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BRIQ

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Africa Rising in a Multipolar World

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Esentepe Mah. Yüzbaşı Kaya Aldoğan Sk. No: 4 İç Kapı No: 209 Şişli-İstanbul
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Principles of Publication

At a time when U.S. ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Türkiye has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Türkiye is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Türkiye's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Türkiye through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners -including Türkiye- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.

Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA style, 7th edition, <https://www.apastyle.org>) and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

EDITORIAL

The rise of humanity in Africa

There is a broad consensus that we are at a pivotal moment of change in the international system. The debate centers on whether hegemony will continue to dominate or a more equitable system of international relations will emerge, led by nation-states in the developing world. Critically, the ability of states challenging Atlantic dominance to transform their collaborative platforms into a hub for an alternative order is vital. Creating this new order demands the development of alternative mechanisms endowed with the capability and inclusiveness necessary for tangible achievements.

Asia has decisively marked its influence on the 21st century, as we draw close to the end of its first quarter. The continent's progress, with China leading the way, is lauded for its burgeoning skilled labor force, advanced technological achievements, expanding knowledge through scientific innovations, and economic growth.

Asia's ascent is not happening in isolation. Along with Latin America, Africa is also on the rise, buoyed by its abundant natural resources, youthful labor force, and relatively steady growth trend. Presently, the Republic of South Africa is playing a pivotal role in the BRICS, a key initiative shaping the new world order. Furthermore, governments in Africa that once collaborated with the West and were exploited for centuries are now being systematically dismantled. The second wave of independence movements, starting in the 2010s and following the initial wave of independence in the 1960s, is significantly impacting both the continent and its former colonizers. The new governments emerging from changes in leadership in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are fortifying the pan-African movement for independence, united in their opposition to Western hegemony.

African nations, which had led the Non-Aligned Movement at its inception, are increasingly collaborating with Asia. Similarly, Asian countries facing challenges from Atlanticist influences are seeking stronger ties with Africa. Partnerships across a wide range of sectors with nations such as China, Russia, Türkiye, Iran, and India are flourishing at an unprecedented pace. Moreover, deepening cooperation with countries like Saudi Arabia, which are pursuing more independent policies from the West, is significantly aiding African nations in their effort to break free from neocolonialism. The trend towards regional cooperation, which has contributed to the decline of the unipolar world order, is now encompassing Africa as well.

These developments are shifting the balance of power not just on a continental level but globally as well. The erosion of Western hegemony is unlocking opportunities for Africa's wealth to be utilized for the benefit of its people, enabling South-South cooperation previously impeded by imperialist actions, and consequently generating positive results for all stakeholders. Through this lens, overcoming neocolonialism in Africa is emerging as a shared objective, not just for African nations but for the entire developing world. The movement to break free from the constraints of neoliberalism and globalization is gaining momentum across Africa.

It is becoming clear that the 21st century will be defined not only by Asia's ascendance but also by Africa's resurgence.

With this issue, BRIQ marks four and a half years of publication and embarks on a new venture. Since our debut, the journal has been available in both Turkish and English. However, from this issue forward, the print edition will be exclusively in Turkish, while the English version will transition to an electronic format. Both the Turkish and English e-journal versions of BRIQ are accessible on our website. We have also started efforts to release BRIQ in e-journal format in Chinese, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Spanish, and French. Our goal is to evolve BRIQ into a journal available in the main languages of the countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. With the support of our readers, we are hopeful of achieving this ambitious objective.

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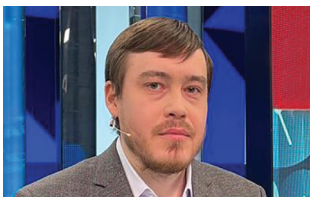
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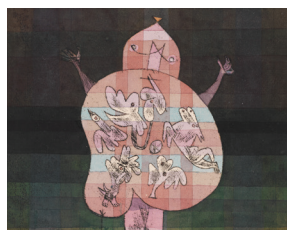


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Africa at the Dawn of a New World



ALİ RIZA TAŞDELEN*

Sociologist, Writer

**Ali Rıza Taşdelen was born on December 6, 1956, in Ceyhan, Adana. He graduated from Adana Technical High School. In 1980, he moved to France, where his family lived. He received his bachelor's degree in sociology from Lyon 2 Lumière University and his master's degree in the same field from Paris 7 Denis Diderot University. His studies focused on the social organization of Turkish immigrants in France, Türkiye's EU accession process, and French foreign policy. In 1987, he started working as a journalist at 2000'e Doğru magazine. His news and research articles were published in Gökyüzü, 2000'e Doğru, Yüzyıl, weekly and daily Aydınlık, and monthly Teori magazines. He worked as the representative of Ulusal Kanal and Aydınlık newspapers in France. Since 2011, he has been writing a weekly column foreign policy in the daily Aydınlık newspaper. He is the author of a book titled "From Paris Commune to the Yellow Vests: French Social Democracy," published by Kaynak Yayınları in 2020.*

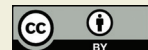
e-mail: arizatasdelen@yahoo.fr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3901-9046>

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on the contemporary transformations in Africa's struggle against the neo-colonial system within their historical context. It particularly examines the dynamics behind the current shifts in governance in former French colonial African countries. The process of Africa's colonization and its struggle for independence will be dissected into four sections: the colonial period, the process of political independence, the emergence of neo-colonial activities, and what can be referred to as the Second War of Independence for African nations. Certainly, colonialism stands as one of the darkest chapters in human history. With the rise of capitalism and its innate need to find new markets and resource-rich lands, the previously untapped wealth of the African continent was of strategic importance for colonial powers. In the 1880s, colonial conquests accelerated, and by the early 20th century, nearly all African territories were divided among the colonial powers of the era. The classical colonial period continued until after World War II, with Africa gaining political independence in the 1960s. However, Africa's position on the world stage persisted within a new framework of exploitation through dependency agreements imposed by neo-colonialist states. Resistance to this new form of colonialism that began in the 1960s was often met with occupations, military coups, and bloodshed. In the 21st century, the political and economic balance of forces has shifted against leading imperialist states like the United States and France. Eurasian countries, particularly China, respecting the independence and territorial integrity of nations and proposing a new framework of peaceful cooperation, have begun to exert increasing influence in Africa. This environment has brought the African forces striving for full independence back onto the world stage.

Keywords: Africa, de Gaulle, Non-Aligned Movement, new colonialism, New World.

"China has achieved in twenty years what the West failed to achieve for over four centuries in Africa."

Professor Abdoulaye Wade Former President of Senegal

Introduction

WITH ITS INCREASING POPULATION AND growing economy, Africa will continue to be the focus of the world's attention in the coming years due to its abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, gold, uranium, diamonds, copper, and many others. Currently, Africa is home to 1.5 billion people, with 60% of them being young people under the age of 25. According to recent

estimates, it is expected that Africa's population will double to 2.5 billion by 2050 (IMF, 2023). According to Hubert Vedrine, former French Foreign Minister, "since the early 2000s, Africa has been growing at an average rate of 5%, and after 2014, the average growth rate is estimated at 6-7%. As the urban population increases in parallel with the growing population, African countries, in addition to having ample natural resources, represent a colossal market" (Vedrine, 2013:34).

This is why the whole world has its eyes on Africa. Africa, until the end of World War II, was subjected to classical colonialism by countries like England, France, and Belgium. During the Cold War era, it witnessed the neo-colonialism of the United States and France. After the Cold War, Africa faced invasions and interventions by the United States, France, and other imperialist states while trying to protect their presence and interests against emerging powers, such as China, Russia, and Türkiye. However, the rise of the BRICS countries in Africa during the 2000s has triggered significant transformations at the expense of Western hegemony and in favor of multipolarity (Gürkan, 2019a, 2019b).

With a group of colonels taking over the government in Mali, independently of France’s initiative, Mali’s struggle for independence against imperialism initiated a new process.

Despite gaining political independence in the second half of the 20th century, African countries have continued to be economically and militarily dependent on imperialist countries. After the wave of independence movements in the 1960s, Africa is now entering a second era of struggles for liberation. The popular movement that began on February 22, 2019, offered the Algerian Army the opportunity to remove the country from the Western influence it had been under for forty years, and the New-Boumediene cadres started to determine the policies of the new era in the lead of the New-Boumediene cadres. With a group of colonels taking over the government in Mali on August 18, 2020,

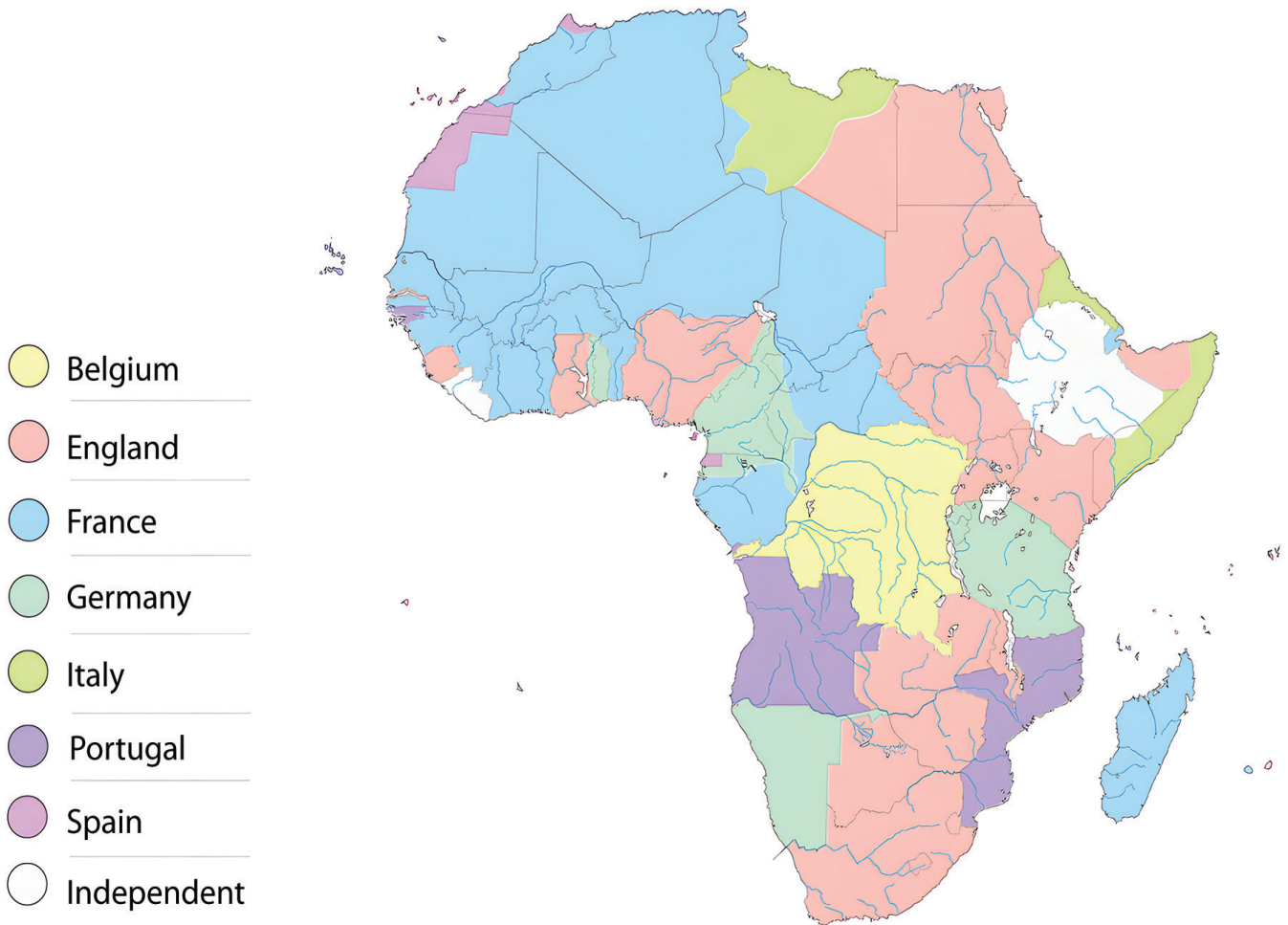
independently of France’s initiative, Mali’s struggle for independence against imperialism initiated a new process. Following Mali, on September 30, 2022, Burkina Faso also followed in Mali’s footsteps, and under the leadership of Captain Ibrahim Traore, a group of young officers dealt a major blow to French imperialism. On July 26, 2023, after Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger also struck a decisive blow against U.S. and French imperialism by forming a people-army alliance and deporting French forces.

