

Kohnert, Dirk

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Does Turkey support development in West Africa?

The example of Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast

Dirk Kohnert ¹

Erdoğan visits Africa ²



Source: © [Gado](#), 2016

Abstract: In the 19th and 20th centuries, Turkey considered only North Africa a substantial part of the Ottoman Empire and neglected sub-Saharan Africa unless vital interests were at stake. However, the apathy of successive Turkish governments changed with the 1998 "Africa Action Plan". Since then, the Turkish state has intensified its diplomatic, political, economic and cultural interactions with sub-Saharan Africa. Turkish-African relations received a further boost when Ankara declared 2005 the "Year of Africa". Although the predominantly Muslim region of North Africa is the focus of Turkish foreign policy due to their shared history, the importance of Sub-Saharan Africa has also increased due to the growing demand for military and medical supplies. Since 2005, Ankara promoted state-building in sub-Saharan Africa, although it does not follow Western democratization policies. Turkey's growing economic, political and security involvement in Africa aims to open new markets for its manufactured goods, particularly its defence and security industries. Presenting itself as a relevant regional power without colonial ballast, Turkey sets itself apart from traditional Western players on the continent. Turkey's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa differed markedly from that of other emerging powers such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. While Ankara shared the disregard for Western sanctions due to BRICS members' democratic deficits, it went beyond traditional state-to-state relations and increasingly relied on cooperation with non-state actors. African partners value Turkish products and expertise. In addition, Ankara has taken a coordinated approach to working with African states and leaders, avoiding entanglements with international organizations or other alliances, as in Somalia and Kenya, but more recently in much of East, South and West Africa. This has been demonstrated using the example of the three West African countries Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast.

Keywords: [Turkey](#), [Sub-Saharan Africa](#), [West Africa](#), [Nigeria](#), [Ghana](#), [Ivory Coast](#), [international trade](#), [migration](#), [sustainable development](#), [democratization](#), [postcolonialism](#), [nationalism](#), [BRICS](#), [China](#), [France](#), [Great Britain](#), [ODA](#), [NGOs](#), [African Studies](#)

JEL-Code: E26, F22, F24, F35, F52, F54, F63, I31, J46, J61, L31, N14, N17, N37, N47, O17, O35, O55, Z13

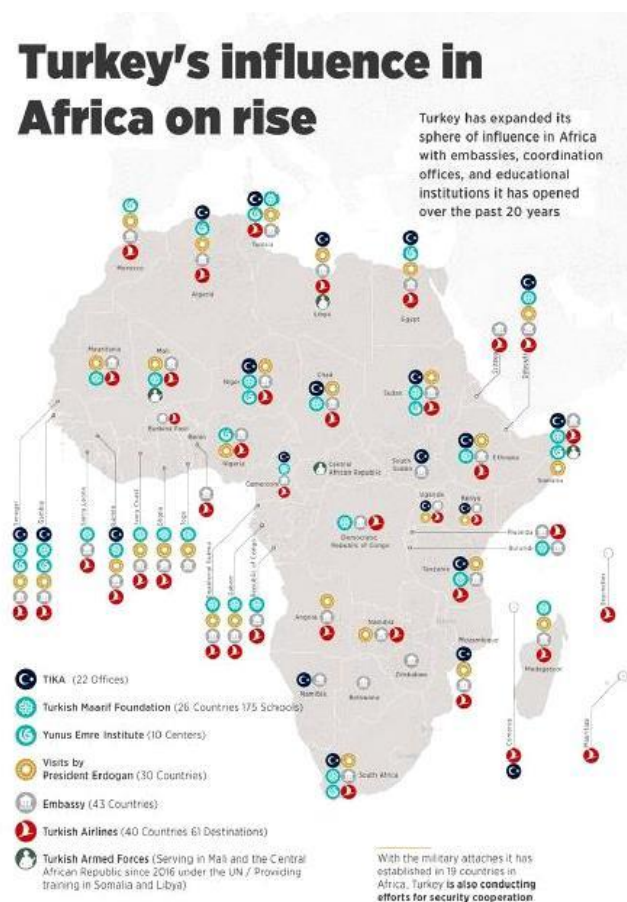
¹ Dirk Kohnert, associated expert, [GIGA-Institute for African Affairs, Hamburg](#). Draft: 3 May 2023.

² Cartoon: 'I come bearing gifts from Turkey' (fuelled by oppression of domestic opposition), © Gado. [Antonio Cascais / mc, 06/02/2016 DW](#), Deutsche-Welle (DW), 6 February 2016.

1. Introduction

Already the [Ottoman Empire](#) attached a great relevance to the [Maghreb](#) and [North Africa](#) although its foreign relations with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) were rather insular. This was also because [Turkey](#) could not compete with the other empires during the nineteenth-century [Scramble for Africa](#), and therefore stayed away from the region (Cavlan, 2022). This the more so, because [Istanbul](#), then the capital of the Ottoman Empire, experienced a period of downfall, due to its industrial backwardness and lack of capital accumulation compared with other colonial powers like [Great Britain](#) and [France](#). After [World War II](#) and the end of the [Cold War](#) (1989), Turkey, now integrated into the Western [NATO](#) alliance, continued to consider North Africa as an integral part of its sphere of influence but still neglected SSA, unless there were vital interests at stake (Cavlan, 2022).

Graph 1: Turkey's influence in Africa on the rise since the late 1990s



Source: Anadolu Agency (2021)

Source: Cagaptay & Cook & Soukkarieh, 2022

The apathy of successive Turkish governments only changed with the adoption of the 'Africa Action Plan' in 1998, when [Ankara](#) tried to increase its diplomatic, political, economic and cultural interactions with SSA (İpek, 2017; Hammoura, 2016). Another indicator of its improving foreign relations was the Turkish declaration of 2005 as 'the year of Africa' (Dahir, 2021). Thereby, Ankara as a new [emerging power](#) on the continent (Alrmizan, 2023) tried to establish new markets for its manufactured goods, notably for its defence and armaments industry, and present itself as a relevant regional and global actor. Thereby it was different from traditional Western players in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), because it was free of the latter's colonial baggage, promising a win-win constellation for both sides (Dahir,

2021; Besenyő & Oláh, 2012). Moreover, by adapting to a multi-centric world, Ankara moved beyond conventional state-to-state dealings with SSA by expanding its cooperation with non-state actors (İpek & Biltekin, 2013).

In the following, the focus will be laid on Turkish foreign relations with [West Africa](#) which has been neglected compared to other SSA regions, notably in Eastern and Southern Africa, like Somalia, Kenya and South Africa. Furthermore, land-locked and fragile West African states will be left aside to concentrate on three major countries, including both Anglophone and Francophone West Africa, i.e. [Nigeria](#), [Ghana](#) and [Ivory Coast](#). A review of the literature, taking Turkish relations with SSA in general as a starting point, will be followed by an analysis of the contribution of Turkish-African relations to sustainable development in the case of the above-named three selected countries.

2. Turkish foreign- and trade relations with Sub-Saharan Africa

Ankara's new engagement coincided with the beginning of the rule of the [Justice and Development Party](#) (AKP) in 2002 when [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) became prime minister in 2003. It prospered on multiple fronts, including economic ties, military cooperation, and cultural, humanitarian, and religious initiatives (Cagaptay & Cook & Soukkarieh, 2022). Erdoğan underlined the Turkish - African bonds of friendship and cooperation through his African tour that took him in October 2021 to [Angola](#), [Togo](#) and [Nigeria](#) (Ngouana, 2021). However, Erdoğan's decision in 2020 to intervene in the [second Libyan civil war](#) (2014-2020) was not well received by his African peers (Skah, 2020).

