

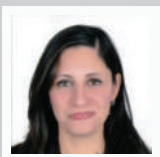


AFRICAN NARRATIVES

Turkey's African Ascent: Strategy, Ambitions, and Challenges



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Abstract

In recent years, Turkish foreign policy tools have been deliberately expanded to enhance its influence in Africa, a key component of its broader global and regional strategy to achieve its strategic interests. Turkey's strategic vision increasingly links military deployment beyond its borders to the safeguarding of its interests and the integration of its influence across the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Initially, Turkey employed soft power tactics to establish a foothold in Africa. However, security, military, and strategic dimensions have since become the primary drivers of its engagement. This policy aligns with Ankara's strategic

approach of establishing influence within key countries that can then serve as launching pads for broader regional expansion. Somalia has become the focal point of Turkey's presence in the Horn of Africa, and Niger has emerged as its strategic base in West Africa.

While Turkey's developmental and economic role, particularly in humanitarian and development aid and trade relations, is often recognized by the international community and generally well-received, its geopolitical role in projecting power and engaging in regional competition is viewed with caution. This competition risks exacerbating existing tensions, divisions, and conflicts within Africa.

Introduction

Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002, Africa has become a prominent priority for Turkish foreign policy, enabling Turkey to achieve considerable influence in numerous African countries. This increasing penetration of the African continent, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region, reflects Ankara's evolving vision of itself as a central state with a complex and interconnected foreign policy, guided by the theory of strategic depth.

Strategic depth, a key driver of Turkish policy since 2002, posits that Turkey possesses multiple continental basins, giving it strategic depth and positioning it as an "Afro-Eurasian" nation capable of wielding influence in Europe and Asia, as well as Africa. Consequently, Turkey has actively sought to solidify its influence in regions of geopolitical significance, whether due to their proximity to vital maritime routes such as the Horn of Africa and the Bab al-Mandab Strait or their abundance of natural resources and promising investment opportunities, as exemplified by Niger in West Africa.

Over the past decade, the Horn of Africa has transformed into an arena of geostrategic competition among various international and regional actors, including Middle Eastern powers seeking to establish or consolidate a foothold in this critical region.

Within this context, Turkey has emerged as a major player, employing a combination of economic, security, and political instruments to expand its influence. This is particularly evident in its relationship with Somalia, which serves as Turkey's gateway to the Horn of Africa, especially given the growing interest in exploring and exploiting oil and gas resources in the country. Sudan, with its strategic location and rich natural resources, also represents an important arena for international competition, owing to its geopolitical importance as a bridge between North Africa and the Middle East. Historically, Sudan has been enmeshed in regional conflicts and power dynamics due to its location and natural resources such as oil, minerals, and agricultural land. These factors have made Sudan an attractive target for regional and international powers. In light of the military coup in Niger in July 2023, Turkey has sought to position itself as a counterbalance to competing international powers in the region, pursuing partnerships that are responsive to and aligned with African needs.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine Turkey's increasingly active and expanding strategy in the Horn of Africa (with a focus on Somalia and Sudan) and in West Africa (Niger), analyzing the factors that have driven Turkey's growing interest in Africa and exploring the challenges it faces in its relations with African countries.





I: The Strategic Importance of the Horn of Africa and West Africa

Horn of Africa Region

The Horn of Africa's strategic importance stems from its location, forming the African shores of the Indian Ocean to the east and the Gulf of Aden to the north. It acts as a gateway from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, providing a crucial sea route from the Indian Ocean to Europe via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait between Djibouti and Yemen.

Economic and security developments have further amplified the Horn of Africa's geostrategic significance. Its control over the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a vital commercial and military waterway, has spurred the proliferation of foreign military bases, often accompanied by soft power initiatives such as foreign corporate investments, particularly in ports.

The region's geopolitics have implications for both regional security and the global economy.

The Horn of Africa sits astride major trade and transportation routes for oil and gas from the Gulf States to the United States and Europe. Beyond its geopolitical value, the region also possesses abundant resources that have yet to be fully integrated into the global economy.

However, the Horn of Africa is also a region plagued by conflict, with piracy off its coasts, the presence of al-Shabaab in Somalia, civil war in Yemen and South Sudan, ongoing unrest in Ethiopia, and recurring border disputes. These factors have drawn foreign powers to the region for security activities, ranging from the establishment of a US military base in Djibouti after 9/11 for counter-terrorism operations (particularly against al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab) to the use of Djibouti and Eritrea by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia for their military campaign in Yemen and China's construction of its first overseas military base in Djibouti and its deployment of a large peacekeeping force in South Sudan.

1 Ursu, AE and van den Berg, W, 'China and the EU in the Horn of Africa: competition and cooperation?' Clingendael Institute, 2018. Available at: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/PB_China_and_the_EU_in_the_Horn_of_Africa.pdf

2 Meester, J. and van den Berg, W. Ports & Power: the securitization of port politics, Clingendael Institute, 2018, pp. 15-17. Available at: Clingendael Institute. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/Ports_and_Powers.pdf