Colonial Era in Africa

Colonialism can be defined as “a state’s acquisition of overseas territories beyond its borders through various means, primarily through the use of military force, and establishing dominance over native populations in political, economic, and cultural domains, ultimately plundering all resources of those territories for its own benefit” (Kavas, 2009:394-397).

The process of colonization in Africa dates back to ancient times, reaching as far back as the Phoenicians and Ancient Greeks. However, modern colonialism, in its true sense, began in the 15th century with the Age of Explorations, led by Portugal and Spain. Subsequently, with the involvement of the Dutch, French, and British, Africa became a major battleground for colonization. These European colonial powers initially established colonies in Northwest Africa, mainly for trade purposes, and became particularly involved in slave trade. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European colonialism in Africa was primarily centered around commercial colonies along the western and southern coasts, focusing on slave trade (Şahin, 2018:2).

It was not until the 1870s, with the industrialization of Europe, that increasing production, coupled with the inability to consume the surplus domestically, led to the search for new markets and



At the Berlin Conference, borders were drawn with a ruler. In 1913, almost all of Africa was colonised by Europe (Photo: NDLA, 2024).

resource-rich territories to meet the raw material needs of Europe's growing industries. This quest for new markets and resources through colonial conquests intensified in later periods. In this context, the African continent stood out due to its untapped and abundant resources.

Lenin, in his book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, provided a comprehensive assessment of imperialism. He quoted Hobson, stating

that between 1884 and 1900, "Britain, with a population of 57 million, acquired 3.7 million square miles; France, with a population of 36.5 million, acquired 3.6 million square miles; Belgium, with a population of 30 million, acquired 900,000 square miles; Portugal, with a population of 9 million, acquired 800,000 square miles of territory," highlighting that "European states achieved significant expansion" (Lenin, 1992: 83-84).

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the De Facto Occupation of Africa

While free-market capitalism reached its peak and the transition to capitalist-imperialism was underway during the years of 1860-1880, Germany achieved national unification in 1871. During this period, Germany joined the stakeholders of Africa, which had already been divided among Belgium, France, and England. Under the leadership of Germany's founding chancellor, Bismarck, a conference known as the "Berlin Conference" was held from November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885, attended by "fourteen states: Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway, the Ottoman Empire, and the United States" (Şahin, 2018:3). During this conference, "(...) the principles adopted paved the way for the actual occupation and division of Africa. The decisions made at the conference set the stage for the partition and occupation of Africa, disrupting the continent's traditional structure" (Şahin, 2018:18).

In Berlin, the colonial powers accepted the principle of "de facto occupation," initiating the division of Africa. By the year 1905, except for Liberia and Ethiopia, all African territories had been occupied by European colonizers.

In Berlin, the colonial powers accepted the principle of "de facto occupation," initiating the division of Africa. By the year 1905, except for Liberia and Ethiopia, all African territories had been occupied by European colonizers. While Britain and France became the largest colonial empires, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Belgium followed suit. French colonizers, who had

begun their occupations with Algeria in 1830, continued with Tunisia in 1881. In the early 20th century, they occupied Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Ivory Coast, Benin, Niger, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, and much of North, West, and Central Africa. They also occupied parts of East Africa, Djibouti on the East African coast, and the island of Madagascar.

Establishment of Colonial Administrations and the Policy of "Civilizing" Indigenous People

By the eve of World War I, the conquest of African territories had been completed. Following Germany's defeat in the war, in West Africa, the former German colonies of Cameroon and Togo became French mandates in 1918. "Military victory continuously altered the colonial map in favor of France. Both old and new colonies sent troops to defend France during the Great War. 172,000 Algerians and 134,000 Africans were sent to European battlefields" (Gosnell, 2020).

Post-war policies aimed to increase dependency on colonial rule. Within this framework, France initiated the creation of colonial administrations, the establishment of schools to promote the French language and culture, and the mobilization of missionaries to "civilize the barbaric African peoples (Roge, 2012:117)." "Binary divisions such as 'black' and 'white,' 'savage' or 'barbaric,' and 'civilized' were deployed as colonial tools to legitimize domination over the colonized" (Roge, 2012:117-130). To facilitate the replacement of Africa's local languages, religions, and traditions with French customs, laws, and values, as well as to ease the cultivation of their lands and the transfer of raw materials to France, the French colonizers had to build railways for transportation, establish the necessary institutions for the flow of money and goods, and implement an administrative system. Therefore, they created an administrative network, a combination



French caricature, 1884-1885, at the Berlin Conference, a document showing how Europe divided Africa among themselves (Caricature: NDLA, 2024).

of private and centralized administration, and established a powerful structure with the Colonial Governor having executive, legislative, and diplomatic powers.

In all the colonies, distinct areas were clearly defined for whites and Africans, arrangements were made for the former to reproduce the same living environment as in metropolitan France, while the latter were relegated to the margins. In short, everything was done to manage, control, and regulate the local population (Tonme, 2023:4).

Political Independence Process in Africa

The attainment of formal political independence by colonies is conceptualized as “Decolonization.” “Decolonization is the ending of control by one state over the people and institutions of another. It can be political and/or cultural. This concept is particularly used for the disintegration of colonial empires established before World War I” (CVCE, 2023).

After World War II, European colonial imperialist countries suffered immense devastation. Their economies were paralyzed, the flow of raw materials and products was disrupted, industrial production came to a halt, and unemployment reached its peak. During this period, the myth of civilizing colonization in France gave way to the myth of peaceful decolonization, and subsequently, developments that would positively influence the independence struggle of the colonies emerged.

The wind of independence began to blow from Asia: In 1945, the countries of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) initiated their struggle for independence against French colonizers. In 1945, Indonesia, in 1947, India and Pakistan, and in 1948, Myanmar (Burma) declared their independence. The most influential development that shaped this process was the Chinese Revolution and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China under the leadership of Mao Zedong.

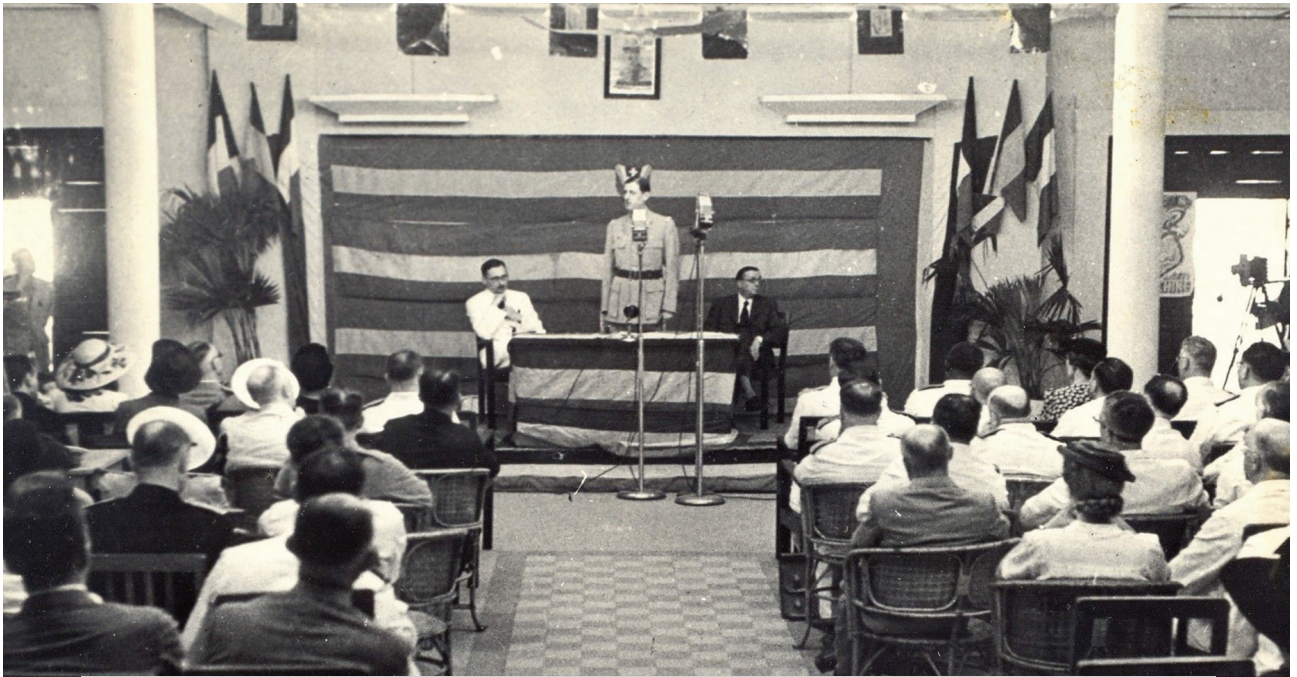
The wind of independence blowing from the East found an echo in Africa, marking the beginning of a new era in the fight against colonialism. On the other hand, the United States, one of the victors of the war, emerged with very little loss and sought global hegemony as the most powerful imperialist state of the time. To achieve this, it aimed to encircle the Soviet Union and control Europe and Third World countries. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established on April 4, 1949, to achieve this goal. Thus, the Cold War era began, which would last until the 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed.

The wind of independence blowing from the East found an echo in Africa, marking the beginning of a new era in the fight against colonialism.

The Bandung Conference held in Indonesia from April 17 to 24, 1955, brought together approximately twenty-nine delegates from African and Asian countries, including Nehru from India, Nkrumah from Ghana, Nasser from Egypt, Sukarno from Indonesia, Modibo Keita from Mali, and Tito from Yugoslavia. The participants adopted a declaration stating that their countries were officially neither with nor against any of the major blocs. In other words, they chose to remain outside the Cold War. They also issued a “Declaration on World Peace and Cooperation,” based on five principles to govern their relations. These five principles included mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Tonme, 2023).

The Brazzaville Conference (1944)

In 1940, France was under German occupation, and its administration was divided between the Nazi-collaborating Vichy Government and the resistance movement “Free France” led by General de Gaulle from London. The French colonial empire in Africa was facing the threat of extinction. Almost all colonial governors had taken a pro-Vichy stance. Only Governor Félix Éboué of Chad, along with Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville (now the Central African Republic), supported the cause of “Free France.” Except for Gabon, by the end of the summer of 1940, nearly the entire French Equatorial Africa (AEF) had joined the Free French Forces. In Congo, massive demonstrations in support of de Gaulle’s “Free France” struggle were taking place. With the support of the colonies, the strength of the Free French Forces increased from 7,000 in July 1940 to 35,000 by the end of August, and on August 29, 1940, General de Gaulle declared that “the war continues throughout the French Empire,” with reference to the colonies. The capital Brazzaville was seen by the General as a “refuge” for French “honor” and “independence” (Ndiaye, 2021). On October 24, 1940, General de Gaulle arrived in Brazzaville, where the organization of the resistance of Free France was to take place, following his call for resistance from London on June 18, 1940. On October 26, he made a radio speech announcing the organization of the French response against the Nazi occupation. “On October 27, Brazzaville, which became the capital of Free France, announced the establishment of a ‘Conseil de Défense de l’Empire’ (Empire Defense Council) and confirmed the determination of Free France to continue its struggle with the support of French Equatorial Africa” (Dedeyan, 2020). This shows how important Africa was in the struggle of France against Nazi occupation. Before de



De Gaulle giving a speech at the Brazzaville Conference (1944). On stage, from left to right, Rene Pleven, General De Gaulle, Felix Eboué (Photo: Musee Alexandre-Franconie, 2024).*

* This photo is taken from the website of the Alexandre-Franconie Museum - Guyana Regional Collective.

