

STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS OF THE SUDANESE-TURKISH RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TURKISH- AFRICAN RELATIONS

SUDAN-TÜRKİYE İLİŞKİLERİNİN STRATEJİK BOYUTLARI VE TÜRKİYE-AFRİKA İLİŞKİLERİNE ETKİSİ

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Abstract

Recently, academic studies dealing with regional relations and bilateral relations between countries have become increasingly important in the academic world. Because these studies are expected to provide simpler and more understandable findings on a specific subject rather than giving a macro perspective. In addition, since such academic studies research on a country basis, it is of great importance for other countries to determine a strategy for the country that is the subject of the research. In addition, it has gained indispensable importance in international politics in recent years and provides the method of comparison, which is one of the development strategies. For these reasons, it is possible to see that thought centers and research institutes have evolved in this direction. Such studies have gained more importance especially for African countries that have not been researched deeply and without prejudice. Based on this idea, current article aims to discuss the importance of bilateral relations between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of Turkey and the positive effects of the relations on Turkey-Africa. Sudan is an influential country in the African continent, and Turkey, on the other hand, has been following a policy of opening to the African continent, since it has a common history with many African societies. In this regard, the relations between the two countries tend to welcome the cooperation opportunities in all fields in line with the policy of mutual benefit for all African countries. In addition, the article focuses on the necessity of stable bilateral relations between the two countries and the opportunities that may arise as a result.

Key words: African Continent, Republic of Sudan, Republic of Turkey, bilateral relations, Sudan-Turkey bilateral relations, Turkey- Africa relations.

Son zamanlarda akademik dünyada, bölgesel ilişkileri ve ülkeler arasındaki ikili ilişkileri ele alan akademik çalışmalar gittikçe önem kazanmıştır. Zira bu çalışmalar makro bir bakış açısı kazandırmaktan ziyade spesifik bir konuda daha basitçe anlaşılabilir bulgular elde etmeyi sağlamaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra bu tür akademik çalışmalar ülke bazında araştırma yürüttükleri için diğer ülkelerin araştırmaya konu olan ülke için strateji belirlemede büyük önem taşımaktadır. Ayrıca son yıllarda uluslararası siyasette vazgeçilmez önem kazanmakta ve kalkınma stratejilerinden biri olan karşılaştırma yöntemini de sağlamaktadır. Bu sebeplerden dolayı bugün düşünce merkezlerinin ve araştırma enstitülerinin bu yöne doğru evrildiklerini görmek mümkündür. Özellikle daha önce derin ve önyargısız olarak araştırılmayan Afrika ülkeleri için bu tür çalışmalar daha fazla önem kazanmıştır. Bu anlayıştan yola çıkarak ele alınan bu makale, Sudan Cumhuriyeti ile Türkiye Cumhuriyeti arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin önemini ve bu ilişkilerin Türkiye-Afrika ilişkileri üzerindeki olumlu etkilerini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Zira, Sudan'ın Afrika kıtasında etkili bir ülke olması ve Afrika kıtasına açılma politikası izleyen Türkiye'nin de birçok Afrika toplumu ile ortak bir geçmişe sahip olması, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin Afrika ülkeleriyle karşılıklı menfaat politikası doğrultusunda, tüm alanlarda iş birliği olanaklarına açık olmak istemesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca makalede, iki ülke arasında istikrarlı ikili ilişkilerin gerekliliği ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkabilecek fırsatlar üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika Kıtası, Sudan Cumhuriyeti, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ikili ilişkiler, Sudan-Türkiye ikili ilişkileri, Türkiye-Afrika ilişkileri.

Structured Abstract

Nowadays, with the start of searching for new resources in the world, the African continent has started to gain more importance in international politics. This situation has turned the continent into a veiled battlefield from time to time. Today, the African continent has almost become a battleground between the United States of America and Russia, and between the People's Republic of China and the United States. In addition to these, new actors such as Israel, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and many European countries have been making different attempts to have an active and influential voice in Africa.

While this is the case, it is possible to observe that the political mentality of the African continent has changed, albeit not at a sufficient level. Africans, whose resources have been exploited for many years, have begun to believe that the old order must change. They do not only believe, but also make many moves in line with their aforementioned beliefs.

Among these moves are establishing strategic partnerships with countries other than former colonial countries that believe in a win-win approach. Within the scope of these strategic partnerships, in the Africa continent, efforts are made to ensure that their resources are used for the interests of their own countries. From this point of view, some countries have recently entered Africa strongly in the international arena and have gained an important place, and the Republic of Turkey is one of these countries. Currently, the Republic of Turkey has strategic cooperation and partnership with countries of strategic importance in Africa, such as Sudan.

Sudan is one of the countries having strategic importance in the Africa continent. It also has importance for the politics in Africa, which cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the Republic of Sudan, which is also rich in natural resources, has faced many problems at both national and international levels since its independence. While it faced many isolation moves, including an embargo, in the international arena, it also faced factors such as Africa's longest civil war, tribal warfare, and political instability in domestic politics.

