

# **THE OTHER FACE OF TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: SOFT POWER POLICY IN SOMALIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sub-Saharan Africa, continues to play an important role in the geopolitical landscape due to its abundant natural resources, thriving human capital and growing influence in international politics. This importance has not gone unnoticed by Turkey as it seeks to strengthen its global position and position itself as a regional powerhouse. Recognizing the enormous potential of Africa and more specifically the critical importance of Somalia, Turkey adopted a soft power strategy to increase its influence in the continent, especially after the devastating famine in Somalia in 2011. By providing emergency humanitarian assistance and supporting Somalia's recovery and state-building efforts, Turkey has played a key role in the country's reintegration into the global community. This engagement marks an important milestone in Turkey's engagement with Somalia and underscores a broader commitment under the African Opening Policy, which gained momentum in the late 1990s and escalated after 2005. Over the past years, Turkey has developed a solid and enduring partnership with Africa, supporting its economic and political presence with soft power initiatives in the fields of culture, education, health and religion.

**Keywords: Foreign Policy, Soft Power, Sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey, Somalia**

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## **TÜRKİYE’NİN SAHRA-ALTI AFRİKADA’DAKİ DIŞ POLİTİKASININ DİĞER YÜZÜ: SOMALİ’DE YUMUŞAK GÜÇ POLİTİKASI**

### **ÖZ**

Sahra Altı Afrika, bol doğal kaynakları, gelişen insan sermayesi ve uluslararası politikada artan etkisi nedeniyle jeopolitik manzarada önemli bir rol oynamaya devam ediyor. Bu önem, küresel konumunu güçlendirmeye ve kendisini bölgesel bir güç merkezi olarak konumlandırmaya çalışan Türkiye’nin de gözünden kaçmamıştır. Afrika’nın muazzam potansiyelinin ve özellikle de Somali’nin kritik öneminin farkında olan Türkiye, özellikle 2011 yılında Somali’de yaşanan yıkıcı kıtlığın ardından kıtadaki etkisini arttırmak için yumuşak güç stratejisini benimsemiştir. Acil insani yardım sağlayarak ve Somali’nin toparlanma ve devlet kurma çabalarını destekleyerek Türkiye, ülkenin küresel toplumla yeniden bütünleşmesinde kilit bir rol oynamıştır. Bu durum, Türkiye’nin Somali ile angajmanında önemli bir kilometre taşına işaret etmekte ve 1990’ların sonunda ivme kazanan ve 2005’ten sonra tırmanan Afrika Açılım Politikası kapsamındaki daha geniş bir taahhüdün altını çizmektedir. Geçtiğimiz yıllarda Türkiye Afrika ile sağlam ve kalıcı bir ortaklık geliştirmiş, ekonomik ve siyasi varlığını kültür, eğitim, sağlık ve din alanlarındaki yumuşak güç girişimleriyle desteklemiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler: Dış Politika, Yumuşak Güç, Sahra Altı Afrika, Türkiye, Somali**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In international relations, soft power refers to the capacity of states to influence other states in favor of their policies through tools such as cultural appeal, ideological influence and diplomacy, without using force or offering material incentives. This concept, introduced by Joseph S. Nye, plays a critical role in understanding the dynamics of global politics. At the core of soft power is how a country's values, policies and culture are perceived internationally. This perception is an important factor in shaping a state's relations with other countries. For example, a successful soft power strategy allows a country to gain credibility on the world stage, have a greater say in international affairs, and achieve its goals at a lower cost. In this context, Turkey's foreign policy in Somalia can be analyzed as an example of a soft power approach that aims to increase its influence in the African continent and strengthen its position as a global actor. Turkey's strategic approach has materialized in various areas such as humanitarian aid, education, health services and development projects, thus establishing a mutually beneficial partnership that has deepened Turkey-Somalia relations.