Gaule arrived in Paris on August 24, 1944, the Provisional Government of the French Republic (Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française-GPRF) was established in Algeria on June 3, 1944. The resistance was managed from three centers until de Gaulle's return to Paris: London, Congo-Brazzaville, and Algeria. At the same time, the French colonies that supported France in the war were boiling, and nationalist demands were increasingly voiced. Debates about the status of the colonies in the international arena had also begun. De Gaulle knew that the Soviet Union opposed colonialism, and the United States also wanted the sovereignty rights of the colonies to be fulfilled. The United States, which had joined the sharing table and saw itself as the savior of Europe, aimed to "condemn colonialism and advocate for the liberation of peoples" (Ndiaye, 2021). Throughout

the war and afterward, De Gaulle remained distant from the United States, and with the idea of taking the lead and not losing France's colonies, he asked Chad Governor Félix Éboué to organize a meeting with all colonial governors. From January 30 to February 8, 1944, the "French Africa Conference" was held in Brazzaville, the capital of AEF, under the auspices of General de Gaulle. "Nineteen governors of French West Africa and representatives of North African countries attended the meeting. No local Africans were invited to the conference. The conference discussed topics such as increasing colonial representation in the Constituent Assembly, establishing representative assemblies consisting of Europeans and natives elected by general vote in each colony, and implementing a policy to educate and encourage native elites" (Bouamama, 2021:74-75).

It became clear at the conference that France did not favor the political organization of the colonies. In his opening speech, General de Gaulle stated, “The results of France’s civilizing efforts in the colonies rule out any idea of autonomy, even in the distant future, as every kind of autonomy is ruled out for any section of the empire, just as it is for other regions where people under our flag do not bring material and spiritual benefits to themselves or rise to the level where they can participate in the management of their own affairs” (Gassama, 2010:169).

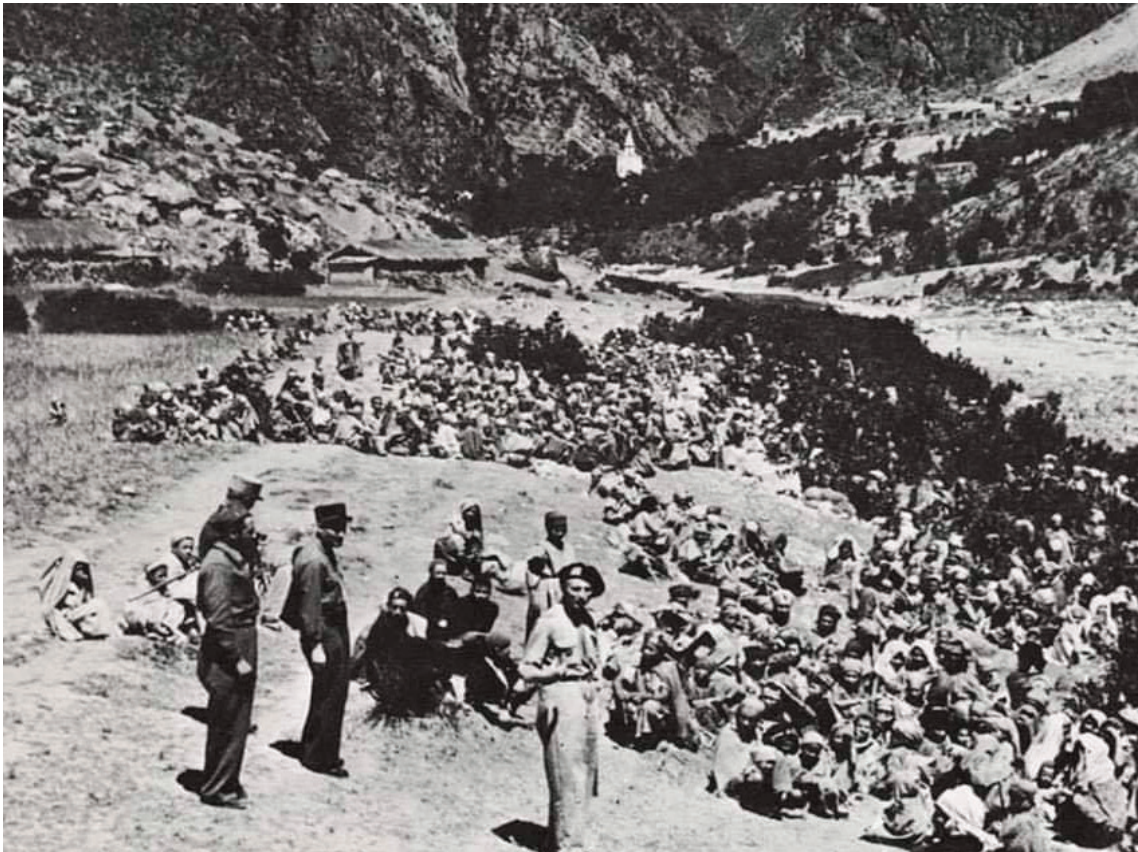
French had started seeking ways to ensure that the colonies remained under France’s sovereignty.

General de Gaulle did not foresee immediate independence for French colonies. He believed that the process towards the independence of the regions would be gradual. With these words, he aimed to reshape France’s colonial policy after the war: “We believe that, especially in terms of developing resources and major communications, the African continent must largely form a whole. However, as in all other regions where people live under our flag, people in French Africa must rise gradually to a level where they can bring material and spiritual benefits to themselves and participate in the management of their own affairs, just like everyone else under our flag. It is France’s duty to make this happen” (Gassama, 2010:170). They had started seeking ways to ensure that the colonies remained under France’s sovereignty. Félix Éboué, the Governor of Chad and the organizer of the conference, advocated for

the creation of a “local bourgeoisie” that would serve France: “By promoting and establishing the authority of local political institutions and local leaders, we can turn them into an elite that serves us, we can create a ‘local bourgeoisie’ consisting of Black and mixed-race French people” (Ndiaye, 2021). They partially succeeded in this, training cadres that served them and gaining political independence in the 1960s, while also facing the emergence of nationalist and revolutionary leaders in Africa who rebelled against French colonial oppression.

The Deadlock of French Colonialism

The decisions of the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, aimed at continuing colonial rule, were met with strong resistance in Africa. On May 8, 1945, the same day the war ended, in the town of Setif in Algeria, demonstrators led by the clandestine Algerian People’s Party shouted “Long live free and independent Algeria” and carried the Algerian national flag, but they were attacked by French colonial police and soldiers. To suppress these uprisings, the French colonialists carried out attacks by land and air, resulting in the killing of 45,000 Algerians. The Provisional Government of de Gaulle was in power at the time. On May 12, de Gaulle sent a telegram to the general governor of Algeria, stating, “Express the sympathies of our government to the families who lost their lives. Publicly declare that France will not tolerate anything that aims to challenge its sovereignty over Algeria. Take the necessary measures” (Taşdelen, 2020:176-177). Not only de Gaulle but also the Social Democrats and the French Communist Party (FCP) supported these massacres (Pervillé, 2012:332).



On 8 May 1945, the occupying French forces in Algeria carried out a terrible genocide in Setif and Guelma. 45,000 Algerians lost their lives (Photo: hawzahnews, 2022).

Until 1958, France, primarily governed by Social Democrats, was in a state of political instability. During this period, France's biggest issue was the war of independence initiated by Algeria in 1954. In 1946, when discussions about a new Constitution arose in the 2nd de Gaulle government, which was formed with the French Communist Party (FCP) and the Socialist Party (SP), de Gaulle resigned on January 20, 1946, when he could not reach an agreement with the FCP and SP. Thus, the new Constitution that de Gaulle opposed was adopted in October 1946, and the Fourth Republic, which would last until October 1958, was estab-

lished. On December 18, 1946, a temporary government was formed under the presidency of Socialist Léon Blum, which would last for two months. According to the new Constitution, on January 16, 1947, the parliament elected the new president of the republic. Socialist Vincent Auriol, supported by the Communists, became the president. Auriol entrusted Paul Ramadier with the task of forming the government. The organization of the Gladio and France's entry into NATO took place during the presidency of Socialist President Auriol and Prime Minister Ramadier, who remained in power until 1951 (Pervillé, 2012; Taşdelen, 2020).

On June 18, 1954, the government was formed by Radical Pierre Mendès France, who appointed François Mitterrand as the Minister of the Interior responsible for the colonies. The government not only faced the Algerian issue but also simmering unrest in the colonies. The independence struggle that began against French colonialists in 1946 had been won by the countries of Indochina. On July 21, 1954, Mendès France, through an agreement signed in Geneva with the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, officially ended French colonialism. Tunisia and Morocco had also revolted against France. On March 2, 1956, Morocco gained independence, followed by Tunisia on March 20, 1956, putting an end to French colonialism (Taşdelen, 2020:177-178).

Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962)

On November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front of Algeria (Front de Libération Nationale: FLN) initiated a war of independence against France. On the same day, Ahmed Ben Bella announced the establishment of the FLN through a radio channel in Cairo. The National Liberation Army (Armée de Libération Nationale: ALN), which led the actions, revealed its founding program through leaflets distributed in Algeria and called on the Algerian people to join the struggle:

“Colonialism is nothing but a lie when it comes to justice, democracy, and equality... Our brothers who have died for their homeland and we, at the cost of your blood, call you to the struggle for freedom. Organize in the Liberation Front. Allah is with those who fight on the right path, and no force can stop this besides death. Long live the armed liberation. Long live independent Algeria” (Michal, 2012:19-20).

FLN explained its goal of national independence as follows:

“1. To establish a democratic, social, and sovereign Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles, 2. To respect all basic freedoms without discrimination based on faith or race.”

They presented a three-point negotiation platform to the French government:

“1. Abolish all laws declaring Algeria as French territory and recognize Algerian citizenship, 2. Acknowledge the indivisibility and sovereignty of Algeria and initiate negotiations with representatives of the Algerian people based on this, 3. Release all political prisoners, repeal special laws, and cease searches and pursuits against the combatant forces to establish a climate of trust.”

They added:

“1. Respect will be shown for the economic rights legitimately acquired by the French, their cultural interests, and French families, 2. French residents who wish to remain in Algeria will either retain their original nationality or adopt Algerian citizenship under the laws that will come into effect, 3. Relations between France and Algeria will be determined by a mutual agreement based on interests and equality” (Michal, 2012:20-22).

During the Mendès France government, with François Mitterrand as the Minister of the Interior responsible for the colonies, an effort was made to suppress the uprising with more than 800,000 soldiers, declaring, “Algeria is France, and France will not accept any authority other than itself” (Michal, 2012:39). After the general elections on January 2, 1956, a “Republican Front” government was formed under the presidency of Socialist Guy Mollet, excluding the Communists and de Gaulle supporters. Mitterrand became the Minister of Justice. A Socialist Party member, Robert



1958, soldiers of the National Liberation Army in the Algerian War of Independence
(Photo: Museum of African Art Belgrade, 1958).