West Africa Region

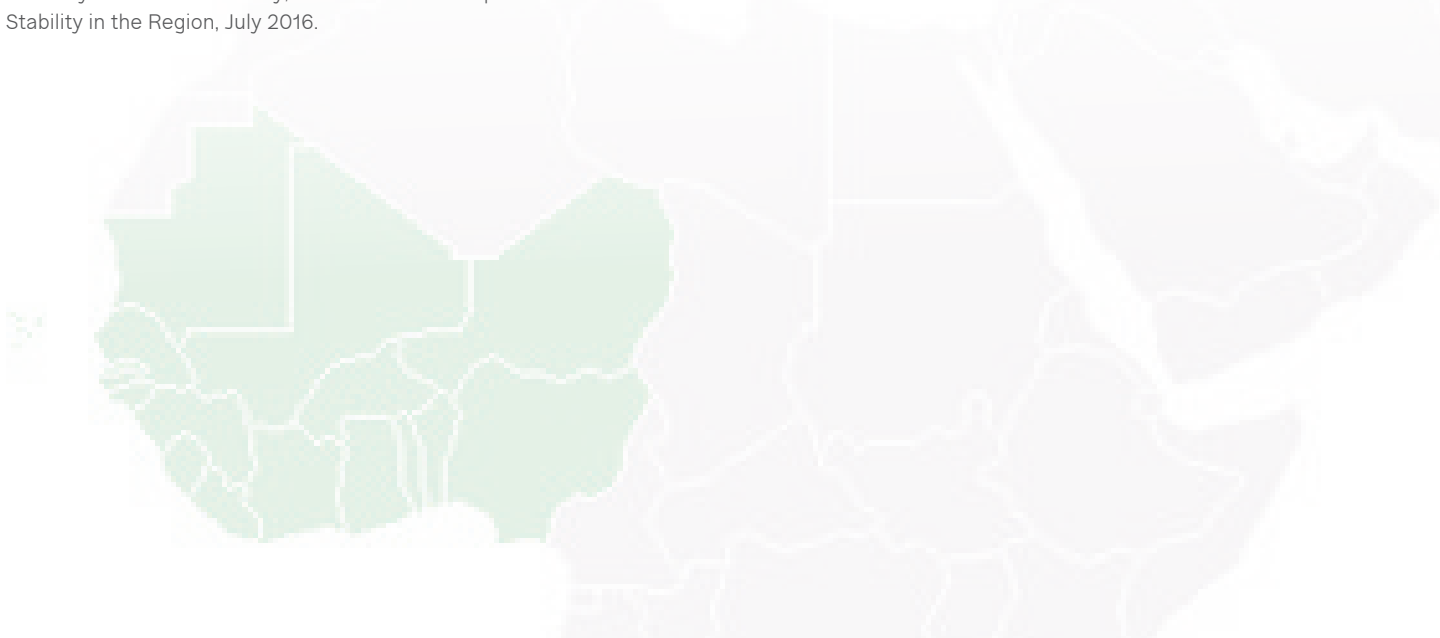
Covering five million square kilometers (17% of the African continent), the West African region holds a third of the world's land available for investment, along with significant hydroelectric power potential and marine and mineral resources, including diamonds, gold, fish, and oil and gas reserves. Notably, 70% of Africa's oil reserves are concentrated along the West African coast. The total oil production of West African countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea is projected to exceed that of the Arab Gulf countries by 2025, with a share of 25% compared to the Gulf countries' 22%. The recent addition of Liberia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone to the Organization of Petroleum Producing Countries in West Africa, with estimated reserves of 200 million barrels, further solidifies West Africa's role as a key resource hub for the global economy. African oil is characterized by its low sulfur content and proximity to European and American markets, enhancing the strategic importance of the region.

West African countries are witnessing intense international competition for oil and natural resources, and Turkey has emerged as a regional

player in this arena. West Africa is viewed as a base for Turkish energy interests, leading to the establishment of the Turkish-African Summit and a free trade area with West African countries. Ankara has also gained membership in the African Development Bank and the African Development Fund, becoming the twenty-fifth non-African member of the former.

Turkey also attaches significant importance to West Africa, and particularly the Sahel region, in the security domain. Turkish policy has become increasingly militarized to expand its geopolitical influence in the region and across the continent, as demonstrated by the security cooperation agreements Ankara has concluded with various countries in the region, including Mauritania, Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Sudan, Guinea, Nigeria, and Benin. Most recently, in July 2020, a security agreement was reached with Niger, aimed at establishing a public foothold in the Sahel and Sahara region. Some reports suggest that Ankara is seeking to establish a military base in West Africa, potentially in Niger near the border with Libya, which would provide it with a presence in a third African country, after Somalia and Libya.

3 African Studies Center Leiden (ASCL) Improving the Perspective for Regional Trade and Investment in West Africa: the Key to Food Security, Economic Development and Stability in the Region, July 2016.





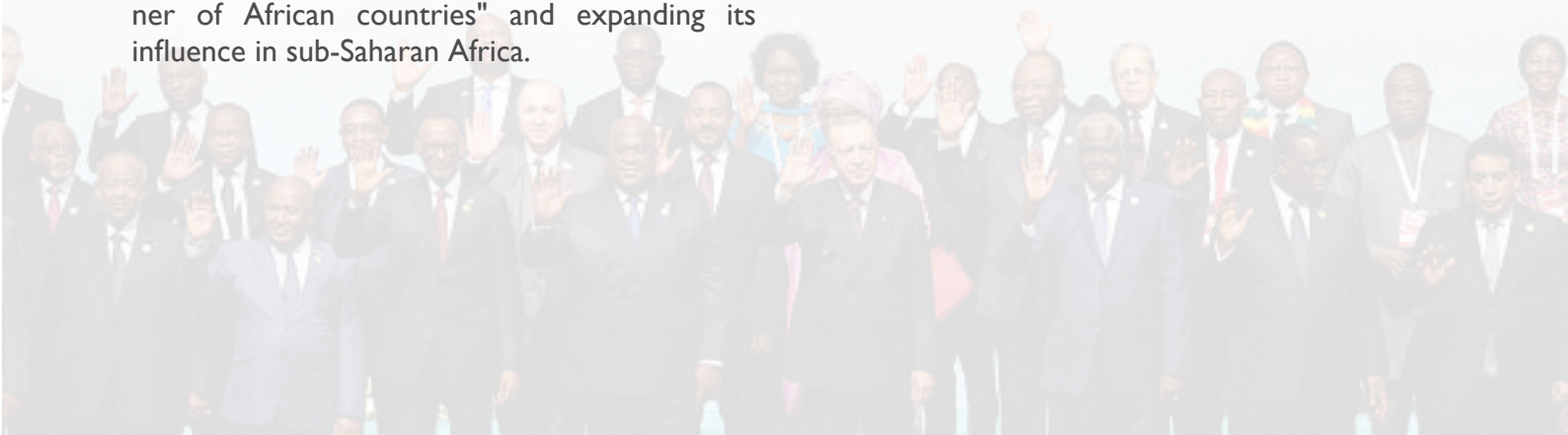
II: Tools and Motives for Turkey's Growing Engagement in Africa

While Africa has long been on the agenda of Turkish foreign policy, a qualitative shift occurred with the rise of the Justice and Development Party in 2002. The AKP was determined to reactivate Turkey's role in Africa and forge new alliances. Turkey turned to the African continent in search of a new role that would allow it a foothold on the Red Sea and enable it to capitalize on the continent's assets.

