

TÜRKİYE'S AFRICA-SUB-SAHARAN POLICIES AND ITS COMPETITION WITH
FRANCE

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Türkiye'nin Afrika-Sahra Altı Politikası ve Fransa ile Rekabeti

Öz

Türkiye yaklaşık son yirmi yılda dış politika yaklaşımında bir dönüşüme giderek Orta Asya, Kafkasya, Balkanlar ve özellikle de Afrika'da varlığını daha da hissettirmeye başlamıştır. Şüphesiz bu durum dış politikada yeni bir bakış açısı gerektirmektedir. Bu nedenle yirminci yüzyılda bu bölgelerden uzak durmasının veya ilgisiz kalmasının nedenlerini sorgulamayı da gerektirmiştir. Türkiye, özellikle Afrika'da sahip olduğu tarihsel arka planın getirdiği kültürel ve dini değerleri vurgulamak suretiyle önce yumuşak güç unsurlarıyla Afrika politikasını temellendirmeye çalışmıştır. Yumuşak gücün tek başına yeterli olmayacağı gerçeğiyle, özellikle 2011 Arap Baharı'ndan sonra "sert güç" politikası da devreye alınmıştır. Şüphesiz Türkiye'nin Afrika'da uyguladığı dış politikalar geleneksel sömürgeci güçleri, özellikle hala bölgede etkinliğini sürdürmeye çalışan Fransa'yı rahatsız etmektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye'nin Afrika'daki tarihsel geçmişi, yumuşak güç-sert güç uygulamaları ve bölgede çıkarları olan Fransa ile olan ilişkiler üzerine odaklanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sahra Altı Afrikası, Türkiye, Yumuşak Güç, Sert Güç, Türkiye-Fransa Rekabeti

Turkiye's Africa-Sub-Saharan Policies and Its Competition with France

Abstract

Türkiye increased its presence in Central Asia, Caucasus, Balkans, and especially Africa by transforming its foreign policy. Undoubtedly, this situation requires a new perception in foreign policy. Therefore, it required the causes of the policy of disinterestedness to these regions in the 20th century. Türkiye, endeavored to structure its African policy with the soft power instruments emanated from its historical background by stressing cultural and religious values. Being aware of the fact that soft power is not sufficient enough, hard power instruments have also been implemented after Arab Spring in 2011. Certainly, Türkiye's foreign policy in Africa disturbs imperialist powers especially France which wants to maintain its influence. This study deals with Türkiye's historical presence in Africa, its soft and hard power instruments and its relations with France which has interests in the region.

Key Words: Sub-Saharan Africa, Türkiye, Soft Power, Hard Power, Türkiye-France Competition

Introduction

It has been observed that there has been a great struggle in the African continent, especially in the sub-Saharan region and in North Africa, which can be described as the gateway to the sub-Saharan region, as in various parts of the world. It is known that the sub-Saharan region, which is an important geopolitical and geo-economic area, is known as the traditional power, France, England, the United States, as well as the newly developing powers that claim Global power, aiming to have a greater say in global sharing. However, the face of competition has started to change. Undoubtedly, there may be many reasons for the intensification of competition in the region. However, among these, the fact that approximately two-thirds of the population is under the age of twenty-five can be considered as an important feature in the face of the aging and unpopulated West. However, the fact that it has abundant natural resources and a great potential for renewable energy is one of the reasons that increase the attractiveness of the region (Gain, 2021). The existence of these and other dynamics causes intensification of competition between regional actors such as Russia, China and Türkiye, as well as the West, which has existed as a colonial and imperial power in the region for centuries. We know that these forces want to take part in Africa again or again. Of course, it brings with it the analysis and questioning of a substantial literature on the colonial past of countries such as France and England, the former colonial powers in the region, and the methods and tools they used for exploitation.

Economic motivation generally constituted one of the main reasons for colonial occupation. The period when Europe seized and exploited the human and natural resources of the continent by using its superior military power is considered as the colonial period in African historiography. In this period, African peoples did not knowingly and willingly give up their freedom and resources (Okon, 2014: 193). However, efforts to cooperate with the world's leading actors in recent years have led to significant changes in Africa's foreign relations. While many of these countries, including China and the Gulf countries, are located in the region, the presence of many countries and the significant flow of resources have also caused economic and political understanding to be reshaped. Instead of relying solely on the United States and former colonial powers, Africans made an effort to establish relations with foreign countries. This has created an opportunity for African countries to diversify their partnerships and accelerate the economic growth of the region (Devermont, 2018).

Türkiye has undergone a radical change in foreign policy since the 2000s. It has started to (re)develop a Global perspective on global problems, especially in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, by leaving as much as possible from the endless energy-consuming debates of domestic politics. Africa has also become one of the regions where Türkiye continues its struggle to exist effectively and intensely.