Lacoste, was appointed as the general governor of Algeria. Robert Lacoste and General Massu, under his command, unleashed terror with full authority. Algerian patriots were subjected to unimaginable torture, and some were beheaded by the guillotine.

French governments failed to suppress the Algerian resistance. On May 28, 1958, President Coty assigned General de Gaulle, with the support of the army, the task of forming the government. De Gaulle accepted the task. De Gaulle, who went to Algeria on June 4, stated in his spe-

ech, “I understand you. The path you have opened in Algeria is the path of brotherhood. Everyone living in Algeria is French. They have the same rights as those in France” (Caillet, 2018). FLN had taken a clear stance against de Gaulle’s statements, stating that Algerians had not been fighting for four years to become French citizens, and they would not accept any promise other than independence, and that de Gaulle was trying to assimilate them, emphasizing that they had not sacrificed 500,000 martyrs in vain (Ageron, 1982:174).

On September 19, 1958, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (Gouvernement Provisoire de la Revolution Algerienne-GPRA) was announced in Cairo, with Ferhat Abbas as its president. On September 28, de Gaulle presented a new constitution including a semi-presidential system, which was approved by 80% of the votes in a referendum. The constitution officially came into effect on October 4, marking the beginning of the Fifth Republic, which continues today.

De Gaulle was determined to resolve the Algerian issue. He signaled negotiations with the GPRA, saying, “We have a challenging and bloody Algerian problem to solve. We won’t achieve this by jumping on each other, shouting slogans... We will look at the problem as a great nation. The only valid options are 1. Separation and independence, 2. Assimilation as equals with the French, 3. Algerians choosing their own government

but remaining tied to France in terms of the economy, education, defense, and foreign relations” (Michal, 2012:560). GPRA President Ferhat Abbas responded, “There can be no negotiations until French soldiers withdraw.”

Finally, the negotiations that began in Evian, France on March 18, 1962, resulted in the signing of a Treaty, bringing an end to the eight-year armed struggle. With the amnesty issued, Algerians in captivity regained their freedom, and resistance fighters who had been forced to leave their country returned. An independence referendum was held on July 1. On July 3, France officially recognized Algeria’s independence, and on July 5, Algeria became an independent country.

Ahmed Ben Bella became Algeria’s first President. In 1960, Huari Boumediene, who was the Chief of the Liberation Army, played a significant role in Ben Bella



Huvvari Bumedyen was the second President of Algeria from 19 June 1965 to 27 December 1978
(Photo: AfricaSis, 2019).

becoming president and became the Vice President and Minister of Defense. Later on, due to economic difficulties and the unrest in society causing turmoil in the military, a government coup took place on June 19, 1965, under the leadership of Boumediene, toppling Ben Bella. In December 1978, Boumediene, whose health was deteriorating, passed away. (Michal, 2012:870-871).

The Momentum Paving the Way for Political Independence: The 1958 Brazzaville Speech

While preparing for the upcoming referendum on the new constitution scheduled for September 28, 1958, De Gaulle was also attempting to reach an agreement with the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale: FLN) to resolve the Algerian issue. The post-war realignments, the emerging Western system, and the resistance against colonialism in Asia and Africa had made it clear that colonialism was no longer sustainable. De Gaulle was striving to resolve the colonial issue in favor of France on a constitutional level.

"We will establish a Community in which each region will govern and manage itself, provided that we pool certain areas, such as diplomacy, defense, and currency, which will be in a common fund"

In August 1958, just three months after returning to power, General De Gaulle embarked on a tour of Africa to persuade the people to support his new constitution plan. He visited Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar,

Senegal, and Algeria.

On August 24, 1958, General De Gaulle delivered a speech to a crowd at the Felix Eboué stadium in Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo. In his speech, he proposed the establishment of a Community in which the French Union would be replaced, and each member state would have the opportunity to be autonomous. General De Gaulle warned that every region that voted "no" in the Constitution referendum on September 28, 1958, could become independent. He stated, "Anyone who desires independence can achieve it immediately. France will not oppose it... We will establish a Community in which each region will govern and manage itself, provided that we pool certain areas, such as diplomacy, defense, and currency, which will be in a common fund" (De Gaulle, 1958).

In this way, De Gaulle offered two options to the African colonies: "To remain part of Metropolitan France and the Overseas Territories (colonies that would remain under French control) and establish a Community where each would have its own free and full government (political independence) while sharing a common pool in certain areas, including defense, foreign affairs, politics, economics, justice, education, and long-distance communication, all under the direction of France.

To become an independent country separate from France: If a specific region voted 'no' in the referendum on September 28, they could immediately accept this path, signifying that they did not want to be part of the proposed Community and wished to go their own way, in isolation, taking their own risks. The Metropolitan France would accept the consequences of this decision, and I guarantee you, it will not oppose it (De Gaulle, 1958)."

Ahmed Sékou Touré

On September 28, 1958, voters in mainland France and overseas territories (colonies) overwhelmingly cast their votes in favor of the new Constitution. Only Guinea, under the leadership of Sékou Touré, chose independence on October 2 by casting a dissenting vote. Subsequently, the Community was established, with the former French West Africa (AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (AEF) regions becoming member republics. This new situation offered several advantages for France, such as no longer requiring France to maintain colonial administration and leaving untouched the tools of exploitation. Access to raw materials and diplomatic harmony were guaranteed. All wrongdoers would

be punished with coups or assassinations, while loyalists would be defended against popular movements (Tobner, 2010:632).

While 14 French colonies agreed to the new colonial system, the only one to oppose it was Guinea, led by Ahmed Sékou Touré. Touré perceived General de Gaulle's aforementioned Brazzaville speech as "disparaging Africans." Just one day after the conference, on August 25, 1958, Touré delivered a speech in Conakry, Guinea's capital, in the presence of General de Gaulle. This speech, which African leaders currently fighting for their Second Independence frequently reference and has made Touré a symbol against colonialism in Africa, is excerpted here:

"The emergence of Africa's values is hindered not by those who shaped them but by economic and po-



Ahmed Sékou Touré was Guinea's first president from 1958 to 1984 (Photo: AfricaSis, 2018).

litical structures inherited from colonial rule, which are not in harmony with future aspirations. That is why we want to correct these structures fundamentally, not with timid and partial reforms, so that our societies may follow the rising path of constant evolution, continuous progress... We will never and shall never renounce our legitimate and natural right to independence. We intend to exercise this right, while staying bound by, and collaborating in the use of, it for the common wealth, as proposed. We do not confuse the exercise of this right with leaving France. The draft constitution should not be locked into the logic of colonial rule that made us legally French citizens and our territories an integral part of the Indivisible French Republic. We are Africans, and our territories cannot be part of France... The nature, or rather the new nature, of relations between France and its former colonies should be determined without paternalism or deceit. We categorically say NO to any change in the colonial regime or any paternalistic spirit, with the intention of preserving the commitments to be entered into by the new French-African Community in time and space, without any sense of rebellion. We are the determined and conscious participants in the political evolution of Black Africa; this is a basic condition for the total reformation of all colonial achievements for the African peoples and in their interest, not against them” (Touré, 1958).

Guinea, which cast a “no” vote in the referendum, declared its independence on October 2, 1958, under the leadership of Ahmed Sékou Touré. By December 1, 1958, sixty countries had recognized their independence. However, France did not take this kindly. While General de Gaulle appeared to be taking a step towards freedom, dignity, and independence for the peoples under French rule, the reality was quite different. Sékou

Touré recommended to his people that they choose independence over the Community proposed by de Gaulle, which he praised. As a result, Guinea found itself under a severe blockade overnight and faced a series of consecutive plots to eliminate Touré (Tonme, 2023:50).

14 French Colonies Gaining Their Independence

Following the constitutional referendum, in less than two years (by 1960), several French colonies achieved their political independence, including Cameroon, Senegal, Togo, Madagascar, Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central Africa, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Mali, and Mauritania.

On January 1, 1960, Cameroon, on April 27, 1960, Togo, and on August 1, 1960, Dahomey (which later became Benin in 1975) declared their independence. On August 3, 1960, Niger, on August 5, 1960, the Upper Volta region, initially part of Ivory Coast and later separated, became independent. Burkina Faso was named during Thomas Sankara’s rule on August 4, 1984. On August 7, 1960, Ivory Coast, on August 11, 1960, Chad, on August 13, 1960, the Central African Republic, on August 15, 1960, Congo Brazzaville, on August 17, 1960, Gabon, on August 20, 1960, Senegal, and on September 22, 1960, the former French Sudan, under the name of the former Mali Empire, gained their independence.

Algeria’s independence in 1962 inspired many other African countries. Armed struggles erupted in other last colonial strongholds: Angola (1961), South Africa (1961), Guinea-Bissau (1963), Congo (1963), Mozambique (1964), and Rhodesia (1966), and they eventually achieved their independence.

This process produced leaders who became symbols in the fight against colonialism and guided nationalist and revolutionary leaders in Africa today: Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of Ghana, the first black African country to declare independence on March 6, 1957, and an advocate of “African socialism.” Ahmed Sékou Touré, who brought Algeria into the camp of “anti-imperialist states” and nationalized the country’s energy resources (oil and natural gas), banks, and major industries, becoming one of the prominent figures in the Non-Aligned Movement. Modibo Keita, the first President of Mali, played a decisive role in the Non-Aligned Movement and suggested the name “Non-Aligned” at the 1961 Belgrade conference attended by President Tito, Nasser, and Nkrumah. Habib Bourguiba, who followed in the footsteps of Atatürk in Tunisia, secularized the country, and leaned towards Nasser’s Arab socialism.

Another example is Thomas Sankara. In the 1970s,

while receiving military training, he became acquainted with Marxism; he read African revolutionaries and Lenin. He was respectful of faith and believers; “When asked which books he would take with him to a deserted island in 1986, he answered: Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, the Bible, and the Quran” (Bouama, 2021: 348). Thomas Sankara gathered a group of officers in an organization called *Rassemblement des officiers communistes (ROC)* consisting of revolutionary soldiers and contributed to the Marxist education of many of them. He was appointed State Minister in charge of information and later Prime Minister on November 7, 1982 (Lepidi, 2020). Thomas Sankara met Fidel Castro at the 7th Non-Aligned Countries Summit in New Delhi on March 7-12, 1983, and was influenced by Castro’s call for the cancellation of Third World countries’ debts at the United Nations General Assembly, which he attended on September 25, 1984. After the General Assembly meeting, he visited Cuba



Thomas Sankara, President of Burkina Faso from 1983 to 1987, was a Burkinabé military captain, Marxist revolutionary, pan-Africanist theorist (Photo: AfricaSis, 2018).

to meet with Castro (Jaffre, 2016). On March 26, 1983, his anti-imperialist speech as prime minister at a rally disturbed the conservative wing of the regime, and he was arrested on May 17, 1983. Supported by left-wing organizations and unions, popular protests forced the government to release him (Bouamama, 2021: 352-353). When he became president after a military coup on August 4, 1983, with the support of the people, he was 35 years old. He claimed to have realized a “Democratic and Popular Revolution” and defined his line as anti-imperialism. The “National Revolution Council” they established started by changing the name of the country from “Upper Volta,” the name during the French colonial period, to “Burkina Faso,” which means “Land of Honest Men” (Bouamama, 2021: 355).

Sankara advocated for African unity and independence against imperialism and neo-colonialism.

He added the phrase “We will overcome” to Che Guevara’s famous “Homeland or Death” quote, which became the country’s slogan (Lepidi, 2020). During his four years in power, the destiny of the country changed. He advocated for African unity and independence against imperialism and neo-colonialism. He supported revolutionary struggles in neighboring countries such as Mali, Ivory Coast, and Togo. This situation particularly disturbed the imperialists, especially France (At that time, François Mitterrand was the President of France, and Jacques Chirac was the Prime Minister). On October 15, 1987, he was overthrown by a coup led by his closest friend Blaise Compaoré and subsequently killed. The role of France in the 1987 military coup and Sankara’s assassination is still a subject of debate today (Lepidi, 2020).

