

SOFT PENETRATION AND CLEAN INFILTRATION AS A NEW TURKISH STRATEGY IN AFRICA (ECONOMIC DIMENSION AND GEOSTRATEGIC APPROACH)

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Abstract:

The African continent, particularly the North African region, is one of the areas most susceptible to international and regional trends, given its significance in international politics, not to mention its strategic and geostrategic importance. Following the Arab Spring revolutions, waves of political reform and changes in most North African countries, the region has become a prominent subject in strategic studies. This region is a key factor in the balance of power in the area as a whole.

INTRODUCTION:

Turkish-African relations are characterised by numerous contradictions, particularly in the wake of political reforms and the Arab Spring revolutions. These relations encompass negative and positive aspects simultaneously. For example, there is a prevailing conflict in Turkish-Libyan relations, alongside cooperation in certain areas, particularly economic cooperation. This is influenced by historical and religious affiliations, as well as security and military ties with some countries. This complexity largely stems from the lack of a unified North African strategy.


Discourse surrounding the nature of the North African regional system, its components, and its mechanisms has begun to evolve, as have its concept and boundaries. There have been numerous attempts to dissociate the Arab political identity from the concept of the African regional system, with the aim of making the region more open and less constrained by a geopolitical system that governs its interactions. Additionally, many regional projects have emerged, proposing general frameworks for the region's future, and serving as practical alternatives to the Arab Maghreb Union. These projects attempt to integrate various actors into the political landscape, thereby granting them a say in regional affairs, similar to the influence held by the United States, Europe, Russia, and Turkey.

This raises several questions about the region's strategic balances in light of Turkish-North African relations and how these relate to international and regional developments, as well as the political changes witnessed by most North African countries. However, amid evolving Western-African relations, the most significant question concerning Turkish-African security theory is: What internal, regional and international factors determine the foreign policies and ideological orientations of North African countries and Turkey? Are these changes driven by internal factors or by current and future international and regional repercussions? What are the potential scenarios for these relations? Can the economic dimension rectify the corruption caused by politics?

In order to address these questions and reach conclusions that will benefit Turkish-African relations, we will focus on the following points:

- determinants of Turkish-African relations (economic, security and geostrategic factors);
- Internal, regional and international variables and their implications for Turkish-African relations (the foundations of Turkish and African foreign policymaking).
- Towards a forward-looking vision for Turkish-African relations.

Axis One: Justifications for Turkish Interest in Africa (A Study of Variables and Determinants)



The shift in Turkish foreign policy, particularly since the rise of the Justice and Development Party, is based on a new geopolitical perspective from a Turkish viewpoint. The perception of developments and events occurring and accelerating both regionally and internationally has changed in light of different balances, criteria and frameworks. This intellectual shift is the result of both foreign policy evolution and internal reforms.

Security and Geostrategic Justifications:

The rapid international and regional developments, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, have significantly influenced the formulation of a Turkish foreign policy that reflects these changes.

Today, Turkey views its region and the world differently. Today, Turkey views its region and the world differently to how it did before, and naturally, this will also be reflected in its approach to foreign policy towards Africa, leading to a fundamental transformation.

Observers of Turkish foreign policy note that Turkey has turned its attention to the African continent in response to prolonged tensions with the European Union¹. This shift in Turkish-African relations was evident when 51 out of 53 African countries voted in favour of Turkey at the UN Security Council in October 2008, helping it to secure a non-permanent seat. The African Union approved Turkey's observer membership and later elevated its status to that of a strategic partner in 2008. This was also the year that the first Turkish-African summit was held, attended by nearly 50 African countries², which reinforced Turkey's implementation of a new policy of 'soft penetration' towards Africa, aimed at enhancing relations in various fields³.

Hosted by Turkey from 18 to 21 August 2008, the Istanbul Summit is considered one of the most significant summits in the history of contemporary relations between Turkey and Africa. Focusing on 'solidarity and partnership for a shared future', it aimed to develop bilateral relations in various areas. Turkey announced its intention to open embassies across the African continent, enhance diplomatic representation and increase commercial and scientific exchanges by offering scholarships to Africans⁴.

While Turkish-African relations are not entirely new, this engagement marks a significant economic turning point. Despite Turkey's historical interest in Africa dating back to 1998, these ties have become more pronounced since the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002.

