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## GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

TUNÇ DEMİRTAŞ

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Africa has long been a focal point of global competition, driven by its young, dynamic population and abundant natural resources. The shifting international order has further intensified the presence of both global and regional powers on the continent. In this context, Türkiye has distinguished itself by adopting a unique approach, the model partnership, emphasizing strategic partnerships and a human-centered, development-driven strategy. This approach has garnered significant attention, positioning Türkiye as a key actor in shaping Africa's future and fostering sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships.

Türkiye has taken significant steps in recent years to strengthen its relations with Africa and play a more active role. In this context, Türkiye's Africa policy is gradually developing with positive momentum. Türkiye's Africa policy is addressed in a wide range of economic, diplomatic, military, defense, security, intelligence, cultural and humanitarian dimensions.

Although the African continent is addressed as a holistic policy, it has various regional and sub-regional systems. In this context, first of all, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are evaluated as two main regions with different strategic priorities in Türkiye's policy development processes. Therefore, Sub-Saharan Africa is divided into various regional systems such as West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, and the Sahel Belt. Indeed, each region of Sub-Saharan Africa has differences, such as separate dynamics, cultural structures, historical experiences, civilizations, ethnic structures, and social dynamics. Apart from this, each region also has its sub-regional systems. In this context, sub-regional systems such as the Horn of Africa, the Rift Valley, the Great Lakes Region and the Lake Chad Basin stand out in pursuing more strategic policies. Türkiye strives to offer region-specific solutions that take into account local dynamics by following different strategies in these regions and sub-regional systems as needed. In this context, the strategies developed

by Türkiye for each region in Africa include an approach that emphasizes the need to take regional differences into account and is based on cooperation with local partners and the local people of each country. This situation allows Türkiye to establish more effective, long-term and sustainable relations by taking into account the dynamics in Africa.

Although Türkiye's relations with the African continent continued at a certain level throughout the Republican period, these relations were generally limited and low-profile. However, in the last twenty years, visionary and effective steps have begun to be taken in Türkiye's Africa policy. During this period, Türkiye adopted a comprehensive strategy to strengthen and diversify its relations with the continent and has made significant progress in economic cooperation, humanitarian aid, diplomatic representation, and security policies. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stands out as a driving force in Türkiye's increasing engagement towards Africa. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is the primary manager and implementer of the Africa policy. The active duties of the experienced diplomats of the Turkish Foreign Ministry in Africa for the last twenty years have made it possible to implement and coordinate Türkiye's Africa policy successfully.

Apart from these actors at the core, Türkiye's Africa policy has a wide range of institutions and tools. These institutions and tools consist of elements that can be combined as smart power. In addition, institutional platforms also have an essential place in Türkiye's relations with Africa. In this context, the "Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit," which was last held for the third time in 2021, the "Türkiye-Africa Media Summit" organized by the Presidency's Directorate of Communications in 2022, and the "Türkiye-Africa Business and Economy Forum," which was last held for the fourth time in 2023, are essential platforms. In addition, the strong participation of African countries in the third Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) held last year shows that Türkiye's diplomatic relations with the countries of the continent are deepening and the importance given to Türkiye's Africa policy is increasing, as well as the interest of African countries in Türkiye. By making its relations with African countries more visible on such multilateral platforms Türkiye strengthens its interactions and engagement with different regions of the continent and reinforces its positive image towards Africa in the international arena.

In this context, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) plays an active role in the continent with humanitarian aid and development projects, while the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMV) operates in the field of education, the African Culture House and Handicrafts Market (Africa Culture House), established in 2016 under the patronage of First Lady Emine Erdoğan, and the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) operate within the framework of cultural

diplomacy. In addition, institutions such as the Turkish Religious Foundation (TDV) and the Turkish Red Crescent carry out work to increase the quality of life for the local population with humanitarian aid and social support projects. Furthermore, Turkish Airlines (THY), which brings the continent together with the world, and media organizations such as *Anadolu Agency (AA)* and *TRT Afrika*, which make the continent's voice heard to the world, allow Türkiye's principled model to be introduced to the world and the "Türkiye" brand to expand its sphere of influence. In Türkiye's Africa policy, investments by the Turkish private sector and the presence of the business world on the continent also play an important role. In this context, investment and trade forums through business organizations and chambers of commerce, primarily the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), strengthen Türkiye's economic and trade relations.

In addition, Türkiye has the advantage of not having a colonial past and its own unique "Turkish Model" (model partnership) in its policies towards the continent. The Turkish Model covers many different areas, such as humanitarian aid, development cooperation, security cooperation, cultural diplomacy, education, and capacity building. As stated above, Africa stands out as a continent that attracts the attention of global powers with its young and dynamic population, rich natural resources, and strategic location. In this context, Türkiye aims to contribute to regional development and strengthen its interests by acting within the framework of the win-win and equal partnership principles in its relations with the continent. The multifaceted relations that Türkiye has developed in diplomatic and economic terms also aim to contribute to the peace and stability of the continent. In this direction, the Turkish Model offers a model based on cooperation and mutual benefit, unlike the competitive and generally unilateral policies of other actors in the continent. Furthermore, Türkiye aims to support sustainable development in Africa by adopting a long-term partnership perspective instead of achieving short-term results with humanitarian aid and development projects.