The Era of Neo-Colonialism

Neo-colonialism refers to an imperialist policy adopted by colonial powers towards their former colonies, in which they use various methods of influence and domination to serve their own interests and those of their corporations. Coined by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1956, this term was first used in a speech by Kwame Nkrumah in 1965. The term extends the concept of colonialism from the 16th to the 19th centuries to describe post-colonial relations of domination (Ardant, 1965:837-838).

Neo-colonial powers use excuses to legitimize their military presence, ensuring the security of countries that supposedly gained independence after the 1960s and suppressing those who rebel against the system through counter-insurgency methods. Furthermore, they effectively control countries through financial methods, often leading to indebtedness, and cultural policies (also known as “cultural imperialism”) (Gürcan, 2022). Former colonial states, especially when it comes to natural resources, continue to maintain their presence in the economies of their former colonies. Many foreign companies continue to exploit Africa’s mineral and oil reserves, such as Total, Elf, and Areva.

Although African countries achieved political independence in the second half of the 20th century, their economic and military dependence on imperialist countries persisted. Particularly, France established a new colonial system in Africa. Except for Guinea, the countries outside of Guinea accepted their independence while entering into dependency agreements under the guise of cooperation. Thus, since 1960, Africa’s economic and military dependence on France has continued.



(left to right) Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ethiopian delegate Yilma Deressa, Kojo Botsio of the Gold Coast and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the Bandung Conference (Photo: Picryl, 1955).

French remained the official language and language of education in these countries. France maintained its economic and military ties with former colonies by creating the “Community of French-Speaking Countries” in Africa. In 1945, it introduced the CFA franc (African Financial Cooperation franc) as a currency to perpetuate the colonial system. Fourteen African countries have been using the CFA franc as their currency since 1961. Since 1961, the “national” currency reserves of 14 African countries have been held at the French Central Bank. This situation brings France approximately 400 billion euros annually from Africa (Konate, 2021). French companies continue to exploit minerals such as oil, gold, uranium, and silver, plundering

these countries in the fields of telecommunications, electricity, water, transportation, construction, and health. State leaders who went astray were overthrown and replaced by their collaborators. “In Paris, a real Ministry of Colonies, known as the Cooperation Ministry, managed these natives with zero tolerance for any deviation. Assassinations, kidnappings, torture, disappearances, and manipulations were part of this policy.” (Tonme, 2023:52-53).

Prime Minister Michel Debré clarified the connection between cooperation and independence in a meeting with Gabon’s future President Léon Mba on July 15, 1960, a month before independence was declared: “Independence is given on the condition that the independent state commits to respecting

the cooperation agreements previously signed; two systems are in place simultaneously: independence and cooperation agreements. One cannot exist without the other. These famous cooperation agreements were almost the same for all new states: the CFA franc remained as it was, and France retained its veto power over African currency printing institutions; financial assets remained under the control of the French Treasury; French companies preserved customs privileges, long-term exemptions, and freedom of profit transfer, and they received protection guarantees against nationalization; the presence of the French army was guaranteed in former colonies, etc.” (Bouamama, 2021:176-177).

After World War II, the Atlantic system, led by the United States, also created its own tools to continue military domination and economic exploitation.

After World War II, the Atlantic system, led by the United States, also created its own tools to continue military domination and economic exploitation. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established together in 1945 following the Bretton Woods Conference (1944), with the aim of creating a new international monetary system, and they began operating in Washington from 1946 onwards. This marked the beginning of the era of the dominance of the U.S. dollar (Gürçan, 2023). These organizations would indebt poor African countries through loans they provided, imposing political, economic, and military demands in return.

Africa's Second Wave of Independence in the New World

In the 2000s, a significant shift in global dynamics began to take place. The dominance of the United States and France, both worldwide and in Africa, was weakening, making way for a new civilization rising from Asia. Economically, China and India, and militarily, Russia, were beginning to surpass the United States and France. Türkiye, which was rapidly ascending in the era of Asia, and showing signs of distancing itself from the Atlantic Front, naturally began to embark on an economic and diplomatic opening in Africa.

The foundation of relations between Asia and Africa was laid during the Bandung Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, from April 18 to 24, 1955. This conference laid the groundwork for the Non-Aligned Movement. In recent times, Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), stated the principles of his country's relations with Africa during his speech at the 60th anniversary of the Asia-Africa Summit held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on April 22, 2015: “Sixty years ago, the leaders of 29 countries from Asia and Africa gathered at the Bandung Conference, giving birth to the spirit of Bandung solidarity, cooperation, and brotherhood; they revived national liberation movements that embraced Asia, Africa, and Latin America; they accelerated the global process of decolonization. The Conference played a historical role in the course of international relations by setting forth the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Ten Principles of State-to-State Relations, and it developed relations between Asia and Africa and North and South. The Bandung Conference is a cornerstone of solidarity and cooperation among the peoples of Asia and Africa” (Teori, 2016).



Africa and China promote a more just and equitable international order in the framework of win-win cooperation. 6 September 1963. Members of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) delegations were visiting Mao Zedong (Photo: Liu Qingrui, Xinhua, 1963).

President Xi Jinping outlined the principles of his relationship with Africa during his speech at the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta as follows: “In the framework of win-win cooperation, we should promote a new type of international relations and foster a fair and equitable international order... We should deepen Asia-Africa solidarity... We should jointly address challenges, bring our cooperation to a higher level, and continuously enhance the qualities that make us good friends, good partners, and good brothers... We should embrace the win-win approach for common development, align our development strategies, enhance infrastructure accessibility, and engage in

result-oriented cooperation in industry, agriculture, human resources development, and other fields, and promote activities such as green energy, economic and e-commerce... While preserving differences, we should create common ground and be open and inclusive... It is imperative to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all countries and their right to freely choose their social systems” (Teori, 2016).

In China’s relations with Africa, there is no bloodshed, massacre, destruction, or bombing. Chinese companies extract oil in Angola, uranium in Zimbabwe, cobalt in the Congo, and copper in Zambia, while

also building roads to transport goods, and constructing railways connecting Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Djibouti, and Rwanda. They build government buildings, schools, hospitals, and social facilities in African countries.

Former Senegalese President Professor Abdoulaye Wade commented on China-Africa relations, saying, “China has achieved in twenty years what the West failed to achieve for over four centuries in Africa” (Tonme, 2023:172).

China has unquestionably become Africa’s top trading partner.

The 2000s were a period of rapid development for China’s relations with Africa. In 2007, China surpassed France and became Africa’s top trading partner starting from 2009. Unlike the colonial West, China has been developing its commercial relationships with Africa on the basis of mutual benefit and non-interference in domestic affairs, which has been appealing to African countries. Even Western-leaning heads of state have started turning to China for economic and military cooperation.

Trade between China and Africa reached \$282 billion in 2022, increasing by 11% compared to the previous year. According to Chinese customs officials, exports to Africa increased by 11.2% to \$164.49 billion compared to the previous year. Imports from the African continent also increased by a similar rate, reaching \$117.51 billion. With a total trade volume of \$282 billion, the Africa-China trade relationship, according to the same source, saw Chinese exports to African countries increase by 20% to approximately \$97.8 billion between January 1 and July 31, 2023, compared to the same period in 2022. China has unquestionably become Africa’s top trading partner.

Shanda Tonme, a professor at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), who has authored several reference works on Africa and international relations, describes what China has been doing in Africa as follows: “Every African country has hundreds of undergoing projects. When China is not there, it’s Türkiye and other developing countries. Roads, bridges, entire cities, and private factories were built in a very short time, often financed via advantageous loans... The Ethiopia-Djibouti railway is simply stunning. This transportation and sub-regional integration jewel, which stretches hundreds of kilometers and is built with Chinese financing, has no coastline, connecting a distant country to the sea. It was built in a completely necessary and indisputable modern standard, which nailed Westerners’ heads and revealed their boundaries and failures, as well as their rudimentary plans, self-centeredness, and calculated selfishness” (Tonme, 2023:172-175). China has established Confucius centers in many African countries to teach the new language of international trade. Until 1980, it was rare to hear of an African studying in China, but by 2000, it became a trend, and a real race began to become rich in Eduardo’s science and technology. In this context, the African student community in China is currently one of the largest and most active communities, as well as being the most widespread in the country’s major cities” (Tonme, 2023:178).

The Nearing End of Neo-Colonialism in Africa

In recent years, a wave of rebellions has erupted against the neo-colonialism that has been ongoing in Africa for 60 years. In response to these developments, imperialist powers, particularly France and the United States, in alliance with each other against China in Africa, orchestrated a series of coups and invasions in the 2000s to stop Africa’s shift towards China.

In 2010, in Ivory Coast, they overthrew Laurent Gbagbo, who was keen on developing relations with BRICS countries, especially China. In 2011, France, led by Sarkozy, who played the role of the striking force of U.S. imperialism, attacked Libya and assassinated President Muammar Gaddafi. In 2013, France intervened militarily in Mali and the Central African Republic. In 2019, the United States attempted a coup in Ethiopia. However, they could not achieve the results they aimed for with these efforts. The West has started to lose in Africa, where it had been plundering for its own wealth and prosperity. Military interventions would no longer work. Shanda Tonme, the author of the book “France-Africa: Inevitable Separation,” writes about the direction of development as follows: “A new planetary balance is being established before our eyes, where the center of gravity will shift from the West (Western Europe and North America) to the Eurasian continent (Russia and China). There is an opportunity to seize. Sub-Saharan Africa will be able to break free from French colonial bondage and create win-win partnerships by breaking free from the bonds of colonial history” (Tonme, 2023:15).

With the moderate climate created by the strengthening of leading countries in Eurasia such as China, Russia, and Türkiye in Africa, a resistance and struggle against imperialism has begun in several countries in Africa. The ideas and actions of leaders of the anti-colonial struggle, such as Ahmed Sékou Touré, Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, and Thomas Sankara, are flourishing once again.

The Second Wave of Independence in Africa: Mali (2020)

On August 18, 2020, a group of young colonels in Mali, led by Assimi Goita, seized power, marking a new phase in Mali’s independence struggle against imperialism. The Malian people supported this move

by the army’s revolutionary officers against imperialism and neo-colonialism. These events highlighted the army’s crucial role in defending and securing the nation’s independence and safety with the support of the people.

Goita’s administration is determined to eradicate all remnants of French neo-colonialism.

Goita’s administration is determined to eradicate all remnants of French neo-colonialism. On January 31, 2022, the French Ambassador was asked to leave Mali, followed by a decision for all French troops to immediately exit the country. Consequently, in 2022, France’s Barkhane Operation in Mali ended, and the Malian government terminated military agreements that formed the legal basis for the Serval and Barkhane Operations and the Takuba Task Force. With 5100 French troops in Mali at that time, all activities of French and European soldiers on Malian soil were declared illegal (Harding, 2022).

In 2013, under the pretext of combating jihadist terrorist groups in Northern Mali, the French military established its presence through the Serval and later Barkhane Operations. After the expulsion of French Barkhane forces and the departure of UN peacekeepers, the Malian army began successful operations against terrorist groups. By November, the Kidal region, controlled for a decade by separatist and jihadist armed groups, was liberated by the Malian army with Russian allies. Mali’s struggle and victory against the new colonialism of the USA and France set an example.