Turkey launched its "Opening to Africa" policy in 2005, after gaining observer status in the African Union that same year. In 2008, it became a strategic partner of the AU with the holding of the first Turkey-Africa Summit in Istanbul. Since then, Turkey has refined its approach to African countries, pursuing a long-term, multi-dimensional policy aimed at solidifying its position as a "partner of African countries" and expanding its influence in sub-Saharan Africa.

Turkish penetration tools

Turkey has sought to increase its involvement in the Horn of Africa and the African continent in general through a combination of political, economic, and military tools. Ankara has employed economic and humanitarian assistance to establish a foothold, establishing a broad diplomatic presence (44 embassies), holding joint Turkish-African summits, implementing development projects in education, infrastructure, and health (building schools, hospitals, and water wells), providing humanitarian and development aid, and pumping major economic investments. The Turkish strategy has also included acquiring major infrastructure projects, renovating and managing airports, and managing ports.



In recent years, Turkey has expanded its African presence in the military and defense sectors (hard power), seeking to extend its military influence within Africa and conduct joint military exercises. This has led to the signing of security and defense agreements with a large number of African countries, such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Niger, encompassing arms transfers, military training, security provision, and counter-terrorism cooperation. Ankara has also worked to open new markets for the Turkish defense industry. Ankara has also developed its tools to penetrate Africa, including:

- On December 11, 2024, Ankara announced a reconciliation agreement between the Somali and Ethiopian governments, creating a positive image of Turkey as a "peacemaker" that avoids negative involvement in regional conflicts and is interested in establishing multiple partnerships based on a "win-win" rule, which enhances its acceptance. In December 2024, Turkey also announced an initiative to mediate between Sudan and the UAE to ease tensions between the two countries.
- Activating the diplomacy of defense industries and drones: Given the rapid growth of Turkey's defense industry, this sector has become a tool of foreign policy to enhance its influence and position. Within a few years, Turkey has become a leading supplier of defense equipment to Africa, meeting a growing demand for affordable drones with advanced technology to enhance military capabilities in the face of security challenges, including terrorism, rebellion, civil war, border conflicts, and smuggling. Ankara has sold various models of its drones to approximately 13 African countries, including Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Rwanda, and Senegal, all of which have received "Bayraktar TB2" drones.
- Recruiting mercenaries: The use of mercenaries is a tool for expanding Turkish influence.

ers have been sent to Niger to guard companies, factories, and mines run by Turkey, and some have infiltrated other countries in West Africa, such as Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

Motives for Turkish penetration

Turkey's engagement in Africa extends beyond bilateral interests or issues directly related to the continent; it has become integrated into its broader strategic maneuvers on the global stage, reflecting its search for a new role that aligns with its vision of its position in the international and regional power structure. Key motives for Turkish interest include strengthening its position in regional affairs to counter the growing influence of powers such as Iran, Israel, and China, and containing the movements of other actors such as the Emirates and Egypt within the context of regional competition. Turkey also seeks to present itself as a viable alternative, ready to advance the interests of Western powers and the United States in the region.

- Securing energy supplies and economic interests: Ankara imports approximately 90% of its oil and gas needs. Therefore, Turkey seeks to obtain energy from Africa at preferential prices, particularly natural gas, of which Turkey is the seventh-largest consumer globally, while also diversifying its sources to reduce dependence on Russia and Iran.
- Imposing its influence on the Red Sea to benefit from the continent's assets, including seeking to manage the largest strategic port in Djibouti.
- Engaging in regional and international competition for influence in the region.
- Seeking to acquire new partners on the African continent.
- Strengthening its position as a global power.

4 Contradictory Sudanese positions on Turkey's initiative to de-escalate tensions with the UAE, Asharq Al-Awsat, December 30, 2024. Available at: <https://n9.cl/wng6b>

5 Dr. Muhammad Al-Subaiti, Turkish Weapons in Africa: Marketing Motives and Cooperation Models, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, pp. 10-15.

III: Turkey's Strategy for Penetration into Somalia

Turkey has a long history in the Horn of Africa, dating back to the Ottoman Empire. However, its modern engagement was limited until it increased significantly in 2011, when it entered Somalia. Since then, Turkey has continued its broader engagement with Somalia and has strengthened its relations with Horn of Africa countries through long-term investments and comprehensive cooperation agreements. Somalia is considered Turkey's most prominent ally, representing a starting point for its projects in the region.

Somalia's importance stems from its location overlooking global sea and land trade routes, its proximity to the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabian Gulf, and the abundance of its natural resources. Somalia also possesses the largest sea outlet in Africa, making it a gateway to influence; whoever controls it controls the Horn of Africa region.

Turkey has pursued its strategy by capitalizing on international opportunities and crises. It exploited the famine crisis in Somalia in 2011, following President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Mogadishu, the first such visit by a non-African leader, to draw international attention to the tragic situation and provide unlimited humanitarian, economic, and medical aid, opening new horizons between Ankara and Mogadishu and establishing a foothold and influence in the Horn of Africa.

