

Review Article

A Security Perspective on Turkey-Africa Relations: Analysis of Smart Power Strategy

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Abstract: Somalia and soft power diplomacy in East Africa has been the first and most important step in Turkey's engagement with the African continent. In this way, with its opening to Africa initiative and investments in Somalia, Turkey has demonstrated to the international community that it will be among the important actors contributing to the future of the African community. Today, starting from East Africa, Turkey has been developing and strengthening its influence and presence in many regions of Africa, including North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Sahel Region, through its multidimensional foreign policy. Moreover, it has successfully supported its soft power diplomacy in the continent with its initiatives in the field of the defense industry and its Smart Power strategy and has come to the forefront as a security partner of the African countries.

Keywords: Smart Power Strategy, Turkey-Africa Relations, Soft Power Diplomacy, Security Partner, Defence Industry Initiatives in Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the end of the colonization process, it appears that international competition is being continued on the African continent by other actors with modern methods and means. In addition, the established order by the European states would not match the realities of African society when they left the region and would be one of the biggest obstacles to its development for many years. While the enforced borders that do not match the social structure of African societies caused disagreements and ethnic conflicts, on the one hand, they damaged the trade, transportation, and economies of the newly established countries on the other. Inevitably, the atmosphere of violence and insecurity caused to weaken state institutions and hindered the political and economic progress of African countries. Unfortunately, the new actors who took over the global competition in the continent did not also contribute to the social and economic development of the region, rather than positioning themselves to preserve the current order in their relations with the continental countries. Therefore, these developments of the last century have transformed the traditional structure of the geopolitical rivalry on the continent and evolved it into a different dimension. Meanwhile, the growing rivalry and relentless competition have also provided an opportunity for the poor nations of Africa to improve new partnerships with the civilized world countries and create new momentum for their economic

and cultural developments. In this regard, these recent developments in the international arena pave the way for an opportunity for Turkey to revise its foreign policy approach and also enabled her to new cooperation fields with new actors in different places of the world. One of them was the African engagement on the subject of soft power policy and the Somalia initiative as a starting point for its opening to Africa policy. Admittedly, Turkey had the advantage to create a positive atmosphere to apply its historical ties and cultural similarities for the opening to Africa policy in the beginning, and also the manifestation of the opening to Africa initiative in 2005 gave momentum to the implementation of soft power diplomacy in some parts of the region. In this context, the Somalia initiative has enhanced Turkey's position to emerge as one of the active players in the region. Because Turkey has reliable motivational sources in terms of its similarities with East Africa which is the key arena of contest for global power influence in the coming decades.

On the other hand, ongoing rivalry and the complex structure of international politics have brought forward the multifaceted perception of diplomacy for all actors, and the successful execution of these relations has profoundly changed the sources, dimensions, and methods of diplomacy in Africa. In this context, Turkey's promising Smart Power Strategy, which shows its military presence along with soft power

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elements, has increased its appeal, credibility, and diplomatic prestige in the eyes of African society. In addition, Turkey imposed a unique meaning on smart power conceptualization by adopting methods to establish long-term relationships based on equal partnership and has become one of the influential actors in some parts of the African continent. Today, starting from East Africa, Turkey has been developing and strengthening its influence and presence in many regions of Africa, including North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Sahel Region, through its multidimensional foreign policy. Moreover, it has successfully supported its soft power diplomacy in the continent with its initiatives in the field of the defense industry and its Smart Power strategy and has come to the forefront as a security partner of the African countries. Within this framework, this study will start with the historical background which extends to the recent past of Africa-Turkey relations to submit a better understanding of the historical and cultural similarities between the two communities. Subsequently, parameters of smart power strategy and opening to Africa policy, and military cooperation and security diplomacy in the African continent will be analyzed in this direction.

1. Historical Background of Turkey-Africa Relations

In view of the fact that most parts of the continent especially North Africa and some parts of sub-Saharan Africa were bound to the Ottoman state as governorates, it can be argued that the historical ties between the African continent and Turkey started with the Ottoman Empire period during the 16th century. In that period, Ottoman Empire had a consulate in South Africa and also had connections with Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Niger, and also Chad. The Ottomans played an important role in preventing Spanish penetration, especially in North Africa. Even in the northern part of sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans were also part of the balance of power, with friendship and an alliance with the Kanem-Bornu Empire that prevailed in modern-day northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. (Özkan, 2010).