In terms of humanitarian assistance, Turkey's humanitarian efforts to Somalia have increased significantly in response to the major drought and famine crisis in 2011. The Turkish government and civil society organizations have provided extensive support to meet basic needs such as food aid, water supply and shelter. This assistance has significantly improved Turkey's image among the Somali people and positioned Turkey as a reliable partner in the region. Humanitarian aid plays a critical role in Turkey's exercise of soft power because it reinforces Turkey's image as a responsible actor in the international community, while at the same time improving the living conditions of people in the target country and creating a positive perception of Turkey. Turkey has also made significant contributions to education and health in Somalia. Schools, hospitals and training centers funded by the Turkish government and various Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have contributed to the social and economic development of Somalia. Such projects reflect Turkey's intention to have a long-term impact and presence in Somalia and strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

Development aid is another important element of Turkey's soft power strategy in Somalia and has made tangible contributions in areas such as infrastructure projects, agriculture and industrial development. Such

projects help to lay the economic foundations for Somalia to stand on its own feet while enabling Turkey to project a positive image in the international arena. In conclusion, Turkey's use of soft power in Somalia is realized through humanitarian aid, education, health services and development projects. Besides increasing Turkey's influence in the international arena, this strategy has also contributed to Somalia's socio-economic development and strengthened relations between the two countries.

Soft power as a concept first appeared in the book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* written by Joseph Nye in 1990, but its use in interstate relations dates back to much earlier (Demir, 2012). Soft power is based on the attractiveness of a country's culture, political values and foreign policy. In this context, the culture and values of a country seeking to gain power must have universal appeal. Such a state should be able to present its national interests in line with the expectations of target countries and implement these policies to their satisfaction, which will significantly contribute to the increase of its soft power. Alexander L. Vuving, another thinker working on soft power theory, drew attention to Nye's definition of 'getting others to want what we want' and whether the desire of others should be a strong desire or a passive acceptance. In this case, he emphasized that the definition of soft power should be '*getting others to want or accept what we want*' (Vuving, 2009).

Since soft power is the style of relations developed with values, culture, foreign policy practices and other factors that influence the behavior of foreign actors, cultural interaction activities gain importance when examining Turkey's soft power practices. Using peaceful methods in foreign policy and setting the agenda by pursuing an active policy are examples of soft power (Nye, 2005). In this context, dealing with the problems in Turkey's neighborhood and assuming an order-building role can be shown as Turkey's soft power strategy (Oğuzlu, 2011). This strategy has provided Turkey with unique opportunities to assert itself and increase its influence, especially in Africa, a continent that has attracted increasing international attention in recent years and has great potential.

Despite its difficult colonial history, the African continent continues to struggle with serious problems such as hunger, drought, poverty, civil wars and coups. This rapidly growing and developing continent is increasingly becoming an attractive region for both developed and developing countries due to its strategic location, vast natural resources, growing human resource

capacity and significant representation in the United Nations. Therefore, countries aiming to have an impact on the continent strive to increase their influence by establishing commercial, social and cultural relations. Turkey's policies and initiatives towards Africa have an important place in the effort to utilize this vast potential.

Somalia, like many other countries in Africa, has experienced a tragic colonial history and has faced serious problems such as humanitarian crises, terrorism and famine after gaining independence. Despite these challenges, Turkey has been trying to increase its influence as a prominent soft power in the region and has shown a remarkable presence especially in Somalia due to its religious and historical ties. Through the state, autonomous structures and civil society organizations, Turkey has implemented an effective soft power policy that has lasted for nearly 20 years and contributed to the state-building process. The activities carried out in various fields, especially humanitarian aid, have turned into a cooperation model that started in 1998, has lasted until today, and constitutes an important turning point in Turkey-Africa relations (Karaođlan, 2018).

The evolution and application of the concept of soft power has been subject to various criticisms in academic circles. These criticisms usually cover issues such as the measurement of soft power, its impact, its relationship with hard power and its potential association with cultural imperialism (Wilson III, 2008). In particular, the difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of soft power, the necessity of long-term investments, and the importance of synergies with hard power have been frequently emphasized in academic debates (Gallarotti, 2011). There are also criticisms arguing that soft power can be perceived as interference in the internal affairs of target countries, which may conflict with the principle of independence and sovereignty (Hayden, 2012). In this framework, while critics question the role and effectiveness of soft power in international relations, they also reveal the limits of this concept and the difficulties in its use.

Soft power also has its limitations: its effectiveness is difficult to measure, it usually yields long-term results, it may not be sufficient on its own without combining with hard power, it may be subject to criticisms of cultural imperialism, and it may be perceived as interference in the internal affairs of target countries (Nye, 2004; Wilson III, 2008; Gallarotti, 2011). Nevertheless, in a globalizing world, factors such as increased intercultural interaction, complex global threats and challenges, and the proliferation of

information and technology ensure the continued relevance of soft power. Nye (2011) and other scholars emphasize the importance of soft power as a strategic tool in international relations in the 21st century, pointing to its potential to enhance states' international reputation and influence through diplomacy.