Actually, Türkiye is not a foreign country to Africa and African societies. He has relationships with a long history. Even briefly, it would be useful to dwell on Türkiye's past in Africa.

Historical Background of Türkiye's Relations with Africa

When we look at the history and back ground of Türkiye-Africa relations, it will be seen that it has a history going back centuries. The Ottoman Empire maintained ties with most of the African coast, either as part of the empire or as a vassal of it. The North African region—Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt to the south to Sudan, to parts of Niger and Chad, and to Eritrea to the east; The places as far as Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia were in the interest of the Ottomans (Malnassy, 2020: 74). The West's search for new trade routes led the Ottomans to take various measures, with the Ottoman Empire's taking control of trade routes after the conquest of Istanbul. Because the vital change that started with the world trade routes reaching the Atlantic coasts from the Mediterranean and piling up everything in the region in the name of capital and enterprise in the Western ports wasa in a quality that would determine the fate of the Ottoman Empire along with the Mediterranean and the Near East in the long term. According to Sabri F. Ülgener's determination, it is paradoxical and surprising that the rise of the Ottoman Empire and the period of the slow dissolution of the region coincided with the same period. In fact, far-sighted Ottoman sultans and state dignitaries realized this trend. Therefore, Yavuz Sultan Selim's expedition to Egypt should be seen as an effort to retain a strategic gateway to determine the fate of the declining Mediterranean and therefore the empire, rather than a simple invasion movement (Ülgener, 1991: 22). The Ottoman State's interest in the continent continued during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and in the years that followed. Even in the years when the state was on the verge of weakening, it made great efforts to hold on to the continent. For example, it is stated by some thinkers that the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference was not a meeting where a colonial division was decided, but rather to facilitate conflict free imperialism in an increasingly crowded market (Stone, 1987: 57). With the participation of the Ottoman Empire in this conference and signing the agreement, it made other countries accept its rights in Libya, but also recognized the rights of France in the Muslim majority regions such as Algeria and Tunisia, which were formerly Ottoman provinces. Ottoman Empire had to leave the continent at the beginning of the twentieth century.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye completely lost interest in the north of the continent it had controlled for years. There are many reasons why he lost interest in the continent. The first of these is the entry of Türkiye into the orbit of the United States of America, especially after the Second World War. Then, the indexing of Turkish foreign policy to the West is focused on trying to join the European Union (Lawal, 2021).

In addition to these informations, it has been tried to prevent Türkiye's pro-

duction of policies related to its near and far surroundings with the existing and created instability. Obstacles have been removed from establishing relations with both the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. For example, it was prevented from being active in foreign policy, as stated by the terrorist organization PKK, which emerged in the 1980s, and later by the President of the United States, Trump himself (Adams, 2015). In addition, the Islamic State (ISIS/DEAS), which was created by the United States of America and used for terrorist acts with all kinds of support, was prevented from being active in foreign policy. In fact, although France has not been an Eastern Mediterranean country in recent years, it has been too involved in the energy debates in this region. It would not be wrong to consider this situation as efforts to keep Türkiye distracted from its own sphere of activity, like the policies they have been implementing for nearly two hundred years in this region. For all these and other reasons, Türkiye had isolated itself from its traditional spheres of influence, including North Africa (Saddiki, 2020). However, in the middle of the twentieth century, the continental countries that started to get rid of the status of exploited countries began to declare their independence. As such, Türkiye recognized almost all of the countries that gained independence. Türkiye established diplomatic relations with them and opened embassies in countries such as Ghana. Although Türkiye's relations with North African countries increased significantly during the Cold War, Türkiye generally did not get involved in African affairs. therefore, he missed the chance to develop political, economic and commercial ties (Dahir A. H. 2019)

After the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, it can be said that foreign policy and relations priorities focused on solving important problems in the immediate environment, such as the status of oil-rich Mosul on the Iraqi border and establishing good relations with neighboring countries. This is an amazing situation. During this period, Türkiye opened embassies in many European and Middle Eastern countries. But none of this happened in Africa. In fact, this meant a passive role for Türkiye in international relations. Between 1923 and 1998, this was true not only for Africa, but also for all regions outside of Europe (Wheeler, 2011: 44).

Despite all these events and policies, Türkiye has put aside its administrative instability since the 2000s. Türkiye seems to have focused itself on the places it needs to be, especially on the African continent. There are undoubtedly lots of reasons for its focus on Africa.

