

## Review Article

## Turkey's Foreign Policy in Africa: Somalia Initiative as a Test Case for Turkey's Soft Power Diplomacy (2005-2022)

Hüsni Mısırlı<sup>1\*</sup>, Duygu Dersan Orhan<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey<sup>2</sup>Graduate School of Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, Atılım University, 06830 İncek, Gölbaşı, Ankara, Turkey**Article History**

Received: 04.08.2023

Accepted: 11.09.2023

Published: 16.09.2023

**Journal homepage:**<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

**Abstract:** Turkey has come to the forefront as one of the countries starting its initiatives towards Africa in the new international environment that emerged with the end of the Cold War period. Turkey had the advantage of creating a positive atmosphere to apply its historical ties and cultural similarities for the opening to Africa policy in 1998. Also, the declaration of the 'Year of Africa' in 2005 gave momentum to implementing soft power diplomacy in some parts of the region. In this context, the Somalia initiative has enhanced Turkey's position to emerge as one of the active players in the region. The primary purpose of this study is to examine Turkey's soft power diplomacy toward the African region, focusing on the Somalia initiative, its successes, and the limitations of that policy.

**Keywords:** international environment, Cold War, cultural similarities, Turkey's soft power diplomacy.

**Copyright © 2023 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

### INTRODUCTION

With the beginning of decolonization movements between the 1950s and 1960s, the new superpower competition took place after the traditional European powers lost their influence and left a vacuum in the African continent. First, the United States, Russia, and China were eager to move in and fill the vacuum. Accordingly, the impoverished nations of Africa again found themselves in the struggle of global rivalry for their vast and invaluable resources. Especially once the US-Soviet competition ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a new rivalry emerged with the eagerness of China to gain influence in the political and economic vacuum the Soviet Union left behind. As a result, the rivalry for Africa gained another dimension with China's involvement. At this moment, the US had another rival for African influence with the start of the two heavyweights' battle for political and economic control over the continent's resources.

In the case of other competitor countries' political influence on the continent, Russia is seen to be endeavoring to the region's economic and diplomatic balance against its competitors (Blogs. prio. 2022). Given the amount of military and economic partnerships Russia built in the region and the weaponry

supplies and technical assistance it provides to African countries, it is seen that its partnership capacity exceeds the Soviet times' power projection capabilities. On the other hand, Africa's booming growth dynamics have also drawn a renewed interest from its traditional Western trade partners, who felt their preferential relations threatened by both the growing Chinese and US competition and the rivalry of the other developing regional countries for access to abundant strategic resources. Therefore, these developments of the last century have transformed the traditional structure of the geopolitical rivalry on the continent and evolved it into a different dimension. Meanwhile, the growing rivalry and relentless competition have also provided an opportunity for the nations of Africa to improve new partnerships with the developed countries and create new momentum for their economic and cultural developments (Sarı 2020). In the same vein, these recent international developments paved the way for Turkey to revise its foreign policy approach and enabled her to new cooperation fields with new actors in different places of the world. One of them was the engagement with Africa shaped by soft power diplomacy and the Somalia initiative as a starting point for its opening to Africa policy.

Within this framework, this study will try to answer the questions; What were the reasons motivating

Turkey for the opening to Africa initiative? Within this direction, what was the importance of the Somalia initiative for the opening to Africa policy? In consideration of the reality that Africa has a huge continent and has fifty-four sovereign states on its territory, soft power diplomacy was adopted by Turkey on the subject of Somalia instead of a holistic approach for its opening to Africa policy. Accordingly, the main point for Turkey is to balance itself between the rivalry of other powers and its preferences as a regional player, which is to determine its foreign policy approach according to new realities of the world order rather than within the scope of the alliance doctrine. In light of the information indicated above, 2005 and the following years come forward as the determining period for its engagement with the African continent within the context of the Somalia initiative as a starting point for its soft power diplomacy. In this regard, the main reason is argued to be that the parameters of Turkish Foreign Policy have undergone a significant change towards Africa because of the international rivalry and changing dynamics in the continent. Within this framework, this study will start with the historical background which extends to the recent past of Africa-Turkey relations and Somalia to submit a better understanding of the historical and cultural ties between the two countries and follow the path with different dimensions of foreign policy positioning of Turkey in Africa. Subsequently, the parameters of opening to Africa policy and the importance of the Somalia initiative in Turkey's soft power diplomacy will be analyzed. In this context, Turkey proclaims itself as standing by Africa and is located near the local people against the politics of imperialism (Segell 2019). This challenge with rhetoric and powerful discourses gives an upper hand to its opening to Africa policy and fosters a bond between the peoples of Africa and Turkey. However, the applied soft power policy, which is based mainly on cultural diplomacy, also has shortcomings and is prone to be reconsidered in compliance with the new conditions and realities of the global world order. In light of the information presented above, the primary purpose of this study is to examine the Turkish foreign policy concept towards the African continent and the implications of the Somalia initiative as a starting point for Turkey's opening to Africa engagement.