As its main arguments, the present article focuses on the fact that Turkey has become an important soft power actor in Sub-Saharan Africa by investing heavily in Somalia in the last 20 years. By capitalizing on its cultural, religious and historical ties, Turkey has improved its relations with this region and has been seen as part of its efforts to assume an active role on the world stage. In particular, the historic visit to Somalia in 2011 is highlighted as a turning point that strengthened Turkish-Somali relations and Turkey's Sub-Saharan Africa policy in general. Turkey has played an active role in Sub-Saharan Africa in areas such as health, education, cultural cooperation, and humanitarian aid projects, effectively utilizing its soft power elements through commercial and political channels. Sub-Saharan Africa's perception of Turkey as being in a more advantageous position compared to traditional great powers without a colonial past has positively reinforced Turkey's influence in the continent. Turkey's relations with Sub-Saharan Africa have not only contributed significantly to the countries of the continent, but also enhanced Turkey's international image and influence. With its economic growth potential and resource richness, Sub-Saharan Africa offers new opportunities for cooperation and development for Turkey. Turkey is expected to further deepen these relations and establish mutually beneficial sustainable development partnerships. In conclusion, Turkey's Sub-Saharan Africa policy has the potential to be a strategic partnership that serves the mutual interests of the continent and Turkey. This policy strengthens Turkey's position as a global actor and plays an important role in helping Sub-Saharan Africa achieve its development goals.

Methodologically, this study aims to analyze Turkey's soft power strategies in Somalia and their impact on bilateral relations with Somalia. The research will adopt a qualitative approach and utilize existing literature and document analysis methods. Firstly, Turkey's various strategic initiatives towards Somalia, such as humanitarian aid, education, healthcare and development projects, will be comprehensively analyzed. These sources will be used to reveal the extent of Turkey's influence and soft power in Somalia. The analysis will assess how these activities have shaped Turkey's

international image and contributed to socio-economic developments in Somalia. This methodology will provide an assessment of Turkey's use of soft power in the region and help us understand the dynamics and interactions in bilateral relations. In the first part of the study, the historical course of Turkey-Somalia relations before 2011 will be analyzed, followed by a discussion of soft power effects in the new era of Turkey-Somalia relations. In the last part of the study, examples of institutions that are active in Somalia in the context of Turkey's soft power will be analyzed.

### **A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TURKISH-SOMALI RELATIONS BEFORE 2011**

The Ottoman Empire established significant political, economic, social, and military connections with North Africa, and similarly fostered robust relationships with East Africa from the 16th century onward. This region was of strategic importance to the Ottomans, especially for safeguarding the sacred Islamic sites and securing sea and trade routes. Countries such as Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia were, to varying extents, under Ottoman influence or control. The Empire particularly maintained positive relations with Muslim sultanates in the area, notably the Sultanate of Harar and Zanzibar. During the 16th century, the Sultanate of Harar emerged as a dominant force in East Africa, exerting control over regions including Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Ethiopia. The Ottoman Empire supported these Muslim sultanates both to fortify them and to counteract Portuguese colonial ambitions in East Africa, providing comprehensive support in political, economic, social, and military spheres. In the 19th century, the Dervish Resistance Movement, led by Somalia's most prominent anti-colonial figure, Sayyid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, signed an agreement with the Ottoman Empire to provide military assistance to its anti-colonial movement (Sıradağ, 2016).

The ties between the Ottoman Empire and Africa extended beyond military alliances, encompassing economic engagements and diplomatic efforts as well. For instance, in what is now South Africa, the Ottoman Empire designated Mehmet Remzi Bey as its ambassador in 1914, aiming to foster and enhance bilateral relations. Additionally, the Empire's connection with the continent was marked by religious and cultural exchanges. A notable example of this is in 1862, when the Ottomans dispatched Imam Abu Bakr Effendi to South Africa with the mission to educate the local population about Islam and promote its teachings. (Ozkan, 2012).