The reasons for Türkiye's Focus on Africa

The slave traders of the developed Western countries, as colonizers or investors, tended to the African continent in the last three hundred years. However, the dominant trend today, and especially in recent years, has been the phenomenon of large emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil assuming their own claims to the continent. There are various debates among experts as to what the purpose of these countries is. However, a significant number of scientists attribute the current

trend largely to economic motives. Türkiye, which has the potential to be influential on the continent in economic, political and cultural issues (again), is the last country to be included in Africa compared to other countries. It is seen that Türkiye has steadily increased its diplomatic and foreign policy presence in Africa since the 2000s.

This mobility led to the creation of diplomatic missions on the continent, the expansion of economic activity, and humanitarian diplomacy. This developing relationship between Africa and Türkiye resulted in the declaration of 2005 as the “Year of Africa” (Adams, 2015). After declaring 2005 as the “Year of Africa”, Türkiye has started to establish political and economic ties across the continent, and this is part of expanding its reach worldwide (Armstrong, 2021). Perhaps the most important reason for Africa’s relations with Türkiye is this, analysts say. Türkiye does not bear the negativities created by former colonial powers such as France on the continent. However, it is based on the fact that almost all of the countries where Türkiye is active in the continent have significant Muslim populations that are more open to partnering with an Islamic power (Lawal, 2021).

In fact, Türkiye’s increasing presence in Africa and Sub-Saharan began with the writing of the document called “Action Plan”. This document was prepared in 1998 by the Turkish Ministry of State, which forms the basis of the political and economic agreements between Türkiye and the continent.

However, it was never (or not) implemented due to the serious economic crisis in Türkiye (Dedet, 2021). For this reason, foreign observers draw attention to the wrongness of attributing Türkiye’s relationship with Africa to the Justice and Development Party (Adams, 2015). However, it should be admitted that the acceleration of Türkiye’s African policy started with the Justice and Development Party.

It is seen that Türkiye has started to spread its political, economic and even military position to all four corners of Africa in a quiet way since the 2000s.

Türkiye’s foreign policy, which has changed since the 2000s, has found its best reflection in Africa (Grigoriadis & Fusiek: 2022).

As mentioned above, Türkiye, which lost its interest in the continent after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, was granted observer status in the African Union (AU) in 2005. This situation has transformed its foreign policy towards the continent by designating this year as the “Year of Africa”. Türkiye has been a soft power deployment situation towards Africa at the same time. Again, this has been instrumental in gaining local support for its participation in trade and other important investment projects on the continent (Hussein, 2020). In fact, it can be said that Türkiye silently carried out its political, economic and military foreign policy transformation towards Africa.

Indeed, with the establishment of the Republic, secular elites formed a Turkish Global identity with a conscious reference to Europe or the West, during periods when the Republican People’s Party and military regimes, even if other political parties were

in power, the military bureaucracy. According to this identity, Türkiye was portrayed as a modern European country that would adhere to liberal principles. In the environment of the Cold War, they tried to emphasize their pro-Western identity, in harmony with the then EEC and the USA, on economic and defense issues. In this context, Türkiye was supported by Western partners as a moderate ally of geopolitical importance. However, with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party from the beginning of the 2000s, a new political identity began to emerge. This political identity aims not only to reinvigorate the traditional Turkish influence in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, but also to assert more broadly the Turkish Policy feature at the Global level against Europe and the West (Langan, 2016: 1401).

Between the establishment of the Republic and the beginning of the 2000s, Türkiye-Africa relations decreased to a very low level. It is also claimed that the reasons for this are due to internal problems such as the nation-state building process experienced by both African countries and Türkiye in the struggle against colonialism (Özkan, 2011: 120).

In this political transformation, the effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s and the efforts of countries to adapt themselves to the change in the world order should not be ignored. The new international environment created by this change has forced Türkiye, which is at the crossroads between continents, to follow a different foreign policy than before (Dahir A. , 2021: 30). The transformation in Türkiye's foreign policy, especially the change in Africa, was also expressed on the official website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is an important point here that improving relations and cooperation with the African continent constitutes one of the basic principles of Türkiye's multidimensional foreign policy. One of the main reasons for this is that Africa will play a more active role in the international system from the second half of the twenty-first century. For this reason, it is the issue that it can play a more important role at the Global level.

Following this, it is stated that Türkiye will share its historical experience, social, political and cultural accumulation in Africa with African countries on the basis of the principle of "African solutions to African problems" and mutual benefit (MFA, 2022). In an article published on December 22, 2021 in "Foreign Policy", which produced ideas for the United States on foreign policy, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defined himself as a friend of Africa. He stated that he made many diplomatic trips to Africa and that as of 2021, the projects given to Turkish construction companies in Africa reached 71.1 billion dollars. He stated that while trade with Africa was only 5.4 billion dollars in 2003, it reached 25.3 billion dollars by 2021 (Gbadamosi, 2021). In a way, he has fulfilled its duty to warn the United States of Türkiye's growing influence in Africa.