#### **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TURKEY-AFRICA RELATIONS**

Since most parts of the continent, especially North Africa and some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, were bound to the Ottoman state as governorates, it can be argued that the historical ties between the African continent and Turkey started with the Ottoman Empire period during the 16th century. In that period, the Ottoman Empire had a consulate in South Africa and connections with Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Niger, and Chad (Kavas 2007). The Ottomans played an essential role in preventing Spanish penetration, especially in North

Africa. Even in the northern part of sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans were also part of the balance of power, with friendship and an alliance with the Kanem-Bornu Empire that prevailed in modern-day northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad (Özkan 2010).

Turkey started to build an engagement with the continent based on its historical inheritance derived from the Ottoman Empire, and also thanks to the common similarities such as historical acquaintance, cultural ties, and a religious resemblance between the populations. As a result, these are all parts of the complete historical picture for assessing Turkish foreign policy from a historical perspective. On the other hand, Turkey-Africa relations were not developing desirably due to external and internal factors. First of all, the domestic political and economic problems were preventing Turkey's transformation from completing its state-building process along with its social and economic change. At the same time, during the Cold War period, because of the bipolarity of the world order and the external security threats forced Turkey to take part under the influence of the Western camp and respective organizations, such as NATO, and adopt a non-expansionist foreign policy outside its borders (Aydın 2005). These developments of the last century and also the changes in geopolitical balances around its peripheries have forced Turkey to shift its foreign policy approach and create a new partnership formation in the near and remote areas to balance itself in the changing global order after the end of the Cold War period. In this sense, after adopting the opening to Africa plan as a state policy in 1998, Turkey has increased its initiatives with humanitarian and cultural diplomacy and has become a strategic partner for the African Union (NGWA 2019). As a reflection of the multidimensional foreign policy understanding of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government, which took office in 2002, bilateral relations have also been developed with the increasing interest and capacity in Africa. In this context, Turkey has seen the results of this initiative in a short time by conducting an active foreign policy at the state level with non-governmental organizations. Along with gaining the strategic partnership of the African Union, it also became the 25th non-regional member of the African Development Bank in 2013 (AfDB 2021). More importantly, the votes in favor of almost all African countries have moved Turkey to provisional membership of the United Nations Security Council for the 2009-2010 term (MFA 2021).

After 2005 was declared as the 'Year of Africa,' Turkey-Africa relations reached their highest level with the declaration and framework document on cooperation which was accepted at the first Turkey-Africa Cooperation summit held in Istanbul in 2008 (KEDİR 2016). In that vein, while improving its relations with African countries, Turkey attached equal importance to building institutional cooperation with

the African Union and other regional organizations (Habiyaemye & Oğuzlu 2014). Although the development of Turkey-Africa relations has an impact on regional power balances, it also has the potential to offer new opportunities for Turkey in the political and economic sphere of the continent. That was why the year of Africa 2005 initiative and subsequent Istanbul declaration in 2008 were significant for Turkey to participate in the growing East-West rivalry in the African continent. Initially, Turkey found a suitable political position to start an engagement with the underdeveloped countries of Africa. Admittedly, the socio-economic and geopolitical dimensions of the African continent, the influence of both traditional old hegemony, and the growing rivalry between the new superpowers forced Turkey to adopt a soft power policy on a familiar spot instead of holistic foreign policy engagement. That is where the Somalia initiative takes significance in understanding Turkey's African engagement and soft power diplomacy.

#### **PARAMETERS OF OPENING TO AFRICA POLICY AND SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY**

Concepts such as power and domination have been inherent in human nature since the early ages. Although they change their shape in line with human history, they evolve by preserving their general form as basic theoretical concepts both in IR and in the interactions between the states and communities. Until the 21st century, human history has witnessed many wars, and as a result, every war experience led to new advances. Still, war technology advances day by day, and these improvements caused high casualties in battles. Considering both its high cost and the size of human loss, today's conditions require the development of rational strategies instead of high-casualty battles. As a result, there is a tendency for states to get what they want in diplomacy by using other means before classical combat weapons (Waltz 1993). They can be defined as tangible and intangible actors who can reach and influence other societies. Until the understanding of the concept of power changed shape, the realistic approach dominated international relations, and central importance is attached to the concept of power in theoretical approaches. In this regard, placing the concept of power at the center of international relations discipline, E.H. Carr drew attention to the determining role of power in inter-state relations and defined it as the fundamental element of politics (Carr 1941). The lack of a central authority and an effective control mechanism in international relations justify the thesis advocated by this approach. In this system, where the actors have to take care of themselves, each state follows some strategies to maintain its existence and ensure its security. The structural realists later adopted the same views, and the importance of power in international relations was reiterated. According to their opinions, international relations are anarchic and not hierarchical, populated by functionally similar units, and the structure of the global system or polarity varies

based on the distribution of capabilities (Waltz 1979; Lobell 2010). However, after the Second World War, the concept of power started to change, so the perspective on international relations turned into another dimension. As Morgenthau argued liberal norms also began to take place within the balance of power understanding of the states (Morgenthau 1954). But even in defending these new norms, the balance of power concept between state relations and the effects of power could not be given up by the thinkers of that period. Both actors in international relations and scholars who conceptualized the thought saw success as a scale of getting what they wanted in relations between states and having the power to influence the behavior of other actors. In this context, regardless of the way power is used, the purpose is the same; 'to make changes in behavior towards the desired direction' (Holsti 1964).