Turkey started to build an engagement with the continent based on its historical inheritance derives from the Ottoman Empire, and also thanks to the common similarities such as historical acquaintance, cultural similarities, and also a religious resemblance between the populations. As a result, these are all some parts of the complete historical picture for the assessment of Turkish foreign policy from a historical perspective. On the other hand, Turkey-Africa relations were not developing desirably due to external and also internal factors. Because the domestic political and economic problems were preventing Turkey's transformation to complete its state-building process along with the social and economic transformation. And, at the same time, during and after the Cold War

period, because of the bipolarity of the world order, and also the external security threats forced Turkey to take part under the influence of the Western camp and their organizations such as NATO, and adopt a non-expansionist foreign policy outside its borders. In light of these developments of the last century and also the changes in geopolitical balances around its peripheries have forced Turkey to shift its foreign policy approach and create a new partnership formation in the near and remote areas to balance itself in the changing global order after the end of the Cold War period. In this sense, after the adoption of the opening to Africa plan as a state policy in 1998, Turkey has increased its initiatives with humanitarian and cultural diplomacy and won the strategic partnership of the African Union as well. As a reflection of the multi-dimensional foreign policy understanding of the AKP government, which took office in 2002, bilateral relations have also been developed with the increasing interest and capacity in Africa. In this context, Turkey has seen the results of this initiative in a short time by conducting an active foreign policy at the state level together with non-governmental organizations. Along with gaining the strategic partnership of the African Union, it also became the 25th non-regional member of the African development bank. More importantly, the votes in favor of almost all African countries have moved Turkey to provisional membership of the United Nations Security Council (MFA, 2021).

After 2005 was declared as the "Year of Africa", Turkey-Africa relations reached its highest level with the declaration and framework document on cooperation which was accepted at the first Turkey-Africa Cooperation summit held in Istanbul in 2008. In that vein, while trying to improve its relations with African countries, Turkey attached equal importance to building institutional cooperation with the African Union and other regional organizations as well. (Oğuzoğlu, T. & Habiyaemye A., 2014). Although the development of Turkey-Africa relations has an impact on regional power balances, it also has the potential to offer new opportunities for Turkey in the political and economic sphere of the continent. That was why the year of Africa 2005 initiative and subsequent Istanbul declaration in 2008 were very important for Turkey to take part in the growing East-West rivalry in the African continent. Initially, Turkey found a fitting political position for itself to start an engagement with the underdeveloped countries of Africa. Admittedly, the socio-economic and geopolitical dimensions of the African continent, the influence of both traditional old hegemony, and also the growing rivalry between the new superpowers forced Turkey to adopt a soft power policy on a familiar spot instead of the holistic foreign policy engagement. That is where the Somalia initiative takes its significance to understand Turkey's African engagement and soft power diplomacy.

2. Parameters of Smart Power Strategy and Opening to Africa Policy

The United States had become a sovereign power alone in the new world order with the end of the Cold War period but had to redefine its power elements because of the new dynamics of the world order such as the technological developments, intercultural interactions, and commercial interdependencies. For this purpose, leading international relations experts such as Joseph Nye and L. Armitage within the body of the Smart Power Commission, which was established in the United States in 2006, introduced the smart power concept as a new definition of the combination of hard and soft power. According to Nye, enhancing a country's diplomatic effectiveness and expanding its sphere of influence comes from smart power, not soft or hard power alone. In this sense, he argues that a smart state can choose both kinds of power wisely, that is, hard diplomacy is meaningful when it can be supported by soft elements or vice versa. In this regard, it is a reality that today soft power alone cannot produce the best results, and hard power alone cannot be sustained for a long time. Aware of this new reality, Nye has brought a new concept to the theory of international relations through the assessment of the current situation of her own country by naming it as a smart power. This new concept requires a holistic approach named contextual intelligence strategies which contain an integrated strategy and combine soft power and hard power." Contextual intelligence is needed to produce an integrated strategy that combines hard and soft power" (Nye, 2009). He argued that if the military and economic power of his country is supported by soft power resources, it would be possible to adapt to global threats and the new world order, stating that this can be possible with a smart power strategy. "By complementing its military and economic might with greater investments in its soft power, the United States can rebuild the framework it needs to tackle tough global challenges. That would be true smart power" (Nye, 2009). In this context, the strategic concept of smart power which pushes military power to the second plan and envisages the use of soft power together with hard power has officially entered the agenda of the USA. In conclusion, the smart power concept can be briefly defined as the effective combination of hard and soft powers and it also represents the meaning of the development of an integrated strategy created with both hard and soft power to achieve the goals of the United States. This multifaceted strategy has become widespread over time as one of the foreign policy tools of all countries. In addition, public diplomacy has also gained importance as the affiliate of the smart power approach that emphasizes soft power elements. In this regard, Turkey can be given as an example as one of the countries that have been successful in the smart power strategy with its multifaceted and active public diplomacy implementation in recent years (Pallaver, 2011, p.20) has shown European Union as another actor who successfully uses smart power by stating that