Goals and Motives of Turkish Penetration into Somalia

Turkey's clear strategic goals for its presence in Somalia are to confirm its role within international strategies in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea Basin, positioning itself as a rising power in the international arena. These goals include:

1. Economic goals:

Securing sustainable energy sources, opening new markets for Turkish companies and boosting trade, leveraging Somali oil and gas wealth to reduce Turkey's dependence on external energy sources, strengthening the Turkish economy through long-term investments in infrastructure and the energy sector.

2. Security and military objectives:

Supporting regional stability to protect its economic interests, using military bases to enhance its strategic presence, ensuring the stability of Somalia as part of Turkey's strategy to protect its interests in the region, confronting security challenges such as piracy and terrorism that threaten maritime trade routes, protecting its ships, and securing its trade routes in the Horn of Africa region.

Turkey considers Somalia its gateway to East Africa and seeks to maintain security in the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden to ensure the safety of its commercial ships loaded with Turkish products. Given the military attacks launched by the Houthi group in the Red Sea against ships heading to Israel, it has become necessary for Turkey to strengthen its military presence in this region to protect its ships.

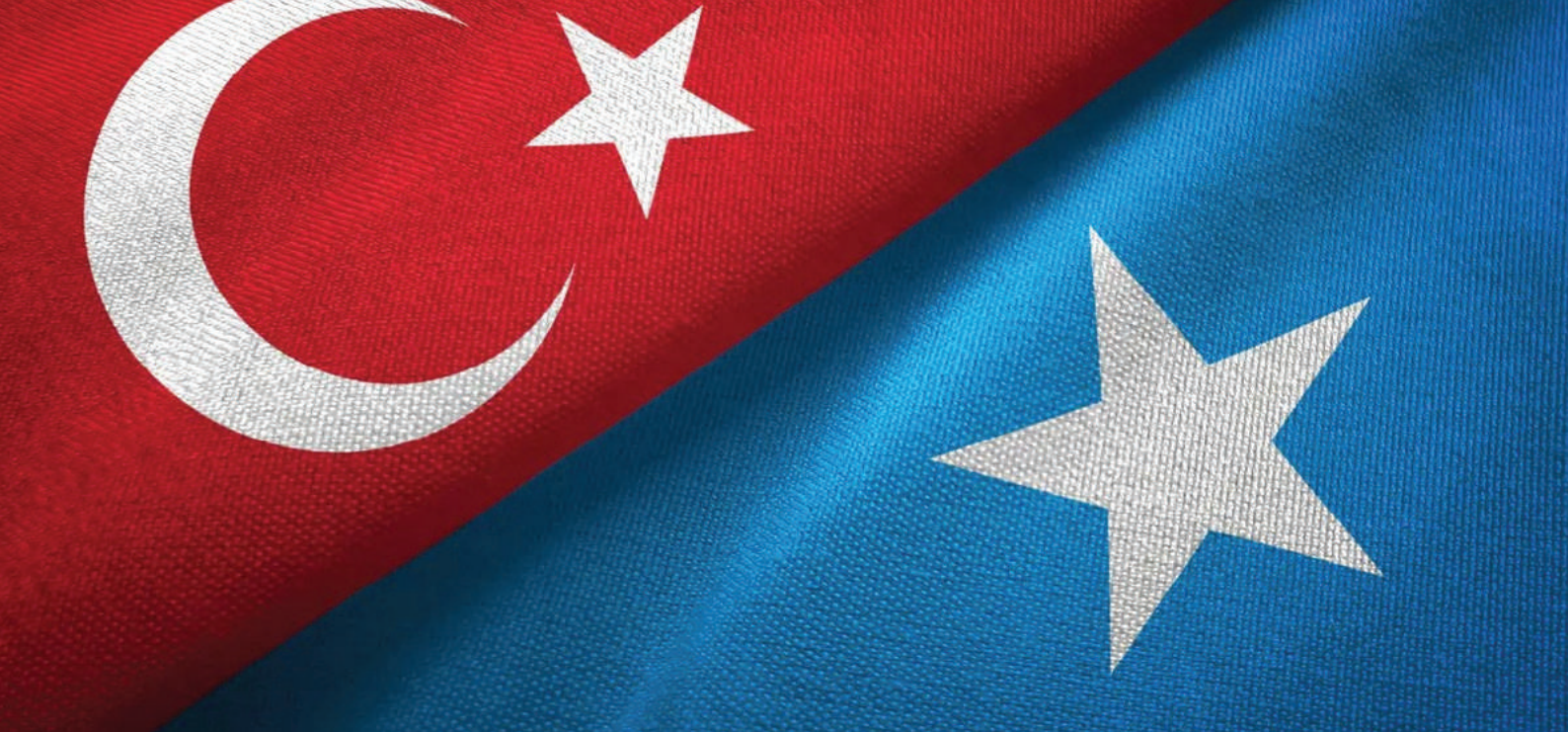
In addition to controlling sea lanes, the Horn of Africa's proximity to the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a vital global sea lane, enhances Turkey's ability to influence international trade and energy flows.

• Expansion goals:

Expanding Turkish influence in Africa as part of the "Return to Africa" strategy launched in the early 2000s, realizing Turkey's vision as a global power with influence in multiple regions, and creating a new balance of power in the Horn of Africa that serves its regional and international interests.

6 Emel Parlar Dal, Op.cit,

7 Muhammad Abdul Qadir Khalil; Al-Shafi'i Abtdon, Türkiye's Policies in Light of Regional Competition over Somalia, Arab Policy Forum, 2021.



- **Political objectives:**

Seeking strategic depth in Africa after its failure to gain membership in the European Union.

Turkish Penetration Tools in Somalia

Turkey's role in the Horn of Africa can be divided into two parts: an economic developmental component and a geopolitical component. While these aspects overlap, Turkey initially focused on the former upon entering Somalia in 2011, then gradually shifted towards the geopolitical dimension in subsequent years, reflecting the transformations in Turkish foreign policy as President Erdogan sought to capitalize on the unrest in the Middle East as a political opportunity to advance his vision.