This situation has created an obstacle to the development of the country. We cannot say Sudan is in a good economic situation today although it is a country that is rich in natural resources. In addition to economic problems, there are also problems such as institutionalization and lack of technology in the country. Therefore, the Republic of Sudan, which has started to open up to the outside world, has turned to activities such as experience sharing and strategic partnership to eliminate the problems mentioned recently

and to ensure the development of the country. In this regard, this article deals with the bilateral relations between Sudan and Turkey multilaterally.

This paper has several aims, the first of these is to shed light on the development of bilateral relations that will enable the reader to fully understand the mutual ties that the two countries possess at the political as well as the social level. The next step is to underline the competing international conflict regarding Africa, and the opportunities available for Turkey to build successful relationships with African countries, despite the presence of such a tensioned and tumultuous atmosphere. In doing so, the intention was to clarify to what extent reciprocal interest-based relations must be developed with Africa.

Then the geopolitical and geostrategic impact that Sudan has on Africa was dealt with, as well as an examination of the extent to which Sudan has become an unsurpassable figure in Africa, as well as the subsequent consequences that this has on Turkish-African relations. Also highlighted was the Turkish State's foreign policy and potential about the basis and mechanisms, as well as the opportunities for the success of its openness strategy aimed toward Africa, in addition to the positive role that can be played by Sudan concerning making these relations work.

In recent decades, there have been feeble Sudan-Turkish bilateral relations. However, the Turkish Republic has undertaken serious effort into upgrading these relations, and through the positive responses of Khartoum, over the last few years; these efforts have shown an unprecedented increase. Recently, following the political change that occurred in Sudan in 2019, in which the Islamic regime power within Khartoum was ousted, diminished bilateral relations have been observed between the two countries due to a belief held by the Sudanese leaders in which these mutual relations are ideologically-based (pan-Islam) and individualistic and/or partisan relationships were present with previous regime leaders.

Although a great number of academic studies have been conducted that deal with the relations between these two countries, no studies have been conducted dealing with this issue within a strategic supra-governmental dimension. Therefore, the current research dealt with the bilateral relations between these two countries, and as well, highlighted their strategic dimensions, and revitalized the prospects toward joint cooperation, in addition to possible positive repercussions on their future, as well as on Turkish-African relations from a much broader perspective, going beyond the relevant ruling regimes.

Finally, the prospects of these bilateral relations, as well as the achievements of each country, were outlined and brief conclusions are represented in addition to the recommendations that follow.

Introduction

The African continent is so rich in many raw natural resources that it is becoming increasingly more important and valuable as far as international relations are concerned. As a result, many countries around the world endeavor to build successful and steady relations with the African continent, which has become one of the major international policy issues of this era. In this regard, relationships between Africa and the rest of the world have always been characterized by the exceptional posture of the painfully colonial history for most African societies. This history was, and still is, the basic element that structures the perceptions of African politicians of the outside world and influences their principles about building their foreign relations. In this regard, the historical relations between Turkey and the African continent are devoid of this colonial legacy.

The first aim of this paper is to shed light on the development of bilateral relations, thus enabling the reader to fully understand the mutual ties of the two countries at the political and social levels. Then, the international competing conflict regarding Africa was highlighted and the opportunities for Turkey in

building successful relations with the African countries despite this tumultuous and tensioned atmosphere was underlined. This is intended to clarify the extent to which it is necessary to build reciprocal interest-based relationships with the African continent.

The paper then dealt with Sudan's geopolitical and geostrategic impact on Africa; to what extent that has made Sudan an unsurpassable figure on the continent, and the subsequent consequences on Turkish-African relations. The paper also highlighted the potential and foreign policy of the Turkish State in terms of the basis and mechanisms, in addition to the success opportunities of its openness strategy towards Africa, as well as the positive role that Sudan can play in making those relations work.

For these, over recent decades, the Sudan-Turkey bilateral relations have been feeble. However, the Republic of Turkey has deployed serious efforts to upgrade these relations and, through Khartoum's positive responses, they have grown to an unprecedented level in the last few years. After the recent political change in Sudan in 2019, which ousted the Islamic regime power in Khartoum, bilateral relations between the two countries have diminished as a result of a belief by the leaders of Sudan that these mutual relations were ideologically-based (pan-Islamic) and individualistic or partisan relationships existed with the former regime leaders.

Although there have been many academic studies dealing with the relations between the two countries, there have been no studies dealing with the issue in a supra-governmental strategic dimension. Therefore, this paper dealt with the bilateral relations between the two countries, highlighting their strategic dimension, and revitalizing the prospects for cooperation, with potential positive repercussions on their future in particular, and on Turkish-African relations from a broader perspective that goes beyond the ruling regimes here and there.

Finally, the study outlined the prospects of the bilateral relations, their gains from the perspectives of both countries, in addition to brief conclusions and ensuing recommendations.

1. Background the Bilateral Relations of the Two Countries

The Sudanese-Turkish relations have been deep-rooted since the era of the Ottoman rule of Sudan, between 1820 and 1885. This period in Sudan's history of literature is known as the Ottoman-Egyptian rule in Sudan. The Ottoman-Egyptian governance of Sudan has engendered many cultural, educational, social, political, and military common features, including Sudanese cuisine, where there is a significant Ottoman cultural influence on Sudanese gastronomy.