"Smart power can take on different forms. What has been called smart power is, in fact, a combination of diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural tools, and the European Union could be regarded as one of the best examples of this.", and (McClory, 2011, p. 24) argued that "Soft power alone may not be sufficient, but its relative strategic importance compared to hard power will continue to increase." As can be understood from these definitions, it has been an accepted fact that the effective use of soft power and hard power together makes states more successful in achieving their foreign policy goals. For this reason, smart power, and its diplomatic applications, has been indispensable concepts in today's international relations. In this sense, from the point of view that it highlights elements of soft power, public diplomacy has been regarded as one of the most effective means of implementing a smart power strategy. Because, winning the hearts and minds of the societies in this new world order which is the information age; spending knowledge and modern technology on inter-community interaction and creating a positive image, leads to the establishment of long-term relationships between both states and societies. In this sense, the smart power concept which was conceptualized with this strategy is not just a combination of hard and soft power. It predicts professionally a measured reaction on the ground prepared in advance to adapt to the actor's behavior to which the force will be applied. These changes within the nature of power have brought new developments about power itself, its resources, and its use regarding the foreign policy of the host country. In this way, the change in the perception of power has deeply affected the domestic and foreign policy methods of the governments, as well as enabling international structures and non-governmental organizations to gain a presence as important actors in the global system. As a result, the transfer of hard, economic, and soft power concepts to foreign policy in a proactive, simultaneous, and balanced implementation form, in a way that supports each other, has made the smart power concept important for the states. In this regard, the complex structure of international politics has brought forward the multifaceted perception of diplomacy for all actors, and the successful execution of these relations has profoundly changed the sources, dimensions, and methods of diplomacy.

In the globalizing world conditions, a country that wants to achieve its foreign policy goals should not only use soft and hard power elements but also develop relationships based on mutual affection and trust between the nations. (Nye, 2004) argues that a country should be able to establish emotional ties, such as attraction, with desired foreign audiences to assure policy objectives. Therefore, understanding that imperialist approaches in their foreign policy implementation backfired especially in the African continent, western countries redefined power and have

developed strategies for the use of smart power which consists of both hard and soft power approaches. Despite this relentless competition and influence of the traditional colonial European countries who know very well the historical, cultural, and economic codes of African society, it can be argued that Turkey has managed to create a positive and promising domain for itself by using soft power diplomacy and smart power strategy effectively. Terminologically, the soft power concept, which began to be used at the end of the Cold War period, and became widespread, also influenced Turkey's foreign policy approach and caused it to gain multidimensionality. In this respect, with the end of bipolarity, Turkey has also updated its foreign policy dimension and adopted an active and multifaceted foreign policy implementation. Admittedly, the reduction of security threats at the periphery, and search for the new resources for its growing economy had been effective in Turkey's foreign policy change. For this purpose, the opening to Africa policy, which was launched in 1998, has been developed and turned into a strategic partnership since 2005. In this context, more serious efforts have been made to develop bilateral relations through the General Directorate for Africa which is established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To develop bilateral relations with Africa, soft power diplomacy has also come to the fore as an effective force in the region by giving priority to mediation activities, foreign aid, and State-building processes. Blending the concept of soft power with its interpretation Turkey has achieved a more advantageous position than its competitors in geographies with which it has historical and cultural ties.

On the other hand, though it has rich historical and cultural ties between the geographies and societies it targeted in its foreign policy, Turkey understood that it must combine modern soft power elements with these advantages, and accordingly, it has made serious investments in this field of diplomacy. In this regard, public diplomacy coordination office has been established to direct soft power elements in line with state policies. ‘‘ In 2010, the Prime Ministry's Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD) was established to provide for the coordination between public agencies and organizations and non-government organizations, in the course of promoting Turkey in the international community and enhancing her credibility. The OPD carries out various activities such as public diplomacy panels, foreign policy workshops, youth programs, country meetings, wise people conferences, and journalist committee programs. On the other hand, OPD effectively uses social media platforms. OPD publishes tweets in Turkish, English, Arabic, and French (the Turkish account is followed by more than 35.000 users, while the English one is followed by about 7.000) and manages a Facebook page (more than 5.000 members)’’ (Wikia.org., 2021). And then this formation was turned into a more comprehensive and visionary capacity as