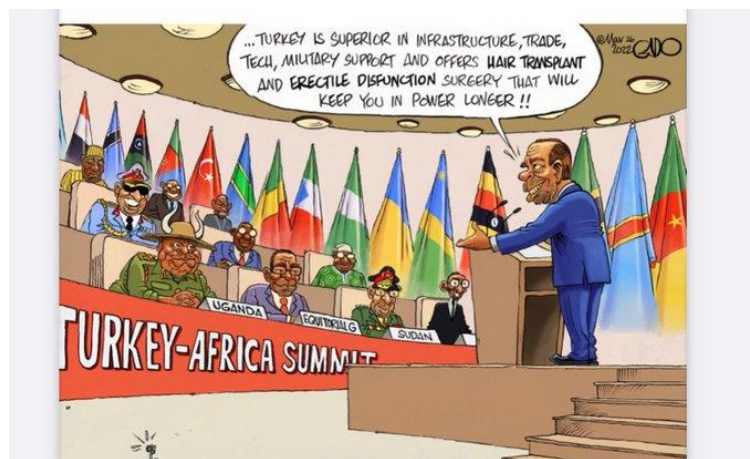
Nevertheless, Turkey considerably improved its influence in [SSA](#). Ankara's interventionism took also advantage of new openings provided by the [Arab Spring](#) as well as the return of [Russia](#) to the Mediterranean and SSA, given its growing isolation by the West because of [Russo-Ukrainian War](#) (Marcou, 2022). Moreover, Turkey's growing strategic interest in SSA was demonstrated by mediating national reconciliation in [Somalia](#) between the central government in [Mogadishu](#) and the regional authorities in [Hargeisa](#) in 2013. In September 2017, a Turkish military base was formally inaugurated in Mogadishu to increase its foothold in the [Horn of Africa](#), thus competing with the US military bases in Somalia, like the large [Baledogle Airfield](#), a former Somali Airforce base 110 km northwest of Mogadishu (Al Jazeera, 2017). Ankara's coordinated approach in both Somalia and [Kenya](#) could provide lessons learned to be applied to other parts of [East Africa](#), notably [Tanzania](#), [Uganda](#), and [South Sudan](#) (Cannon, 2017).

To date, Erdoğan visited 33 African countries, which made the Turkish president the most frequent visiting statesman to the continent. The number of Turkish embassies increased from 12 to 44. This was answered by African governments increasing their embassies in Turkey from 10 in 2008 to 38 in 2022 (Yanarocak, 2022). Also, Erdoğan took part in the [African Union summit in 2007](#). One year later, Turkey became an official partner of the [African Union](#). In 2008, Ankara hosted its first Turkish-African Cooperation Summit in [Istanbul](#), where 49 African nations participated. At the second Turkish-African Cooperation Summit in 2014 in [Malabo \(Equatorial Guinea\)](#), ambitious cooperation and investment programs were incorporated into five-year development plans, starting in 2015. The 2nd Summit resulted in the Malabo Declaration, the Africa-Turkey Joint Implementation Plan and a matrix of key priority projects covering trade and investment, peace and security as well as culture, tourism and education, youth empowerment and technology transfer, rural economy and agriculture, infrastructure, notably energy, ICT and transport as well as other topics such as health and media (AU-Press Release, 2021). For the first time, also security cooperation was added to

the programs (Yanarocak, 2022). Ankara's security agreements include not only training programmes but also comprehensive security cooperation agreements, covering training, technical, and scientific cooperation. Altogether, 30 African states signed different types of security-related agreements with Turkey. The largest number of agreements, 21 in total, were ratified in 2017 (with Benin, Chad, DR Congo, Djibouti (1-2), Gabon, Gambia (1-2), Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast (1-2), Kenya, Libya, Mali (1-2), Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda), followed by 16 agreements in 2018 (The Republic of Congo, Djibouti (1-2), Ghana, Madagascar, Niger (1-2), Nigeria, Rwanda (1-2-3), Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania (1-2), Tunisia) (Yaşar, 2022).

The third Turkish-African summit in December 2021 in [Istanbul](#) under the topic “Enhanced Partnership for Common Development and Prosperity”, accompanied by 102 ministers, including 26 foreign ministers, from 39 countries, consolidated these achievements (Yanarocak, 2022).

Cartoon 2: Turkey-Africa Summit



Source: © [Gado cartoons](#),
in *@thecontinent this week!* 27. March 2022

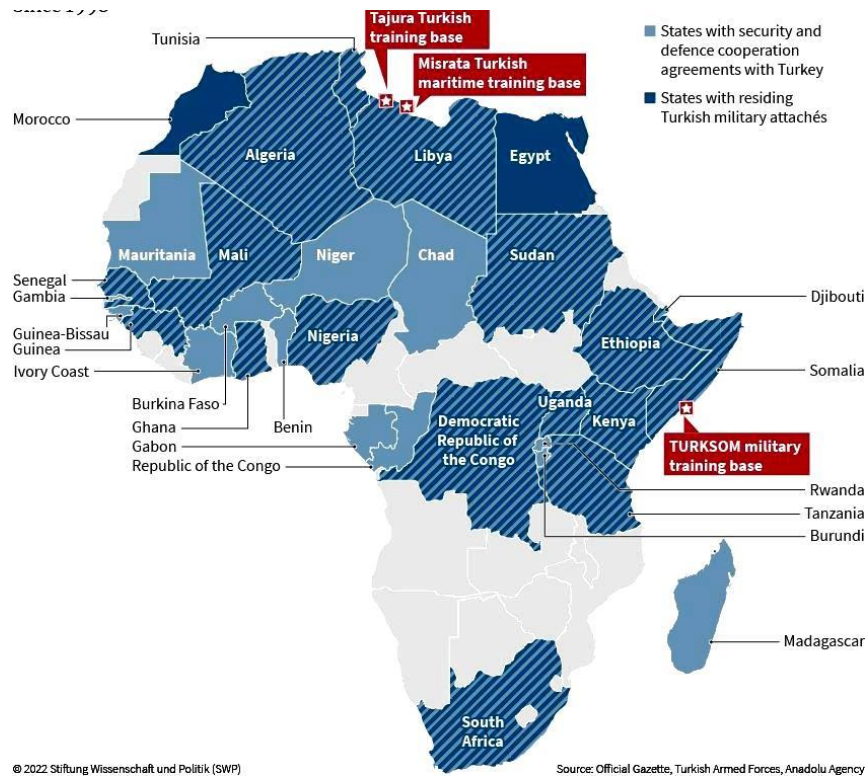
Whereas Western secular [Non-governmental organizations](#) (NGOs) or government agencies employed a [rights-based approach](#) to development aid, the faith-based Turkish NGOs utilized the language of religious duty and obligation to justify their involvement. For example, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency ([TIKA](#)) provided humanitarian aid as well as water and sanitation services as a contribution to African countries' development by preventing deaths from water-borne diseases, decreasing the daily burden of carrying water, and hence increasing the life quality of the people. As such, its impact was considered an integral part of the organization's religious duty and *raison d'être* (İpek & Biltekin, 2013).

Also, the Turkish-Asian Center for Strategic Studies ([TASAM](#)) organized annual Turkey-Africa Congresses. Here, academics, experts, and business groups met to discuss Turkey's role vis-a-vis the contemporary problems of Africa. Thus, sovereignty-bound actors (SBAs) and sovereignty-free actors (SFAs), such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey ([TUBITAK](#)) and TIKA were integrated systematically into the implementation of Turkish foreign policy. TASAM, for example, organized a Turkey-Africa Civil Society Organization (CSO) Forum in August 2008, parallel with the Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit (İpek & Biltekin, 2013).

Although, Ankara ostensibly did not try to effect democratic transition in the countries aided, it nevertheless employed democracy support instruments in the form of [state-building](#) in Sub-

Saharan Africa from 2005 to the present day (Aydın-Düzgit, 2020). Thus, in the past two decades, Turkey emerged as a major humanitarian actor in SSA, actively branding itself as a benevolent brother in faith of African states. This reputation was even consolidated by Ankara's role as an impartial broker of [the Black Sea Grain Initiative](#) between [Ukraine](#) and [Russia](#), with Turkey gaining international recognition for having prevented more severe food crises (Demirdirek & Talebian, 2022).

Graph 2: Turkey's security and defence cooperation with African states since 1998



Source: Aksoy, H. A. & S. Çevik & N. T. Yaşar (2022)

Moreover, the Turkish power elite, whether secularists or conservatives, share the conviction that the world is moving towards a post-Western order (Josseran, 2022). This meets the needs of African autocrats who seek to attract Turkish foreign direct investment, diversify economic and political partners to reduce dependency and fuel their state-building projects (Dahir, 2021).