It can be said that the Ottoman-Egyptian ruling of Sudan has contributed substantially to the configuration of Sudan's geopolitical map. Moreover, many terms and words used in Sudanese colloquial language, and cultural values, are seen as being unique to Sudanese society in sub-Saharan African countries, which has been considered as hereditary of that historic era.

Additionally, the modern Republic of Turkey was one of the first states to recognize Sudan as being an independent country when it was liberated of English-Egyptian colonialization in 1956.

As mentioned earlier, Sudanese-Turkish relations have been characterized by continuous rapprochement and stability since the 1980s, although they have been at a much lower level than the ambitions of the two countries and were sometimes described as characterized by an obstructive slowness.

This was obvious after Turkey adopted an open policy towards Africa, translating a desire to build a strategic partnership, based on mutual benefits. Sudan's appointment as a gateway to Africa has resulted in

relations progression in several important areas, such as political, economic, cultural, security, and military. Consequently, industrial and investment cooperation has increased, including domains such as communications, transport, energy, mining, and agriculture. Many bilateral agreements and protocols have been signed, and joint committees have been formed to follow up and facilitate their implementation, such as joint economic and political committees. In the same context, several forums have been held, targeting strengthening and supporting this partnership. Turkey views this cooperation as a strategic partnership, confirmed by holding a forum that comprised a considerable number of businessmen from the two countries, and aiming at encouraging bilateral partnership between the two states (Kamaleldeen, 2019:25).

These agreements have actually paid off, as trade cooperation and investment have increased. Many projects have been launched in Sudan based on Turkish experience. The most important of which, as an infrastructure, was King Nimr Bridge, Al-Halfaya bridge, and Nyala Hospital, which was built to international specifications. Turkey has provided materials as well as support and funding to various sectors in Sudan, such as training and rehabilitation in different sectors, such as security, agriculture, and health, as well as the Jihad Industrial City Project and other support initiatives. Turkey has also played a positive role in resolving Sudan's political issues, such as the Darfur issue. Within the framework of its openness strategy toward Africa, Turkey declared 2005 as the Year of Africa. The Turkish-African summit was held in 2008, where participants discussed diverse African issues and problems, and explored various approaches of cooperation, targeting the building of strategic partnership.

It is worth mentioning that the summit resonated all over the world, as attention was drawn to the upcoming dynamic Turkish role in Africa. Later, in 2012, the Turkish-African International Conference has held (Abu Salih, 2012:53). Sudan was then appointed as the hosting country, which symbolized evidence of Turkey's coordination and partnership to make Turkey's strategy in Africa work and to enable Sudan to play actively a central role within that strategy.

2. International Competition in Africa and Turkey's Opportunities

The fact that the African continent has retained potential and several raw natural resources have been the primary competition-based element and affecting power for Western countries and major economies to head toward Africa. As a consequence of the policies of these countries in dealing with their presence in the Horn of Africa, Turkey has emerged as an acceptable partner, following a flexible diplomacy strategy, taking into account the principle of common interest, respect of national sovereignty, and support for African countries in resolving their crises (Kamaleldeen, 2019:20). This has resulted in some analysis and assessments about Turkey's policy regarding Africa, its historical links with the continent, and its ability to deal with the intense competition alongside the Western powers. For instance, the United States of America has adopted a strategy based on security, trade, and purely economic principles toward Africa; France is present on the continent within its Francophone region, and Britain, which has had historical influence, since the colonial era, on many countries on the continent. In addition, China has emerged as a strong strategic partner on the African continent, Israel, which has preferred a penetration policy and strategy into Africa, and Iran, with regional strategic ambitions, aims at spreading Shi'ism.

It was the opinion herein that the Republic of Turkey, when compared to other countries, has the most favorable chance of building tight relations with Africa as a result of its historical ties with many of the influential countries on the continent. In addition to its foreign policy objectives regarding Africa, which were built upon the principles of having a greater regional role, Turkey might be considering setting up a new order in the Middle East and the Balkans, to effectively contribute to the transformation of the whole area into a regional superpower. Thus, maximum economic interdependence within the countries of the region would be realized, as well as observing Turkish national defense by assuring security and stability in the region and the neighboring countries. In addition, the attention of Turkey's partners in the North will

be attracted to the importance of the Turkish role and influence in the region, which will inevitably change the foreign policy balance of these countries, this will make them seriously consider how to take advantage of Turkey's growing influence in Africa and the Middle East.

3. Sudan Geopolitical and Geostrategic Influence in Africa

3.1. Republic of Sudan's Potential

Sudan occupies a vital and strategic location in Africa, situated in the center of the African continent. Historically, Sudan extended to cover the region from the east of the Red Sea to the Atlantic west, the African southern desert regions, and north to the equator (Artin, 1911:11). Today, Sudan is designated to the region which is located in the South of Egypt in the middle part of the Nile Basin. The name (Kosh) was also designated, in the Old Testament and the Assyrian texts to the same part of the land, but the present name, Sudan, is the plural of a Greek word that means black people (Tirab, 2020: 50).