the new Office of Public Diplomacy with the arrangement came into force by the presidential decree issued in 2020 (Official Journal, 2020, 31248). In this context, Turkey has adopted public diplomacy and made serious investments to use soft power sources effectively. For this purpose, both public institutions and non-governmental organizations have been mobilized to work in coordination with each other. ‘‘In Turkey, there are numerous government and private organizations which conduct activities related to public diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and the Ministry of Economy, all work to promote Turkey through their diplomatic missions in foreign countries. Turkey also performs public diplomacy by providing developmental assistance and technical support to countries in the developing world through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)’’ (Wikia.Org., 2021). In addition, multilateral diplomacy is also carried out on defense and military issues and continued to invest in both student exchange programs related to military education and security cooperation. In this sense, bilateral security cooperation agreements with Somalia and some other countries, military student exchange programs, and military bases that were established by Turkey can be submitted as tangible examples in this direction. Additionally, education scholarships for international student exchange programs and soft power elements in state-sponsored investments made by businessmen in other countries contribute to Turkey's image as an active actor in soft power diplomacy. On the other hand, Turkey intends to get more space in the international system and gain legitimacy for its foreign policy engagements by performing soft power policy and public diplomacy actively. For this purpose, it was important for Turkey to open up to geographies as in the case of Africa with which it has historical and cultural ties. Therefore, the large investments in various parts of Africa, such as building a large military facility in Somalia and undertaking infrastructure projects in Senegal, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Sudan, show the economic and geopolitical importance it attaches to the continent. To support the submitted information with an example, it can be highlighted that sympathy for Turkey has grown so much in Somalia, where it actively implements both security diplomacy and all elements of soft power in harmony, that those newborn children are given the name of the Turkish President. In this context, Turkey's active role in the state-building process in Somalia, being an important commercial partner in Ethiopia and offering other African countries an option based on equal partnership, and also its active participation in the United Nations African peacekeeping force with its military elements indicates that it is effectively using the Smart Power Strategy in Africa. In this sense, there have been activities in which the Turkish Armed Forces took part in the region to facilitate soft power targets and contribute to the security of the African region. Because with the globalizing world, armed forces have become

globalized as well, and one of the actors supporting the soft powers of the state. As the other powerful actors do in the region, Turkey also combines hard power and soft power elements and strengthens its image among the competition. In this context, security operations supported by the Turkish Armed Forces within the scope of peacekeeping missions in Africa can be summarized as presented below (TAF, 2021);

- UN Somalia Humanitarian Aid and Peacekeeping Operation (UNOSOM) between 02 January 1993-22 February 1994,
- UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) from 30 July to 30 November 2006,
- UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) between 25 April 2005 and 27 July 2010,
- NATO Joint Protective Operation between 29 March-31 October 2011 after the internal turmoil in Libya,
- UN-African Union Darfur Mission (UNAMID) between June 2005 and December 2007 to provide training and transportation support to the African Union,
- EU Police Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUPOL KINSHASA), April 2005- July 2007
- NATO Ocean Shield Operation between October and December 2008 in Somalia offshore and in the Gulf of Aden,
- UN Somalia Relief Mission (UNSOM) since 2015,
- United Task Force 151 to combat piracy and armed robbery in African territorial waters.
- Peace support operations carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces in Somali territorial and offshore waters continue,

As a result, Africa is one of the most discussed and interested continents of the 21st century in world politics as the second largest and most populous continent in the world after Asia with its 54 countries and a population of more than one billion. The fact that many states have different ethnic and cultural structures, being multilingual and each of them has different colonial history makes it difficult to understand the continent, but on the other hand, it paves the way for multi-faceted perspectives to produce a permanent and long-lasting foreign policy approach. Within this framework, especially for the countries such as Turkey that have just engaged and been trying to understand the continent in a social, economic, and geopolitical sense, this situation is also a necessity to produce a sustainable strategy. For this reason, considering the issue of how Africa should be understood in the 21st century is extremely important, especially for the new countries entering the continent. In this regard, it can be argued that countries generally examine their African policies from three different perspectives. Firstly, the historical approach takes into

account colonialism and its effects on the African population. Secondly, the religious and social approach has an impact on cultural values and identity formation. Finally, the regional approach aims to avoid the generalist point of view on the continent. While determining the opening to Africa policy, Turkey has synthesized these three perspectives and developed its unique soft power diplomacy based on mutual trust and strengthening cultural and economic ties. As a result, Turkey's promising Smart Power Strategy, which shows its military presence along with soft power elements, has increased its appeal, credibility, and diplomatic prestige in the eyes of African society. In addition, Turkey imposed a unique meaning on smart power conceptualization by adopting methods to establish long-term relationships based on equal partnership. In this context, it can be argued that Turkey has been successful in using soft power elements and smart power diplomacy effectively and started to become one of the influential actors in some parts of the African continent.