Nevertheless, the entry of a 'newcomer' like Turkey in the *chasse gardée* of the African market, jealously guarded by the former colonial powers, above all [France](#) (Kohnert, 2022) implies the arrival of new economic competitors for European powers and companies. French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) accused Turkey on 7 November 2022 of acting as an imperialist and colonialist state in Africa, alongside [China](#) and [Russia](#) (Yanarocak, 2022).

Yet, the growing global demand for energy and natural resources, which up to date dominates imports from SSA, does not concern only the rivalry between the EU and Turkey, but concerns also other global players notably the [BRICS](#) members (Brazil/Russia/India/China/South Africa) (Atak, 2023; Kohnert, 2022a). Both, [China](#) and [Turkey](#), use their increasing material capabilities and political power to shape the current international system, become important rising aid donors in SSA, and last, but not least to secure access to African resources and markets (Dipama & Dal, 2016; Bayramzadeh, 2014;

Belder & Dipama, 2018; Yanarocak, 2022). A prominent example of global powers striving for influence in SSA was the positioning in the controversial debate on Ethiopia's [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam](#) (Pilling, 2020).

But, Ankara's interventions showed only limited similarities to that of the BRICS states. There exist fundamental structural differences concerning the [BRICS](#) established interest and presence in [SSA](#), e.g. regarding Turkey's commitment to embracing activism of non-governmental actors, and its engagement in humanitarian missions and charity work and resulting trade-related economic investments (Elem Eyryce & Evren & Abul, 2017).

Cartoon 3: *Ethiopia's Nile mega-dam is changing dynamics in the Horn of Africa*



Source: © [Ingram Pinn/Financial Times](#) ³

Last, but not least, Ankara systematically invested in education in SSA. Thus, African students, the future elites, were trained through Turkey-Africa scholarship programs that contributed to the enhancement of Turkey and [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) cooperation in both the public and private sectors. Similar to the United States ([Fulbright Program](#) since the 1980s), [France](#) and [China's](#) scholarships, Ankara used these programs in its foreign policy, above all, since 1990 (after the end of the [Cold War](#)), parallel to the implementation of the Turkish multi-dimensional foreign policy (Djamanca & Etüdleri, 2018). Up to 2022, Turkey financed over 15,000 scholarships to African students, and around 5,000 African students are currently studying at Turkish universities (Daily Sabah, 2022). Although the students experience challenges in the latent racist Turkish society (Umut, 2002), they also demonstrated their agency and became resilient through resisting marginalization experiences (Musizvingoza, 2020).

Although some African countries use their engagement with Turkey to fuel their state-building process, and to some extent, secure the transfer of Turkish know-how, Ankara embark on its so far largest overseas humanitarian operation in 2011 to tackle a crippling famine that was devastating Somalia. Consequently, [Mogadishu](#) turned Ankara's involvement to fuel its post-conflict state-building process. Accordingly, Turkish transport infrastructure, hospitals, and schools proliferated all over the country in addition to personnel training of Somali security forces by the Turkish military. The Turkish projects in Somalia are praised for their tangibility, respect for ownership, and deploying staff to the field, despite the threats to security mainly from ISIS affiliate al-Shabaab terrorist group (Dahir, 2021). This arose the interest of other [SSA](#) countries, including [Sudan](#), that was also interested in security, peace-

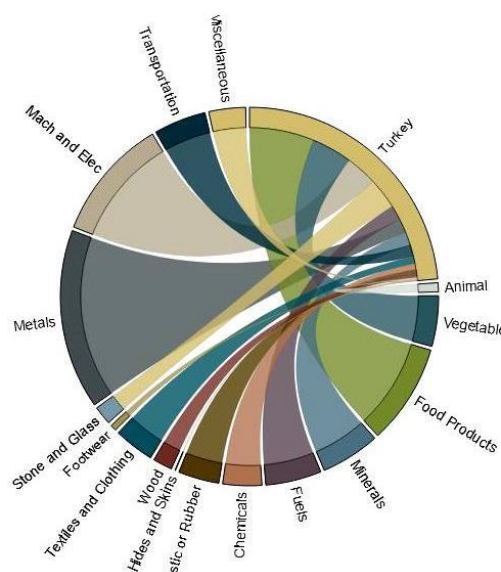
³ "China, US, Turkey and Saudi Arabia vie for influence amid region's renaissance." - The figure in the cartoon refers to [Meles Zenawi](#), President of Ethiopia from 1991 to 1995 and then Prime Minister of Ethiopia from 1995 until he died in 2012.

building, and mediation initiatives. Thus, [Khartoum](#) accepted a mediation offer by Ankara to end its border dispute with [Ethiopia](#). [Angola](#) and other SSA governments requested the cheap and effective Turkish [Baykar Bayraktar TB2](#) drones after it was credited with swinging the fate of conflicts, e. g. in [Libya](#) and the [Tigray war](#) (Dahir, 2021). The latter was used in a controversial attack by the Ethiopian National Defense Force during the [Tigray War](#) in November 2022 (Bearak & Kelly & Sohyun Lee, 2022). So far, [Djibouti](#), [Somalia](#), [Libya](#), [Niger](#), [Morocco](#), [Togo](#), [Angola](#) and [Ethiopia](#) ordered the Bayraktar TB-2s. In 2020, Turkish defence and aviation exports to Africa amounted to US\$ 82.9m one year later it soared to US\$ 460.6m (Yanarocak, 2022).

In fact, despite all humanitarian rhetoric, economic factors have been the most important factors pushing Turkey's opening to [SSA](#). Its diplomatic, development, and humanitarian assistance served mainly to achieve its primary objective of increasing economic ties. This was indicated by the exponential rise of trade and investment. From 2006 to 2016, Turkey's trade with individual African countries grew at an unparalleled rate. Trade volume between Turkey and SSA grew by 253% from 2006 to 2016. In countries such as [Nigeria](#), [Ethiopia](#), and [South Africa](#), trade relations outweighed humanitarian and to some extent diplomatic relations, although both were often used as the first point of contact (Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2020).

Turkey – Sub-Saharan Africa Trade

Graph 3: Product imports and exports by Turkey from SSA, 2019



Source: World Bank statistics, [WITS](#), 2023

Turkey's trade with SSA increased substantially during the past two decades. Turkey's total trade volume with Africa in 2003 stood at US\$ 5.4 billion. By 2021, this figure rose significantly to US\$ 34.5b. out of Turkey's 2021 global trade volume of US\$ 496.7b. The same improvement can also be seen in Africa's share of exports. In 2003, Africa only constituted 4.5 % of the whole Turkish exports. However, by 2021 this figure rose to 9.4 % (Yanarocak, 2022).

As a share of its total exports, Turkey more than doubled its exports to [SSA](#) within 14 years from 0.97 % in 2001 to 2.24 % in 2015 (**Graph 4**). However, despite the growth in Turkey's imports from SSA in value terms, its imports from SSA fell from 1.70 % in 2001 to about 1 % in 2015 as a share of its total Turkish imports (Graph 5) (Tepeciklioglu & Tok & Basher, 2017).