Somalia established its embassy in Ankara in 1976, followed by Turkey inaugurating its embassy in Mogadishu in 1979. This embassy remained operational until the onset of the civil war in Somalia in 1991. This early diplomatic engagement laid the groundwork for enhanced bilateral cooperation across various domains. Notably, Somalia was among the initial recipients of Turkey's official development assistance, starting in 1985. To deepen its ties with Africa, Turkey devised the "Africa Action Plan" in 1998. Despite the establishment of these relations, the bond between Turkey and African nations, including Somalia, remained relatively subdued until the late 1990s. Turkey's commitment to strengthen its diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural ties with African countries gained momentum with the introduction of its Africa initiative in 1998. The initiative gained significant traction under the AK Party government, which came into power in 2002, marking a period of proactive engagement and substantial steps towards realizing the goals outlined in the Africa Action Plan (Ipek, 2014). The initial formal engagement between Turkey and Somalia occurred during the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, held on January 29-30, 2007, with the participation of the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During this summit, Erdoğan held a meeting with Somalia's then President, Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed, where he invited the Somali leader to submit a proposal to Ankara detailing Somalia's challenges and requirements (Özkan, 2014).

### **NEW ERA IN TURKEY-SOMALIA RELATIONS: 2011 AND BEYOND**

Erdoğan's landmark visit to Somalia in August 2011 significantly marked the strengthening of political and diplomatic ties with the country. Prior to his trip to Mogadishu, it is reported that Erdoğan convened an urgent meeting in Istanbul with members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address and aid the famine crisis in Somalia (Ipek, 2014).

After the meeting, members pledged US\$350 million and pledged to establish a team to coordinate aid to Somalia, comprising Senegal, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kazakhstan and the OIC General Secretariat. Another indication of Erdoğan's extensive lobbying for support for Somalia was his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2011, where he devoted half of his speech to Somalia, urging the global community to help Somalia get back on its feet (Özkan, 2014).

Erdogan chose to visit Somalia especially during Ramadan in order to draw attention to the world's major droughts, not only from the Muslim world but also from other countries. According to the International Crisis Group (2012), during his visit to Mogadishu, the Turkish leader led a large delegation of more than 200 business, political and cultural figures, including his family. Erdoğan ignored the perception of Mogadishu's pervasive phenomenon of a "no-go zone" and subsequently became "the first non-African leader" to visit the famine-hit capital in two decades. Following this historic visit, Turkey reopened its embassy in Mogadishu on November 1, 2011 (ICG, 2012).

It is important to note that Turkey appointed Cemalettin Kani Torun, a medical doctor and former president of the World Doctors Association, as the Turkish Ambassador to Somalia on September 13, 2011. In addition, a friendship group was first established between the Turkish Parliament and the Somali Parliament in 2011. Following Erdogan's historic visit to Somalia, relations between the two countries reached a peak as Ankara continuously campaigned for Somalia's support among the international community (Sıradağ, 2016).

In its engagement with Africa, Turkey has transitioned from primarily a political role to a more proactive stance in addressing the continent's challenges. A notable example of this shift is Turkey's collaboration with the United Nations to host the "Preparing Somalia's Future: Aiming for 2015" conference in Istanbul on May 21, 2012. This event, which drew participation from 57 countries and 11 regional and international organizations, focused on critical issues such as water, energy, transportation, and racism, aiming to craft a strategic vision for Somalia's rehabilitation. The conference culminated in the formulation of a detailed five-point plan for the reconstruction of the Somali state, emphasizing national unity, the establishment of a new political framework, economic overhaul, the organization of national defense forces, and overall national development. This initiative underscores Turkey's deepening engagement with Somalia, further evidenced by the continued high-level visits by Turkish deputy prime ministers and various cabinet members to monitor and advance ongoing projects, illustrating the evolving and multifaceted nature of Turkey-Somalia relations (Özkan, 2014).

On January 25, 2015, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a significant visit to Somalia, during which he officially opened the newly constructed

terminal at Mogadishu airport and inaugurated one of the region's largest and most advanced hospitals, both of which were funded and completed by Turkey. This visit underscored Turkey's distinctive role in Somalia, positioning it as an unconventional political entity in the region. Unlike traditional actors who have often prioritized security concerns and the tangible aspects of their diplomatic engagements, Turkey has adopted a humanitarian-centric approach in its dealings with Somalia. This strategy has not only differentiated Turkey from other international players but also challenged and prompted a reconsideration of the prevailing, predominantly security-focused and static foreign policy approaches towards Somalia by these traditional actors (Bingöl, 2013).