In 2003, the number of embassies in African countries was only 12. Today, this number has increased to 43, and the number of embassies of African countries in

Ankara has increased from 10 to 37 in the same period (Marcou, 2022). And in the same period, the amount of foreign direct investment, which was US\$ 100 million, rose to US\$ 6.5 billion. In addition, there was a five-fold increase in trade between the same years (Fabricius, 2021). Since 2005 was designated as the “Year of Africa”, Türkiye has established political and economic ties across the continent through aid and trade. In making these breakthroughs, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who served as the Prime Minister until 2014 and as the President since then, developed relations with African leaders. It has helped Turkish companies access new markets and financed projects that portray Türkiye as the guardian of Islamic culture in heavily Muslim Africa (Armstrong, 2021). These religious structures can often be combined with charitable activities or humanitarian aid (funding irrigation projects). These humanitarian, religious and cultural initiatives are led by public institutions such as the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, Anadolu Agency, as well as NGOs (Marcou, 2022). Such initiatives bring to mind the concepts of “soft power-hard power”.

Türkiye’s Soft Power in Africa

We see that the idea of distinguishing between hard power and soft power was first introduced by Nye in the 1990s. Nye generally defines power as “the ability to influence others to achieve one’s desired results”. It also characterizes hard power as coercive power used through domination, incentives or threats. Military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions are considered hard power. As a matter of fact, the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the UN economic sanctions against Iraq in 1991 following the First Gulf War are examples of the use of hard power.

Soft power, collectively, refers to the tools in a nation-state’s arsenal that do not lead, reward, or threaten other actors to preferred behavior (Seymour, 2020). The main purpose of the soft power discourse put forward by the American political scientist Joseph Nye in the 1990s is exactly this. It was to show that the USA is not a declining power, but that it can maintain its position as the world’s leading superpower. He argued that the USA should maintain an ambitious foreign policy program using “soft power” without being imprisoned within the borders of the country. Following these early studies, the concept of soft power began to be used internationally as a part of the state’s generalized strategy in an increasingly interdependent world (Angey-Sentuc & Molho, 2015: 3).

Türkiye has worked to establish multiple partnerships in order to achieve its strategic goals in a world where competition in almost every field, especially economic and political, is intense. It continues its quests to improve African relations especially in the sub-Saharan region as well as in the western part of the continent. It plays an important role in (re)structuring the regional and Global equations and balances in the Sub-Saharan region of the continent (Askar, 2020). With more than one billion people living in cities that provide rapid economic growth, Africa attracts

the attention of countries such as China, Russia, Gulf countries and Türkiye (Nussbaum, 2020). It is seen that it has a long history connecting Türkiye and Northern and Sub-Saharan countries since the beginning of the fifteenth century, creating a synergy that forms the basis of Türkiye's soft power (Uslu, 2015: 106). In fact, for Türkiye, North Africa has always had a special place in relations with the former Ottoman lands. However, in the last two decades, it has begun to turn its attention to African countries geographically located under the Maghreb (African countries with a coast to the Mediterranean). And these regions have begun to be seen as secondary and peripheral in terms of interests of Türkiye (Donelli & Levaggi, 2016: 103).

Türkiye had the chance to assert itself as an important player in the continent with the famine, which affected three and a half million people in Somalia in 2011. On August 17, 2011 date, Türkiye hosted the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) emergency summit, where it forced forty Muslim states for three hundred and fifty million dollars in aid. After then, at the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly, he presented Türkiye as the protector of the world's moral obligations towards people in need. Following this, the visit to Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, where there is a terrorist risk, was the implementation of an important soft power application (Czerep, 2019).

Private donations have been mobilized on an unprecedented scale by NGOs, artists and other groups to aid relief efforts in Somalia. In 2011, \$300 million was donated, in addition to 94 million state aid. As stated above, despite the high security risks, a volunteer of 500 people reached Somalia before the end of 2011. Turkish medics converted an old ammunition depot into Mogadishu's most modern hospital in two months (Czerep, 2019)

Sub Saharan foreign policy of Türkiye, which seeks to increase its geopolitical gains in Africa through soft power, relies on a common religious identity and cultural resources to expand its economic activities, strengthen its presence and engage in security cooperation with these countries. It has combined diplomatic and economic efforts by providing financial and political support to multilateral initiatives, launching direct THY flights, investing in infrastructure and identifying new routes to regional markets (Gain, 2021).