Graph 4: Exports to SSA by BRICS and Turkey (% of total exports) ⁴

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Avg share (2001- 15)	CAGR (2001- 15)
Brazil	2.02	2.46	2.51	2.61	3.23	3.40	3.57	3.47	3.60	2.33	2.55	2.61	2.46	2.16	2.09	2.74	108.37
China	1.55	1.40	1.57	1.51	1.56	1.79	2.02	2.40	2.60	2.63	2.81	2.98	3.02	3.32	3.39	2.30	121.58
India	4.56	4.57	4.38	4.82	4.90	6.02	6.67	6.09	5.68	6.10	6.07	7.36	7.90	8.69	7.63	6.11	116.81
Russia	0.22	0.36	0.23	0.23	0.18	0.19	0.18	0.21	0.30	0.13	0.26	0.27	0.28	0.33	0.56	18.71	117.01
South Africa	12.84	13.10	13.30	12.49	13.18	14.05	16.40	18.36	24.94	14.43	27.06	27.82	29.72	28.94	18.71	113.62	
Turkey	0.97	0.98	1.02	1.05	1.25	1.44	1.59	2.20	2.36	1.72	2.39	2.22	2.37	2.20	2.24	1.73	117.02

Source: Tepeciklioglu & Tok & Basher, 2017

Graph 5: Imports from SSA by BRICS and Turkey (% of total exports) ⁵

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Avg share (2001- 15)	CAGR (2001- 15)
Brazil	3.66	3.09	3.79	6.10	4.61	5.98	6.13	5.94	4.53	4.34	4.71	4.21	5.13	5.53	3.52	4.75	107.50
China	1.40	1.36	1.56	2.28	2.52	3.03	2.95	3.90	3.22	3.49	4.36	5.44	5.45	5.55	3.16	3.31	119.68
India	3.91	4.53	3.72	3.09	2.76	5.39	5.97	6.27	6.56	7.30	7.02	7.16	6.93	7.82	7.94	5.76	120.48
Russia	0.84	0.88	0.78	0.80	0.69	0.54	0.48	0.46	0.63	0.60	0.50	0.48	0.51	0.53	0.74	0.63	110.34
South Africa	2.64	3.31	3.04	4.18	3.71	4.80	6.19	7.35	7.00	9.24	7.38	11.05	11.02	12.49	11.74	7.01	120.15
Turkey	1.70	1.06	1.17	1.58	1.56	1.80	1.85	1.23	1.52	1.13	1.41	1.10	0.99	1.02	0.99	1.34	107.42

Source: Tepeciklioglu & Tok & Basher, 2017

Ankara concluded trade and economic cooperation agreements with 48 African countries, mutual investment promotion and protection agreements with 32 countries, double taxation avoidance agreements with 16 countries and free trade agreements with 5 countries. African leaders favoured Turkish good, notably military hardware because it was delivered at cheaper prices and with fewer strings attached.

⁴ Turkey's *exports* to SSA and BRICS. Notes: Tepeciklioglu & Tok & Basher, 2017 calculations based on Direction of Trade Statistics, IMF, CAGR refers to compound annual growth rate. Numbers are reported in percentage points.

⁵ *Imports* from SSA and BRICS and Turkey. Notes: Tepeciklioglu & Tok & Basher, 2017 calculations based on Direction of Trade Statistics, IMF, CAGR refers to compound annual growth rate. Numbers are reported in percentage points.

Turkey has become one of the countries with the largest number of contracting companies in almost the entire continent (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritius, Sudan). At the end of 2021, 88 Turkish companies were operating on the African continent. The investments of these companies reached around US\$ 1.7 billion. In the contract sector, 1,777 projects worth US\$ 82.8 billion have been undertaken in Africa so far. According to the regional breakdown, US\$ 56 billion (1,330 projects) in [North Africa](#) and US\$ 26.7 billion (447 projects) in [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) were undertaken. As part of Ankara's efforts to diversify export markets, [Ethiopia](#), [South Africa](#), [Nigeria](#), [Libya](#) and [Egypt](#) were among the "target countries" determined for the period 2022-2023. In 2022, 24 fairs were organized in African countries. In addition, the Turkey-[ECOWAS](#) Economic and Trade Forum had been organized in [Istanbul](#) in 2018 to improve relations with the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)), including 15 West African countries. Since the end of 2021, the most important investments were in the sectors of basic metal industry (US\$ 680.7 million), textile and clothing manufacturing (US\$ 330.1 million), production and distribution of electricity, gas, steam and ventilation systems (US\$ 267.4 million) and wholesale and retail trade (US\$ 238.5 million) (AFP - TRT-Français, 2022).

The geographical distribution of Turkey-SSA trade during the last decade shows that Turkey managed to diversify its largest trading partners across all the sub-regions of SSA as much as possible. Four out of the top ten trading partners of Turkey in SSA are in [West Africa](#) ([Nigeria](#), [Senegal](#), [Ivory Coast](#), and [Ghana](#)), two in [Southern Africa](#) ([Angola](#) and [South Africa](#)), three in [East Africa](#) ([Sudan](#), [Ethiopia](#), and [Tanzania](#)), and one in [Central Africa](#) ([Cameroon](#)). Turkish business councils were established with Ethiopia in 2008, with Kenya in 2010, with Nigeria, Tanzania, Mauritania, Ghana, Uganda and Angola in 2011, and with Gambia and Rwanda in 2012. Nigeria, the by far biggest nation in SSA besides South Africa, has been the second most important trading partner of Turkey in 2018 (Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2020).

Graph 6: The top 10 trading partners of Turkey in SSA, in 2018

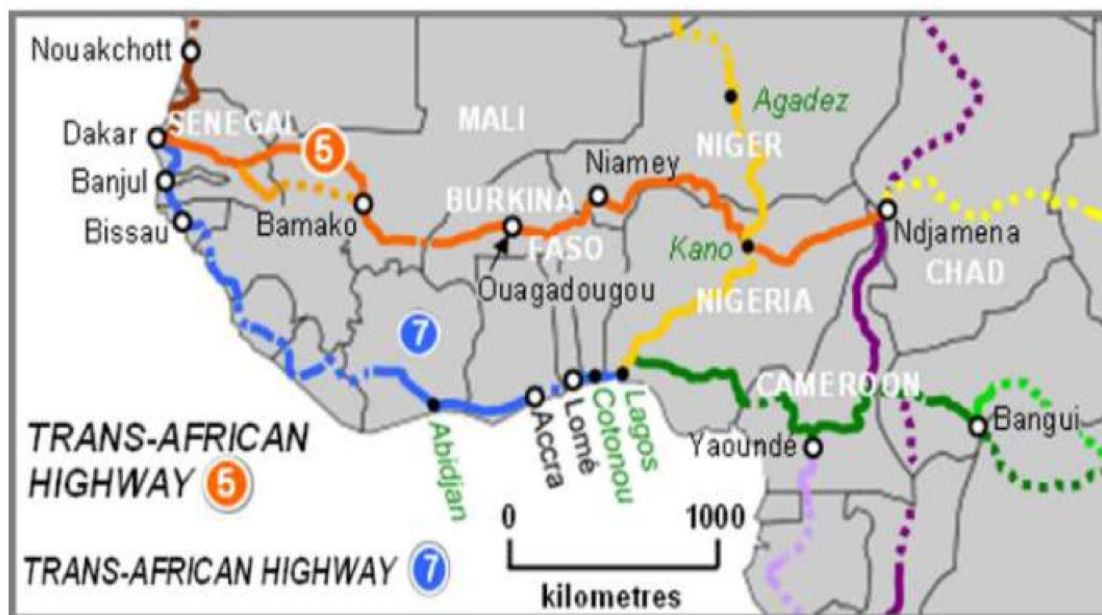
<i>Country</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
South Africa	1st
Nigeria	2nd
Sudan	3rd
Senegal	4th
Cote d'Ivoire	5th
Ethiopia	6th
Ghana	7th
Tanzania	8th
Angola	9th
Cameroon	10th

Source: Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2020, p. 258

3. West African country case studies

Turkey's geo-strategical investment in West Africa focusses on [Senegal](#) and its Atlantic coast port of [Dakar](#) as gateway to [West Africa](#) and vital connectivity node for its West African trade and investment. Dakar constitutes the coastal terminal point for the [Dakar-Ndjamena highway](#) (Trans-African Highway Route 5) that traverses all five Sahel countries, and for the Dakar-Lagos coastal highway ([Trans-African Highway Route 7](#)) that traverses the coastal urban centres of the [ECOWAS](#) countries. Thus, Senegal becomes the hub of a multi-modal land route that could be complementary to the maritime commercial transportation to the [Gulf of Guinea](#) (Tanchum, 2021). Turkish construction firms invested heavily in Senegal, including the construction of the country's € 575 m [Blaise-Diagne International Airport](#). Another flagship project is Tosyalı Holding's US\$ 2 bn iron and steel manufacturing complex and special economic zone in Khelcom, near [Kaolack](#), Senegal (Tanchum, 2021).