On the other hand, while actors who could achieve what they wanted by using force are considered vital, today's approaches to the definition and use of power have changed significantly. At present, it has become an accepted reality that there is no absolute way to achieve what is desired and that there are various methods which are also called different forms of power. In this context, Nye's interpretation can be given as an illustrative example of the final point of power perception. He states, 'In the post-Cold War age, foundations of power have been moving away from an emphasis on hard power and instead toward a reliance on persuasion by other means and therefore the intangibles of power' (Nye 1990: 153-171). In addition to this argument, he divides power into various categories and takes it to a different dimension.

'Traditionally, the test of great power was its strength in war. Today, however, the definition of power is losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras. The factors of technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population, and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important.' (Ibid: 154).

By arguing that 'All major states will have to confront the changing nature of power in world politics.' (Ibid:156). Nye brought a new understanding of IR emphasizing that the concept of power has changed with the development of societies. Because, in the new world order, new values like globalization, capitalist economic order, and interdependence of societies laid the groundwork for this conceptualization. (Ibid: 164). Accordingly, Western countries that experienced the two world wars did not want to encounter the destructive effects of nuclear weapons and the war's severe consequences again. As a result, international relations took on a new understanding of the use and attainment of power. Observing that the concept of hard power has become unsustainable with

the globalizing modern world conditions, based on the unsuccessful experiences of the United States of America, Nye revised this concept and defended the necessity of soft power in international relations. The most striking examples of the failure of American hard power were the disproportionate use of force in the Vietnam War and, subsequently, again, the failure demonstrated by the hard power they exerted for invading Iraq in 2003 even without the consent of the United Nations Security Council and the International Community (Zwanenburg 2004). Nye was naming this new reality in his phrases expressing the need for soft power. In addition, he emphasized that “power sometimes plays a role in international relations, but traditional power tools are no longer as effective as they used to be” (Nye 1990: 167). Because the world has experienced a significant change and transformation in the military, political, economic, and cultural fields, it is generally accepted that the new concept of power makes itself felt more in technology, economy, trade, politics, and social and cultural fields. In this context, with increasing globalization, states use various communication and interaction channels to bring their image to a better position in their foreign policy implementations. For this purpose, humanitarian projects, development assistance, and bilateral cooperation come to the fore to create a positive image in front of national and international public opinion. Because of these benefits, using soft power options remains a popular tool in today's foreign policy understanding.

After the end of bipolarity, Turkey has also revised its foreign policy approach and adopted an active and multifaceted foreign policy implementation (Aka 2014). The reduction of security threats at the periphery and the search for new resources for its growing economy had been effective in Turkey's foreign policy change. In light of these developments, the opening to Africa policy launched in 1998 has been developed and turned into a strategic partnership since 2005 (MFA 2022). To develop bilateral relations with Africa, soft power diplomacy has also become an influential force in the region by prioritizing mediation activities, foreign aid, and state-building processes. Blending the concept of soft power with its interpretation Turkey has achieved a more advantageous position than its competitors in geographies with which it has historical and cultural ties. In this context, Turkey has adopted public diplomacy and effectively invested in using soft power sources. For this purpose, public institutions and non-governmental organizations have been mobilized to coordinate with each other. In addition, multilateral diplomacy is also carried out on defense and military issues and continues to invest in student exchange programs related to military education and security cooperation. In this way, it can be argued that Turkey has effectively managed to create a positive and

promising space for itself by using soft power diplomacy.

There are different approaches in the literature about when exactly Turkey's interest in Africa started. In this respect, arguments about the timing of inclination point to the period and guidance of former prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and his opening policies (Aras 2014). According to Aras, “The basic reason for Turkey's interest in Africa lies in the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy within global politics, and the main architect behind such a reorientation is the current foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu” (Ibid: 404-418). On the other hand, other arguments claim that the African foreign policy engagement started in 1998 following Turkey's unsuccessful European Union membership declaration by the EU. Paolo stated that in October 1998, the coalition government led by Ahmet Mesut Yılmaz officially inaugurated an opening-up policy to Africa. This strategy would be later promoted during the first years of the JDP government (Paolo 2011). Accordingly, this inspiration was adopted by the subsequent governments, and relations with the continent improved following the predetermined state strategies. In this regard, thanks to the vision of strategic depth policy and the contribution of outside factors in the new world order after the Cold War period, Turkey found new momentum to create a multidimensional foreign policy approach towards Africa. There are also opposite arguments with the ideas representing the political economy perspective. In this regard, by drawing attention to Turkey's investments in Africa, Cannon states that “while investments in unstable places such as Somalia are risky, and the rules of the game in politics and business either do not exist as they would in more stable states, the rewards can be great in the long term as in the case of Turkey's engagements in the region” (Cannon 2016: 98-123).