The Turkish strategy towards the African continent is based on a new vision that positions Turkey as a regional power with significant regional and even international standing. Therefore, it should not overlook areas of influence and conflict among major powers, especially in the Middle East and Africa, and should not continue to focus its foreign policy solely on Asia and the Caucasus.

In December 2015, the "African Partnership and Creative Thinking Summit" was held in Istanbul, marking the first session of the "Turkish-African Ideas Shield." The conference discussed forms of cooperation between the two parties on various political, economic, and security levels.

Istanbul also organized an economic forum between Africa and Turkey in November 2016, bringing together African and Turkish business leaders and prominent economic figures. The Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board established business councils with 35 African countries to develop trade

¹- Dalila Amara, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy and Its Importance in Assessing Turkey's Role Regionally and Internationally," *Journal of Political and Administrative Research*, Ziane Achour University, No. 13, 2019, p. 35.

²- Dilella Amara, *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³- Lotfi Sour, "Dimensions of Turkish Foreign Policy in Africa During the Justice and Development Government," *Journal of African Studies and the Nile Basin*, Democratic Arab Center, Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2018, p. 69.

⁴- Khalid Bakaas, "Turkish-African Relations after 2002: A New Turkish Government and a Different Bilateral Reality," *Journal of Legal and Political Sciences*, No. 15, January 2017, p. 146.

relations. In Antalya, a meeting was held in April 2017 for the agricultural ministers of African Union countries and their Turkish counterparts.

In 2017, the "Health in Africa" conference was organized, attended by health ministers from the African Union and numerous Turkish and African health institutions. The aim was to address the challenges facing the African health sector and work on finding solutions, as well as providing Turkish aid and equipment¹.

Economic Justifications and Determinants

The Turkish approach towards Africa has emerged from internal political changes in Turkey and shifts in the global economic landscape. These internal changes aim to transform the traditional Turkish economy by identifying alternative trade routes within the global economy. Consequently, Turkey is seeking to establish multifaceted relations, particularly in the economic realm, with not only neighbouring countries, but also distant nations with which it shares political and economic ties. Therefore, Turkey's engagement with Africa has become a fundamental aspect of its foreign policy.

Africa is a testament to changes in Turkish foreign policy, reflecting the geopolitical vision of its leaders, particularly since the Justice and Development Party came to power. This new strategy, 'clean penetration', has transformed the nature of Turkish-African relations and serves as a model for Turkey's diplomatic openness.

Given that the current trend in international relations is characterised by economic and ideological elements, the Turkish leadership has adopted this approach in its strategies towards Asia and Africa. Turkey has become a development partner in Africa for several reasons, including:

1. Using the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA): This is the Turkish government's development cooperation agency, with coordination offices in 20 countries. It operates across Africa, Asia and Europe, providing developmental assistance through its projects and activities.
2. Leveraging the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON): This organisation facilitates annual meetings that bring together business leaders and heads of chambers of commerce from Turkey and African countries. The third such meeting was hosted in Istanbul under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of Commerce and Foreign Affairs from 3 to 17 May 2008.
3. Relying on its membership of the African Development Bank: The African Development Bank is the largest financial institution in Africa. It accepted Turkey as a member, enabling Turkey to contribute to the bank's capital and support its economic operations on the continent².
4. The establishment of the Turkish-African Forum: This forum meets regularly at a senior level to enhance and monitor relations between the two parties in various fields.

Currently, Turkey is focused on meeting its energy needs (oil and natural gas), as these resources are almost non-existent within its borders. Here, Africa could be a valuable partner, providing Turkey with the energy it needs at preferential prices. Oil constitutes 44% of Turkey's energy consumption. Turkey currently produces around 5.2 million tonnes of crude oil per year, accounting for 7% of its total oil consumption. However, given that Turkey's annual consumption is around 30 million tons, it faces a 93% oil deficit relative to its actual annual needs³.

Therefore, Turkey's focus on Africa as a source of natural resources, particularly oil and natural gas, is not only necessary, but also urgent, in order to secure this valuable energy source. This is

¹ - Khalid Bakaas, *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²- Lotfi Sour, "Dimensions of Turkish Foreign Policy in Africa During the Justice and Development Government," *Journal of African Studies and the Nile Basin*, Op. cit., pp. 72-73.