Turkey has employed both "soft" power and "hard" power policies, ranging from economic, commercial, investment, health, cultural, and military instruments. Turkey is one of the largest donors and investors in Somalia, contributing to sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and humanitarian aid through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). In 2016, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the

field of energy and mining, shortly after the Somali government granted Turkish companies the mandate to carry out oil drilling and exploration operations off its coast.

Relations have since developed from humanitarian aid to military and security cooperation through training the Somali army, establishing the "TURKSOM" training center in Mogadishu in 2017, and Turkey owning a military base in Somalia, its largest military base abroad. Turkey also reached an agreement to establish a military base in Djibouti, and Turkish companies manage the main seaports and airports in Mogadishu, such as "Favor" and "Albayrak", which provide 80% of the Somali government's revenues.

In 2018, Turkey appointed a special envoy to Somalia, whose mission focused on reconciliation efforts between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Somaliland region. In 2020, Turkey paid off Somalia's debt to the International Monetary Fund, strengthening relations between the two countries.

In 2024, Turkey played a significant role in mediating between Ethiopia and Somalia, leading to the signing of a reconciliation agreement on December 12, 2024, in Ankara. President Erdogan is expected to travel to Mogadishu and Addis Ababa in January to follow up on the implementation of the agreement.

7 Muhammad Abdul Qadir Khalil; Al-Shafi'i Abtdon, Türkiye's Policies in Light of Regional Competition over Somalia, Arab Policy Forum, 2021.

8 Gizem Sucuoglu, and Jason Stearns, "Turkey In Somalia: Shifting Paradigms of Aid", Research Report 24, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 21 Nov 2016, p.15. Available at: <https://n9.cl/167uo>

9 Erdogan announces agreement on "historic reconciliation" between Ethiopia and Somalia, Asharq, December 11, 2024. Available on: <https://n9.cl/d6fchj>

Dimensions of Turkish Penetration into Somalia

The dimensions of the Turkish strategy toward Somalia can be summarized as follows:

Strategic and military dimension:

Turkey has built its largest military base outside its territory in southern Mogadishu, contributing to the rehabilitation of Somali military personnel. On February 8, 2024, Turkey and Somalia signed a framework agreement for economic and military cooperation in Ankara, an exceptional agreement that provides Turkey with extensive military influence over Somalia. Under the agreement, Turkey is committed to helping Somalia defend its territorial waters, training and rebuilding the Somali Navy, and arming it with Turkish-manufactured weapons. In exchange, Turkey will receive 30% of the revenues from Somalia's exclusive economic zone, in addition to opening Somali airspace entirely for Turkish military use. Accordingly, Turkey has become the main player in Somali security, enabling it to test its weapons in a new geographical area and potentially encouraging other African countries to purchase Turkish weapons. The Somali-Turkish military partnership allows Turkey to establish a permanent political and military presence in the Horn of Africa, becoming a key part of the regional security equation and an active player in global trade routes.

Economic and commercial dimension:

Ankara has signed agreements related to oil and natural gas exploration along the Somali coast. In December 2024, the Turkish seismic research vessel "Oruç Reis" began seismic survey activities for oil and natural gas in licensed areas in Somalia, under a memorandum of understanding signed in March 2024. The signing of the memorandum came one month after the signing of a framework agreement for defense and economic cooperation, under which Turkey provides maritime security support to Somalia, to help it defend its territorial waters for a period of 10 years.

The project enhances Ankara's ambitions to test long-range missiles and explore space while cementing its growing ties with the Horn of Africa nation. Turkey also seeks to expand African markets for Turkish goods, as Somalia represents an important gateway to East African countries.

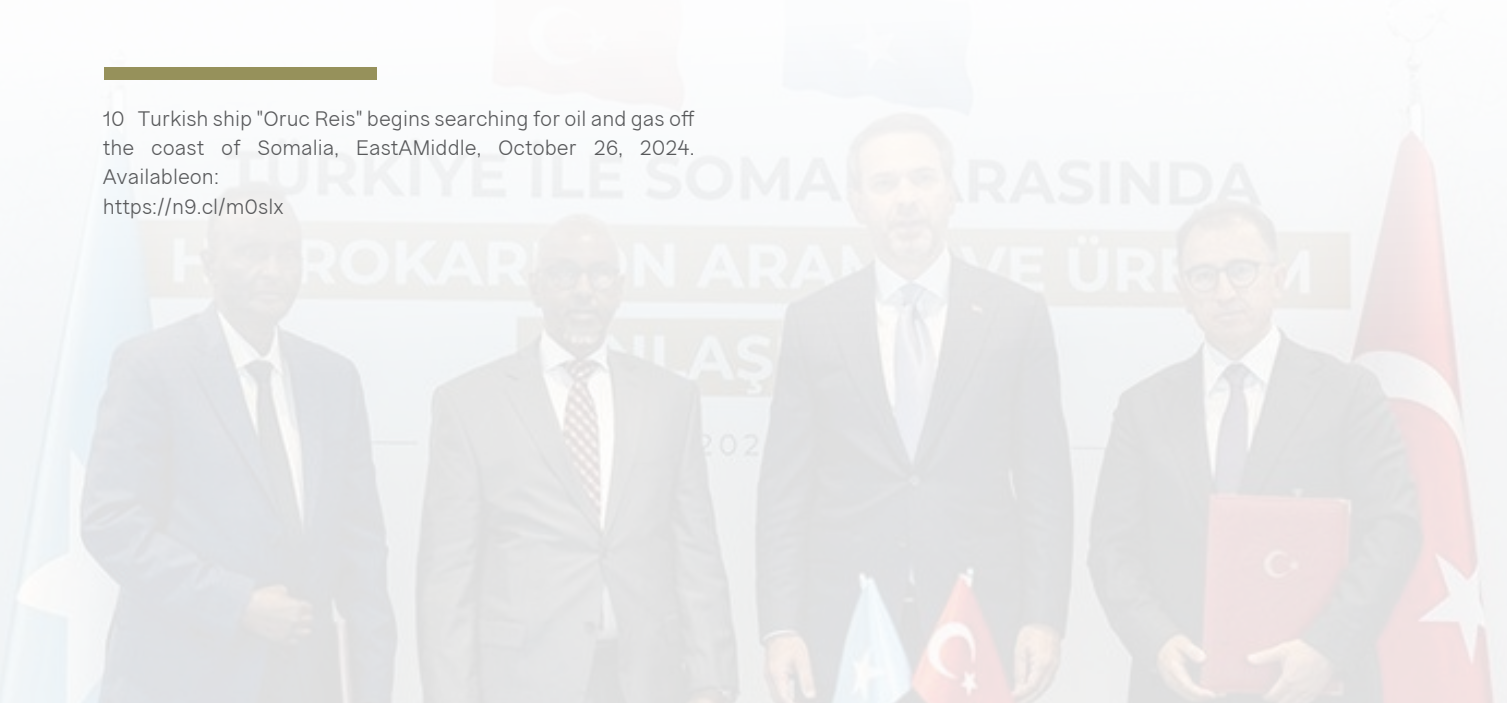
Geopolitical dimension:

Ankara aspires to establish its presence within the security and political strategies in the region, particularly since it oversees the passage of about 14% of international commercial navigation, including Gulf oil towards Europe. Ankara also seeks to contribute to international efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime in this region.

¹⁰ Turkish ship "Oruc Reis" begins searching for oil and gas off the coast of Somalia, EastAMiddle, October 26, 2024.

Available on:

<https://n9.cl/m0slx>



Challenges to Turkish Penetration in Somalia

Turkey faces several challenges that threaten its influence in Somalia:

- **Regional and international competition:**

Turkey is not the only foreign actor in Somalia. Competition with Gulf powers (such as the UAE and Qatar) creates political pressure. Somalia is also an area of competition between major powers (the United States, China, Russia), which hinders Turkey's ability to enhance its influence. Conflicts also exist between Turkish expansion in Africa and the interests of major economies in the European Union, as well as Chinese, Indian, and Russian expansion.

- **Internal divisions in Somalia:**

Divisions and conflict over influence exist within Somalia, with some groups viewing Turkish inter-

vention as foreign interference. Conflicts between the central Somali government and regional governments may also hinder Turkish projects.

- **Political Corruption:**

Corruption in Somali institutions could limit the effectiveness of Turkish support and affect Turkey's image.

- **Economic challenges:**

Turkey needs large investments to support its development projects in Somalia, putting pressure on its resources. The weak infrastructure in Somalia also makes implementing projects more difficult and increases costs.

Finally, Turkey's interest in Somalia emerges as part of a long-term vision to enhance its regional and international influence and extract oil. Despite the challenges, Turkey seems determined to consolidate its presence in Somalia to achieve its security, economic, and expansionist goals through flexible and sustainable strategies.



IV: Turkey's Strategy for Penetration into Sudan

Sudan's geopolitical location gives it a unique regional and international status as an extension of the Horn of Africa, a region of strategic importance where major countries compete. Sudan's proximity to the oil countries in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf gives it the ability to control oil pipelines in the Red Sea. It also has vast areas suitable for agriculture, water resources, and minerals such as gold.

The importance of the Red Sea to Sudanese lands can be summarized in three points: Sudan ranks fourth in terms of coastline length, its proximity to the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Red Sea's effectiveness as a route for global trade, especially oil trade.

Accordingly, Turkey has sought to strengthen its presence in Sudan for the past decade, as relations between the two countries date back to the Ottoman Empire. Turkish-Sudanese relations have witnessed remarkable development in recent years, and Turkey has implemented huge economic projects in Sudan, including the rehabilitation of Suakin Island on the Red Sea, in addition to its focus on military and cultural cooperation. These moves reflect Turkey's desire to expand its geopolitical and economic influence in the region. This Turkish engagement in Sudan followed President Erdogan's visit in December 2017, where economic and trade agreements worth \$650 million were signed.

Turkey has grown into a major player in the ongoing conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces since 2023, hosting the parties to the conflict and providing military support to the Sudanese army, as well as political, diplomatic, and humanitarian assistance, and helping to rebuild infrastructure.

Goals and Motives of Turkish Penetration into Sudan

Turkey seeks to strengthen its influence in Sudan as part of its foreign policy aimed at restoring its influence in areas that were under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Sudan is an important gateway to strengthening Turkish relations with Africa and the Arab world. Turkey's most prominent strategic objectives in Sudan are:

- **Military and security objectives:**

Turkey aims to strengthen its military presence in the Red Sea region, providing it with a strategic platform to expand its influence in East Africa and achieve balance against other regional powers. As Sudan is an important gateway to the Red Sea, Turkey seeks to establish a foothold on the coast, particularly at Suakin Port, which allows the presence of Turkish forces and training for Sudanese forces.

- **Economic goals:**

Turkey seeks to strengthen its presence in the Red Sea and benefit from Sudan's natural resources through the Suakin Port. Ankara can secure its economic interests through infrastructure and trade projects and benefit from Sudan's agricultural wealth and oil. Therefore, Türkiye focused on investing in infrastructure and major economic projects such as oil exploration and gold. Since the outbreak of the war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, expectations have increased about increasing Turkish-Sudanese coordination, which enhances competition in economic projects between Turkey and regional actors such as Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

11 Dr. Ashraf Hassan Ahmed Al-Hajj, Exhaustible Natural Resources and Their Impact on Economic Growth: A Case Study of Gold in Sudan, *Journal of Contemporary Business Research*, Volume 37, December 2023 Issue, pp. 7-8.