In addition, approaches to peace and stability on the continent, cooperation, and sharing of experiences are also developing a different relationship between Türkiye and African countries. In particular, the instabilities experienced in Türkiye's recent history and the fight against terrorism, as well as the most recent coup attempt on July 15, 2016, have caused Türkiye to transform its security policies in many areas. Especially after July 15, Türkiye has taken a determined stance against all threats it perceives domestically and beyond its borders and increased the operational capacity of its military. This situation has enabled Türkiye to successfully emerge from the struggle it has entered into with actors who aimed to confine Türkiye to its geography or even only within its borders and to focus its energy on domestic politics. Therefore, the experiences Türkiye has gained in this process and also in its relations with

African countries, have closely followed the breakthroughs it has made in the context of the defense industry.

Türkiye has restructured its security and defense policies over a wide range, from internal security to cross-border operations, and has begun to share its experiences in this area with African countries. Türkiye's transfer of its experience in ensuring security and stability to African countries is not limited to military and defense cooperation. There is also information and experience sharing in areas such as combating terrorism, preventing radicalization, and restructuring the security sector. Türkiye organizes military training, security consultancy, and police training with many African countries, especially Somalia, thus strengthening local security structures. In addition, Türkiye's counter-terrorism strategies and security reforms are a source of inspiration for many African countries, and Türkiye's experiences have a positive impact on the continent. While these security cooperations of Türkiye increase mutual trust in its relations with the countries of the continent, they also contribute to Türkiye's positioning as a regional security actor.

Within this framework it can be stated that Türkiye's presence, especially in regions under threat from instability and terrorism, such as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel Region, makes significant contributions to international efforts to ensure peace and security. Türkiye aims to increase the welfare of the local population and support regional stability through diplomatic initiatives and humanitarian aid projects carried out in these regions.

Deepening Türkiye's relations with Africa is of critical importance in terms of both economic development and increasing its influence in the international arena. In this context, the main objective of Türkiye's Africa policy is to contribute to the continent's economic development while diversifying Türkiye's strategic partnerships and becoming a more effective actor on a global scale. In its relations with Africa, Türkiye is not limited to trade and investment but also to cooperating in areas such as ensuring security and stability, humanitarian aid, and education, thus reinforcing its presence on the continent. In particular, security cooperation projects and military training programs developed to contribute to Africa's peace and security demonstrate Türkiye's commitment to the stability of the continent.

Africa is becoming increasingly central to Türkiye's strategic priorities. Indeed, in our age, where the "Century of Türkiye" and the "African Century" are being experienced together, the vision put forward by Türkiye in its African policy will lay the foundations for a strong and mutually beneficial cooperation between Türkiye and African countries and will contribute to the further strengthening of these relations in the future.

This edition of *Insight Turkey* delves into the intricacies of Türkiye-Africa relations within the framework of regional organizations and bilateral engagements, with a focus on the historical backdrop and recent advancements in Türkiye's Africa policy. Furthermore, the current edition of *Insight Turkey* touches upon the ongoing massacre in Gaza, that commenced on October 7, aiming to scrutinize the latest developments and multifaceted aspects of the escalating conflict. With this understanding, this issue contains eight research articles and five commentaries, three of which are off-topic.

In the first commentary, Ibrahim Mulushewa Eshete discusses Türkiye's increasing importance and its focus on the East African region and its relations with international organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC), examining the opportunities and challenges that characterize its interactions with these regions, assessing the potential benefits and areas of friction in advancing these partnerships. In the subsequent commentary, Patrick Maluki and Anwar Abdifatah Bashir analyze the evolution and impact of terrorist networks in the Horn of Africa, with a particular emphasis on Somalia and its surrounding region. Additionally, they underscore the necessity of a multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism that integrates military, political, and diplomatic strategies to address both the immediate security threats and the underlying causes of extremism.

In the first research article, Mesut Özcan and Mehmet Köse delve into the core elements shaping Türkiye's African outreach from a historical perspective. They evaluate Türkiye's Africa policy decision-making process, emphasizing a bipartisan, autonomous, rational and pragmatic approach, as well as the principles of mutual approval. Additionally, the authors argue that mutual recognition and respect play a vital role in Türkiye's Africa policy, positively impacting its relations with African countries and fostering substantial partnerships.

In the next research article, Tunç Demirtaş and Ferhat Pirinççi argue that Türkiye's Africa policy is shaped by a comprehensive, pragmatic, multi-dimensional, and multi-stakeholder strategy and a collaborative approach that is well-matched to the needs of the region. In their study, the authors aim to examine security relations in Sub-Saharan Africa from a constructivist perspective, focusing on the sub-regions of East Africa, West Africa, and the Sahel Belt. Demirtaş and Pirinççi, who claim that Türkiye's security cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa encompasses a holistic strategy that goes beyond purely military ties and supports regional peace and stability, emphasize that Türkiye is significantly strengthening its position in Sub-Saharan Africa and contributing to the regional security architecture by developing and strengthening these efforts.