While concentrating on African policies, Türkiye has mobilized its soft power elements. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency supports many development projects, Turkish Airlines connects the region to the world. In addition, many students from the region, mostly in the fields of politics, economy and engineering, receive scholarships from the Presidency for Turks and Related Communities Abroad (Özkan, 2020).

It is seen that the number of students in continental Africa studying in Türkiye has increased even more in recent years (Studyinternational, 2022). In addition to these, President of the Turkish Higher Education Institution, Erol Özvar, stated at the Tür-

kiye-Africa Partnership Summit on 16-18. 2021 that the country will exempt African students from the Turkish International Student Admission Examination, except for those who apply for engineering, medicine and law courses. Thus, he stated that agreements were signed with 21 African countries for cooperation in higher education at the ministerial level, thus paving the way for joint research activities between universities as well as student and faculty exchange. He added that the “religious and cultural closeness” that many African countries have in making these agreements facilitates directing them to universities. He explained that about 40,000 African students from 54 countries are studying in the country, one-third of them are women and 20% of them are enrolled in postgraduate education (Thepienews, 2022).

Türkiye’s Hard Power

It is possible that approaching the concepts of soft power and hard power from various angles. According to one approach, as stated above, hard power is the use of military and economic means by a country to pursue its interests over another country. It can take effect quickly when imposed by one powerful country on another with less military and/or economic power (Tandon, 2020). According to another approach, hard power requires military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions. This is based on power sources such as the armed forces and economic instruments (Gallarotti, 2011: 29). As a matter of fact, Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939 and the UN (United Nations) economic sanctions against Iraq in 1991 after the First Gulf War are examples of the use of hard power (Wagner, 2014).

“Soft and hard power” can often have mutually reinforcing effects. In fact, each power supply group needs at least part of the other for maximum efficiency. Therefore, soft power sources can increase hard power and vice versa (Gallarotti, 2011: 33).

Until recently, Türkiye relied on trade and diplomacy to reflect its power, as well as on its unique geographic location, that was of key importance between Europe and the Middle East. But, the current and potential instability brought about by the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings necessitated the transition to a hard power approach in order to protect itself from threats and to realize its aspirations to become a regional power (Bakeer, 2021).

Actually, we know that Türkiye has a unique geographical location that provides intercontinental transitions from culture to energy. Although this situation provides many advantages on the one hand, it also requires it to be strong militarily and economically, that is, to have hard power in order to maintain these advantages. Türkiye’s being the second largest army in NATO after the USA, the strongest army in the Middle East and the largest economy in the region, it was not too difficult and did not take time for the country to realize its hard power. The regional vacuum, the rise of radicalism and terrorism, foreign intervention, and the need to combat growing hybrid threats and protect Türkiye’s interests have given Ankara the necessary

reasons to mobilize hard power (Bakeer, 2021)

Türkiye is aware of the necessity of military power in order to protect the investments made while Türkiye is developing its economic, commercial and diplomatic relations in the Sub Saharan region,(Armstrong, 2021). Türkiye's participation in the Libyan civil war in 2019 alongside the United Nations-backed Tripoli government was due to a mix of economic and geopolitical interests, as well as securing natural gas concessions on the high seas (Fabricius, 2021).

The active involvement of Türkiye in the civil war in Libya on the part of the “esSarraj” government has banned General Khalifa Haftar's hopes of capturing Tripoli, backed by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia and to a lesser extent France. The signed maritime delimitation agreement and military cooperation agreement strengthened Türkiye's position in Libya. The naval agreement allows Türkiye to lay claim to much of the Eastern Mediterranean. The bilateral military cooperation agreement allowed Türkiye to deploy at the request of Tripoli (Tekir, 2020: 191-192).

The important point that draws attention here is the use of Turkish made TB2 aircraft to strike the Khalifa Haftar attack. The use of these weapons has had an effect of hatred not only in Libya, but also in conflicts such as Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh (Borsari, 2022). These systems, in which Türkiye came together (UAV-SİHA, etc.), caused Türkiye to get rid of its colonies from permanent isolation and foreign policy inertia in order to maintain existing partnerships and create new ones. Besides, it is important to have hard guard alongside the soft bridge to help. Because the support of the Turkish military power to the Libyan government in Tripoli and the deployment of aircraft aircraft showed the Africans that this new medium provides military service. The security issues surrounding the third summit in December 2021 reflected the impression that they were handled more softly than economic and humanitarian cooperation. Although it is known that many opinions in the verse undoubtedly keep these issues on their agenda. It is possible to say that these widespread Türkiye's commitments are increasingly taking on a political character.