As indicated previously, it is seen that Turkey is determined to follow a multidimensional foreign policy approach due to the changing dynamics in the new world order. Although the partnership with the European Union and NATO was necessary for Turkey because of cultural and security reasons, on the other hand, opening to other regions of the world would give a chance for its transformation as an international actor. In this context, with the motivation of opening to Africa, the first actions have been taken in the economic realm. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey's trade volume with African countries was only US\$5.4 billion in 2003, and it increased to US\$30 billion by the end of 2020 (TUIK 2022). In light of these improvements, Turkey has continued to intensify its ties with the continent strategically. From another perspective, the Turkish opening to Africa has been an intensive attempt to revitalize relations in several ways. On the one hand, Turkey has increased its financial aid

to Africa through international agencies and its official Aid and Cooperation Agency (TIKA) (Özkan 2010). On the other hand, Turkey announced 2005 as 'the year of Africa' and hosted the first Turkey-Africa Summit in Istanbul in 2008 (MFA 2008). In this period, Turkey started its opening to Africa policy by using its soft power and other means necessary for bilateral partnership. These summits were significant for bilateral understanding in cultural terms to build a new collaboration by learning the required details for the possible partnership areas between the countries of the region and Turkey. In this regard, like every other influential country in the region trying to take advantage of growing African markets, Turkey also renewed its stance by opening up to new markets to participate in the new global rivalry in Africa.

There were some challenges and obstacles in front of Turkey in opening up to African engagement. Within this framework, the main challenge for Turkey has become prominent when considering the other regional actors with their vast capacity to compete for the region's resources. In this regard, Chinese efforts can be given as a first example of reaching mineral resources of the African countries and enormous investments for infrastructure and bilateral trade initiatives, of course through providing loans to underdeveloped African countries by making exchanges with their valuable natural resources (fpri., 2022). On the other hand, the other interlocutor of the global competition in Africa is the US, establishing military bases in most African countries to protect its trade roads and interests in the region (Pangea-risk 2021). In this sense, AFRICOM can be presented as a tangible example for this purpose. Besides, Russia also has influential investments and increasing capacity in the continent by forcing the balance of rivalry towards multipolarity in the African continent (Kavas & Tandoğan 2018).

In the meantime, Turkey's engagement in the region is not restricted to those aforementioned fields of interest. She also seeks to improve economic partnerships with the regional countries on an equal basis as equal partners. Undoubtedly, all these strategic initiatives have substantial implications for the problems of undeveloped African countries. In this context, Özbilgiç states that since 2010, the security dimension has been added to Turkey's foreign policy initiative (Özbilgiç 2017: 141-163). According to this approach, the fight against terrorism, participation in international stabilization efforts, and especially contribution to military missions in African countries are the essential components of this new initiative. Turkey's contributions to anti-piracy missions in the Horn of Africa and the recent establishment of a military training base in Somalia have been prominent actions regarding the extent of security diplomacy in the continent (AllAfrica 2013). Accordingly, instead of just resorting to state-state relations, soft power instruments

like NGOs, relief organizations, and other non-state actors are also actively participating in the bilateral ties with the interlocutors of Turkish institutions. Turkish Airlines is another great instrument to serve Turkey's soft power diplomacy by connecting Turkey and African countries directly to each other. Another soft power policy instrument was Turkish schools to increase Turkey's influence and create cultural interdependency with the African nations. In this regard, Paolo argued that Turkey resorted to various soft power elements such as development aid, humanitarian aid, and Islamic solidarity to alleviate the brute reality of an enlargement aimed at maximizing its profits and prestige (Paolo 2011). He pointed out that Turkish private schools played an essential role in this context (Ibid). On the contrary, it is seen that Turkish schools abroad became an obstacle to internal and external problems for Turkey because of their ownership and administration by the FETO organization (Kasap 2017).