Gullo highlights that Turkey's approach to Somalia has significantly boosted its soft power on the global stage. Under the governance of the AK Party, Turkey has reoriented its foreign policy priorities, adopting the principle of "strategic depth" which has facilitated a more proactive stance in its international relations, especially towards Somalia and Africa at large. This shift signifies Turkey's transition from a predominantly military-focused foreign policy to one that is more independent and multifaceted. Historically, Turkey's political engagement with African nations was minimal until the early 2000s. However, the modern Turkish foreign policy agenda seeks to alter this narrative by enhancing bilateral relationships with African countries, thereby strengthening Turkey's global stature and recognition (Gullo, 2012).

Soft power strategies play a central role in Turkey's efforts to increase its visibility and influence on the international stage as a developing country. Soft power refers to a country's capacity to influence international relations by utilizing its cultural, historical and social appeal. Turkey has consolidated its position as a global actor by expanding its overseas trade relations and diplomatic representations, as well as having an important place among the world economies. In this process, Turkey's soft power is based on its historical, cultural and religious ties as well as the advantages of its strategic location, peace-oriented foreign policies, economic visibility and the achievements of state and non-governmental organizations.

Especially in recent years, humanitarian diplomacy has come to the fore in Turkey's use of soft power. This strategy has become an effective tool in Turkey's relations with countries with which Turkey has historical, cultural, political, economic and religious ties. In this context, Somalia

constitutes one of the most remarkable examples of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy activities. Following the famine crisis in Somalia, Turkey decided to deepen its relations with Africa and accelerated its efforts for the development of the country and increasing its visibility in the international arena. Turkey's policies in Somalia have not only been a vital support for a fragile state, but have also made Turkey a center of attraction.

Along with its humanitarian diplomacy activities in Somalia, Turkey has conducted a multidimensional and multi-actor foreign policy by mobilizing all the means of its soft power. Through state institutions and civil society organizations, Turkey has made efforts to help Somalia become a self-sufficient country and has provided extensive civil society support in addition to international and public support.

The main foci of Turkey's foreign policy towards Somalia are philanthropy and humanitarian diplomacy. According to Turkey, humanitarian diplomacy involves not only emergency aid but also a broad vision of development partnership. In this respect, the Turkish government has a multidimensional foreign policy plan to ensure peace and stability in the country, which includes emergency aid especially in 2011 and 2012, long-term development assistance, mediation for peace, technical and personnel capacity building, scholarships for Somali students and the development of Turkish-Somali trade relations (Özkan & Orakçı, 2015). Turkey's policies towards Somalia have been shaped primarily to provide humanitarian aid to alleviate hunger and famine in the country and to draw the attention of the international community to the tragedy in the region and to save Somalia, which is in need of urgent assistance, from the effects of famine and hunger (Özkan, 2014).

One of the most important elements of Turkey's soft power policies towards Somalia is development aid. As of today, Turkey is the largest bilateral aid donor to Somalia. After the 2011 famine crisis and the official visit of the Turkish Prime Minister to Somalia, Turkey's humanitarian and development aid to Somalia through state institutions and non-governmental organizations has exceeded 500 million dollars (Karaođlan, 2018). Within the scope of emergency humanitarian aid efforts, from 2011 to 2017, in addition to the 370 million dollars of aid provided by the state to Somalia, 130 million dollars of aid was provided by civil society. Private sector investments in Somalia amounted to 100 million dollars (Orakçı, 2018).

## **TURKISH ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN SOMALIA**

Turkey's foreign policy towards Somalia is both multidimensional and multi-actor. Despite the adverse conditions of the civil war in Somalia, Turkey, through the efforts of state institutions, civil society and private sector organizations, has played an important role in meeting the basic needs of the country and then in the state-building process by providing emergency humanitarian aid and implementing many important projects such as education, health, water and food security in the longer term. With assistance from both public and private organizations, many projects ranging from street cleaning to the construction of complexes such as roads, mosques, schools, hospitals and airport and port operations have been carried out, especially in the Mogadishu region, and assistance for the development of the country has been prioritized. The Turkish government has mobilized state and autonomous institutions such as TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Turkish Red Crescent, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, Public Diplomacy Coordinatorship, Presidency of Religious Affairs and Religious Foundation, Turkish Airlines and AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) for Somalia, and many non-governmental organizations such as IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), Yardım Eli, Yeryüzü Doktorları, Deniz Feneri, Cansuyu Association and many other large and small non-governmental organizations have supported this movement and continue their activities in Somalia. The first institution that comes to mind when one thinks of Turkey in Somalia is TIKA, Turkey's official aid agency, which implements development aid and coordinates infrastructure projects carried out by all kinds of institutions and organizations participating in the aid movement in Somalia. Rather than working as an aid agency in Somalia, TIKA is an umbrella organization that regulates the provision of aid in an effective and organized manner. (Alegöz, 2013).