Sudan is located in the north-eastern part of Africa, between the 22.4 latitudes northern equator and 38.22 longitudes. The country occupies the middle part between Africa and the Arab World. Such a location distinguishes Sudan with a unique characteristic, considering it the main passage between North and South Africa. Sudan was also the main passage for the pilgrim and trade convoys that traveled from East Africa to the Holy Lands until the mid of the current century, due to Sudan being neighbored by Egypt, Libya, Chad, Central Africa, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, and the Red Sea.

The total area of Sudan is about 1,882,000 million km square, which makes it one of the largest African countries, ranking sixteenth among the largest countries of the world. Sudan is the third-largest Arab country and the second largest African country, and the arable lands are estimated to be 200 million feddans, which is equal to 84 million hectares (Republic of The Sudan Council Of Miniteres).

Sudan is thus strategically exceptionally located in the heart of the African continent, constituting a diversified and culturally, ethnically, and linguistically interrelated society with communities of the surrounding states.

Therefore, Sudan's strategic location, as well as its ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, with up to 422 tribes, and more than 250 local languages and dialects (Abugron, (1969:103), has been a very effective and vital interaction and communication factor with its neighbors, and with other African countries. Because of its geographical location, Sudan is a passage as well as a settling place for many people, both in and traveling to Africa, for various purposes, such as research, exploratory, missionary intentions, etc. (Doop, 2013:130).

The length of its borders, its vast lands, and the possession of an important commercial port on the Red Sea coast make Sudan a country of a valuable strategic depth in terms of international trade, and regional and international security. It forges a transit point for cultural interaction and religious currents that make up cultural and particularly, spiritual dynamism, in the region, and the world in general.

Based on the above-cited account, the Republic of Sudan can be described as one of the most important countries in the region that has a direct role and influence on the course of regional events. Thus, it was the opinion herein that exploring the geopolitical influence of this strategically important country will help to recognize its political connotation.

It is well known that Sudan has been a founding member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) since 1963, and one of the founders of the African Union in 2001, and it was also a pioneer founder of The

Confederation of African Football, or CAF, which was established on 8 February 1957 at the Grand Hotel in Khartoum by Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Africa (Dunmore, 2011:21) and Sudan has played a vital role in establishing many other continental organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

3.2. Geopolitical Influence

After attaining its independence, Sudan has aimed at playing an active role in fighting colonialism in Africa and preventing English occupation. At the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s, Sudanese political elites argued against the decolonization of the African people, and for the liberation of the continent of all kinds of occupations, domination, and foreign supremacy (Ismail, 2006: 21). Sudan has adopted an external policy based on fighting against racial discrimination and promoting equality values and principles. These principles were observed throughout the successive regimes and governments that ruled Sudan until the end of the 1980s and early 1990s when political changes emerged and the country modified the order of its priorities, which has considerably limited Sudan's influence on the course of events in the region (Abdel Hameed, 2012:9).

The role of Sudan in Africa, the values and principles on which its foreign policy was based at the time, and its position with regard to colonialism in the region, have turned it into a center for liberation movements, fighting against colonial domination and supremacy. Thus, African youth headed toward Sudan, vulnerable individuals took refuge in the country, which also became a launching point for many movements and factions that supported and reclaimed freedom and independence for African communities (Ahmed, 2002:89). Sudan provided material and moral assistance to many African movement leaders, such as Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Joshua Ancomwa of Zimbabwe, and Sam Nujoma of Namibia, who received financial support and Sudanese identity papers, thus facilitating their movement and ability to travel internationally, to seek support for their liberation movements. Not only did Sudan at the time support this kind of assistance, but, in addition, it used its diplomacy to help the leaders of the African movement at the time (Ahmed, 2002:92).

The Sudanese Embassy in France has also been a forum for these pioneers, such as Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea, Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Modibo Keita of Mali, as well as from other Arab-African countries, such as Algeria's Farhat Abbas (Makki, 1999). Then, in about 1964, Sudan granted political asylum to the Congo rebels, to provide them with political coverage, and facilitate the provision of aid, as they debarked from Egypt and Algeria into Sudan territories (Al-Siddiq, 1997:16).

Furthermore, Sudan was one of the first African countries to clearly oppose and strongly declare, via the United Nations, its positions against colonialism in Africa. It is common knowledge that Sudan was a leading country in supporting the Portuguese boycott campaign in the Organization of African Unity in 1972. In addition, Sudan has provided logistic support and exchanged experiences with the leadership of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (PMLA). Consequently, solid relations were formed with the spiritual movement leader, Augustine, who appreciated Sudan and subsequently respected its political leadership at the time (Sudaress, 2009).