³- David Shinn, "Turkey's Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa: Shifting Alliances and Strategic Diversification," Research Paper, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, September 2015, p. 32.

especially important given that, according to figures from 2010 to 2015, Africa produces over 10 million barrels of oil daily, accounting for around 11% of global oil production.

These figures encourage Turkey to open more economic avenues towards Africa, particularly as its energy needs continue to grow alongside its current economic growth rate of no less than 5% annually – one of the highest in the world.

Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA):

As the strongest executive tool of Turkish foreign policy, TIKA serves as Turkey's presence on the African continent, acting as the main channel through which Turkish aid is distributed to various countries in the region. This agency plays a key role in Turkey's strategic planning for expanding its influence. TIKA opened its first African office in Ethiopia in 2005, and has since established 21 branches across the continent, managing long-term development projects in various sectors.

Consequently, TIKA has successfully implemented numerous development projects in 40 African countries. Between 2013 and 2014¹, Turkey provided \$3.3 billion in humanitarian aid to Africa, making it the third-largest international donor to the continent. This was complemented by an eightfold increase in the value of deals between Turkish companies and African partners, reaching \$6.2 billion in 2016. By contrast, Turkish exports to Africa totalled \$159.7 billion in 2016.

Axis Two: Foundations of Turkish-African Foreign Policy (Determinants of Bilateral Relations)

Turkish Foreign Policy:

A political term, foreign policy refers to a state's external relations and diplomacy with other countries, whether neighbouring or non-neighbouring². In most countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for organising this policy. It is one of the activities through which the state seeks to achieve its objectives within the international community. The state is considered the basic unit in the international system, qualified to practise foreign policy due to its sovereignty, as well as its material and military capabilities.

According to Roland Oulton, foreign policy is defined as the approach to planning developed by state decision-makers towards other countries or international units, with the aim of achieving specific objectives within the framework of national interest. Five key factors determine foreign policy in any state: geographic location, population size, natural resources, military power and moral authority, and the internal system of the state³.

B. Foreign Policy Trends:

A state's foreign policy direction depends on how its national interests align with that direction, taking into account the state's internal circumstances and the surrounding regional and international realities. A state's foreign policy trends may vary based on its strategic location, importance to other countries, and effectiveness both regionally and internationally⁴.

First: Regional-global orientation:

A state's foreign policy is directed according to its geographic area in a regional orientation. Some countries focus their foreign policy on their own region and pay little attention to issues far away. This orientation is accompanied by the state presenting itself as a regional leader, which is an important national image. Such countries have significant and diverse capabilities compared to

¹- Ali Bilgic and Daniela Nascimento, "Turkey's New Focus on Africa: Causes and Challenges," Policy Brief, Loughborough University Institutional Repository, September 2014, p. 26.

²- Mohammed Riyad, General Foundations in Political Geography and Geopolitics: An Applied Study on the Middle East, Hindawi Publishing Corporation, Cairo, 2012, p. 114.

³- Jillian Palmer and Clifton Morgan, Theories of Foreign Policy, translated by Abdul Salam Ali Al-Nuwair, King Saud University, Riyadh, 2011, p. 65.

⁴- Mohammed Abdul Ghani Saoudi, Geography and International Issues, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, Lebanon, 2008, p. 92.



other states in the region, making them regional powers with special responsibilities. These states utilise their capabilities to play an active role at the regional level. Notable examples of countries seeking this role include Turkey and Iran, both of which seek to influence issues in the Middle East¹.

In contrast, a global orientation involves directing foreign policy towards international units outside one's own region. The interests of these states are spread across various countries worldwide and encompass multiple regions. The United States is an example of a country with this orientation, especially since the end of World War II. It directs its foreign policy towards several areas of the world and maintains an active presence in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe.

Second: Orientation of Acknowledging or Changing Current International Relations:

This classification distinguishes between a foreign policy that seeks to affirm the current pattern of international relations, and one that aims to change it to an idealised version. This orientation applies not only to regional issues, but to all international matters across the globe. As this orientation expands, certain aspects of international reality shift, including patterns of international alliances, the structure of international economic relations and power dynamics among states.

Key policies that affirm the existing situation to some extent include neutrality and non-alignment policies. These were adopted by countries that were independent of the two competing blocs during the Cold War. They enable states to play an active independent role, as neutral and non-aligned states gain credibility with all parties, which they can leverage for the cause of international peace and stability.