Consequently, when the engagement with African policy is evaluated in terms of the prominent elements of Turkish Foreign Policy, it is seen that some parameters, such as humanitarian aid, cultural-based partnership, and state-building initiatives, are integrated within the African expansion plan (Alan 2017). Differentiated from other countries by its authentic humanitarian diplomacy, Turkey stands out with elements such as common historical and cultural ties with Africa as an advantage for its engagement. In this context, aiming to create a climate of positive feelings and trust in African society by establishing a cultural-based partnership in Muslim regions of Africa comes to the forefront as another dimension of humanitarian diplomacy. In addition, being a model country in Africa with its soft power diplomacy, Turkey actively participates in peacekeeping operations undertaken by the international community and provides financial support and peacekeeping personnel (peacekeeping.un.org. 2022). In this way, it tries to affirm its legitimacy and existence as an ally in the continent. Activating the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), and other non-governmental organizations within the framework of the African expansion policy and facilitating communication and transportation through flight diplomacy conducted with Turkish Airlines (THY) creates the necessary conditions for becoming an influential country in this direction. Notwithstanding, although the implemented soft power diplomacy is successful in some parts of Africa, it provides both opportunities and challenges for Turkey because of the social structure of the African continent. For this reason, carrying the partnership into a broader perspective is necessary to increase Turkey's popularity in the African region. In this way, Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy-weighted soft power strategy in Africa can lead to a unique soft power diplomacy

concept if it is developed and implemented from a broader and holistic perspective.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF SOMALIA INITIATIVE FOR TURKEY'S SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY**

With its unique foreign policy approach in Africa, Turkey differs from many other international actors by keeping away from the old experiences of hegemonic discourses. In this sense, an equal-based partnership has become the main priority for Turkish foreign policy discourse, as well as using all its soft power instruments toward the African region (Siradağ 2022). In this context, Somalia was an appropriate starting point for Turkey to implement its soft power diplomacy in the continent. It can be argued that Turkey is approaching the geopolitical rivalry differently from the practices of other traditional actors, balancing itself with its soft power instruments in Africa. In the case of Somalia, while most of the international actors focus on preconditioned financial dependency-based agreements and are preoccupied with military-based contracts, Turkey has adopted a new approach to constructing a new partnership (NYADERA *et al.*, 2019). The dynamics of this new approach rested on an equal-based concept by assisting with infrastructure projects, educational and health investments, water projects, unconditional humanitarian aid, equal-based bilateral trade relations, and state-building support to Somalia. To this end, all soft power instruments like non-state actors, business people, and other entrepreneurs have also been actively used by Turkey to succeed in the Somalia initiative and expand its influence throughout Africa with the inspiration of fostering new partnerships with other African countries as well. In one of his speeches, Erdoğan stated:

“No one can speak of peace, justice, and civilization in the world if the outcry rising from Somalia is unheard. This is why we have launched a comprehensive aid campaign for Somalia. We are making every effort to carry out infrastructure investments that will enable Somalia to stand. We are also working unrelentingly to help provide an environment of political stability and peace conducive to sustainable development” (UN News 2011).

Admittedly, Turkey's Somalia initiative started with this enthusiasm with all the means of state, and with the hope that it would spread to the whole continent, starting from Somalia.

The biggest challenge of the Somalia initiative for Turkey at the beginning was the lack of a functioning state structure, the division of society, which is fragmented into different groups, and the ongoing civil war in many regions of this war-torn country (Murphy & Woods: 2014). In such an environment dominated by hunger, misery, migration of millions of innocent people, and violence, a helping hand is extended by Turkey. In this context, Addow

depicts the situation of the international community in Somalia, which relies exclusively on hard power for state-building activities. According to him,

“The international community's initiatives have failed in Somalia and have even been met with counterproductive outcomes in the long term. And that Turkey has achieved success in the region in a short period and has been effective in comparison with other Western countries” (Addow 2011: 31-59).

On the other hand, there were criticisms from some scholars for the remarks of Turkish politicians regarding Turkey's strong ties with the continent and actions taken by Turkey unilaterally before any other international actor has. Within this direction, some arguments oppose the rhetoric claiming that Turkey is taking an active role in an environment where the other countries remain indifferent to Somalia's problems. According to Cannon, the world has been involved in Somalia since long before the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 and the subsequent civil war and continued armed conflict (Cannon 2017: 93-110). Admittedly, this argument intends to refer to the fact that during colonial times, Somalia was under the hegemony of Britain and Italy. After Somalia gained independence from the two countries mentioned above, North Somalia from Britain and South from Italy, the two new independent governments ended up with a declaration for the unity government of independent Somalia.

There are also different perspectives about Turkey's Africa initiative evaluating it as a strategic advantage for the country, especially from the vantage point beginning from Somalia as an entrance to the continent. In this regard, Cannon states that “Turkey can point to one bright spot in its foreign policy: Somalia. It represents a cornerstone of Turkey's emerging power strategy, a policy whereby it attempts to present itself as an essential power beyond its immediate neighborhood” (Ibid). According to him, as a middle power that tries to participate in the new world order, Turkey was using all its energy to balance the rivalry with the old traditional countries and the new actors who engaged in the region with their vast resources (Ibid: 93-110). In this respect, McConnell, Moreau, and Dittmer, who see Turkey's engagement in Somalia as the vantage point of emerging power diplomacy, put forward a different perspective on this subject. According to them, recognition plays a central role in the conventional conferral of state legitimacy and the functioning of the inter-state system (McComell & Dittmer 2012). Within this scope, Turkey's approach to the African continent differs from most regional Powers' policies. To better understand the dynamics of this new approach, the argument of Özkan can be submitted as an example. He points to the fact that Turkey is a medium-sized country with a developing economy and approaches Africa with the aim of mutual

trade instead of extracting natural resources from the continent (Özkan 2010: 533-540).