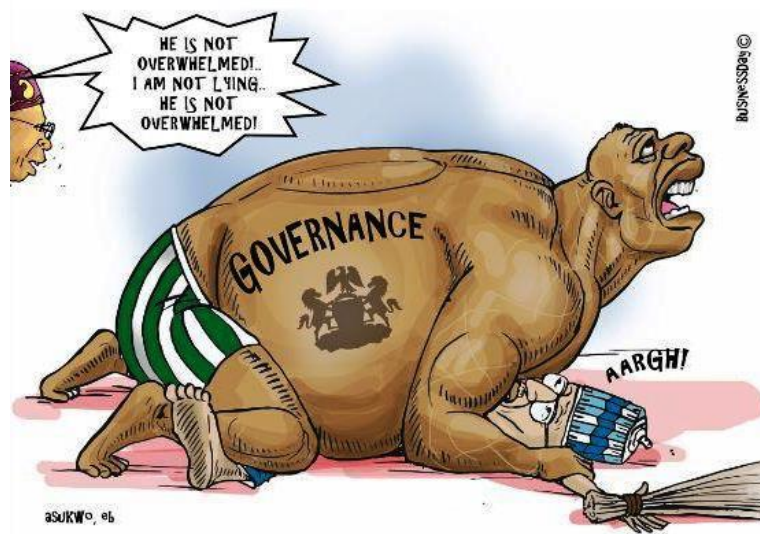
Graph 7: Turkey's use of the Trans-African Highway System – Routes 5 and 7



Source: [Trans-African Highway network](#), Wikipedia, Tanchum, 2021

3.1 Nigeria

Cartoon 4: *the populist mob is still breathing—
Satanic verses or a journey towards hope for Nigeria*⁶



Source: © Cartoonist, [Mike Asukwo](#)

Nigerian - Turkish relations date back to the [Ottoman Empire](#). Although the latter concentrated on North Africa, the sub-Saharan region, notably the present region of Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Somalia had been more than once at least partially controlled and occupied by the Ottomans for a shorter period. Yet, this never lasted long enough to consider them as part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman regime was present only indirectly. For instance, in 1575 Murat III. was only able to become the ally of the [Kanem-Bornu Empire](#) against Portuguese colonization attempts (Besenyő & Oláh, 2012). Later on, at the end of the 20th century, the [Shitta-Bey Mosque](#), one of Nigeria's national monuments, was built in 1891 and inaugurated in 1894 by dignitaries including Abdullahi Quillam, a representative of Ottoman [Sultan Abd-al-Hamid II](#) (Muhammad, 2022). At its inauguration, the mosque admired for its Ottoman-like architecture, was deemed the most modern and costliest ecclesiastical edifice in [British West Africa](#). [Mohammed Shitta](#), a prominent Nigerian businessman, born in 1824 in [Sierra Leone](#), who financed the construction, was honoured by the sultan in Istanbul with the title of 'Bey' for his contributions to Islam in the then-British colony of Lagos and elsewhere. In the post-war period of [World War I](#) and up to the end of [World War II](#), i.e. from 1923 and 1945, Turkey did not have the capacity to be involved in the politics and economy of Africa.

Post-colonial Nigeria and Turkey started official foreign relations soon after [Nigeria's independence](#) on October 1, 1960. Ankara opened an embassy in [Lagos](#), then the capital of Nigeria, in August 1962. Both countries maintained good relations. They are members of the [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](#) (OIC) and the [D-8 Organization for Economic](#)

⁶ The cartoon refers to [Salman Rushdie's](#) book, *Satanic Verses*, published in 1988. Rushdie was attacked again in September 2022 in New York. The cartoon relates to sections of Nigeria's population whose religious tolerance is far behind the norm and compares it with the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, President [Kamal Atatürk](#), who abolished the emirate system and undertook sweeping progressive reforms, which modernized Turkey into a secular, industrializing nation. - The cautioning person on the left side of the cartoon represents former Nigerian President, General [Olusegun Obasanjo](#), the man lying beneath the giant (the populist mob) is the then President [Muhammadu Buhari](#) (Olugbemi, 2022a). Source. Babs Olugbemi, [Business Day NG](#), 1 September 2022.

[Cooperation](#)⁷ (Muhammad, 2022). In 2010 the then Nigerian President [Goodluck Jonathan](#) visited Istanbul (Besenyö & Oláh, 2012). As of 2016, 50 Turkish firms were operating in Nigeria mainly in the construction, manufacturing and energy sectors. Their total investment amounted to US\$ 419.5 m. Including the local partners' shares, Turkish investment in Nigeria even amounted to a total of US\$ 620 m. Moreover, the two governments wanted to collaborate in fighting terrorism, human-, drug- and arms trafficking (Muhammad, 2022).

Commercial relations between Turkey and Nigeria increased substantially in 1982 with the signature of a trade agreement in Lagos, the former Nigerian capital. The deal allowed Turkey to import cacao, cola nut, rubber, zinc, crude oil, coal, palm nut and tinstone while it enabled Nigeria to purchase construction material, electronic goods and agricultural tools from Turkey (Staff of *Further-Africa*, 2020). The volume of bilateral trade, except for oil and gas, totalled nearly US\$ 500 m in 2018. While the sale of Turkish goods to Nigeria amounted to US\$ 340 m, Turkey's imports from Nigeria stood at US\$ 160 m. Foreign trade relations gained significant momentum in 1999 when Turkey began to purchase liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Nigeria. In 2019, Nigerian crude oil also started to sell in Turkey. The bilateral trade volume in 2019 was calculated at US\$ 2.3 bn. Oil and LNG account for 90 % of Turkish imports from Nigeria while oilseed, fruits, sesame, charcoal and cacao range among other goods Turkey purchased (Staff of *Further-Africa*, 2020).

Bilateral Turkish-Nigerian trade (except for oil and gas) rose within five years from US\$130 m in 2005 to 471 US\$ in 2010⁸ and remained since then more or less on this level (see Graph 8). Nigerian exports to the Turkish market could still be enhanced notably in food products, animals, manufactured goods, chemicals, rubber and plastics, and related products (Momoh, 2017).

Graph 8: Development of Turkish trade in SSA, 2005-2018

Turkish trade with South Africa, Ethiopia and Nigeria (except for oil and gas (in US\$ m))

	2005	2010	2016	2018	Rank as Turkey's trading partner in SSA in 2018
South Africa	1.57572	1.25887	1463	1613.46	1st
Ethiopia	139.67	215.78	439.71	293.53	6th
Nigeria	129.98	471.15	399.414	404.35	2nd

Source: Turkish Trade Ministry

Source: Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2020, p. 263

The Turkish education sector reached out to SSA by setting up private Turkish nurseries, primary schools, colleges and, in one case, in Nigeria even a university, i.e. the [Nigerian-Turkish Nile University](#) in the capital Abuja opened in Nigeria in 2009, the first school in 1998. Initiated by private businessmen, these schools were usually referred to as part of the Islamist fraternal [Gülen movement](#).⁹ The earliest of these schools were opened in countries

⁷ Developing-8 members are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. The combined population of the eight countries is approximately 1 billion or 60% of all Muslims.

⁸ There is an apparent discrepancy in the reported bilateral trade figures possibly due to the in- vs. exclusion of oil and gas: According to Besenyö & Oláh, Nigeria's export to Turkey exceeded US\$ 600 m in 2009. Additionally, Nigeria's imports from Turkey amounted to about US\$ 258 m (Besenyö & Oláh, 2012).

⁹ [Fethullah Gülen](#) is a self-exiled charismatic Turkish Islamic preacher. He established schools all over the world, modelled on the [Sufi](#) thinker [Saïd Nursî](#) (1878–1960) (Binaté, 2019). Gülen had a vast network of followers, notably in SSA, where he contributed to opening new markets for Turkish products and services since the late 1960s. Since 2003 he was reckoned as an ally of the AKP. The present government in Ankara accused

where he was already present, such as [Senegal](#), [Tanzania](#), [Kenya](#), [Nigeria](#) and [South Africa](#) (Ipek & Biltekin, 2013).