3. Military Cooperation and Security Diplomacy

As Joseph Nye and L. Armitage (2007, p. 7-8) envisaged the extent of smart power, does not only consist of a combination of hard and soft power but also predicts a measured reaction on a ground prepared in advance to adapt to the behavior of the actor to which the force will be applied. Based on this conceptualization, it can be argued that in today's understanding of international relations, a fact emerges that the military power representing only the hard power cannot be sufficient alone to protect the interests of a country, but it will be a guarantee and complementary element of soft power diplomacy. In this sense, it is often effective when a state demonstrates credibly that it will not hesitate to resort to force when the protection of national security and interests is necessary. Therefore, it has become important for countries to have strong and ready-to-use armed forces and to position them in a way that supports their soft power diplomacy. In other words, based on the criteria set by Morgenthau, military power should also be supported with rapidly developing technology and included in diplomacy to be used as a smart power element (Morgenthau, 1954). However, it is a fact that only the states, whose technology, diplomacy, economy, and media are effective and of high quality, can transform their military power into a smart power, as long as they can reflect these structures on their security diplomacy. In this regard, the importance of security diplomacy has increased recently, and it is also becoming important to support and protect international partnerships and investments with the presence of military cooperation and security diplomacy. When examined specifically in Africa, it is possible to observe that the lack of security is the main problem in many African countries. For this reason, it is important to use military diplomacy as a smart power element to be able to preserve the partnerships which

are on the sensitive ground and very prone to change because of the external factors in the African continent.

The competition of states aiming to be an effective power in the continent generally focuses on some countries in the Sahel region where there are unmanageable areas due to the lack of effective governance structures, and on the "Horn of Africa" region, which is important for its geostrategic location. In this sense, the existence of military bases in Africa is tried to be legitimized by Western countries on the grounds such as ensuring the security of the African countries, fighting against terrorism, and protecting the commercial activities of the partner countries. In this context, it can be argued that the presence of extremist groups and terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabab provides a legal basis for these claims in the African region. Admittedly, it appears that the military base competition in the continent is carried out to share the abundant resources of the continent and ensure the security of oil transportation through the Red Sea region. This can be cited as one of the most important reasons for the destabilization of the region. Due to this reason, examining the strategic regions which are subject to international competition and how the countries are positioned within the context of military bases will contribute to the understanding of Turkey's security diplomacy efforts in the African continent.

With the end of the Cold War period, Turkey's foreign policy understanding has also changed by the developments in the international system, and a more effective and proactive foreign policy strategy has been adopted, unlike the Cold War period. In this context, sending soldiers to the international peacekeeping force (UNOSOM) in Somalia between 1993-1994 can be considered one of the first steps taken within the scope of this new foreign policy understanding. (TSK, 2021). In addition to this conception, Turkey has also been involved in regional integration processes, and in this context, the Africa Action Plan was put into practice in 1998. Following the Africa Action Plan, there have been many positive developments in bilateral economic and political relations and subsequently, it became a strategic partner of the African Union in 2008. At the same time, Turkey did not remain indifferent to the political developments that took place in the African continent and updated its foreign policy accordingly. Within this framework, Arab Spring and subsequent developments can be submitted as the most prominent events in terms of showing that Turkey has adopted a divergent stance from the Western countries. These developments are of significance in terms of reflecting that a more unique foreign policy has been adopted towards the African continent in comparison with the previous policies of the pre-Cold War and Cold War periods. By giving priority to the Sub-Saharan countries, which is the poorest and most problematic region of the African continent, Turkey has given

importance to infrastructure investments along with the basic needs of the region as well, and in this way, it has increased its visibility in the international arena. Along with the success of investments in Africa and the increasing bilateral relations with the continental countries, it gained the right to become a member of the African Development Bank in 2013 (AfDB, 2021). Simultaneously with the developmental needs of the region, security issues were also within the scope of interest to Turkey, and in this context, various investments were also made in the field of military cooperation and the defense sector. In this context, the TURKSOM military training base, which was opened in Somalia in 2017, cadet exchange programs between Turkey and Somalia, military pilot training agreements with Kenya, and military presence in Libya since 2020 can be cited as performed examples of these abovementioned investments. In addition to these, recent developments within the scope of defense industry cooperation show that almost half of the African states have signed defense industry cooperation agreements with Turkey, while 14 states (Burkina Faso, Cezayir, Çad, Fas, Gana, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nijer, Nigeria, Senegal, Somali, Ruanda ve Uganda) have so far imported various weapons and military vehicles from Turkey (Bayram, 2022). This makes Turkey stand out as an important partner contributing to Africa's defense compared to other actors on the continent.