Because of its strategic characteristics on the African continent, Sudan has insisted on calling for, within the Organization, the promoting and reinforcing African will, capacity building, and inner strength. Sudan was an incessantly active participant in all of the activities of the Organization and its other branches until the agreement on the establishment of the African Union at the summit of 1999, held in the Libyan city of Sirte[i]. The African Union was an expansion of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), established on 9 July 2002. Sudan is also a member of several African organizations with different orientations and specialties, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the International

Given the importance of these organizations, and their soft power in influencing African societies and governments, they have provided Sudan with an opportunity and the capacity to strengthen its relations with African communities and governments in general. This emphasizes the vital presence of these organizations and the need to interact with them according to a strategic vision and perspective of managing African relations. Thus, cooperation will be strengthened with African countries, and regional and international partners will be able to achieve the best levels of bilateral and collective relations with the countries of the continent. In addition to these organizations, Sudanese community interaction with African societies will contribute to the greatest communication with all economic, social, and political groups in Africa, to achieve genuine integration and the required interdependence. This will result in benefits and experience exchange with the countries of the continent through flexible and active diplomacy, based on the respect of ratified international agreements, treaties, and laws (Hayati, 2001:42).

Regarding the attempt by African countries to emancipate themselves economically from Western imperialist domination, Sudan was able to attract the People's Republic of China to enter the oil exploration sector in Sudan in the early 1990s, and through the Sudan Gate, China was able to penetrate sub-Saharan Africa and take over the oil market in Chad, Niger, and Algeria, and other countries along with the Belt and Road countries (Chinatoday, 2018).

4. Turkey's Foreign Policy Pivots and Mechanisms

4.1. Republic of Turkey's Potential

The Republic of Turkey is characterized by an extremely important geopolitical and geostrategic position. It became of particular interest to the world, Eastern as well as Western, as it was the latest and the most important Islamic Empire, called the Ottoman State, which ruled for many centuries and has left its imprint in most countries of the Eastern world. Turkey is also of interest to the Western world, as an ancient partner in the configuration of regional and international policies. It is still possible to find many agreements that were signed between Turkey and those countries, with which it continues to have strong relations. Some of these agreements were signed immediately after the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923.

The year 2002 was a major turning point in the history of the modern Turkish Republic, witnessing the launch of a development vision that enabled the Republic to become a model of development and growth. Thus, it managed to be positioned among the 20 most economically powerful countries (G20). It paid back its accumulated debts to the World Bank, after being called for some time, the Sick Man of Europe, to symbolize its economic and administrative weakness as well as the widespread corruption. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a development maker and a visionary leader. After resigning from the Welfare Party, guided by Professor Najm Eddin Erbakan, Erdoğan became a member of the founding Assembly of the Justice and Development Party (JEM) on 14 August 2001. He was directly elected as the party's head by consensus. The party achieved an unprecedented majority and access to power in 2002, in the first elections held after its establishment.

Parallel with the first government of the Justice and Development Party, Turkey achieved a renaissance in all political, economic, security, military, social, and other sectors, which could be portrayed as a full-blown boom. Turkey then targeted the building of external relations with its regional and international surroundings in a way that achieved national and mutual interest with these countries. It was keen while pacing forward openness to the outside world, to adopt a soft power policy as the main principle and guide for orienting its foreign policy.

4.2. Turkish Foreign Policy Pivots

To achieve the foreign policy objectives, the Republic of Turkey established a set of institutions, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (An Institution Concerned with Direct Support by Providing Qualitative Assistance to Friendly States and Their People), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (An Educational Institution Which Grants Annually Thousands of Scholarships to Students All Over the World), and the Yunus Emre Institute (An Institution Concerned with Cultural Aspects), (Akgün ve Özkan, 2020: 1 ve 20). In addition, a comprehensive strategy was developed for all state institutions and civil society organizations, each with a precise role that led to the achievement of the targeted goal (Noval, 2016:17). To do this, the Republic of Turkey has used different methods that can be summarized into the following:

Adopting soft powers while building foreign relations, as stated above, the policy which was focused on moderate secularism at home, and active diplomacy abroad, to assure the removal of things that might obstruct it from achieving peace and stability, maintaining coordination, reinforcing political integration between the Middle Eastern states, southern Mediterranean, the Balkans, and African countries.

Building Turkish foreign policy based on multidimensional and balanced relations with all parties, and in many different geographical regions, as well as focusing on keeping the door wide open to communication with all factions, which enhanced international cooperation, consolidated the principle of sticking to economic activity as the highest priority and as a means of addressing political differences and conflicts, i.e. the primacy of economic interests over political differences, which requires dialog in resolving and settling differences and problems.

Adopting neutrality policy with all of the components of the region, based on the principle of disabling disagreements that might have a historical dimension with some countries in the region, as well as sticking to a regional policy, which enabled Turkey to play the role of an influential element in defining the policies and orientations of the region following the principle of non-interference in the internal political affairs of states, concern for overcoming troublesome differences with neighboring states, and the development of a cooperation and coordination spirit with them based on their respective mutual interests (Davutoğlu, 2010:21).