Conversely, policies that aim to change the current state of international relations include alliance and bloc policies. Each alliance seeks to encompass as many countries as possible in order to strengthen its control over vital positions and prevent the opposing alliance from doing the same².

Third: interventionist and non-interventionist orientation:

While the previous two orientations were classified according to a state's foreign policy goals, this orientation classifies foreign policy based on the tools employed by a state to implement its policies. It refers to the extent to which an international unit uses interventionist tools to influence other international units.

Interventionists seek to influence the policies of other international units by affecting the existing political power structure within them. This approach is often adopted by major powers and regional states that constantly seek to expand their influence and maintain their national interests beyond their own borders³.

In contrast, the non-interventionist orientation also attempts to influence the policies of other international units, but without intervening in the political power structure. This approach is usually adopted by countries with balanced foreign policies that strive to achieve their minimum interests without resorting to intervention, instead relying on formal agreements.

Discussing these three foreign policy orientations individually does not imply that a state adopting one cannot also adopt another. These three patterns of foreign policy orientation can overlap within a global approach that aims to affirm the current situation in an interventionist manner.


Foundations of Turkish Foreign Policy

1. Geopolitical location:

¹- Mohammed Arabi Ladami, "Foreign Policy (A Study in Concepts, Trends, and Determinants)," Democratic Arab Center, December 27, 2016, p. 14..

²- Mohammed Arabi Ladami, Foreign Policy, Op. cit., p. 16.

³- Haile Abd Al-Mawla Tashtosh, The Modern Encyclopedia of Political and Economic Terms, Dar Hamid Publishing, Jordan, 2012, p. 65.



Its geopolitical location is a fundamental pillar of Turkish foreign policy and a key entry point, significantly determining its external behaviour. Turkey's strategic importance is evident in its unique geopolitical position. Turkey covers an area of 783,562 km² and has a population of around 80.3 million. It is surrounded by the Aegean Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south, as well as the Sea of Marmara in the north-west¹.

By controlling the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, Turkey effectively manages the only maritime passageway for ships from Bulgaria, Romania and Russia en route to global ports. This makes Turkey, alongside the Suez Canal and Bab el-Mandeb, a pivotal component of the global strategic landscape.

2. Military capability:

Turkey has adopted a policy of achieving self-sufficiency in weapons production through local manufacturing. This approach has had a positive impact on its economic capabilities, enabling Turkey to establish itself as a major arms supplier, particularly to Gulf countries and East Asian nations. In 2015, the Turkish Defence and Security Technology Research Team announced that the country had allocated 41 million Turkish lira to three major new defence industry projects, with the aim of achieving self-reliance in local production and reducing dependence on foreign sources².

Turkish defence exports reached approximately \$600 million in 2008, doubling to \$1.2 billion by the end of 2012. By 2013, over 500 companies were operating in the military sector, exporting goods worth \$1.5 billion. It was anticipated that Turkish defence exports would surpass \$8 billion by 2020.

3. Economic capabilities:

The Turkish economy is considered one of the most dynamic in the world. It ranks 16th globally, with an estimated gross national income of around \$423 billion. It contributes around \$99 billion to global trade, making it the largest economy in the Balkans and the Middle East. As previously mentioned, Turkey's strategic location between Europe and Asia has enabled it to become a hub for international trade by controlling key straits³.

Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy

1. Strategic Depth

This concept was first introduced by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who emphasised that Turkish foreign policy should be based on geopolitical factors and the country's cultural, social, economic and historical ties with its geographical surroundings⁴. This approach positions Turkey within the sphere of regional and international influence.

2. Centrality of Regional and International Role (New Diplomatic Approach):

This concept encompasses two key elements: the notion of Turkey as a geographical, cultural and political bridge between East and West, and Turkey's role as a constructive or pivotal force in rebalancing regional and international power. This approach signifies Turkey's transformation from a bridge state to an active player, enabling it to engage in cooperative economic projects with neighbouring countries and those with shared interests, with the aim of achieving economic integration (joint empowerment policy).

3. Soft power (harmonious diplomacy):

¹- Ma'arouf Al-Bakheet, "The Turkish Role and Regional Changes," Al-Rai Center for Studies, Jordan, 2010, p. 19.