12 Ali Demir, Türkiye and Sudan.. An important and required Turkish role to end the conflict and rebuild what was destroyed by the war, *Türkiye News Agency*, September 15, 2024, availableon: <https://tr.agency/news-177675>

13 Hurriyet Daily News, "Turkish firm to start building Sudan's "biggest airport", 18 October 2018. Available at: <https://n9.cl/12dd1>

14 Türkiye signs agriculture and oil exploration agreements with Sudan, Reuters, September 11, 2018. Availableon: <https://www.reuters.com/article/business/--idUSKCN1LR11A/>

15 – Al-Arab London newspaper: Sudan's wealth is a new arena of competition between Türkiye and Arab countries, Monte Carlo International, 01/23/2023, availableon: <https://n9.cl/Orehu>

• Political goals:

Ankara seeks to support political forces linked to the Muslim Brotherhood to regain their influence in Sudan, aligning with Turkey's regional policy of expanding the base of allied Islamic movements.

• Regional competition:

Through its presence in Sudan - politically, economically, militarily and culturally - Turkey seeks to strengthen its role as a regional party seeking to extend its influence in the Sudanese coast, as the conflict between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces represented an opportunity for many countries to compete regionally in Sudan, and Turkey - along with Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Egypt - places Sudan among the priorities of its strategy towards the Middle East.

Turkish Penetration Tools in Sudan

Turkey uses soft power in Sudan to achieve its strategic goals, with a mix of military, economic, political, and cultural tools:

• Military tool:

Turkey has strengthened its military cooperation with Sudan by providing training and military assistance to the Sudanese Armed Forces. This cooperation aims to enhance Sudan's defense capabilities and strengthen military relations between the two countries. Following Al-Burhan's visit, Turkey responded to Sudanese demands to provide advanced Bayraktar drones, in addition to training on their use and contributing to the development of Sudanese defense industries, in light of the revival of the Joint Strategic Cooperation Council, and its military support for the Sudanese army commander "Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan". Therefore, the use of drones is considered a major tool to change the balance of power in the region, and

we may see in the future direct intervention from Turkey to resolve the ongoing war in Sudan, and Ankara wants to work on a military track more than a political one in Sudan. Therefore, the Turkish position is focused on military support with qualitative weapons such as drones and others, which is very likely.

• Economic tool:

Turkey provides significant economic support to the Sudanese government through investments in infrastructure and agricultural projects, including the development of ports and airports and the expansion of trade. This support was evident following Burhan's visit to Turkey in September 2023, when it was agreed to activate cooperation agreements in the fields of agriculture, trade and energy, which include allocating agricultural lands to Turkey in Sudan, and for Turkey to undertake the rehabilitation, restoration and management of the city of "Sawakin" on the Red Sea coast. Erdogan also expressed his country's readiness to contribute to the reconstruction of infrastructure after the war stops.

• Cultural and humanitarian tool:

Since the outbreak of the war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces in 2023, Turkey has continued to provide humanitarian aid through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and the Turkish Red Crescent; in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, as it is estimated that more than 25 million people in Sudan need urgent humanitarian aid, in addition to cultural and educational aid represented by Turkish scholarships, academic exchange for Sudanese, and the management of a number of schools such as the Turkish Maarif Foundation schools and cultural centers in Sudan, and restoration projects for the Ottoman cultural heritage in Sudan. This aid - without a doubt - can be used to understand the Turkish cultural ambition in Sudan aimed at extending more Turkish influence in the region.

17 Al-Nour Ahmed Al-Nour, Military and economic agreements and reconstruction.. Al-Jazeera Net reveals details of the meeting between Al-Burhan and Erdogan, Al-Jazeera Net, September 14, 2023. Available at: <https://n9.cl/hax0h>

18 - UNHCR, As Sudan conflict fuels epic suffering, UN launches humanitarian and refugee response plans for 2024, 7 February 2024. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/sudan-conflict-fuels-epic-suffering-un-launches-humanitarian-and-refugee>



Challenges of Turkish penetration in Sudan

• Economic challenge:

The high economic cost of equipment Military and defensive weapons, such as Bayraktar drones, with which Türkiye supports the Sudanese army, which raises questions about how the Sudanese army finances them in light of the economic crisis.

• International position:

The international community is focused on achieving stability in Sudan, and Turkish military support may be seen as an obstacle to peace efforts. Especially in the event of Turkey's direct intervention in Sudan if its interests require it,

although this is unlikely, as current circumstances seem less conducive to a large-scale military intervention, given the complexity of the conflict and the intensity of regional competition.

• Regional reactions:

Regional states may see the Turkish intervention as a direct threat to their interests in the region, increasing the likelihood of an escalation of the conflict.

Finally, it becomes clear that the Turkish intervention in Sudan goes beyond military support to include economic, political and security dimensions. The Turkish intervention carries indications of a new regional escalation in the Red Sea region, making Sudan an arena for an open geopolitical conflict.

V: Strategy of Turkish Penetration into Niger

Turkey's influence in the West African region has increased over the past decade, from trade to politics, from cooperation in the defense industry to education and development. We can take Niger as a model for Turkish penetration into West Africa. Following the military coup that the country witnessed in July 2023, Niger adopted a different foreign policy, worked to change its international partnerships, and expelled French and American forces from its territory, thus opening the way wide for Ankara's ambition to expand and extend its influence in the African continent through Niger, with a multi-dimensional and multi-objective partnership. So with the beginning of the crisis that occurred in Niger due to the coup of July 26, 2023, Türkiye stood against the military intervention announced by the group Ecowas, to begin a new chapter in the history of relations between Ankara and Niamey.