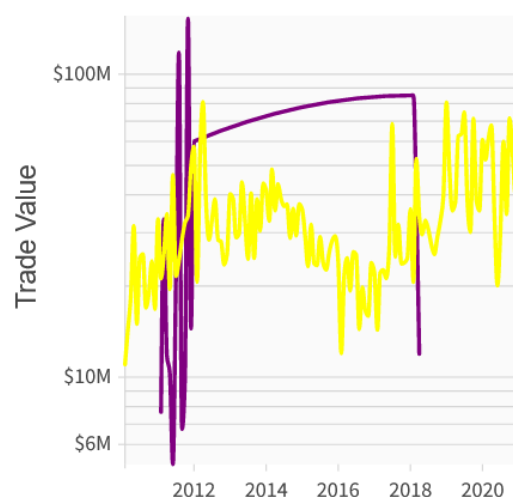
Cartoon 5: Islamist terrorism, funded unintentionally by the Nigerian security budget vs. Evangelical crusades, funded by Sunday offerings¹⁰



Source: © Cartoonist, Moses Okpora

A major diplomatic downturn occurred in 2016 after the [failed coup attempt in Turkey](#) because of Ankara's effort to clamp down on its perceived enemy, the [Gülen movement](#), which had considerable investments in Nigeria. Not only did the move not get legislative backing, its implementation would deny Nigeria and her citizens the benefits of those investments which the Turkish government sought to put an end to (Bashir, 2018). Three of Turkey's top 10 trading partners in SSA, respectively, [South Africa](#), [Nigeria](#), and [Ethiopia](#) have not yet agreed to Turkey's request to either take control or close schools linked to the Turkish oppositional Islamist fraternal [Gülen movement](#) or hand them over to the [Maarif Foundation](#) founded in 2019 as a global education brand controlled by [Ankara](#). But Ankara continues to use soft diplomatic and economic pressure to get the reluctant governments to respond positively to its request. Apparently, Turkey still prioritized its economic foreign relations over political ones (Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2020).

Graph 9: Turkey (yellow) and Nigeria (purple) trade, 2012-2020 (US\$ m)



Source: [oec.world](#), 2023

Gülen and his followers of having incited the coup attempt of 2016 and subsequently chased the movement internationally as a terrorist organization.

¹⁰ [‘Satanic verses or a journey towards hope for Nigeria’](#). Babs Olugbeni, [Businessday NG](#), 18 August 2022



1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1039-1043.

3.2 Ghana

Cartoon 6: Turkey vs Ghana desk flags table flags



Source: [Freepic.com](https://www.freepic.com), 2023

Turkey and [Ghana](#) have longstanding foreign and economic relations. Shortly after [independence](#) from Britain in 1957, Accra established diplomatic relations with Ankara in 1958 and opened an embassy in [Accra](#) in 1964. From 1981 to 2010 the embassy was closed because of economic stringency measures. Bilateral relations soured in the early 1980s because the then President of Ghana, [Jerry Rawlings](#), had restored diplomatic relations with [Gaddafi's Libya](#) shortly after coming to power and supported Libya's position (Chazan, 1999). In 2012 Ghana opened an embassy in [Ankara](#). The Turkish government regarded Ghana as a strategically important African country because it was one of the region's few functioning democracies with successful economic development. Ankara aims to expand its preferred 'form' of Islam, that is, [Sunni Islam](#). The latter has to compete with various shapes of Islam in Ghana which deviate from the orthodoxy of Turkey's Sunni Islam, including [Salafis](#) and members of the [Ahmadiyya](#) movement, a significant minority in Ghana, of about 16 % of the population (Haynes, 2022). Yet, Turkey's [Sunni Islam](#) is seen by the government in Accra as unlikely to stimulate radicalization among Ghana's Muslims, while Turkey's economic presence is welcomed as an important means to assist Ghana to develop its economy (Haynes, 2022). A symbol of the cordial development cooperation was the construction of the big (capacity of up to 15,000 people) and ultra-modern [Ghana national mosque](#) in Accra with the support of the Ankara and the Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Foundation at a reported cost of US\$ 10 m. It was inaugurated in July 2021 and included a library complex, an office and residence for Ghana's Chief Imam, research and senior high school complexes, a clinic, an administration block, an auditorium, and a conference centre. President [Erdoğan](#) aimed to profit from increasing bilateral trade, and, at the same time, to the improvement of the position of Ghana's Sunni Muslims and to enhance the educational opportunities for Muslims in a country with a Christian majority (Haynes, 2022).

Moreover, Ankara tries to convince Accra to challenge the [Fethullah Gülen movement](#), which it considers a transnational terrorist organisation. The latter has been involved in Islamic education in Ghana since 1994, including the [Galaxy International School in Ghana](#), a day and boarding school for 450 students, established in 2001. Teaching in the local language, the schools successfully recruited students to spread their brand of [Sunni Islam](#). The extended family and religious communities are still the most important sources of socialisation of young Ghanaians and for their own religious learning, although the proliferation of digital technologies, notably the mobile phone and social media increasingly encourage independent and self-directed religious learning (Moberg, Marcus et al, 2019).

During an official State visit by the Turkish President, [Abdullah Gul](#), in 2011, bilateral trade negotiations covered various areas of interest, especially defence. An agreement on military cooperation in the areas of training, technology and science was negotiated and signed between the two countries on 24 March 2011 (Kunbuor, 2015).

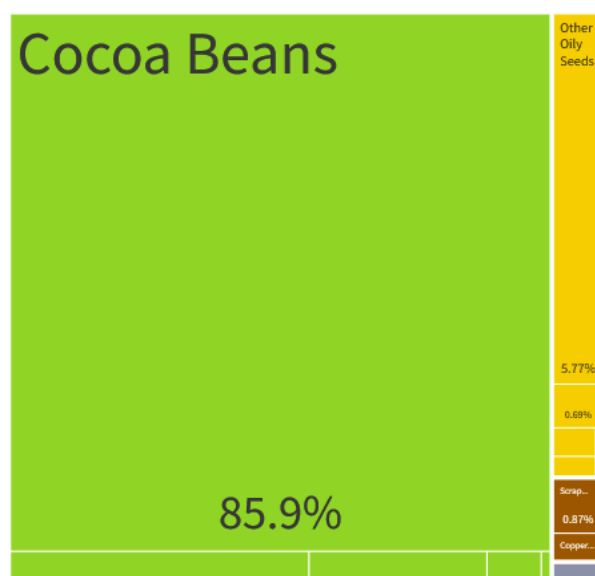
Graph 12: Trade between Turkey (*yellow*) and Ghana (*purple*) (US\$ m)



Product Category	Percentage
Wheat Flours	7.51%
Pasta	9.72%
Steel Bars	6.7%
Cement	6.11%
Iron Structures	4.89%
Iron Blocks	3.63%
Tissue	3.86%
Poultry Meat	3.16%
Insulated Wire	2.71%
Seed Oils	2.18%
Rubber Footwear	1.54%
Stranded Copper Wire	1.44%
Seats	1.35%
Other Furniture	1.37%
Chocolate	0.78%
Plastic...	0.60%
Plastic...	0.58%
Plastic...	0.49%
Plastic...	0.40%
Plastic...	0.39%
Plastic...	0.38%
Plastic...	0.37%
Plastic...	0.36%
Plastic...	0.35%
Plastic...	0.34%
Plastic...	0.33%
Plastic...	0.32%
Plastic...	0.31%
Plastic...	0.30%
Plastic...	0.29%
Plastic...	0.28%
Plastic...	0.27%
Plastic...	0.26%
Plastic...	0.25%
Plastic...	0.24%
Plastic...	0.23%
Plastic...	0.22%
Plastic...	0.21%
Plastic...	0.20%
Plastic...	0.19%
Plastic...	0.18%
Plastic...	0.17%
Plastic...	0.16%
Plastic...	0.15%
Plastic...	0.14%
Plastic...	0.13%
Plastic...	0.12%
Plastic...	0.11%
Plastic...	0.10%
Plastic...	0.09%
Plastic...	0.08%
Plastic...	0.07%
Plastic...	0.06%
Plastic...	0.05%
Plastic...	0.04%
Plastic...	0.03%
Plastic...	0.02%
Plastic...	0.01%

16

Graph 14: Ghana's exports to Turkey by major commodity group
total US\$ 9,1 m, 2022



Source: oec.world, 2023

Also, tourism was used systematically by Ankara as a foreign policy tool to enhance cooperation rather than just for the development of tourism relations (Aydemir & Bal, 2018).