5. Sudan within the Turkish Strategy of Openness Toward Africa

This strategy was named “the strategy of opening to Africa and the Middle East”. The states of strategic importance in those regions were identified as the key for cooperation, coordination, and access to the region. Sudan was thus selected among African countries and portrayed as Turkey's key to Africa, as declared by the Turkish ambassador in Khartoum at that time (Hasan, 2005:21). However, for some reasons, such as the internal conflict in Sudanese political compositions, corruption, bureaucratic slowness, lack of transparency, or lack of a clear-cut Sudanese vision of cooperation with Africa, Turkey began seeking an alternative that could be a partner in realizing its aspirations toward the African continent. Its attention was thus turned toward Sudan’s neighbor, Ethiopia. Consequently, the volume of trade and cooperation grew to the highest levels (Sebsebe, 2015:50).

Despite the momentary boom in the volume of trade exchange between the two countries, this was not a reflection on Turkish relations with the country of the Horn of Africa, to extend to other African countries. Among the obstacles, was that the regional and international parties hostile to Turkey were working to inflame the feelings of fear on the Ethiopian side of any potential Turkish role in the region, even if commercial investments were to prevent Turkey from building strategic relations in the Horn of Africa and the continent as a whole (Arpa, 2015:42). Turkish investments in Ethiopia witnessed many

attacks during the political turmoil that struck Ethiopia in 2018.

On the other hand, China was able to penetrate Africa, north and south, due to its early relations with Sudan. The Arab countries realized this fact early also, and that is why they worked to establish educational centers destined for Africa in Khartoum, such as the African Islamic Centre in Khartoum, in 1967, which developed into the International University of Africa and like the Islamic Dawa Organization in 1980, which was based in Khartoum and was able to spread to 55 African countries.

Despite the political stalemate in Sudanese-Turkish relations after the transfer of power in Khartoum in April 2019, the forces opposing the regime of former President Omar Al-Bashir did not declare any anti-Turkish stance from the new Sudanese government. The political situation in Khartoum is still fluid, and positions are being reconfigured and trends are being rebuilt according to the developments within the new government's political coalition and the stances of the countries of the region that bear a view that is not favorable to complete the democratic transition in Sudan, which may ultimately lead the Sudanese government to review its relationships with the international community, especially Turkey and Qatar. In summary, the political change that took place in Sudan has not negatively affected the bilateral agreements between the two countries thus far.

Nevertheless, Sudanese-Turkish relations are still on a good level, having all factors that can help to build up the best of bilateral relations and a model for coordination and cooperation between Turkey and African countries. From this perspective, in the next part of this study, the focus will be placed on the prospects of bilateral relations between the two countries.

5.1. Prospects of the Bilateral Relations of the Two Countries

Turkey's appointment of Sudan as being the gateway toward Africa was not an arbitrary choice, as there were logical reasons and scientific, political, geographical, and cultural justifications for it. One of the most important reasons might be the importance of Sudan as a key strategic influencer in Africa, and in the region in general, the common history of the two countries, and the cultural and ethnic composition of Sudan. This will make things easy for Sudan to influence and to be influenced, as well as to be open toward the majority of African communities. In addition, most African countries do have respect and appreciation for Sudan, for its outstanding support of African liberation movements, its effectiveness in African organizations, the role that Sudan played in building and consolidating African-Chinese relations, and many other reasons. This choice was therefore a complete recognition by the Turkish State of what has been said previously, which demonstrates that Turkey's strategy toward Africa was based on high-precision and planning with regional and international dimensions (Sabir, 2020:23).

Concerning Sudan, during the Sudanese Al-Ingaz (salvation) regime, many problems and obstacles hindered the implementation of this partnership in a way that would benefit both sides. Sometimes, there were even obstacles purposely put into the path of the implementation of projects that were planned to be carried out in Sudan. This was a clear indicator of unplanned processes or the misalignment of priorities.

It is worth mentioning here that, despite these obstacles, one can see that Turkey remains fully prepared to go on alongside Sudan, as an appropriate partner regarding its strategy toward Africa. This implies that Sudan should start putting its internal affairs into order, developing its strategic plans for the country's governance according to a national vision, regulating its external relations in order to be a vital affluent supporting national interest, and reviewing the Turkish partnership issue concerning Africa. It was opined herein, in accordance with what the Republic of Turkey requires to build a genuine strategic partnership based on mutual interests and reciprocal confidence with the continent's countries, that it must pinpoint a strong partner, whose appropriate awareness and familiarity with the African continent will

possibly help to remove all potential obstacles.

5.2. Integration and Cooperation Benefits in the Bilateral Relations of the Two Countries

5.2.1. From a Turkish Perspective

The foreign relations contraction and stagnation that Sudan has experienced in recent years implies that there is an urgent need to reconsider how to manage its foreign relations and undertake the required reforms. If the above-mentioned Sudanese State's potential is considered, it will be obvious that if these reforms are undertaken, Sudan has the qualifying strengths to play an important, pivotal, and positive role in establishing Turkish-African relations. This, from a Turkish perspective, will result in diverse gains that can be exemplified as follows:

Working with full awareness and understanding to functionalize and activate the role of Sudan and its close relations with the African Union, for the sake of strengthening the Union's relationship with Turkey, as well as building a network of close relations with the state members and supporting Turkey and its efforts deployed to communicate with African economic organizations and groupings of the African Union, by using Sudan's strategic relations with the African countries to make the Turkish partnership with the African countries succeed.