3.1. North Africa

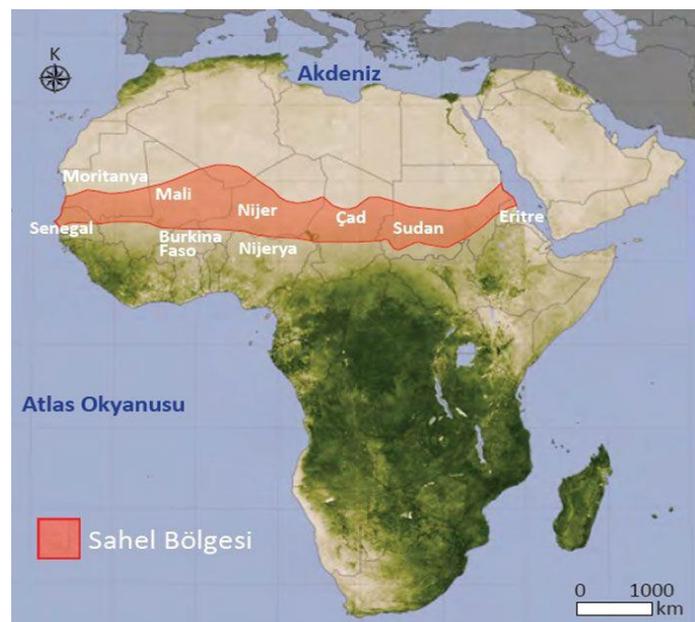
Today, when the international competition areas and formations applied on the African continent are examined, it is seen that especially the North African region is being tried to be redesigned by the competing countries. Strikingly, north Africa and the eastern Mediterranean area are at the forefront of this competition. In this context, it can be argued that the multinational efforts for controlling the Red Sea region, the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon deposits, and Libya are the cornerstones of this relentless rivalry. Disintegrating in the aftermath of the civil war in 2011, Libya continues to attract international attention due to its strategic location and rich natural resource capacity such as oil and natural gas reserves which comprise 40% of the total reserves in Africa. In addition, regional countries and international actors who aspire to take advantage of Libya's vague situation have been trying to be influential in the region by way of waging proxy wars against each other. Italian writer Manlio Dinucci (2016) describes the picture of Libya's latest position in his article called "The Hounds of Libya" which refers to a Libyan union of three states that have formed a partnership on oil and gas, supported by the European powers. The content of this article is providing a clue in terms of reflecting the dreams of the actors competing in the region. According to him, those who think in Washington, Paris, London, and Rome, are the very same people as those who will collect the ruins through the "international aid mission to Libya" after

destabilizing the Libyan state through war and dividing it into pieces (Dinucci, 2016).

On the other hand, a new phase has begun in Libya, where the balance of power has changed with Turkey's interference in 2020. Sending military support and weaponry to the region within the framework of the military assistance and cooperation agreement with the National Consensus Government, which is recognized by the United Nations, Turkey has become an important factor in the region. Within the framework of this bilateral agreement between the two countries, Turkey has initiated projects comprising of opening an airbase in Vatiyye town, and a naval base in Misrata port in Libya. With this move, it has taken an important step both to preserve its soft power initiatives and to protect its investments in the region. As (Seuferd, 2020) highlighted that Turkey's engagement in Libya and North Africa is a sign of the shift in the focus of its foreign policy that will create new challenges and consequences for the EU and other competing countries in the region. As a result, with its decisive military engagement in Libya, Turkey has gained legitimacy not only to protect its long-term interests in North Africa but also to be a regional power at the expense of Western players.

3.2. Sahel Region

The Sahel region covers the South of Africa's Sahara Belt, starting from Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and even some parts of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Eritrea as well. It includes a transitional line between South Africa and North Africa, usually composed of mostly Muslim states. Currently, it is known that one of the most important tools of international rivalry on the African continent is the establishment of military bases by states from outside of the continent. In this regard, it is expressed as the reason why Western countries focus on the Sahel region is, it is in a position to control migration routes, and another reason is the necessity of fighting against terrorism due to the extremist elements situated in the region. However, considering that the Sahel region is one of the most untouched areas in the world in terms of its great resource potential both in the sea and land areas, it can be better understood why the international competition is mostly concentrated in this region. In addition, especially the presence of zinc reserves in Burkina Faso, gold in Mali, uranium in Niger, oil in Nigeria, Sudan, and Chad, iron, and silver reserves in Mauritania intensify the ongoing competition in the region. For a better apprehension, the regional map is presented below:



MAP-1: Sahel Region

Source: Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication>

When evaluated in terms of both military bases and infrastructure investments, the USA, France, the UK, and China stand out as the main actors competing in the region. Admittedly, as one of the main actors of the international relations system and having military elements in 50 countries of the African continent, it is seen that behind the anti- terrorism discourses of the USA, there is a motivation to preserve its regional dominance against China and create a new ground for the armed elements it has established with the train and

equip system, after Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Thus, it aspires to maintain its dominance, especially in the Sahel region for many years. The other traditional Western countries such as France and England have been trying to open more military bases and maintain existing ones to protect their currently settled interests in the region. At the same time, while having strong ties to its former colonies, and military bases in Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Mauritania, and Eritrea, France appears as another influential country in the Sahel region. In this

regard, the military operations that France initiated in 2013 under the pretext of the fight against al-Qaeda in Mali have still been continuing with the support of the USA and other European countries, and that it has spread to almost all the countries in the Sahel region since that period. It shows that military presence and security diplomacy in the region is becoming indispensable to preserving the long-term interests of these countries. The fact that the places, where military operations are carried out under the name of the fighting against terrorism, have rich resources, and that all these resources are operated by US and European companies, contributes to the legitimacy of this argument. As Alpar, (2016, p.638) highlighted that the military presence and operations of the US and European states in the African continent are aimed at maintaining the old order and protecting their interests other than contributing to the security of the African countries.

As for Turkey's military presence in the Sahel region; Turkey has been contributing to the international peacekeeping operations carried out by the United Nations in the Central African Republic and Mali. In this context, a certain number of military elements are included in the multinational task force in the designated areas. Apart from that, following the Presidential level visit to Sudan in 2017, Suakin Island was allocated to Turkey for 99 years, but after the military coup which took place in Sudan in 2019, the bilateral agreement was canceled by the new administration unilaterally and declared invalid. Aware of the geostrategic importance of Sudan in terms of security and control of the Red Sea region, the diplomacy of the regional countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates is considered to be effective in this regard. From this aspect, it can be argued that the Sahel region, including Sudan, which is seen as the gateway to Sub-Saharan countries, is one of the competition areas in Africa with its growing economic trend and resource potential. From the theoretical perspective, it seems that the thesis of the constructivist approach, which argues that the concept of legitimacy is as important as the concept of power in international relations, is becoming invalid due to military coups and the fragile social structure of the African continent. For this reason, due to the weak state structures and lack of institutional characteristics of the African countries, the realist approach that evaluates international relations from a security

perspective emerges as the determining factor of this rivalry. Considering the generally accepted international dynamics in the region, it can be argued that the success of soft power diplomacy and long-term investments in Africa depends on smart power diplomacy supported by the presence of hard power which is represented by military power.

3.3. The Horn of Africa

Located in the northeast of the African continent, where Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Ethiopia are situated, the Horn of Africa region stands out as one of the most politically dynamic and contentious regions of the world. And the region has also a rare characteristic because of its strategic ports overlooking crucial waterways connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa. In addition, the valuable natural resources, rich minerals, and underground water resources increase the interests of the international powers in the Horn of Africa region. Last but not least, the presence of the Bab al-Mandab Strait, which connects the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden has also given geostrategic importance to the region and turned it into an area of relentless competition. Admittedly, the region is very fragile and unstable due to famine, humanitarian crises, terrorism, piracy, and weak state structures. In this respect, it can be argued that the internal problems and border disputes of the Horn of Africa countries negatively affect the stability of the region. In addition, it is seen that the civil war in neighboring Yemen since 2015 has also created serious risks in terms of the continuity of the global trade conducted over the Gulf region. Considering that approximately 10% of the global oil supply is transported through this strait, it is becoming important for investing countries to keep the region stable and energy resources protected. For this reason, the race to establish military bases in the Horn of Africa region has increased in recent years. In this regard, Djibouti is of great importance for global actors due to its location to monitor the passages to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the vast majority of the military bases in the region are located in Djibouti because of its strategic position. Accordingly, France, the USA, Italy, Germany, Spain, Japan, and China, which opened their first military base in Africa can be submitted as the countries having military bases in Djibouti. To provide a better perception of the geographical position of the Horn of Africa region, the map is presented below;



Map-2: Horn of Africa Region

Source: Retrieved from: [www.https://www.mapsofworld.com/answers/geography/region](https://www.mapsofworld.com/answers/geography/region).

Considering Turkey's foreign diplomacy in the military field in the Horn of Africa, it is possible to refer to the engagements such as establishing a military base in Somalia, the recent efforts to establish a new base in Djibouti, and various peace support operations within the context of international initiatives in territorial and offshore waters of the region. In the general sense, while carrying out its foreign policy in Africa with more human-oriented diplomacy, Turkey also needs to establish military bases to protect its investments in the region. In this sense, within the framework of Turkey's strategic plan, the Somalia military base (TURKSOM) has been recorded as the largest military base Turkey built abroad in 2017. As highlighted in the (Middle East Monitor, 2017), "The construction of this base can be considered as the first step in efforts to rebuild Somalia's military that collapsed during the protracted civil war." In addition, it is considered that the military training provided by the military base contributes positively to Somalia's fight against terrorism and the provision of internal security. Eventually, the contributions of non-governmental organizations carrying out their activities in this secure environment accelerate the state-building process of the disintegrated and fragmented Somalia society.