Then, Kaan Devecioğlu analyses Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy and development cooperation strategies towards Africa within a theoretical and conceptual framework and assesses their impact and importance on the continent. Devecioğlu emphasizes that Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy strategy based on mutual benefit and sustainable development goals has effectively increased its positive image and influence in Africa. In a similar vein, Gökhan Kavak focuses on media relations within the scope of Türkiye's multifaceted policy in Africa. Kavak aims to address the transformation of the press and media in Africa and examine Türkiye's initiatives in the African media landscape, particularly since 2005. Arguing that Türkiye has taken various initiatives in the media sector, especially since 2008, and that these relations have shown an upward trend until the 2020s, the author claims that more steps need to be taken, especially in areas such as the employment of African media professionals, cooperation in the media sector, and the production of more content related to Africa.

In our subsequent research articles, the authors mostly evaluate the continent with regional organizations. While Abdullah Imam Haruna touches upon Türkiye-Africa relations with the continental organization, the African Union (AU) and the sub-regional organization the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ahmed Badawi Mustapha completes the missing dimension of Türkiye's relations with West Africa by addressing Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, which have left ECOWAS in a complementary manner. In his research article, Haruna examines Türkiye's changing foreign policy approach towards Sub-Saharan African regional blocs, with particular emphasis on their political, cultural, and economic aspects. He stresses that Türkiye's strategic engagement with influential regional organizations such as the AU and ECOWAS, among others, reflects its broader ambition to expand its influence and develop multifaceted partnerships across the African continent. On the other hand, Ahmed Badawi Mustapha evaluates Türkiye's relations with the newly established Alliance of Sahel States (AES), consisting of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, within the boundaries of security engagements, economic connections, and humanitarian/cultural interactions.

Starting to focus on bilateral relations, Zainul Abiddeen Jibril examines the partnership between Nigeria and Türkiye, two countries that have had significant official diplomatic relations since 1960 but whose historical ties date back much further. Considering the economic cooperation between Nigeria and Türkiye, Jibril noted that their shared strategic partnership has fostered a significant development of bilateral trade between them, while also asserting that another critical dimension of their partnership is defense cooperation with Türkiye, which is increasingly becoming an important security partner. The author also claims that the humanitarian and socio-cultural aspects of their partnership facilitate the further development of their relationship.

Lastly, Hasan Aydın and Yi Liu argue that the African continent, which has become the focal point of international relations today, attracts the attention of external actors with various approaches and causes rising international competition in the continent. In this context, the authors aim to answer the questions of what are the differences between traditional and alternative approaches, what are the main factors shaping China's and Türkiye's alternative approaches to Africa, and what are the practical similarities in Beijing and Ankara's approaches to African countries by addressing the similarities between Türkiye's and Türkiye's alternative approaches to Africa. In conclusion, in their study, Aydın and Liu argue that China and Türkiye, despite some differences in their relations with the continental countries, have an alternative stance to the Western-centric approach in African competition.

In addition, we feature three off-topic commentaries focusing on the recent developments in Gaza and the Middle East region. Firstly, Ramzy Baroud claimed that Africa, in contrast to many Arab states, has taken steps towards internationalizing the issue by raising its voice against the ongoing massacre since October 7, and that these initiatives have subsequently been supported by South American states. Based on this argument, the author analyzes the evolution of the Global South's solidarity with Palestine since the establishment of Israel, focusing more on the African continent in his commentary. Secondly, Sadık Abu Amr addresses the impact of Hamas' internal decisions and their impact on foreign relations and the regional changes the movement will cause, following the assassination of former Hamas Political Bureau head Ismail Haniyeh and the election of Yahya Sinwar as the new Hamas leader. Last but not least, Barbara Slavin examines the reasons behind Iran's decision not to immediately retaliate against Israel following the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31, 2024, and considers how the ongoing war will impact U.S.-Iran relations and the new opportunities and challenges that the Gaza war poses for Iran.

Overall, the current edition of *Insight Turkey* undertakes a comprehensive examination of Türkiye's Africa policy, encompassing bilateral, regional, continental, and global perspectives, with a specific focus on the past two decades. Additionally, in the context of the ongoing Gaza conflict in the Middle East, we are pleased to present three off-topic commentaries that offer an in-depth analysis of recent developments pertaining to Gaza and the wider region. In this special edition, our objective is to furnish our readers with valuable insights through comprehensive deliberations and a range of perspectives on the aforementioned subjects. ■

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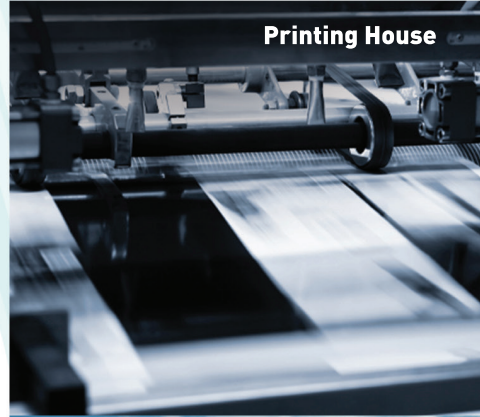
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