As a matter of fact, during its armed intervention in Libya in 2020-2021, Türkiye signed military agreements with Niger, Ethiopia, Chad and Togo (Marcou, 2022). In early December 2021, the Ethiopian government had raged for a year in civil war with rebels from the Tigray region. The American observer was surprised when the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front repulsed the attacks with the drones supplied by Iran, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates and Qatar during the war. Again, the direct involvement of at least four Middle Eastern countries in the conflict has surprised many American observers (Lynch, 2022). It is even known that the Western powers put pressure on Türkiye to stop the sale of unmanned aerial vehicles to Ethiopia, which was trying to suppress the Tigray rebellion.

In addition to these, Türkiye, which has a military base in Somalia since

2015 and then in 2019 with security and military cooperation with Libya, had the opportunity to introduce itself as a power in African geopolitics. On the other hand, it is seen that the sales of Turkish defense and military equipment to Africa have increased in recent years (Bonesh, 2021).

Bilateral relations deepened rapidly after Türkiye made the first humanitarian aid initiatives in Somalia in the early 2010s. Türkiye has gained military and political power in the region. Somalia is a very good example to show how Türkiye's soft power elements are integrated with hard power tools (dryadglobal, 2021). In September 2017, it opened a comprehensive military training facility in Mogadishu, Somalia. With the opening of this facility, it has established Maritime Communication Lines (SLOCs) stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the Horn of Africa via the Red Sea corridor, and from the Horn to Qatar in the Persian Gulf. Critical to the functioning of Türkiye's partnership with Qatar, Türkiye's Mediterranean to Mogadishu SLOC has also come to serve the expansion of Türkiye's economic and political influence in the wider East African region (Tanchum, 2021). At the same time, Türkiye's display of both soft power and hard power in Somalia has brought an alternative approach to the sustainability problems of Africa. At the same time, this power-seeking has attracted the attention of many African countries, which have long sought alternatives to Western and Chinese proposals (Donelli, 2020). When military bases are generally thought of as part of a state's fighting infrastructure; that is, it can be considered as an important tool by which states reflect their military forces abroad (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019). It will be seen that Türkiye is determined to show both its military power and military technology with the bases it has established in other countries, especially in Somalia, behind its bases in countries such as Cyprus and Qatar.

Two months after the Mogadishu base was opened, the Sudanese port of Suakin, which has a strategic importance to control the entrance and exit of the Red Sea, was leased for 99 years with an agreement that could result in all kinds of military cooperation. Although Türkiye stated that it had ostensibly leased this port for the purpose of restoring it for tourism, the then foreign minister declared that Sudan accepted Türkiye's offer "to protect civil and military ships" and signed an agreement. A Gulf-backed coup is said to have taken place in April 2019 against Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, who is on good terms with Türkiye. Although it has come true, Türkiye's positive development of relations with the Gulf countries as well as with the new administration provides the necessary ground for the execution of regional policies.

The Competition of Türkiye with France in the Region

With the domination of Anatolia by the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century, the East-West trade was also seized, causing the era of discoveries to begin. As a result of the discoveries, the European powers from China to the Americas es-

established enormous colonial empires. From 1492 to 1914, Europe's leading powers captured and colonized more than eighty percent of the entire world, despite making up only eight percent of the planet's land mass (Stoler-Conrad, 2015). For nearly five centuries, European empire builders such as England, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy used different strategies and tactics in the countries they exploited, especially in Africa (Jalata, 2011). In addition, those who built these empires thought that they were doing favors for those living in the areas they conquered (Lee & Shultz, 2012: 2). In order to prevent revolts in the areas they captured, indigenous peoples were less likely than foreigners to revolt against their leaders. For this reason, they sometimes preferred indirect management and sometimes direct manage The two largest colonial powers in Africa were France and Britain, both controlling two-thirds of Africa before the First World War and more than seventy percent after the war.

The period from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s was the peak of imperial rule in Africa (Khapoya, 2012: 100). The French colonial empire consisted of overseas colonies and mandate territories that it had conquered from the seventeenth century. After the period until 1814, which was accepted as the first colonial empire, Algeria, which was under the rule of the Ottomans, was captured in 1830. A distinction is made between the period that began with the seizure of Algeria and is considered to have ended in 1962. By the 1900s, although it was far behind the British Empire in terms of both population and size, it had become the world's second colonial empire and reached approximately 12,300,000 square kilometers (Hargreaves, 2005: 1). In the nineteenth century, France's expansion into Africa and Asia was legitimized on the basis of its "civilizing mission" aimed at educating less civilized people in more remote corners of the world (Ware, 2015: 189).

In world history, power struggles have been seen/are seen, which have greatly changed the international political space, the borders of the conquered lands, and have significantly affected the indigenous peoples of the colonial countries under their control. As one of the most powerful colonial countries in modern history, France ruled over a large area of Sub-Saharan Africa until the formation of liberation movements in the 1960s (Krupova & Čech, 2020: 291).