3.3 Ivory Coast

The first diplomatic relations between Turkey and [Ivory Coast](#) were established in 1964, four years after Ivorian independence from [France](#) in August 1960. Up to 2009, the Turkish embassy in [Dakar](#) (Senegal) was accredited to represent Turkish interests in Ivory Coast. An own Turkish embassy in [Abidjan](#) became operational only in November 2009. An Ivorian embassy in [Ankara](#) followed in February 2013¹¹. In 2005, agreements on trade and economic and technical cooperation were signed that still constitute the basis of bilateral economic and commercial relations. Since 2012 several Turkish companies, such as BEKO, DEKOSET, INCI, FERGEN, and KAYDAN installed branch offices in Ivory Coast (Binaté, 2019). The first political visit between the two countries took place in 2014 when [Guillaume Soro](#), President of the National Assembly of Ivory Coast, attended the handover ceremony for President Erdoğan's election as President of the Republic. Ivorian President [Alassane Ouattara](#) followed suit with his official visit to Ankara on 25 March 2015 (Djamanca, 2023). In February 2016, President [Erdoğan](#) paid an official return visit to [Abidjan](#) accompanied by a large Turkish delegation, and several additional agreements of cooperation in a wide range of activities, including economy, education, security and technology development were retained. The Ivory Coast is the largest trade partner of Turkey in [Francophone SSA](#)¹². Turkey's approach to Côte d'Ivoire, francophone West Africa's largest economy, follows its approach to Senegal, although on a smaller scale. Turkey's focus in Côte d'Ivoire is a cement manufacturing plant established by Limak Cement Group in 2018, with an annual production capacity of 1 m tons and 1 m cubic metres of ready-mixed concrete. It is meant to service the growing construction activities in the whole West African region (Tanchum, 2021).

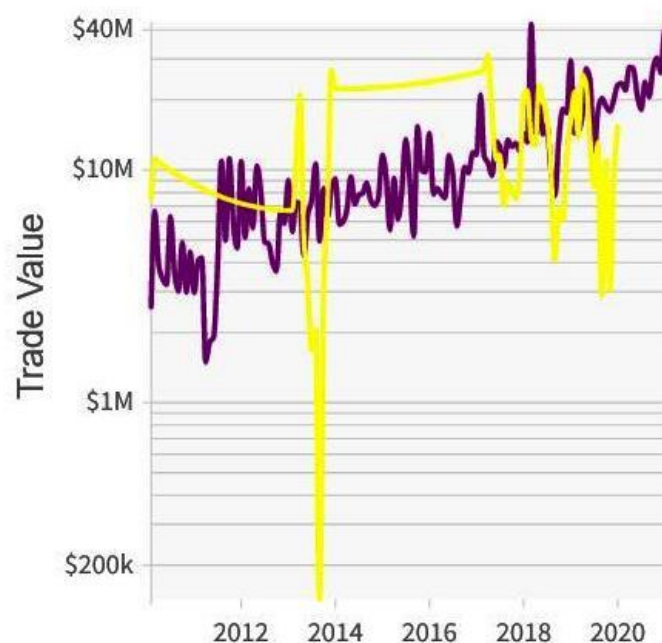
¹¹ [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), Republic of Turkey, 2023, accessed: 30 May 2023

¹² [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), Republic of Turkey, 2023, accessed: 30 May 2023

The Ivory Coast's rapprochement with the Islamic world from 2001 onwards was documented by joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation ([OIC](#)), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([ISESCO](#)), the Islamic Development Bank ([IDB](#)) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa ([BADEA](#)). Similar to Nigeria and Ghana, the Ivorian-Turkish relationship extended to non-economic sectors of activity, in particular education, charitable service and Islam. Far from becoming radicalized and despite increasing levels of activism, the country's Salafi elites and main national associations demonstrated civic engagement and opposition to terrorism. They also increased their participation in socio-economic activities as well as their willingness to act as an intermediary between the Muslim community and the country's political leadership (Madore, 2016).

Again, the [Gülen Movement](#), known as *Hizmet* (literally 'service' in Turkish) played a decisive role. The *Şafak* (literally 'dawn' in Turkish) International School Group, an avant-garde initiative of the Turkish presence on Ivorian soil, opened in Abidjan in 2006. It was part of a network of sympathizers grouped within the Confederation of Entrepreneurs [TUSKON](#) (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists). It accommodated children from the middle-class, and families in difficult circumstances, and served as a stepping-stone for charitable organizations affiliated with movements such as *Kimse Yok Mu* and *Timetohelp*. This educational project later split into various activity programs ranging from humanitarian to Islam, was quite similar to that of the 'civilizing mission' of the European colonizing empires, [Portugal](#), [Spain](#), [Great Britain](#) and [France](#) that served to train a local elite who, in this case, eventually would form the spearhead of 'Turkishness'. Thus, the Turks resumed the role of [Lebanese](#), [Burkinabè](#), [Maliens](#) and [Nigerian](#) entrepreneurs in the Ivorian community, however in this case often with an ambition of geopolitical positioning (Binaté, 2019).

Graph 15: Trade between Turkey (yellow) and Ivory Coast (purple) (US\$ m)

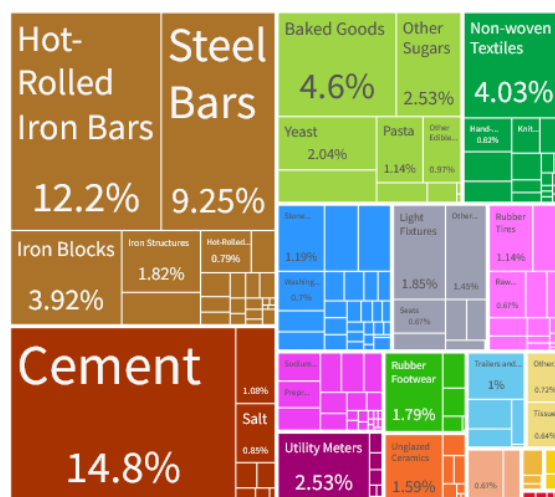


Source: [oec.world](#), 2023

Bilateral economic and commercial relations were established by the Agreement on Economic and Trade Cooperation of 2005. Ankara considers Ivory Coast as one of its top six trading partners in SSA and the largest trading partner within French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. An Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation on Income Taxes and Prevention of Tax

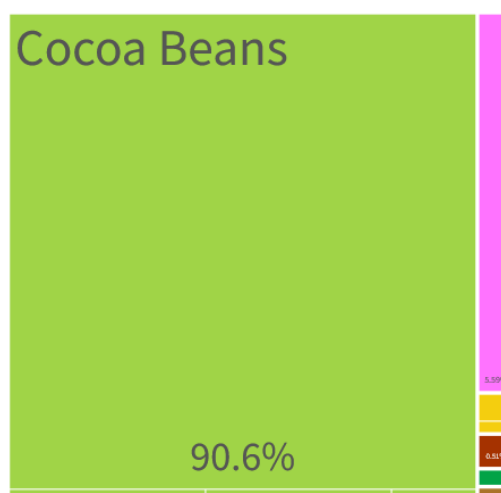
Evasion was signed on February 2016 but has not entered into force for now. Also, an Agreement on Mutual Encouragement of Investments has not been ratified by the national parliaments so far (Djamanca, 2023).

Graph 16: Turkey's exports to Ivory Coast by major commodity group
total US\$ 23,5 m February 2021



Source: oec.world, 2023

Graph 17: Ivory Coast's exports to Turkey, by major commodity group
total US\$ 15,3 m, Dec. 2019



Source: oec.world, 2023

As in other West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana, the student mobility initiated by the Turkish government's policy of internationalization, allowed thousands of young people to leave for Ankara, Istanbul or Konya, making Turkey a new player on the global scene of educational exchanges (Binaté, 2021). In a context of repeated crises in higher education and cultural attraction of the countries of the North, Africans found in the Turkish student mobility programs a real alternative to traditional destinations, like France, Britain, Germany and the United States. West African students, including Ivoirians, largely managed to integrate into the Turkish society that is rather restricted to outsiders, notably from SSA, and this despite purges that occurred following the military-political events between the Ankara

government and the Gülen movement in July 2016. This student mobility sometimes dismissed as an unjustified 'brain drain', developed as an economic and social win-win situation for both sides (Binaté, 2021).