Based on Sudan's geographical and strategic position on the African continent, bilateral industrial projects can be established, in partnership between the two countries, within the Sudanese territory, to serve the African markets and take a part in implementing projects, such as investment in infrastructure, roads, and bridges linking the continent's countries, especially continental roads which would be a useful step for the Turkish-African partnership. This will directly facilitate the possibility of exchanging benefits with Turkey's strategic project and build relations of common interests with African countries and communities.

Close Sudanese-Turkish relations will help Sudan to consolidate all aspects of the cooperation map with the African countries, which was also targeted by Turkey, and will contribute to understanding the Turkish goals comprised in this strategic partnership effectively and positively, appreciating exchange gains, setting up the frameworks and aspects of cooperation, and realizing the aspirations and prospects of the African countries expected from Turkey.

5.2.2. From a Sudanese Perspective

From a Turkish perspective, the advantages of bilateral relations between the two countries were formerly elucidated. Sudan can also benefit from its stable relationship with Turkey, which has a prolific historical experience, rooted in state management and its institutions, with regional and international influence, and significantly developed in many areas. Sudan requires such a partner within the coming period, particularly in areas such as agriculture, agricultural engineering, and industry. Thus, stable bilateral relations with Turkey will enable Sudan to do the following:

Economically, Turkey has managed, within a relatively short period, to achieve outstanding success, renew regionally and internationally, as, after being within the circle of poor and economically collapsed countries, it integrated the group of world economy-leading countries, whose policies were determined by the G20. Not only did Turkey pay off its debt to the World Bank, but it even lent money to this institution. This means that Turkey has managed to rejuvenate its economic viability and confidence. It has thus become an unsurpassed figure in regional and international economic policies. In this context, the level of per capita income has increased, the Turkish Lira's value has amplified, and the country has developed cutting-edge infrastructure, in addition to operating deep-seated changes in different urban aspects. The

country's states, localities, and villages have been linked to a modern national road network, and hospitals, schools, and universities have been established based on the latest technology. Within this period of rapid and steady emergence, Turkey has become a desirable destination for millions of tourists from different countries and continents, as well as being a secure repository for regional and international capital. This has had an evident impact on all the country's economic sectors. Accordingly, the Turkish experience can be used to reform Sudan's crumbling economy, due to incorrect and unconsidered policies that Bashir's governments have pursued since he came to power in 1989. Turkey was indeed underprivileged, and all of its services had been worsening until 2000; however, due to planning, acting, and strong political leadership, in less than a decade, it was able to achieve the significant success that was aimed to portray above.

The Turkish experience in training can also be highlighted and used in rehabilitating national cadres in many sectors. The Turkish experience is renowned for progress at the global level and is presently a training ground in many vital sectors, such as civil service, security, trade, and industry, especially in terms of self-reliance in the national defense industry, health, infrastructure, etc. All of this should indeed be carried out in accordance with a national plan, so that time and money are not spent in vain.

It is known that the modern Republic of Turkey is a natural extension of the Ottoman State, which ruled large parts of the world for centuries. Hence, when the modern Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, the historical experience was accompanied by the modern state restructuring, wherein Turkey then built up a powerful and orderly institutional system, which has directly been contributing to the country's recent renaissance. Hence, transferring the Turkish well-established institutional experience can contribute to rebuilding the Sudanese State system in a strong and sophisticated fashion. The civil service, and even the military, in Sudan have been affected by "the empowerment policy", adopted by the former Sudanese regime, that, instead of relying on long-term rehabilitation and compatible qualifications for employment in public sectors and services, relied on devotion to the ruling party and ethnic affiliation. This policy has damaged state institutions and weakened their performance, which became a major impediment to the Sudanese economy revitalization and the state's development and restructuring.

Turkey has strong diplomatic ties with the oil-rich Balkan states and some European industrial countries. Thus, Turkey has developed a successful industrial experience, as Turkish products can be seen today at the forefront of many Arab and European markets (Novell, 2016:11).

By coordination and taking the example of this experience to develop the industrial and agricultural sectors in Sudan, this step can directly contribute to the activation of the country's enormous potential, keeping in mind that the country's raw material potential largely exceeds that of Turkey. Many other aspects can also be developed and upgraded by building bilateral relations with the Republic of Turkey.

Turkey is one of the Middle East countries that had endured heavily army control and domination over the state governance. After the Justice and Development Party acceded to power in 2002, through free and fair elections, this party was able to achieve a democratic transformation that was internationally recognized and managed to calm the army's connection with politics (Taşkın, 2011:13). In this context and close cooperation with the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish experience of democratization can be used, by transferring what fits into Sudan's situation. Sudan has been suffering from military supremacy and control over power since the country's independence, a fact that a review of Sudanese political history will undoubtedly prove. This has impeded the establishment of a democratic civilian state that can meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people.