An important piece of the postcolonial puzzle was the military presence of France. This, in addition to the mandate to intervene through defense and military agreements with nearly half of the African states, all helped to promote France's recognition as the African gendarme. With permanent military bases originally located in Senegal, "Cote d'Ivoire", Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Kamurun, and the Central African Republic, the responsibility to "protect Africa from communism" during the Cold War coincided with French interests in maintaining regional hegemony (Benneyworth, 2011). However, the end of the Cold War left France's African policy in a state with no geopolitical or ideological basis (Lavallee & Lochard, 2019: 393).

However, France maintained agreements with most Sub-Saharan countries in a wide range of areas, from foreign aid and technical assistance to defense cooperation. All this helped France to have a power and influence over these countries in political, economic, social and cultural fields (Sabry, 2020). France generally used harsh power and manipulation methods in order to maintain its presence and therefore its interests in Africa. For example, when Guinea, a sub-Saharan country, abandoned the French monetary system in 1960 and wanted to implement its own national monetary system, France printed large amounts of new money before pouring the new currency into the country, increasing inflation and causing the country's economy to collapse. Likewise, when Mali left the Frankish region in 1962, France pressured neighboring countries to limit trade with Mali. This caused the new currency to depreciate and eventually forced Mali to rejoin the French monetary system.

France also has at least two African heads of state who plan to introduce a national currency and remove their country from the French monetary system. It is believed that to have played a role in the murders of Sylvanus Olympio in Togo (in 1963) and Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso (in 1987) (Phase, 2019). Especially the economic interests of France are motivating for the implementation of such policies. For example, Niger, despite being one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of chronic hunger and malnutrition, is rich in natural resources such as uranium. According to the British Geological Survey, Niger is the world's fourth largest producer of uranium. Two-thirds of the electricity France produces comes from nuclear energy. One third of the uranium used in the production of this energy is extracted by the French company Areva (Sabry, 2020).

Since the 2000s, the relations between France and African countries have been defined by a temporary departure from France, with new trajectories, changes in alliances, and diversification of partnerships (Signé, 2019). In addition, the political events that have taken place in some former African colonies in recent years have brought to the fore a new reality that France has lost control over its former partners and customers (Lupelescu, 2021: 26).

There are undoubtedly many reasons for the loss of control in Franco-African relations. One of these reasons is that the countries described as emerging powers want to take advantage of the economic-commercial opportunities of Africa. It is also clear that a solid African presence is essential for any Global player (Fabricius, 2021). While the policy developed by China, as part of its strategy of "going out" (zouchugu) in Africa since the late 1990s, is similar to the "One Belt One Road" strategy it announced later, both strategies have been combined since 2013. Afterwards, "One Belt, One Road" was gradually expanded to the whole world, especially to Africa (Cabestan, 2019: 592). China is another example of sub-Saharan power projection to exploit Africa's development gap to achieve its leadership goals, and China is making a great effort to promote its sub-Saharan security model as defen-

sive and collaborative. However, factors such as China's bad reputation for financing arrangements that put the countries in which it invests in heavy debt and the fact that it selects workers from its own country have led to the development of a skeptical perspective among African countries (Gain, 2021).

As explained above, Türkiye has an important role as one of the emerging new regional powers in Africa, especially in the last two decades. Before the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, although the Ottoman Empire had some interactions with Sub-Saharan African countries, it was limited. After the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, Ankara stayed away from Africa. After the 1980 military coup, although Africa was placed at the bottom of the foreign policy agenda, no real opening could be made. The end of the Cold War changed the Global climate in which Turkish foreign policy developed and Türkiye once again had to try to explore different regions (Areteos, 2021). In addition, the focus on postcolonial discourse intensified after the 2016 coup attempt, which could be regarded as an attempt to overthrow Türkiye's legitimate government by "Western colonial powers" (Grigoriadis & Fusiek, 2022: 4).

Besides all this, in terms of Türkiye's relations with Africa, the leaders of the Justice Development Party emphasized that the Ottoman Empire was never engaged in the full-fledged "colonialism" of the European powers. Instead, it was emphasized that the relationship between the Ottoman center and its periphery was a relationship of consent anchored by cultural ties between Muslim brothers and sisters as part of a "pax-Ottoman". Therefore, in the modern era, neo-Ottoman identity was defined as a benevolent force in an "anti-colonial" narrative in Africa, as opposed to Western hegemony. In addition, the neo-Ottoman discourse emphasizes that Türkiye, as an emerging economy, is willing to demonstrate its friendship materially, that is, through beneficial investments and trade links with poorer countries. Türkiye promises to use soft power tools such as aid to improve the lives of neighboring and distant peoples in this neo-Ottoman era (Langan, 2016: 1403). In this sense, one of the most important areas of Turkish presence in Africa is development, cooperation and the development of cultural relations, which can be considered as important tools of Turkish soft power (Malnassy, 2020: 77)