Cameroonian author Shanda Tonme, in his book “France-Africa: The Inevitable Separation,” describes the ignited spirit of independence in Mali: “Mali, even



Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power in Burkina Faso in 2022 and became the world's youngest leader (Photo: ISS, 2022).

more than the Central African Republic, has become a beacon for a different Africa rising against French neo-colonial pressure. The reality is that the ruling soldiers speak a direct language without diplomatic concerns and act with a clear awareness of responding to the masses' expectations. Their leader, Assimi Goita, combines determination and humility in a dialectical exercise where he respectfully references Thomas Sankara, offers himself as a sacrificial lamb if needed, and sends a strong message of resolve to French leaders. If in 1958, with Ahmed Sékou Touré's resonant 'no' to General de Gaulle on behalf of the French community, Africa was not yet ready to raise its voice and give a definitive, public, resolute, and popular response to the arrogant, racist, and condescending colonizer, today the situation is different. From Bangui to Bamako, young state leaders, backed by a more equipped, informed, and alert national public opinion, are initiating resistance" (Tonme, 2023:196-197).

Burkina Faso (2022)

On September 30, 2022, Burkina Faso followed the path of Mali. A group of young officers led by Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power. Like Mali, they ended the mission of the French Special Forces in their country, which had been operating against the so-called jihadist terror through the "Sabre" operation for 12 years. They expelled the French Ambassador and annulled the military agreement signed between the two countries in 1961, striking a significant blow against French imperialism. Traoré is compared to Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso's revolutionary leader from 1983 to 1987, also known as the "African Che Guevara." La voix du Niger newspaper reported, "The rise to power of Colonel Ibrahim Traore has already sparked enthusiasm among many Burkinabé, who have lived through the glorious days of the Sankarist revolution, seeing him as a new Thomas Sankara returning to the game" (Rfi, 2022).

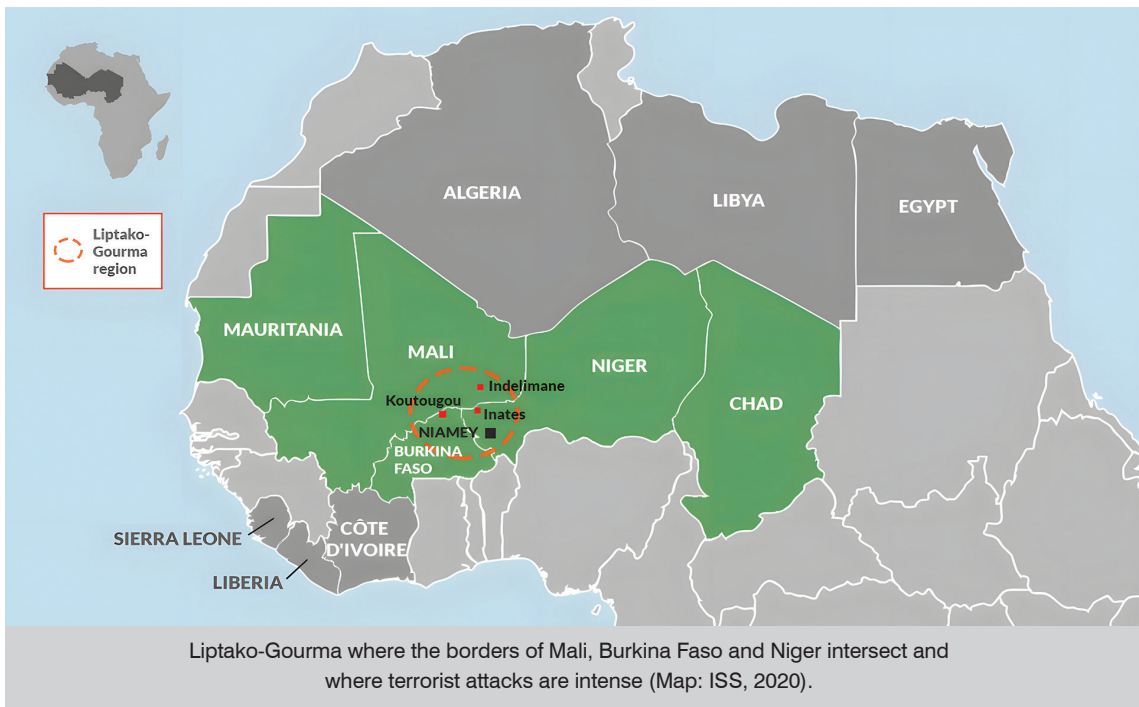
Burkina Faso’s young and charismatic leader, Ibrahim Traoré, made a striking speech at the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023: “A slave who cannot rebel does not deserve mercy.” He spoke about Africa suffering from hunger due to the West’s neo-imperialist policies and being condemned when people try to take their fate into their own hands. Traoré, questioning the paradox of Africa’s richness and its poverty, said, “My generation doesn’t understand this: How can Africa, so rich, be the poorest continent today? And why are African leaders traveling the world begging?” He called for struggle, proclaiming, “Victory to our people. Either the homeland or death” (Lefaso, 2023).

Niger (2023)

Following Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger also struck a blow against U.S. and French imperialism through the unity of its army and people. On July 26, a mi-

litary uprising led by Abdurrahman Tiani resulted in the expulsion of French forces in the country. Since France’s military intervention in Mali in 2013 (Operation Serval), which later expanded to Burkina Faso and Niger with Operation Barkhane, 5100 French soldiers had been stationed in the region. After Mali and Burkina Faso expelled French troops, France had relocated its soldiers to Niger. Finally, the remaining 1500 French military personnel in Niger were also expelled by the new regime (Pierson, 2023). Control over uranium, along with oil and other resources, was one of the reasons for France’s continued economic, political, and military dominance over its former colonies after their independence. Niger is the world’s seventh-largest producer of uranium.

Despite only contributing about 4% of global production, it is a significant supplier. According to the EU’s nuclear agency Euratom, in 2022, 25% of the European Union’s uranium imports came from Niger. For France, Niger accounted for 15-17% of its



imports over the past decade (BBC, 2023), making uranium strategically important for France.

“Yesterday Mali, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and today Niger rejected France, its forces, and its companies”

The new regime’s tensions with France are causing concern in France, which derives 70% of its electricity from nuclear energy. French senators sent a letter to President Emmanuel Macron criticizing the Paris administration’s recent policies in Africa, which have turned into anti-French sentiment. The letter stated, “Yesterday Mali, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and today Niger rejected France, its forces, and its companies” (Rfi, 2023).

The French media extensively covered France’s defeat and deadlock in Africa: *Le Point* (August 1, 2023) headlined “Emmanuel Macron at an impasse in the Sahel” and added, “The coup in Niger dealt another blow to him. The coup that the President of Niger fell victim to on July 27 nailed the last coffin in Macron’s policy in the south of the Sahara.”

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), spurred by France and the U.S., threatened the Nigerien revolutionaries with military intervention. ECOWAS had adopted the same stance against Mali, imposing sanctions and closing borders with neighboring countries. These were not just sanctions but a complete blockade. Mali did not submit to France or its follower ECOWAS. Mali and Burkina Faso declared, “An attack on Niger is an attack on us and is a cause for war.” Algeria, Russia, and Türkiye raised their voices against military intervention.

Africa Moving Towards Economic, Military, and Diplomatic Unity

Developments are increasingly unfavorable to Western imperialists and colonizers. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger’s Second War of Independence against French imperialism is clearing all remnants of new colonialism, strengthening solidarity and unity among them.

The leaders of Niger, Mali, and Burkina-Faso met in Mali’s capital, Bamako, on September 16, 2023, to sign an agreement defending their countries’ sovereignty and territorial integrity against threats, both foreign and domestic. The agreement, named after the Liptako-Gourma region where the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger converge and which has been a hotspot for intense terrorist attacks, states, “Any attack on the sovereignty or territorial integrity of one will be considered an attack on all.” With this agreement, the three countries announced the formation of the Sahel States Alliance (Alliance des Etats du Sahel-AES). While their goals include security and combating Western-backed terrorism, they also decided to develop a common language and work together in diplomacy, defense, and economic areas. The 17-article agreement includes “improving the free movement of goods and people within the AES, establishing a food security system, developing a common industrialization strategy for the Alliance States, and projects in energy, agriculture, and water...” (Victoria, 2023). In foreign relations, the three countries have canceled all agreements with the European Union, including those in the military-security area. They withdrew from the G5 Sahel organization, initially formed by regional countries but later controlled by France. They annulled decades-long tax agreements with France. As stated in Article 16 of the agreement, they plan to join the BRICS. Niger’s military leader, General Abdurrahman Tiani, announced on national television on December 10, 2023, that Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are seeking a political and monetary alliance (Agenceecofin, 2023).


The first article of the Liptako-Gourma Agreement includes the establishment of an investment bank and the creation of a common currency, the “Sahel,” aimed at escaping the West African currency CFA franc, seen as a remnant of French colonial administration. This step symbolizes Africa’s struggle for economic independence, with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger reclaiming control of their destinies (El Kanabi, 2023).

Conclusion

For centuries, African countries have been plundered by colonial imperialists and have been under the hegemony of the West for the last 60 years. Parties, movements, and other actors in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which defend their countries’ independence against U.S. and French imperialism, are rising to power through the unity of the “Army-Nation,” expelling colonial institutions and troops from their territories.

Today, in Africa’s political, economic, and military equations, there are rising Eurasian powers like China, Russia, India, and Türkiye, and on the other side, declining Atlantic powers like the U.S. and French imperialists. The colonial era, which began with Portugal and Spain during the Age of Discovery in the 15th century, continued with the slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, accelerated with colonial conquests after the 1880s, the rise of monopoly capitalism, and ended with the division of almost all African territories (except Liberia and Ethiopia) among European colonizers after the “Berlin Conference” led by German Chancellor Bismarck from November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885, lasted until World War II. After the 1960s, the process towards independence from colonialism, conceptualized as “Decolonization,” began. This process was marked by France’s famous leader de Gaulle. With the changing post-war world conditions and the rise of the anti-colonial struggle, French imperialism agreed to political independence for its colonies with

new methods of dependency to maintain their economic and military dominance, thus beginning the era of neo-colonialism. While French colonizers continued to plunder Africa, they encountered new nationalist and revolutionary leaders brought forth by history.

In the 2000s, however, global balances shifted. Eurasian countries like China, Russia, India, and Türkiye began significant economic, military, and cultural cooperation in Africa, weakening the influence of imperialists like the U.S. and France. The independence struggle against French imperialism won by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the 2020s marked the beginning of a second era of independence. The formation of the Sahel States Alliance (AES) by the three countries with the Liptako-Gourma Agreement, the liberation of Mali’s Kidal region from terrorist organizations, the successful joint fight against terrorism, and the concrete efforts by AES to break free from the French colonial currency CFA, will significantly impact other countries in Africa’s Sahel region (Mauritania, Chad) and southern neighbors (Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Guinea). Western-backed terrorism is one of the region’s most pressing common problems. Other significant issues include drought, hunger, water and electricity, unemployment, and education. The unification of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to overcome shared challenges will resonate in the region. Article 17 of the Liptako-Gourma Agreement facilitates the inclusion of any West African country that wants to escape France’s new colonial policy and achieve sovereignty like the AES states. “Togo has already expressed its intention to join the Liptako-Gourma coalition, and other countries may follow. The name ‘Sahel’, referring to the region, enhances its appeal to other countries, bolstering its influence and economic potential. Ultimately, the Sahel represents much more than a mere currency change; it symbolizes Africa’s struggle for economic independence and the reclaiming of control over their destinies by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger” (El Kanabi, 2023). 