According to the framework of the Republic's foreign relations management strategy, Turkey has adopted a "reconciling differences" policy to deal with neighboring countries and has insisted on building stable economic and political relations, based on the common interest principle, with its regional and

international surroundings (Taşkın, 2011:71). To achieve this, Turkey has established institutions, excellently making great success in this direction, and gained the support of many Islamic, Arab, African, and some Western countries. To deal with foreign relations issues, Turkey has been adhering to values of mutual interests, abstaining from having covered agenda, and prefers communicating directly with governments, refraining from covertly dealing with other entities within the country to respect the non-interference principle in the domestic affairs of other states. Sudan could thus benefit from this experience in forming and configuring its foreign relations, which have been distorted over the past decades.

Politically, Turkey recently authorized mediatic, political, and individual freedoms, and is inclined to a comprehensive policy, comprising all Turkish society segments. The ruling political body adopted a political discourse, tolerating and treating all parties alike. The government focused on cooperating with the segments, entities, and components of the Turkish people, whatever their intellectual, political, and ideological spectrum may be, to achieve its strategic objectives. The government viewed these suggestions as to the country's strategic vision, which is planned to be attained by 2023, i.e., Turkey has managed to launch a comprehensive and inclusive national project that meets the aspirations of the Turkish people (Taşkın, 2011:87). This has had positive impacts on Turkey's domestic policy, making it highly stable. On the other hand, the problems challenging Sudan, due to the lack of comprehensive national vision, which can enable authorities to manage diversity in such a way that it becomes a source of national power. From this perspective, the Turkish experience can be beneficial to Sudan, transposing all Turkish practical positive aspects and forming a Sudanese national identity and vision. Consequently, the country can transcend its identity crisis, and surpass the failure of national diversity management.

The tense relations between Sudan, the European Union, and Western countries, in general, have cut Sudan completely off from the international scene, leaving it incurably isolated, and completely deprived of sophisticated scientific, technological, and technical development attained by and accessible to other world nations. Sudan was also incapable of building vigorous external relations that could help the country to play an appropriate role as an important and strategic member in the regional, as well as on the international scene. This has had a negative impact, both internally and externally, since Sudan is a member of an international system, whose components can affect and be affected by each other. Thus, thinking that the Sudanese State intends to counter the effects of imposed isolation, and reset relations with the European capitals to a stable normal state, the Turkish State can play a positive role in this regard, because of its political and economic relations with some important European countries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear that Sudan has an important role and influence in the Organization of the African Union, the various organizations on the continent, and the whole African continent in general. Sudan is in fact active and dealing with many African countries within various regional organizations. It is thus one of the most important countries that can play a positive strategic role on the African continent in general. This can qualify Sudan to represent the gateway to Africa, and provide access to building diplomatic, political, and economic relations with Africa. However, this implies that Sudan should arrange its domestic affairs, achieve internal stability and renaissance, and then develop a strategy that accommodates its size, and its new vision regarding relations with the neighboring countries, on the regional and international scene.

The Republic of Turkey has effective success factors for building harmonious and stable relations with the African continent. Nevertheless, understanding the nature of the societies on the African continent, and ways of dealing with regional and international issues is essential and urgently needed. This means that Turkey needs a strategic partner, like Sudan, which has a strategic and geopolitical influence on the African continent. Turkey needs a partner that can support its positions and make channels of communication accessible. All this is of great importance to any country intending to build harmonious political and

economic relations with the region's countries. That is why many countries in the world today are eager to engage with partner countries on the African continent, representing a launch platform forward, building relations with other African countries. Other countries have also adopted another strategy to deal with the difficulty of understanding African societies; that is, the strategy of investing their African-originated citizens in managing their relationship with the black continent.

All successive Turkish governments have been keen to maintain contact and solid relations with Sudan and provide a variety of aid. The current government of the Turkish Justice and Development Party has made Sudan the center of Turkish relations in Africa. It is worth affirming that the motivation of Turkish-Sudanese relations is not ideological, as it has always been otherwise understood in Sudan. The government in Turkey is democratically elected and has not taken power through a coup d'état. Thus, any government could be dissolved and replaced by another. Still, the Turkish vision of bilateral relations with Sudan will continue to obey Turkey's desire, not the government's will. Turkish-African cooperation continues to expand. On the other hand, Turkey realizes that Sudan is an important country in Africa; therefore, establishing relations in terms of mutual interests is not less than a must. Hence, Turkey remains fully prepared to have Sudan as a strategic partner within its strategy toward Africa. This was a concrete orientation in all official statements during and after the Sudanese revolution, as Turkey declared its steady position, supporting the Sudanese people, whatever their choice of the regime is.

If the political balance that is currently experienced by Sudan is taken into consideration, and Turkey can understand this, as they are fully aware of Sudan's conditions, permitting communication channels with the Turkish Government, albeit in an unannounced method, will be a necessary step in the right direction and in a timely way, as it will also contribute positively to Sudan's interest and its relations with the African continent, as Turkey has strategic relations with solid economic, political, and security capable countries, both at the regional and global levels.

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