It is well known that Turkey has a significant impact on the health sector in Somalia and has been working to overcome the deficiencies with significant projects in a country that has experienced serious health infrastructure problems following the civil war. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), four field hospitals have been established in and around Somalia, enabling hundreds of thousands of patients to be treated to date. The 200-bed Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Turkey-Somalia Training and Research Hospital, one of the most modern and fully equipped hospitals in East Africa, built in cooperation with TIKA and TOKI, has enabled the treatment of 6,000

patients and surgery of 100 patients per month. This hospital, jointly operated by the Turkish and Somali Ministries of Health and staffed by Turkish and Somali personnel, has been an important step in improving the health infrastructure and contributing to the employment of local people. The Vocational School of Health Services opened within the hospital aims to train auxiliary health personnel. The Vocational School of Nursing and Public Health, established by the Red Crescent in Somalia in 2016, contributes to the country's manpower progress and development goals. Non-governmental organizations have also made significant investments in the field of health, and efforts have been made to train health personnel through projects such as IHH's cataract surgery for 1000 patients, Ibni Sina Vocational School of Health opened in cooperation with Yeryüzü Doktorları and TİKA, and medical residency programs. By establishing medical nutrition centers in Somalia and creating nutrition programs for mothers and newborn babies in cooperation with UNICEF, Yeryüzü Doktorları also provides medicine and equipment support for these centers (Murphy & Woods, 2014).

Also, Turkey, which has also taken steps to develop social and cultural relations with Somalia, provides training programs to members of the Somali National Youth Council through TİKA on topics such as broadcasting, NGO establishment, project management, practical Turkish and promotion of Turkey (Özkan, 2014). Yunus Emre Institute, one of the most important institutions of Turkey's cultural soft power, continues its activities in Mogadishu such as teaching Turkish to Somali citizens and promoting Turkish culture. Many private foundations and non-governmental organizations from Turkey also provide a large number of scholarships for Somali students. Turkey attaches great importance to these scholarships for Somali students in the name of its soft power. It is aimed that Somali students who will return to their countries after studying in Turkey will not only make important contributions to their countries in the reconstruction process of Somalia, but also provide important opportunities and positive returns to the parties in terms of future Turkish-Somali relations. As of today, there are more than 1000 Somali students receiving undergraduate, graduate and doctoral education in Turkey through official and non-governmental organizations. In addition, there are about 10 Turkish schools in and around Somalia and the Turkish Maarif Foundation provides education to tens of thousands of students through its 6 schools in Somalia (Karaođlan, 2018).

In 2013, the most advanced applied agriculture school in East Africa was established in Mogadishu in cooperation with TIKA and IHH. This school was established to teach modern agricultural techniques and ensure food security, thus enabling the Somali people to produce their own vegetables and fruits. Through these trainings, Somalia aims to become an independent country that can meet its own food needs. In addition, in Somalia, the longest country in Africa with the longest ocean coastline, TIKA is making efforts to develop the fisheries sector and aims to make the best use of the country's natural resources by providing trainings for fishermen. TIKA has also drilled 26 water wells across Somalia as part of the "Access to Clean Water Campaign" carried out in cooperation with the State Hydraulic Works (DSI), providing access to clean drinking water for approximately 200,000 people (Karaođlan, 2018).

Apart from Mogadishu, TIKA also carries out projects in Somaliland and Puntland regions, building hospitals, Quran courses, education centers, orphanages and providing equipment support. In 2014, TIKA started to open offices in Garowe and Hergeysa, and its goal is to open offices in Baidoa and Kismayo, depending on the security situation, in order to extend Turkish aid from Mogadishu to the whole of Somalia (Archilles & Sazak, 2015).

AFAD is one of the most effective organizations working together with TIKA after the emergence of the need for emergency aid in Somalia. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Aselsan, the General Directorate of Security, the Turkish Red Crescent, TIKA and various NGOs, AFAD sent emergency aid materials such as medicines, medical supplies, food and clothing to the country, and later financed investments in many areas such as drinking water projects, hospital constructions and communication systems.