In an effort to fill the vacuum left by influential Western powers in the region in Niger, Ankara has intensified its contacts with Niamey. Prime Minister Ali Amin "Zein" visited Ankara last February and announced during his meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that the security challenge imposed on the country requires Niamey to have all the necessary means to protect its national security; therefore, it is counting on Turkey to help it in this regard. In return, Erdogan stressed Turkey's support for Niger's steps to strengthen its political, military and economic independence, and that Ankara will continue to stand against foreign military interventions targeting the Nigerien people, and is fully prepared to take new steps to increase the volume of trade between the two countries. In support of its expansionist goals, Türkiye has been strengthening its long-standing partnership with Niger across various sectors, with a delegation A high-level Turkish delegation, headed by

the Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited Niger last July, where he met with the President of Niger "slave The Most Gracious Tiani", who took power in 2023, and Turkey and Niger agreed to enhance cooperation in the fields of energy, mining, intelligence and defense. This visit came within the framework of Ankara's insistence on consolidating its presence in Africa, and its quest to be a strong alternative to the influential Western powers on the African continent, especially in the Sahel region.

Goals and Motives of Turkish Penetration into Niger

Türkiye seeks to strengthen its influence in Niger to enhance its presence in the West African region. Its most prominent strategic objectives are as follows:

- **Military and security objectives:**

Ankara seeks to establish a Turkish military base in the Agadez region in northern Niger, which has a strategic geographical location, as it is located in contact with Chad, Libya and Algeria. Ankara hopes that this military base will be similar to the Turkish military base in Somalia, which is its largest military base abroad.

- **Geopolitical objectives:**

Türkiye is trying to improve its geopolitical position by filling the vacuum left by the Western withdrawal from the region, And to strengthen its presence in the region and globally, By increasing defense ties to boost military sales that support its domestic economy and international standing, Türkiye has also sent Syrian militants from the pro-Ankara National Army factions to Niger. since The beginning of the Nigerian crisis in 2023.

19 Türkiye rushes to fill Western void in Niger with multi-dimensional partnership, Asharq Al-Awsat, July 18, 2024. Available at: <https://n9.cl/hclf7j>

20 Liam Karr, Turkish Inroads in Niger, Institute for the Study of War, Jul 25, 2024. Available at: <https://n9.cl/ldd03>

• Nuclear influence:

Ankara is looking to tap into Niger's uranium supplies to fuel Turkey's nascent nuclear power industry. Niger has the highest quality uranium ores in Africa and is one of the world's largest producers. During the Turkish delegation's recent visit, the two countries signed an agreement to boost mining cooperation and grant Turkey access to uranium mines.

• Economic objectives:

Türkiye is working to control all the natural resources that Niger possesses. It achieves economic influence in the region, so Turkish companies control gold and oil extraction contracts. In Niger.

Tools of Turkish Penetration into Niger

Türkiye has used many tools and means to achieve its goals of jealous Gul in Niger, most notably:

• Economic tool:

strengthened Companies Turkish Its presence in Niger is through mega projects, most notably the economic cooperation agreement to develop oil and gas fields in Niger, and access to Nigerian uranium mines, in addition to establishing hotels, hospitals and infrastructure projects. In addition to The volume of trade exchange between Türkiye and Niger has increased in recent years.

• Military tool:

On July 17, Turkey and Niger signed agreements to enhance intelligence cooperation and military training. Turkey had previously signed a military agreement with Niamey in 2021. In addition, there are arms agreements and joint strategic coordination, especially with regard to supplying Niamey with drones for reconnaissance or attack, especially since the Nigerien army is betting on employing these technologies in confronting jihadist factions spread across the

vast Sahara region. Niger had previously purchased 6 Bayraktar-TB2 combat drones from Turkey in May 2022, following the announcement of a deal that included the supply of Turkish weapons to Niger, including drones and aircraft. For training and armored vehicles to enhance its military and security capabilities in the face of terrorist groups. Therefore, Türkiye uses mercenaries to mitigate the impact of insecurity on its operations in Niger.

• Humanitarian and educational tool:

Türkiye has focused on providing humanitarian aid, especially during disasters, due to the shortage of personnel and infrastructure there, by focusing on the inclusion of aid elements that They support the development of Niger, and have also contributed to providing educational and technical projects; therefore, Turkish institutions have penetrated the relief and development fields, such as the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Human Rights and Freedoms, and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency. "Tika" In Niger.

Challenges of Turkish Penetration in the Niger

1- International Competition: The increasing role of Turkish companies in developing Nigerian oil and gas fields could put Turkey in competition with China, which currently dominates Niger's oil sector. China has a majority stake in vital Nigerian facilities, such as Niger's largest oil field, its only refinery, and a newly built oil pipeline to Benin. China is also working on several infrastructure projects in Niger.

2- Security deterioration: Insecurity in mining areas, may expose its investments to attack by terrorist and armed groups, which increases the economic cost, and decreases revenues.



Finally:

In the context of worsening political and security instability across many African nations, including Niger, Sudan, and Somalia, the demand for defense and security services is set to increase. This presents a significant opportunity for Turkey, which leverages its historical ties, religious affinities, and established humanitarian presence through Turkish relief and development organizations to position itself as a preferred partner.

The diverse tools and motivations outlined above represent the evolving nature of Turkish policy toward the African continent, reflecting both tactical adjustments and broader strategic ambitions. These efforts align with President Erdogan's vision of Turkey as an "Afro-Eurasian" power, actively engaging across multiple arenas to bolster its position as a significant middle power in a complex international system. As a result, competition for influence in Africa is likely to intensify, pitting traditional powers against rising actors like China, Russia, and Turkey amidst growing uncertainty in the global order.

While challenges remain, Africa is expected to remain a key priority for Turkish foreign policy. Increased security and military cooperation, coupled with a growing demand for Turkish defense equipment and expertise, suggest a continued expansion of Ankara's influence. These trends could pave the way for Turkey to deepen its engagement in other African nations, potentially including Djibouti, as Ankara seeks to play an increasingly prominent role in shaping the continent's security landscape. However, the long-term sustainability and impact of Turkey's expanding footprint will depend on its ability to navigate regional rivalries, address concerns about neo-Ottoman ambitions, and foster genuine partnerships that prioritize African agency and development.