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The Importance of Africa in the African-Asian Geopolitical Nexus: the Red Sea and the Yemeni Sea



HALİL ÖZSARAÇ*Retired Naval Staff Captain

**Born in Yenişehir-Bursa in 1970, Halil Öz Saraç grew up in Karamürsel-Kocaeli; graduated from the Naval High School in 1987, the Naval Academy in 1991 and became a naval officer; and graduated from the Naval War College in 2002 and became a staff officer. He served in various warships, shipyards, headquarters and military education institutions in the Turkish Armed Forces. His last assignment before his retirement in 2021 was at the Naval Warfare Institute (DHE) of the National Defense University (MSÜ) with the rank of Naval Staff Captain. After his retirement in 2021, Halil Öz Saraç continues to give lectures to Turkish and visiting naval officers studying Command and Staff training at MSÜ-DHE. Halil Öz Saraç is a member of the "Board of Directors" at the National Strategy Center (USMER) and Head of the National Security Desk at USMER. He is a member of the Editorial Board of Teori Magazine. He wrote several books: "The Historical Adventure of the Navy", "The Barbaros: The Untold Story of the Mediterranean" and "The Heart of the Ottoman Empire: Tersâne-i Âmire-Istanbul Shipyard". He is the host of the documentary "Turks in the Sea", which continues to be broadcast on Ulusal Kanal. He is also and the author of the column "Turks in the Sea", which continues to be published in Aydınlık Newspaper. He is married and has 1 child. .*

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 20 years, there has been a notable trend of power centers engaging in efforts to establish or enhance their military presence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden have become a tense intersection point between imperialism, which operates on an inseparable logic of collaboration and power unity, and Asian power centers, which have been unable to break away from sacrificing continental interests for regional ones. Due to its critical waterway characteristics, this region, as a major geopolitical power field, has seen Africa being unable to protect its interests for centuries. This article aims to draw attention to what is happening at the Afro-Asian junction, which will shape the future of the world, and highlights the pivotal role of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, especially for Africa and other oppressed parts of the world in search of a secure future.

Keywords: Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Djibouti Bases, Horn of Africa, maritime banditry, Red Sea.

Introduction

AFRICA, WHICH THE IMPERIALIST WEST labeled as the “Hopeless Continent” in 2000, the “Rising Continent” in 2011, and the “Hopeful Continent” in 2013, has re-emerged as a dynamic area of competition for global power centers (The Economist, 2000; 2011; 2013; Aydın, 2019). In this rivalry, Western powers, which have been dominant politically, economically, and militarily, exert a considerable advantage on African countries, which continue to be dependent in reality despite being ostensibly independent for on half a century. Moving away from traditional approaches, the West frequently resorts to “paternalistic” methods in Africa, imposing liberal political systems and free-market economies

(Altınbaş, 2011). Most African states strive to maintain their “official” independence, hard-earned through endurance and struggle, under the shadow of their former colonizers. For the West, wearing a humanitarian mask, neo-colonialism has become easier and cheaper. In summary, Africa, possessing about 1/7 of the world’s population and geography, can only account for 1/20 of the world’s production (Taştan, 2023). Furthermore, the Western world, by hindering Africa’s maritime development, has kept it far from utilizing the strong geopolitical potential of the seas (African Union, 2012).. Additionally, with its incredible cultural diversity, evident in its 3315 ethnic groups and over 2000 spoken languages, Africa represents an effortless domain for imperialism (Özçelik, 2020).

In recent years, the West's presentation of a "strong image" towards Africa is noteworthy. For example, in November 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken stated, "In the future, Africa will shape not just the destiny of its people, but of the entire world (The White House, 2022)." In the undoubtedly reshaping world, the narratives that portray Africa as strong have geo-economic and geopolitical foundations. It is known that today the African continent, comprising 54 countries and covering a total area of 30.8 million km² along with its surrounding islands, has a geo-economic potential that will mark the future. Research indicates that the African continent possesses (TASAM Afrika Enstitüsü, 2022; Yilmaz, 2014; Şöhret, 2023):

- 60% of the world's unused arable agricultural lands,
- 9.6% of its oil fields,
- 90% of its cobalt and platinum reserves,
- 64% of its manganese reserves,
- 70% of its tantalite reserves,
- 98% of its chrome reserves;
- Two-thirds of its uranium reserves (and 18% of its annual uranium production),
 - Half of its gold reserves (and its annual supply),
 - 30% of its diamond reserves (more than 45% of its annual supply and 90% of its annual diamond production),
- The second-largest rainforest.

Guinea alone is the world's largest exporter of bauxite, while the Democratic Republic of Congo owns 70% of the world's coltan (used in cell phones) and 30% of its diamond reserves. This robust economic potential has triggered power centers' struggle to capture economic domains in Africa and the need to maintain military presence for the security of open economic areas (TASAM Afrika Enstitüsü, 2022; Yilmaz, 2014; Şöhret, 2023).

Africa, located on (or blocking) key trade routes

through the Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, Mediterranean, and Atlantic Ocean, stands in the upper league of geopolitical power potential. Politically and demographically, Africa offers strong potential, as evidenced by:

- Being one of the largest regional voting groups in the United Nations (UN) with a 28% share,
- Holding three non-permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC),
- Anticipated to have a quarter of the world's young population by 2050,
- Continuing population growth even after 2100 while the global population stabilizes towards the end of the 21st century (The White House, 2022).

Method Employed to Preserve Fish Resources: Maritime Piracy

In African waters, despite the West's illegal fishing activities, there exists a fishing sector that generates over \$24 billion annually and provides jobs to more than 12 million people (Chatham House, 2013; Kirval, 2022). In Africa, where over 50% of total protein consumption can be obtained from fish, this is a critical nutritional component for the poorest 40% of the population. However, trawler fishermen from all over the world, converging in Guinean and Somali waters, are engaging in fish theft to an extent that leads to the depletion of fish resources. The "illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU)" fishing activities, which weak African maritime states are unable to prevent, pose a significant security issue for Africa (Chatham House, 2013). For example, in 2017, 53% of the 405,000 tons of tuna consumed annually by the European Union was fished from East African waters (Onyango-Obbo, 2019). The "illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing" activities, a priority concern for Africans over issues like oil

theft, maritime piracy, or armed robbery at sea, are neglected by imperialists who leave the solution to weak African states. Additionally, there are claims that the West has been dumping nuclear and toxic wastes in Somali waters, causing extraordinary damage to the ecosystem (and fish stocks) (Kabba, 2009; Morabito, 2016).

Keeping the Suez Canal, a vital route for 12% of global maritime trade and seizing the geopolitical power of the Afro-Asian junction comprising the Suez Canal, Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden from Africa and Asia, or at least preventing their real owners from using it, are goals consistent with the spirit of imperialism.

In Somalia and Nigeria, unable to cope with the threat of losing fisheries and the ecosystem due to reasons like political fragmentation/lack of authority, local people have resorted to asymmetric solutions that evolved into “maritime piracy” or “armed robbery” in a state of “madness”. The general view in Somalia and Nigeria is that poor, heroic, and patriotic fishermen have taken up arms to keep illegal trawl vessels out of their waters or at least reduce the amount of stolen fish. Especially in Somalia, the collapse of General Mohamed Siad Barre’s dictatorship regime in 1991 and the ensuing civil war and chaos have exacerbated the issue of illegal fishing, along with maritime piracy and armed robbery in territorial waters. After 2001, incidents of “maritime piracy or armed robbery” in the Gulf of Aden have

drawn Western attention (Kabba, 2009; Morabito, 2016). The unsuccessful attack on the luxury passenger ship *Seabourn Spirit* carrying 151 passengers and weighing 10,000 tons on November 5, 2005, by Somali pirates, caught the Western public’s attention (Williams, 2005; Hürriyet, 2005; CBS News, 2005). Maritime piracy in Somalia, initially started by the impoverished local population, later transformed into a sector providing economic resources to destabilizing tribes and radical Islamist terrorist organizations within a few years (Kırval, 2022).

Therefore, Western sources do not limit their reasons for maintaining a military presence in the region to merely maritime piracy; they also assert the impacts of terrorism, terror-crime nexus, arms and drug trafficking, marine pollution, and environmental disasters related to oil, affecting them, and claim that coastal states are not powerful enough to handle these issues (Ghosh, 2004). However, keeping the Suez Canal, a vital route for 12% of global maritime trade and seizing the geopolitical power of the Afro-Asian junction comprising the Suez Canal, Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden from Africa and Asia, or at least preventing their real owners from using it, are goals consistent with the spirit of imperialism.

When examining the above table, it becomes apparent that the incidents of “maritime piracy” at the entrance and exit of the Red Sea have never escalated to a level that would necessitate the West’s exaggerated military measures. During the 2003-2010 period, the risk of facing a “maritime piracy” attack, varying between 3 to 64 in 10,000, is not significant enough to stop or slow down the annual maritime traffic of 30,000 vessels through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait (Kırval, 2022).

Figure 1. Numerical Comparison of Maritime Piracy Incidents in Global Seas and Yemen/Somali Waters During the 2003-2010 Period

Years	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Events on Earth (Including Failed Events)	445	329	276	239	263	293	406	445
Total Incidents in Yemen and Somali Seas (Including Unsuccessful Incidents)	21	10	45	20	44	111	187	192
Ratio	%5	%3	%19	%8	%17	%38	%46	%43
The Risk of Sea Banditry Attack on a Merchant Ship Passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait (Attention: Not the Risk of Capture.)	1/10.000	3/10.000	15/10.000	7/10.000	15/10.000	37/10.000	60/10.000	64/10.000

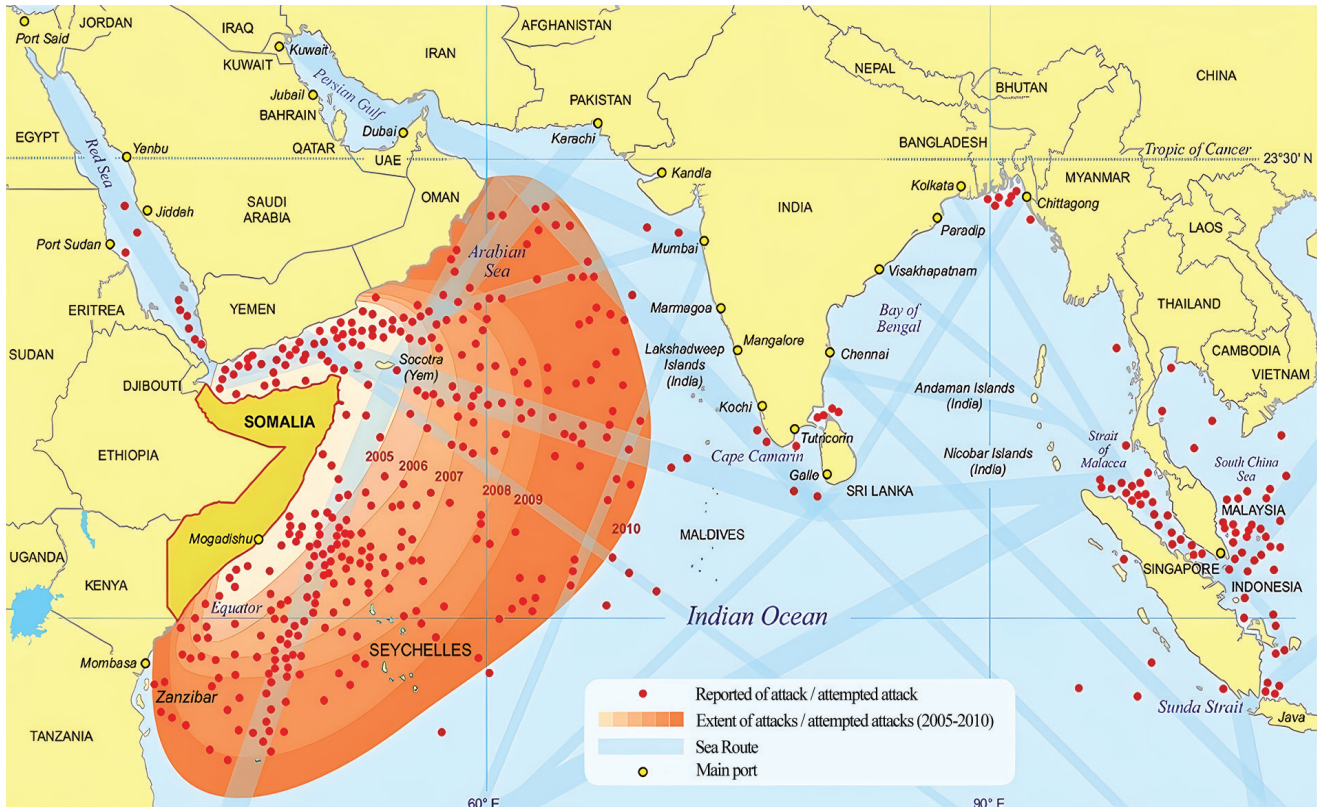
This table was prepared based on Kirval's (2022) numerical data on maritime banditry incidents in Yemen and Somali seas. (Figure: Özsarac, 2023).