Turkish Red Crescent, one of the most important distributors of Turkish official development assistance in Somalia, has been the most effective aid organization in the country since 2011. In 2011, the Red Crescent established the Somalia Delegation Presidency in the region and continues its activities from three centers in Somalia, namely Al Jazeera Camp, Hot Food Center and Warehouse, serving approximately 25,000 people (Alegöz, 2013).

One of the cornerstones of Turkey's influence in Somalia is based on its Islamic identity. The Somali people, the majority of whom are Sunni

Muslims, attribute great legitimacy to Turkey's projects as a Muslim country. In this context, a significant portion of Turkey's aid to Somalia is provided by active institutions such as the Presidency of Religious Affairs. In 2014, the establishment of the Religious Services Counsellor's Office in Mogadishu and the appointment of a religious services attaché to the country stand out as part of Turkey's religious diplomacy efforts. The Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Turkish Religious Foundation, as well as a number of religiously based NGOs are also engaged in various aid activities in Somalia. While these organizations initially focused on meeting food and emergency needs, over time they have started to provide support in areas such as education and religious services.

Today, IHH is one of the oldest and most important non-governmental organizations in Somalia, supporting a wide range of projects from agriculture to health. IHH has been working in the country since 1997, establishing contact with local tribes through Zemzem Foundation, one of the local civil society organizations in Somalia, and striving to reach even the remotest corners of Somalia (Archilles & Sazak, 2015). IHH established the Anadolu Education Center, the largest orphanage in Somalia, and also provides financial support to many orphaned children and their families suffering from the civil war.

In addition to all these organizations operating in Somalia, Turkish companies from the private sector are also making significant investments in the reconstruction process of Somalia. Favori LLC, which operates the Somali airport, and Albayrak Group, which purchased the operating rights of the Somali port for 20 years and made significant contributions to the Turkish embassy complex in Mogadishu, are the most prominent ones. In addition to companies such as En-Ez Concrete Factory, which received a tender from TIKA and made significant contributions to the reconstruction of roads in the country, Yankı Construction, which undertook the construction of a nursing school, PGM, which conducts quality control of manufacturing and import goods in Somalia, as well as many other important Turkish companies operating in the construction and furniture sectors with their local partners in Somalia are also making investments in Somalia. These companies, whose investments in the country amount to approximately 100 million dollars, have a direct contribution to the Turkish soft power and these investments show the importance that Turkey and Turkish entrepreneurs attach to Somalia and its future (Karaođlan, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

Turkey's policies towards the African continent in the last 20 years have attracted attention, especially with heavy investments in Somalia. Turkey has become an important soft power actor in Sub-Saharan Africa by utilizing its cultural, religious and historical ties. The relations developed with Sub-Saharan Africa are seen as part of Turkey's efforts to assume an active role on the world stage. In particular, the historic visit to Somalia in 2011 was a turning point that strengthened Turkish-Somali relations and Turkey's Sub-Saharan Africa policy in general.

Turkey has played an active role in Sub-Saharan Africa in areas such as health, education, cultural cooperation and humanitarian aid projects, effectively utilizing soft power elements as well as commercial and political channels. The fact that Sub-Saharan Africa sees Turkey, which does not have a colonial past, in a more advantageous position compared to traditional great powers has positively reinforced Turkey's influence on the continent.

Turkey's relations with Sub-Saharan Africa have made significant contributions not only for the countries in the continent, but also for Turkey's own international image and influence. The potential for economic growth and the wealth of resources in Sub-Saharan Africa offer new cooperation and development opportunities for Turkey. Turkey is expected to further deepen these relations and establish mutually beneficial sustainable development partnerships.

However, the success of Turkey's Sub-Saharan Africa policy is closely linked to the continent as well as Turkey's domestic politics and economic situation. Turkey should not ignore its domestic problems while developing its relations with Sub-Saharan Africa and the strategies pursued in foreign policy should be understandable and supportable by the public. This is important for Turkey to increase its influence and soft power capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa while at the same time maintaining domestic balances.

In conclusion, Turkey's Sub-Saharan Africa policy has the potential to be a strategic partnership that serves the mutual interests of the continent and Turkey. This policy strengthens Turkey's position as a global actor while playing an important role in helping Sub-Saharan Africa achieve its development goals. The future of these relations will be closely linked to how both sides shape and deepen this partnership.

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