Admittedly, Turkey's African interest and its intensification of the partnership with African countries coincides with the other global Powers' competition in the region (Ibid). That is why helping the Somalian nation to build up its collapsed state structure again with nation-building initiatives along with military bases to educate its military and security organizations would be reasonable as a starting point for Turkey to balance itself between the East-West rivalry in the region. And also, the Somalia initiative within the concept of soft power policy was a suitable strategy for Turkey. Because the cultural differences, chaos, and disorder within the country made Somalia difficult for the international actors to deal with and assist in the transition to democracy. In this context, Turkey has emerged as a new actor and partner country to help Somalia complete its state-building process. This process comprises military education, army building support, humanitarian aid, infrastructure projects, health and transportation projects, rural development activities, agriculture, and water resource projects. For this purpose, Turkey built one of the big military bases inside the African region in Somalian territory in 2017 (Camp TURKSOM) and has been training Somalian soldiers to establish the new Somalian army (Daily Sabah 2020). Other institutions have also conducted other cultural activities bilaterally with the Somali government. In this regard, considering that Somalia has been fighting a civil war, terrorism, and statelessness for years, the success of the state-building project appears prominent and prevailing between the rivalry of powerful states in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The military base supports soldier training and provides support for enhancing security and eliminating terrorism in the Horn of Africa region. In this sense, by establishing a huge military base in Somalia and sending its troops for peacebuilding efforts to Qatar to solve the Gulf crises, Turkey has gained influence and reliability in the African region as a regional power that can provide security with its military and institutional capacity (Insightturkey 2020).

In light of the information presented above, it can be argued that Somalia's state-building process and humanitarian aid diplomacy were successful within the scope of soft power policy. Therefore, Turkey has gained a considerable reputation in the region, especially in comparison with some of the international actors. Also, the engagement policy with soft power diplomacy by reiterating the declaration 'African solutions to Africa's problems' has enhanced its influence in the continent. On the other hand, considering Africa's multinational and multi-religious nature and the fact that the African nations' main concern is economic development, it can be argued that the political approaches based on mainly religious discourses have little chance of being effective for long-

term partnerships. In general, although the vast majority of projects in Somalia contribute to Turkey's stance in the region, a multifaceted foreign policy conception is needed to be more successful in the heterogeneous African geography. Such a foreign policy approach will also provide an opportunity for long-term and permanent regional partnerships. In this manner, the success of the Somalia initiative should serve as a proper model for its engagements with other countries in Africa.

## CONCLUSION

Turkey stands out as one of the most ambitious countries to extend the friendly hand that Africa needs, with its historical experience and humanitarian aid-oriented foreign policy approach towards the continent in the last two decades. In this regard, primarily based on the developments of the continental countries on the one hand and equal partnership engagements on the other, Turkey's foreign policy approach differs from most of the existing policies applied in the region, and standing by the African peoples in their difficult times as in the case of medical support that Turkey provided to many African countries during the Covid-19 pandemic (Independent Türkçe 2020). In addition, Turkey has not broken its diplomatic ties with Africa despite the social and political introversion and economic difficulties experienced worldwide because of the pandemic conditions. Instead, the Turkish Foreign Ministry hosted the Turkey-Africa Business and Economic Forum on 21-22 October 2021 in İstanbul with the declaration of "Turkey-Africa: Stronger Together" (DEİK 2021). More than 3,000 businesspersons participated in the forum to negotiate the latest developments and investment opportunities between Turkey and African countries (Ibid). As another important event, the third Turkey-Africa Summit took place on 16-18 December 2021 in İstanbul between Turkey and African countries' representatives (Altan 2021). Within the scope of the latest developments, it can be argued that these diplomatic initiatives of Turkey, which defines itself as the Afro-Eurasian State in the new international system, also have considerable importance in terms of reflecting the position it will take in the African continent after the Covid-19 pandemic conditions. Additionally, Russia's suspension of the Black Sea grain deal continues to capture the global media's attention as that decision disproportionately hurts African nations (setav.org., 2023). In this respect, Turkey's constructive attitude and initiative in favor of African countries in the Black Sea Grain Initiative that came into force after the Russia-Ukraine war has also been remarkable in terms of reflecting its alliance policy towards the African continent. In this framework, this diplomatic challenge with powerful discourses gave an upper hand to Turkey for its opening to Africa policy and fostered a mutual bond with the African people. However, the applied soft power policy, which is based mainly on cultural diplomacy, also has shortcomings and negative

reflections that Turkey has been experiencing since 2016 and is prone to be reconsidered according to the new conditions and realities of the global world order.