²- Iman Deni, "The Turkish Regional Role in the Middle East After the Cold War," Al-Wafa Legal Library, Alexandria, 2015, p. 78.

³- Ali Hassan Bakir et al., Turkey Between Domestic Challenges and External Stakes, Madbouli Library, Cairo, 1st ed., 2010, p. 32.

⁴- Ahmet Davutoglu, Strategic Depth: Turkey's Place and Role in the International Arena, translated by Mohamed Jaber Thalji and Tarek Abdel Jalil, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2nd ed., 2001, p. 612.

Turkey has made a significant diplomatic leap through its membership of various international organisations, using diplomatic and economic foundations to play an active and distinguished regional and international role¹.

4. Harmony between East and West:

Turkish foreign policy engages with Eastern countries based on history, culture and identity, while engaging with Western countries from a Western perspective emphasising democracy, civil governance and shared economic interests. Evidence of this can be seen in Turkey's pursuit of EU membership alongside its relations with Russia and Balkan countries, which has led to Turkish foreign policy being characterised as multidimensional.

Second: African Foreign Policy (Collective Security Policies and Adapting to Changing Security Standards)

First: Concept of Regional Security:

The regional approach is linked to the model of European unity, where the relationship between security and regional cooperation is emphasized. Barry Buzan was the first to introduce this term in his book *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*², marking the beginning of a transformation in the traditional concepts of security in the analysis of international relations. This shift moves the focus from the national level to the regional level, concentrating primarily on security dynamics that transcend national borders, such that local security stability is influenced by events in the surrounding regional area³.

Moreover, the concept of power in the fundamentals of regional security is relative, depending on the stability and changes within the internal environment. Fragile states or those experiencing instability, insecurity, or internal conflicts become arenas for competition among various external powers, particularly neighboring ones. Consequently, security policies vary from one region to another based on the nature and characteristics of the existing environment, as well as the nature of society regarding modernization and sociological cohesion.

This is particularly evident in African countries, which have become theaters for international and regional rivalries due to their weak internal structures. They represent geographical spaces rife with various crises, whether political, economic, social, or cultural. This situation is primarily attributed to several factors, including the legitimacy of political leaders in Africa, a lack of political experience (most presidents come from military backgrounds), the diversity of ethnicities, and issues related to economic and social development.

Therefore, it has become essential for African countries, especially those in the Sahel region (considered the most susceptible to international competition), to establish a common regional security system to collectively address these transnational threats, particularly regarding terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration.

Security interdependence:

Security interdependence is a fundamental pillar of regional security due to its influence on geographical proximity. The units comprising the region are constrained by regional borders and align their security policies with those of the region, given their limited military and political capabilities. This situation reinforces the regional security system rather than transcending it.

¹- Mohammed Zahid Gul, *The Turkish Renaissance Experience*, Nama Center for Research and Studies, Beirut, 2013, p. 54.

²- Kevin Clements, "The Strategic Logic of Terrorism: Violent and Non-Violent Responses in Dynamic Alliances," Gulf Research Center, 2006, p. 220.

³- John Lloyd Johnson, *Interpreting Foreign Policy*, translated by Mohammed bin Ahmad Mufti and Mohammed Sayyed Salim, King Saud University, Riyadh, 1999, p. 210.



Security interdependence unifies regional security policies, as it is impossible to establish a regional security environment among states without effective security relations. These relations must respond to changes at internal, regional or international levels. Any impact on one unit within the region will affect other states to varying degrees. This contagion operates according to the snowball principle, whereby the core of regional security lies in interlinkage and mutual influence¹.

This is a necessary response to the principle of penetration, whereby competing regional and international states seek to infiltrate Africa's common or collective security system to protect their interests. They do this by formulating security arrangements with regional powers within the regional security framework. However, this penetration can only occur if internal motivations arise from within the regional security system itself. These motivations are typically manifested through opportunities created by elements of the regional security system that allow for the intervention of international actors. Such opportunities often arise from threats to the balance of power or control over vital economic areas. After all, all African states, especially those in the Sahel region, possess economic resources that are vital to the global economy.

Second: the African Security Strategy.

This refers to a joint planning process aimed at utilising the resources of African countries. In reality, however, there is no unified African security strategy; rather, each African country has its own specific strategy. The levels of security in Africa can be divided into three categories:²

Level One: Local or Internal Security Level:

This level focuses on the security of each African country within its political borders and existing political commitments. It includes internal security measures and addresses external threats to ensure stability.