As a result, all competing countries in the Horn of Africa region have a great variety of investments within the scope of both commercial and soft power diplomacy that they implement through their NGOs. On the other hand, because of the fragile social structure and lack of security in the region, the necessity, and importance of defense diplomacy emerge to contribute to soft power initiatives of the investing countries. In this context, considering the regional conjuncture and the international balance of power in

the Horn of Africa, it does not seem possible for soft power initiatives to be long-lasting if they are implemented without military cooperation and security diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

There have been many developments since Hegel's biased views regarding the African continent, in which he claims that Africa has no history and that the black people living there are not suitable for development and change. (Hegel, 1902). Contrary to his views, especially with the social, political, and cultural developments during the last century, the black continent has shown the whole world that it is the cradle of humanity on the one hand and the grave of colonialism and racism on the other. In addition, especially with the independence movements that started after the Second world war, the African continent has become one of the most important subjects of the historical scene and international relations by gaining its independence from colonial powers.

Turkey stands out as one of the most ambitious countries to extend the friendly hand that Africa needs, with its historical experience and humanitarian aid-oriented foreign policy approach towards the continent in the last two decades. In this regard, primarily based on the developments of the continental countries on the one hand, and equal partnership engagements on the other, Turkey's foreign policy approach differs from most of the existing policies applied in the region in terms of taking a stance against the dominance of the global system and standing by the African peoples in their difficult times as in the case of medical support that Turkey provided to many African countries during

the Covid-19 pandemic. (indyrturk.com, 2021). In addition, Turkey has not broken its diplomatic ties with Africa despite the social and political introversion and economic difficulties experienced all over the world because of the pandemic conditions. Instead, the Turkish Foreign Ministry hosted the Turkey-Africa Business and Economic Forum on 21-22 October 2021 in İstanbul with the motto of "Turkey-Africa: Stronger Together". According to DEIK international (2021), more than 3,000 businesspersons participated in the forum to negotiate the latest developments and investment opportunities between Turkey and African countries. As another important event, the third Turkey-Africa Summit took place on 16-18 December 2021 in İstanbul between Turkey and African countries' representatives. (African Business, 2021). Within the scope of the latest developments, it can be argued that these diplomatic initiatives of Turkey, which defines itself as the Afro-Eurasian State in the new international system, have also considerable importance in terms of reflecting the position it will take in the African continent after the Covid-19 pandemic conditions. Admittedly, this diplomatic challenge with powerful discourses gave an upper hand to Turkey for its opening to Africa policy and fostered a mutual bond with the African people.

Another defining feature of Africa is that; Africa is one of the most discussed and attractive continents of the 21st century in world politics is the second largest and most populous region in the world with its 54 countries and a population of more than one billion. Besides, the fact that many African states have different ethnic and cultural structures, being multilingual, and each of them has different colonial histories make it difficult to understand the continent, but on the other hand, it paves the way for multi-faceted perspectives to produce permanent and long-lasting foreign policy approaches in the region. In this framework, especially for the countries such as Turkey that have just engaged and been trying to understand the continent in a social, economic, and geopolitical sense, this situation is also a necessity to produce a sustainable strategy in the region. It can also be argued that Turkey has developed its unique soft power diplomacy based on mutual trust and strengthening cultural and economic ties at the beginning. Likewise, Turkey's promising Smart Power Strategy, which shows its military presence along with the soft power elements, has increased its appeal, credibility, and diplomatic prestige in the eyes of African society. On the other hand, although the implemented soft power diplomacy and smart power strategy are successful in some regions such as Somalia, they provided both opportunities and also challenges for Turkey due to the social and geopolitical positioning of the African continent. In the general sense, while carrying out its foreign policy with more human-oriented diplomacy, Turkey also needed to establish military bases to protect its investments against the ongoing international competition in the

region. In this regard, the Somalia military base (Camp TURKSOM) has been recorded as the largest military base Turkey built abroad in 2017. From a broader perspective, because of the fragile social structure and lack of security in the region, the necessity, and importance of defense diplomacy emerges to contribute to Turkey's soft power initiatives as in the case of other investing countries in the continent. In this regard, the continuity of the smart power strategy is of vital importance for the success and permanence of Turkish foreign policy in Africa.

Notes to Contributors

Hüsnü Mısırlı has finished his MA at Atılım University Ankara, Turkey. His research interests include Regional Studies and Regional Security issues mainly covering the African continent.

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