Graph 18: West African students in Turkey by country, 2013-2018

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Bénin	24	50	88	110	115
Burkina Faso	55	108	123	144	153
Cap-Vert	1	2	3	2	–
Côte d'Ivoire	22	57	89	132	159
Gambie	48	79	104	133	151
Ghana	155	264	312	351	362
Guinée	138	206	217	262	448
Guinée-Bissau	38	60	57	76	101
Libéria	23	44	62	73	80
Mali	140	271	348	353	308
Mauritanie	82	129	151	168	177
Niger	108	163	206	208	214
Nigeria	876	1176	1392	1287	1296
Sénégal	105	135	177	171	163
Sierra Leone	12	24	36	47	54
Togo	28	46	63	71	73
Total	1 855	2 814	3 428	3 588	3 854

Source : Türkiye'de Sahraaltı Afrikalı Öğrenci Hareketliliği (2014-2018). Consulté le 6 décembre 2019

Source : Binaté, 2021

4. Conclusion

During twenty years in power, the Turkish [Erdogan](#) government, the ruling party, the [AKP](#), and its (former) allies like the [Gülen movement](#) established a consolidated distinctive foreign policy as a global player, particularly in [Africa](#). Given the upcoming presidential elections on 14 May 2023, the question is, whether this policy will continue, even in the unlikely case that the opposition candidate [Kemal Kiliçdaroglu](#), nominated by six opposition parties, and his party, the [CHP](#) (Republican People's Party, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP) should take the helm (Dedet, 2023). Would he, for example, stop supporting the [Tripoli government](#) against [Marshal Khalifa Haftar](#)? Would Kiliçdaroglu continue [Turkish occupation in northern Syria](#) or would he reconnect with the regime of [Bashar al-Assad](#)? (Dedet, 2023). Kemal Kiliçdaroglu has a long-standing interest in SSA, notably the geo-strategically important Horn of Africa, as proved by his engagement in Somalia as early as 2011 (Abdulle, 2019). Although little is known on the CHP's approach to foreign policy it is highly unlikely that its foreign and economic policy vis à vis SSA would change substantially. The economic interest of barons of the Turkish industry in SSA weights too strong to allow for marked differences (Öztürk, 2022).

As shown above, the major traits of the Turkish agenda toward [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) followed a novel paradigm of sustainability development, the so-called 'Ankara consensus'. The inner-Turkish political dispute is intimately related to industrialization and democratization. An unwarranted attention to the supposedly religious conflict would obscure the underlying intolerant Sunni-Turkish nationalism cultivated by the Turkish state (Ærenlund Sørensen, 2012). The effects of this paradigm will continue to shape the decisions, policies, and perceptions of the Turkish political elite vis-à-vis Africa for the foreseeable future (Donelli, 2018)

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Résumé : *[La Turquie soutient-elle le développement Le développement durable en Afrique subsaharienne ?]* - Aux XIXe et XXe siècles, la Turquie ne considérait que l'Afrique du Nord comme une partie substantielle de l'Empire ottoman et négligeait l'Afrique subsaharienne à moins que des intérêts vitaux ne soient en jeu. Cependant, l'apathie des gouvernements turcs successifs a changé avec le « Plan d'action pour l'Afrique » de 1998. Depuis lors, l'État turc a intensifié ses interactions diplomatiques, politiques, économiques et culturelles avec l'Afrique subsaharienne. Les relations turco-africaines ont reçu un nouvel élan lorsqu'Ankara a déclaré 2005 « l'Année de l'Afrique ». Bien que la région à prédominance musulmane de l'Afrique du Nord soit au centre de la politique étrangère turque en raison de leur histoire commune, l'importance de la région subsaharienne a également augmenté en raison de la demande croissante de fournitures militaires et médicales. Depuis 2005, Ankara promeut la construction de l'État en Afrique subsaharienne, bien qu'elle ne suive pas les politiques de démocratisation occidentales. L'implication économique, politique et sécuritaire croissante de la Turquie en Afrique vise à ouvrir de nouveaux marchés pour ses produits manufacturés, en particulier ses industries de sécurité et de défense. En se présentant comme une puissance régionale pertinente sans lest colonial, la Turquie se démarque des acteurs occidentaux traditionnels sur le continent. L'engagement de la Turquie en Afrique subsaharienne diffère nettement de celui d'autres puissances émergentes telles que le Brésil, la Russie, l'Inde, la Chine et l'Afrique du Sud. Alors qu'Ankara partageait le mépris des sanctions occidentales en raison des déficits démocratiques des membres du BRICS, elle est allée au-delà des relations traditionnelles d'État à État et s'est de plus en plus appuyée sur la coopération avec des acteurs non-étatiques. Les partenaires africains apprécient les produits et l'expertise turcs. En outre, Ankara a adopté une approche coordonnée pour travailler avec les États et les dirigeants africains, évitant les enchevêtrements avec des organisations internationales ou d'autres alliances, comme en Somalie et au Kenya, mais plus récemment dans une grande partie de l'Afrique de l'Est, du Sud et de l'Ouest. Ceci est illustré à l'aide de l'exemple des trois pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest, le Nigeria, le Ghana et la Côte d'Ivoire.

Zusammenfassung : *[Unterstützt die Türkei die nachhaltige Entwicklung in Afrika südlich der Sahara?]* – Im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert betrachtete die Türkei nur Nordafrika als einen wesentlichen Teil des Osmanischen Reiches und vernachlässigte Afrika südlich der Sahara, es sei denn, es standen lebenswichtige Interessen auf dem Spiel. Die Apathie aufeinanderfolgender türkischer Regierungen änderte sich jedoch mit dem „Afrika-Aktionsplan“ von 1998. Seitdem hat der türkische Staat seine diplomatischen, politischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Interaktionen mit Subsahara-Afrika intensiviert. Einen weiteren Schub erhielten die türkisch-afrikanischen Beziehungen, als Ankara 2005 zum „Jahr Afrikas“ erklärte. Obwohl die überwiegend muslimische Region Nordafrikas aufgrund der gemeinsamen Geschichte im Fokus der türkischen Außenpolitik steht, hat die Bedeutung der Subsahara-Region auch aufgrund der wachsenden Nachfrage nach militärischen und medizinischen Gütern zugenommen. Seit 2005 betreibt Ankara Förderung in Form von Staatsaufbau in Subsahara-Afrika, obwohl es nicht der westlichen Demokratisierungspolitik folgt. Das wachsende wirtschaftliche, politische und sicherheitspolitische Engagement der Türkei in Afrika zielt darauf ab, neue Märkte für seine Industriegüter zu erschließen, insbesondere für seine Verteidigungs- und Rüstungsindustrie. Indem es sich als relevante Regionalmacht ohne kolonialen Ballast präsentiert, grenzt sich die Türkei von traditionellen westlichen Akteuren auf dem Kontinent ab. Das Engagement der Türkei in Subsahara-Afrika unterschied sich deutlich von dem anderer aufstrebender Mächte wie Brasilien, Russland, Indien, China und Südafrika. Während Ankara die Missachtung westlicher Sanktionen aufgrund demokratischer Defizite der BRICS-Mitglieder teilte, ging es über herkömmliche Staat-zu-Staat-Beziehungen hinaus und setzte zunehmend auf die Zusammenarbeit mit nichtstaatlichen Akteuren. Afrikanische Partner schätzen türkische Produkte und Expertise. Darüber hinaus hat Ankara einen koordinierten Ansatz zur Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Staaten und Führern gewählt und Verstrickungen mit internationalen Organisationen oder anderen Allianzen vermieden, wie in Somalia und Kenia, aber in jüngerer Zeit auch in weiten Teilen Ost-, Süd- und Westafrikas. Dies wird am Beispiel der drei westafrikanischen Staaten Nigeria, Ghana und Elfenbeinküste gezeigt.