Level Two: Sub-regional security level:

This level focuses on the security of a limited number of African countries, such as those in the Arab Maghreb Union. Security at this level assumes broader convergence among these countries with regard to their understanding of threat sources and their capacity to mobilise forces jointly³.

Level Three: Regional African Security Level:

This level focuses on a comprehensive concept of security across the entire African continent. It assumes a collective agreement among African countries on sources of threats and strategies to confront them.

All of these factors necessitate the adoption of bilateral and collective policies by African countries to enhance and protect their internal and regional security. Some African countries, such as Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa, have adopted security policies and arrangements that align with the current regional and international circumstances. These countries have proposed significant mediation initiatives to resolve conflicts at the African level. These policies and arrangements align with the internal conditions of each country while taking into account the current regional and international situation, as well as the international competition for influence on the continent, particularly in the Sahel region.

¹- Iain Clark, "Globalization and the Post-Cold War Order," in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, edited by John Baylis and Steve Smith, 2nd ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 95.

²- Ahmed Taleb Absir, "Mutual Security Dependence and Security Strategy in the Sahel Region," Abdelhamid Ben Badis University, Mostaganem, n.d., p. 11.

³- Abdel Salam Qareeq, "Humanitarian Intervention as a Means of Control in Africa," *Dafaner Journal of Politics and Law*, Qasdi Merbah University, No. 9, June 2013, p. 18.



One of the most notable examples of African efforts to enhance joint security cooperation is the Algiers Agreement to Combat Terrorism of 1999. This is because terrorism is considered one of the most pressing transnational and cross-continental issues that African countries have faced.

Third: Determinants of the Future of African Security Integration and the Importance of the Turkish Role.

When discussing the regional security strategy in Africa, we emphasised that it consists of joint policies that utilise the resources of African countries to ensure the security of each country individually ('locally') as well as the security of the African continent ('regionally'). The primary foundation of this strategy is identifying transnational and cross-continental threats that could destabilise the African security system. In order to effectively confront these threats, African countries must:

1. Support democratic transformation:

This involves realising democratic principles by legitimising the governing political systems in African countries and establishing constitutional institutions capable of enforcing and ensuring the rule of law.

2. Achieve balanced sustainable development.

Development must encompass all regions of the state. The Arab Spring revealed weaknesses in civil society and political parties, necessitating development that addresses political, economic and social needs, and fosters integration.

3. Establish a Regional African Security Council:

This council would address the common threats and risks facing African countries and enable the activation of a joint security strategy.

4. Reevaluate dependence on external actors:

A serious and robust approach is required with regard to reliance on external parties to resolve internal crises and conflicts. So far, African regional organisations have struggled to resolve disputes, whether between neighbouring countries or between African states and external parties. There is a need to empower regional organisations in Africa by granting them the necessary authority to peacefully resolve conflicts.

5. Reduce foreign military presence:

There should be a decrease in the number of foreign military personnel in African countries and an end to the establishment of foreign military bases, as this could undermine national sovereignty and increase strategic competition.

The future of Turkey's role in Africa hinges on two main factors. The first is the stance of the European Union towards Turkey, particularly with regard to Turkey's potential accession to the EU. European reluctance is considered one of the key reasons why Turkish foreign policy has shifted towards Africa, in order to ensure the continuity of its regional and international influence. The second factor is the growing tension in Turkey's relations with most countries on the eastern shore, particularly in the Middle East, following the events known as the Arab Spring, and the differing positions and perspectives of the parties involved.

Turkey has used regional organisations to demonstrate its strength, primarily derived from its growing economic capabilities, in order to extend its influence through soft power and establish strong strategic partnerships with several African countries.

Turkey has carved out a space for itself in competition with other major global powers vying for influence in Africa. Turkey's strategy for the continent is based on a new vision from policy planning centres in Turkey. This vision views Turkey as a major regional power that should not be

distant from areas of influence and conflict between major powers in the Middle East and Africa. This vision advocates that Turkish foreign policy should not continue to focus solely on Central Asian countries and the Caucasus region.

Intertwining economic, cultural and humanitarian approaches has resulted in a soft diplomatic policy aimed at establishing a strong presence in Africa, leading to diplomatic relations with 47 African countries.

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