On the other hand, although the implemented soft power diplomacy is successful in some regions such as Somalia, it provided both opportunities and challenges for Turkey due to the social and geopolitical positioning of the African continent. In the general sense, while carrying out its foreign policy with more human-oriented diplomacy, Turkey also needed to establish military bases to protect its investments against the ongoing international competition in the region. In this regard, the Somalia military base (Camp TURKSOM) has been recorded as the largest military base Turkey built abroad in 2017. From a broader perspective, because of the fragile social structure and lack of security in the region, the necessity, and importance of defense diplomacy emerge to contribute to Turkey's soft power initiatives as in the case of other investing countries in the continent. Considering the regional conjuncture and the dimension of the international balance of power in Africa, it does not seem possible for soft power initiatives to be long-lasting if they are implemented without military cooperation and security diplomacy.

In the final analysis, Africa is one of the most discussed and attractive continents of the 21st century in world politics as the second largest and most populous region in the world with its 54 countries and a population of more than one billion. Besides, the fact that many African states have different ethnic and cultural structures, are multilingual, and each has different colonial histories makes it difficult to understand the continent. Still, on the other hand, it paves the way for multifaceted perspectives to produce permanent and long-lasting partnerships in the region. In this framework, especially for countries such as Turkey that have just engaged and been trying to understand the continent in a social, economic, and geopolitical dimension, this situation is also a necessity to produce a sustainable strategy in the region.

## REFERENCES

- Aydın, M. (2005). Turkish Foreign Policy at the End of the Cold War: Roots and Dynamics. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/845046>, accessed 03.10.2022.
- African Development Bank Group, (AfdB). (2021). Nonregional Member Countries. Available at AfdB website: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/non-regional-member-countries/united-states-of-america>,
- Altan, A. (2021). 'Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit delivers 'win-win' agreements', *African Business*. Available at <https://african.business/2021/12/trade-investment/turkey-africa-partnership-summit-set-for-17-18-december/>, accessed 20.12.2021.
- Aras, B. (2014). Davutoğlu era in Turkish foreign policy revisited. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16(4), 404-418.
- AllAfrica. (2013). 'East Africa: Turkish Parliament Extends Anti-Piracy Mandate for Horn of Africa', available at <https://allafrica.com/stories/201302070071.html>, accessed 03.06.2022.
- Africa&Middle East Forecasting (Pangea-risk). (2021). 'Africa&US: Lack of Transparency in US Military Footprint Expansion in Africa. Available at <https://www.pangea-risk.com/africa-us-lack-of-transparency-in-us-military-footprint-expansion-in-africa/>, accessed 10.03.2022
- Alan, N. B. (2017). Ak Parti özelinde Türkiye'nin Afrika politikası ve İnsani yardımlar. May 5.: 22.
- Addow, S. S. Y. (2011). "Turkish Model in Somalia: Civilian Power Approach in State Building Process". *Somali Studies*, 31-59.
- Aka B. H. (2014). 'Paradigm Change in Turkish Foreign Policy after Post-Cold War', available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/19344>, accessed 01.04.2022
- Blogs.prio.org. (2022). 'Russia and China Ambiguity Alliance in Africa'. Available at <https://blogs.prio.org/2022/09/russia-and-china-ambiguity-alliance-in-africa/>, accessed 20.12.2022
- Carr, E. H. (1941). The twenty years crisis: 1919–1939. London, England: MacMillan.
- Cannon, B. (2016). 'Deconstructing Turkey's Efforts in Somalia' *Bildhaan*, 98-123.
- Cannon, B. J. (2017). 'Turkey in Africa: Lessons in Political Economy'. *Florya Chronicles of Political Economy*, 3(1), 93-110.
- Dailysabah. (2020). 'Turkey to train 1/3 of entire Somali military, envoy says', available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkey-to-train-13-of-entire-somali-military-envoy-says/news>, accessed 12.10.2022
- DEIK. (2021). 'Turkey-Africa Economy and Business Forum Online Edition', *DEIK Business Diplomacy*, available at <http://turkeyafricaforum.org/>, accessed 25.10.2021.
- Foreign Policy Research Institute (fpri.org.). (2022). 'Chinese Economic Engagement in Africa: Implications for U.S. Policy, available at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/01/chinese-economic-engagement-in-africa/>, accessed 20.03.2022.
- Habiyaemye, A., & Oğuzlu, T. (2014). Engagement with Africa: Making sense of Turkey's approach in the context of growing East-West rivalry. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 11(41), 65-85.
- Holsti, K. J. (1964). The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations, 7(4), 179-194. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3013644>
- Insightturkey. (2020). 'Deciphering Turkey's Assertive Military and Defense Strategy: Objectives, Pillars, and Implications. Available at <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/deciphering-turkeys-assertive-military-and-defense-strategy-objectives-pillars-and-implications>. Accessed 22.10.2022