It has a positive perception in Türkiye's African policy that they truly see African actors as equals and focus on improving relations rather than interfering in internal affairs. Most importantly, Türkiye is not France, England, Belgium or any of the other post-colonial powers, but Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presents Türkiye as an alternative power against great powers such as the USA and China. Although there is not much reaction against Türkiye among African peoples, Ankara's activities are known to cause anger and uneasiness in other world capitals. The most prominent of these countries is undoubtedly France. France is extremely uncomfortable with Türkiye's presence in West Africa, and President Macron openly accuses Türkiye of

inflaming anti-French sentiment (Kliment, 2021).

Türkiye seems determined to maintain its presence in Africa. The fact that many Sub-Saharan countries have predominantly Muslim populations or a significant Muslim minority is one of Türkiye's additional advantages (Shinn, 2015: 3). For this reason, it is seen that Türkiye has been making an effort to strengthen its ties with Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco in recent years. This strategy is more important for Türkiye than its concentration on many fronts in the region. The Maghreb, which is the gateway to the African market, is not a foreign region for Türkiye. Morocco, and especially Algeria and Tunisia, were once Ottoman provinces. For this reason, it has been the subject of special interest in Ankara in recent years (Dahmani & Samba, 2020). The visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Algeria-Türkiye strategic rapprochement in January 2020 was the first state visit of a foreign leader after the election of Abdelmadjid Tebboune in December 2019. The imperatives of the Cold War created a foreign policy paradigm in both countries based on a purely ideological foreign policy. Later, in the mid-1980s, under the presidency of President Turgut Özal, a softening environment emerged, which started a new era of mutual cooperation and better understanding between the two countries (Toumi, 2021: 45)

Geopolitics is reshaping the landscape of the entire African Sub-Saharan region. Türkiye, one of the new regional powers, is making important moves to gain a position in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Turkish Grand National Assembly had decided to deploy military units in Mali and the Central African Republic. This decision is a situation that France cannot accept (Toumi, 2021: 42) as the region whose old backyard is accepted. Despite this, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit in October 2021 has been part of Türkiye's attempt to break the economic hegemony of former colonial powers such as France. It could also be accepted as part of an attempt to counter China's influence on the African continent. It has given the traditional players a chance to highlight their failures and injustices in dealing with Africa (Coffey, 2021). In fact, the fact that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, both prime minister and President, has visited thirty African countries in nearly two decades is a sign of Türkiye's significant efforts to stay in Africa.

In particular, the presence of Turkish soft and cultural power in the Muslim regions of Africa is of particular interest. Some European countries, especially France, have wide political and security influence in many African countries. France is trying to redesign its relations with Africa by removing the effects of its colonial past. For this reason, it seems to focus on developing infrastructure on the continent (Tekir, 2022: 82.) France claims that Türkiye is acting against France's relations with West Africa under the brand of "Turkish Model" (Bonesh, 2021). What is clear is that the increase in Türkiye's political, geopolitical, economic and military presence in Africa in competition with other regional and even Global players in Africa is of the nature to change the regional and Global equations. Especial-

ly the terror and political instability created by the colonial powers both inside and outside of Türkiye, to a large extent with an effective struggle, and the elimination of terrorism originating from Northern Iraq and Syria with deportation operations takes away the destabilization arguments of these countries.

Conclusion

Colonial policies and practices, which started at the beginning of the sixteenth century and continued intensely throughout the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, began to be questioned frequently in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Undoubtedly, the African continent has been the area most exploited by the Western powers, especially France and England. The economic, cultural and social policies they implemented in this continent formed the sources of their wealth. Although it is stated that the post-colonial period started with the African countries gaining their independence after the Second World War, the French influence shaped international trade. France's economic cooperation agreements with former colonial countries, as well as defense cooperation agreements, provided privileged access to the products and markets of its former colonies.

However, the events that took place in some former African colonies in recent years (for example, the beginning of the year 2022 necessitated the former colonial powers to seek new ones. Especially, Türkiye's lack of colonial past and its religious and cultural affinity provide important advantages on the continent. Türkiye has a foreign policy. With this change, there is no doubt that since the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has taken important steps towards becoming the most effective power on the continent, especially with its soft power in Africa and its hard power in Libya. This is mainly France, which has been a colonial power in Africa for many years. This will require fighting China and other powers that want to expand the One Road One Belt project into Africa.

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