- Independent Türkçe. (2020). ‘Türkiye’nin koronavirüs yardımları sürüyor: Kargo uçağı bu kez Güney Afrika’ya indi’, available at <https://www.indyrturk.com/node/172136/>, accessed 01.06.2020.
- Kavas, A., & Tandoğan, M. (2018). ‘Uluslararası siyasetin odağındaki kıta Afrika’. 201Afrika Araştırmacıları Derneği (AFAM), *Afrika Kitaplığı, Alelmas Yayıncılık, İstanbul*.
- Kavas, A. (2007). Ottoman Empire’s Relations with Southern Africa. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/582756>, accessed 06.09.2021.
- Kadir, S., A. (2016). Turkey’s Emerging Economic Ties In The Horn of Africa: The Rise of Virtual State. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/581702>, accessed 08.08.2022.
- Kasap, S. (2017). ‘Infographic - Turkey keeps FETO schools overseas under close watch’, available at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/education/infographic-turkey-keeps-feto-schools-overseas-under-close-watch/746163>, accessed 02.03.2021
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2021). ‘Turkish Emergency Humanitarian Assistance’ available at <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/humanitarian-assistance-by-turkey.en.mfa>, accessed 20.07.2021.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2008). ‘Türkiye and the African Union.’ Available at <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-and-the-african-union.en.mfa>, accessed 02.05.2022
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2022). ‘Türkiye-Africa Relations’, available at <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-africa-relations.en.mfa>, accessed 11.11.2022
- Morgenthau, H. (1954). *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred P. Knopf).
- Morgenthau, H. (1954). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf.
- McConnell, F., Moreau, T., & Dittmer, J. (2012). Mimicking state diplomacy: The legitimizing strategies of unofficial diplomacies, *Geoforum*, 43(4), 804-814.
- Murphy, T., & Woods, A. (2014). Turkey’s International Development Framework Case Study: Somalia. Available at <https://research.sabanciuniv.edu/id/eprint/32213/1/SO-MALIISBN11.pdf>, accessed 15.02.2022
- Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, 80, 153-171.
- Nyadera, N. I., Ahmed, S. M., & Agwanda, B. (2019). ‘Transformation of the Somali Civil -War and Reflections for a Social Contract Peacebuilding Process. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/830939>, accessed 01.09.2022
- Ngwa, N., R. (2019). Turkish-African Relations: An Institutional Approach of Turkish Foreign Policy towards Africa, *Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*, 2(2), 23-43.
- Setav.org. (2023). Black sea grain corridor and China’s interest in Türkiye, available at <https://www.setav.org/en/black-sea-grain-corridor-and-chinas-interest-in-turkiye/>, accessed 10.08.2023.
- Özkan, M. (2010). ‘What drives Turkey’s involvement in Africa, *Review of African Political Economy*, 37(126), 533-540.
- Özbilgiç, C. G. (2017). The AK Party’s Engagement In Africa After The “Opening Era”. *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1(3), 141-163.
- Paolo, A. (2011). ‘Turkish schools in Africa within the framework of Turkey’s relations with the continent’., available at <https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/ecas2013/paper/15035>, accessed 10.04.2021.
- Peacekeeping.un.org. (2022). ‘United Nations thanks Türkiye for its contribution to peacekeeping’. Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/united-nations-thanks-turkiye-its-contribution-to-peacekeeping>, accessed 30.11.2022
- Sarı, B. (2020). ‘AFRICA: A Constant Battlefield of Great Power Rivalry’. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1093822>, accessed 02.07.2022
- Sıradağ, A. (2022). ‘The Rise of Turkey’s Soft Power in Africa: Reasons, Dynamics, and Constraints’. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2432818>, accessed 18.08.2022
- Segell, G. (2019). ‘Neo-colonialism in Africa and the Cases of Turkey and Iran’, *Insight on Africa*, 11(2). Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0975087819845197>, accessed 01.07.2022.
- Turkish Statistical Institution (TUIK). (2022). Statistical indicators, available at <https://www.tuik.gov.tr/Home/Index>, accessed 15.09.2021.
- UN News. (2011). ‘Tragedy of Somalia shames the world, Turkish leader tells UN,’ 23.09.2011. Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/09/388502>, accessed 01.05.2021.
- Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub.
- Waltz, K. N. (1993). ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’, *International Security*, 18(2), 44-79.
- Zwanenburg M. (2004). ‘Existentialism in Iraq: Security Council Resolution 1483 and the law of occupation’. Available at [https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irrc\\_856.pdf](https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irrc_856.pdf), accessed 17.03.2022

**Cite This Article:** Hüsni Mısırlı & Duygu Dersan Orhan (2023). Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Africa: Somalia Initiative as a Test Case for Turkey’s Soft Power Diplomacy (2005-2022). *EAS J Humanit Cult Stud*, 5(5), 235-243.