Even in 2010, when maritime piracy in the Horn of Africa waters was at its peak, only 15 of the 192 attacks were successful; the 326 sailors taken hostage along with these ships were eventually released following ransom negotiations (Onyango-Obbo, 2019). This means that out of the annual 30,000 ships passing through the Horn of Africa waters, only 15, or 5 in 10,000, fell into the hands of pirates. In other words, only 15 of the 77,768 commercial ships in the world's seas in 2010 were captured by Somali pirates, and their release along with their sailors, secured by paying a ransom, does not justify the Western

military reaction (EMSA, 2010). After all, maritime piracy is common in all the world's seas, even in American waters. Moreover, in 2021, the 192 "ship robbery" incidents in Somali waters should have been considered less significant in priority compared to the 1,964 "bank robbery" incidents on U.S. soil alone (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021).

According to Western sources, the financial damage caused by Somali pirates to the global maritime industry is not excessively high. A study by The One Earth Future Foundation in Colorado (USA) titled "Oceans Beyond Piracy," conducted in 2011, estimated that maritime

Figure 2. Pirate Threat in the Northwest Indian Ocean (2005-2010)



Map showing the incidents of maritime banditry in the Indian Ocean during the period 2005-2010.
(Figure: Venter, 2018)

piracy in Somali waters had caused damage to the global maritime industry between \$6.6 and \$6.9 billion over ten years (Onyango-Obbo, 2019). Accordingly, during the 2000-2010 period when piracy in Somalia escalated, the world maritime industry incurred annual losses of approximately \$660-690 million. With the global GDP in 2010 being \$65 trillion, it raises the question: Has the Horn of Africa waters been occupied by the West just for 1 in 100,000 of the world's income?

Furthermore, the calculated damage includes not only the paid ransoms but also additional costs such as:

- Costs of route changes,
- Security equipment and private protection costs,
- Additional fuel consumption due to the speed increase required for safe passage,
- Increase in risk payments to personnel,
- Rise in insurance premiums for passing through risky areas,
- Costs of prosecuting and imprisoning pirates,
- Expenses of military operations by warships,
- Costs of multinational organizations created against piracy.

Therefore, most of the mentioned damages are additional expenses made by the West, unwilling to pay the ransom (Çınar, 2022).

The limited and low-damage incidents of maritime piracy have been used as an opportunity by the West for systematic control of the waters forming the Afro-Asian junction. A similar instance occurred in 1984.

Implications of Suspicious Naval Mines in the Red Sea for African Geopolitics in 1984

On July 9, 1984, the Soviet-flagged cargo ship Knud Jepsersen sustained minor damage due to an underwater explosion while sailing south from the Suez Canal. Since the batteries of mines laid during the Arab-Israeli wars would not have lasted after 1973, it was clear that this was not a missed bottom mine from those conflict zones. Between July 27-29, 1984, when seven more commercial ships incurred minor mine damage, it became certain that there was an active minefield south of the Suez Canal. Between July 31 and August 2, 1984, six new explosions in the southern Red Sea indicated that mines had been “secretly” laid in various areas of the Red Sea. Besides Egypt, which feared losing Suez Canal revenues, Saudi Arabia also panicked, concerned about the safety of tens of thousands of pilgrims who would arrive by ferries at the ports of Jeddah and Yanbu for the Hajj pilgrimage starting on September 4, 1984 (Çınar, 2022).

On August 3, 1984, when the Chinese container ship Tang He also suffered minor mine damage, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were compelled to formally request Western assistance on August 5-6, 1984. A naval force consisting of British, French, Dutch, and Italian minehunters, along with the USS La Salle and USS Shreveport am-

phibious ships carrying two fleets of mine-sweeping capable helicopters, was dispatched to the region (Çınar, 2022).

The United States rapidly completed its mine-searching operations in the Gulf of Suez, relying on its helicopters. To prove that the area where no mines were found was clear, the aircraft carrier USS America passed through the Suez on August 19. The speed of the U.S. mine-searching operations and the use of Sea Battalion RH-53D helicopters, designed not for bottom mines but solely to detect moored mines, were suspicious. However, the inadequacy of these helicopters was not questioned at the time by states other than the United States, as it was not known (Özsaraç, 2024).

Dutch and Italian minehunters, which also searched Saudi waters in the Red Sea in addition to the Gulf of Suez, did not encounter any mines in their searches until the end of October 1984. French minehunters found 10 obsolete bottom mines left from the Arab-Israeli wars in the Gulf of Suez on their return route. The British minehunter HMS Gavinton, on September 12, 1984, in the Gulf of Suez at a depth of 42 meters, examined a mine stuck in the mud using remotely operated underwater devices and divers and then destroyed it in place. The discovered mine was a Soviet bottom mine, capable of causing more than minor damage with its 720 kg explosive, but it was not set to explode. This meant that the found Soviet stock mine had no relation to the mines being searched for (Çınar, 2022; Özsaraç, 2024).

Although a little-known terrorist organization called “Al Jihad” claimed responsibility for the incidents, this group, lacking the capability to lay mines, was not taken seriously. No live mine samples were found, yet a state suspected of secretly laying

mines was sought based on assumptions. Initially, the West tried to blame Iran, which in turn accused the United States and Israel. In reality, Iran, engaged in a war with Iraq at that time, lacked the capability to lay mines, as it did not have a single mine in its inventory until mid-1985. Realizing that Iran, being the 4th largest user of the Suez Canal at that time, would also economically suffer from the mines in the Red Sea, the West then attempted to accuse Libya, which used the Suez Canal less frequently (Mobley, 2022; O'Flaherty, 2019; Öz Saraç, 2024; Chicago Tribune, 1987; Christ, 2009; The New York Times, 1984).

Although Gaddafi denied the allegations, the West declared Libya, a state causing problems for them, as the scapegoat for the Red Sea mines.

According to the CIA and Egyptian Intelligence, the Libyan-flagged Ghat Ro-Ro vessel, carrying mine-trained Captain Suheir Adham, set sail to the Red Sea on July 6, 1984. The Libyan ship, which took cargo from the port of Assab, remained in the Red Sea for 7 days longer than usual, exiting on July 21, 1984, which raised suspicions. According to the U.S., the Ghat Ro-Ro had laid the bottom mines timed to activate on July 27; the mine that exploded on July 9 had detonated early due to a timing mechanism failure. It was a highly speculative and forced accusation without solid evidence (Mobley, 2022; O'Flaherty, 2019; Öz Saraç, 2024).

On August 23, 1984, while in Marseille, the Ghat Ro-Ro was temporarily detained by French authorities for a few hours under the pretext of a


commercial dispute. Examination of photographs taken during this process led to the interpretation that slight wear on the stern ramp was evidence of mine laying. However, finding a Ro-Ro ship without wear on its ramp is nearly impossible. Although Gaddafi denied the allegations, the West declared Libya, a state causing problems for them, as the scapegoat for the Red Sea mines (Mobley, 2022; O'Flaherty, 2019; Öz Saraç, 2024).

To summarize, in 1984, 17 commercial ships sustained minor damage from mine explosions in the Red Sea, but none sank, suffered heavy/medium damage, or had casualties. The explosives in the mines were just enough to cause alarm. During the four months of mine searching by Western states, no ready-to-explode mines were found in the Red Sea. The world maritime industry appeared to be briefly panicked; in reality, only Egypt and Saudi Arabia were the ones truly alarmed (Öz Saraç, 2024).

Western Consolidation in the Afro-Asian Maritime Junction With the Pretext of Suppressing Piracy in the Horn of Africa

Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines attacks within territorial waters as “armed robbery,” leaving the responsibility to the coastal state, while terming ship attacks outside territorial waters as “piracy (United Nations, 2020).” This distinction laid the groundwork for international intervention in attacks beyond territorial waters and served as a justification for the West’s establishment of a permanent military mechanism in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden, preventing coastal states from utilizing their geopolitical power of the Red Sea.



Countries on the route from Bab el-Mandeb Strait to the Red Sea (Figure: BRIQ , 2024).

Indeed, in 2008, the Somali Federal Transitional Government, unable to withstand Western pressures and lacking the capacity to ensure maritime security, prevent piracy, and prosecute pirates on its own, sought cooperation from various states and organizations. In response, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed five separate resolutions during the period of June 2, 2008, to November 30, 2009 (Evin, 2012).

The fact that the majority of ships passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait carried Chinese trade, and the incidents of piracy in the Horn of Africa began to affect Russia's interests, facilitated the UNSC's adoption of these resolutions. For instance, the seizure of the Belize-flagged Ukrainian ship MV *Faina* by Somali pirates on September 8,

2008, angered Russia. The MV *Faina* was carrying hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of cargo, including 33 T-72 tanks, 73 tank maintenance kits with spare parts, numerous weapons, and ammunition, while en route via the Bab-el-Mandeb. It was later captured by 50 Somali pirates, identifying themselves as the "Central Region Coast Guard," demanding a \$35 million ransom for the ship's release (Reuters, 2008). Although the ship's captain claimed to be transporting the military cargo to South Sudan, the governments of Ukraine, Kenya, and the administration of South Sudan denied this. However, there were reports that over 100 T-72 and T-55 tanks had reached South Sudan during those months (Van Oudenaren, 2008). Following negotiations, the Ukrai-

nian ship was released after a payment of \$3.2 million to the pirates. Kenya subsequently claimed to have purchased the tanks on the ship for its own army. The involvement of 6 U.S. warships surrounding the hijacked Ukrainian vessel and preventing the Kenyan Armed Forces from boarding operations also drew attention (McGreal, 2009). Considering that the Kenyan Armed Forces used British Vickers Mk3 tanks and not Soviet weapons, Kenya's role in the arms shipment to South Sudan, despite UN embargoes, seemed to be a cover-up. The exposure of such incidents by piracy facilitated Russia's endorsement of UNSC resolutions.

The United States, seizing the opportunity of the Yemeni Civil War spilling into the Red Sea, clearly intends to solidify its position in the region using CTF-153.

Based on UNSC resolutions, NATO initiated the "Allied Provider" Operation from October 24, 2008, deploying warships in the region. From December 2008 to August 2009, the EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) operated under the "Atalanta" Operation, followed by the establishment of the multinational Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), led by the U.S., from January 1, 2009 (Evin, 2012). It should be noted that CTF 151 is a multinational force composed of warships from U.S. allies or partner states. Among the U.S. fleets, the 5th Fleet has the smallest area of responsibility. Nevertheless, the United States tends to maximize the use of its allies and partners to maintain or enhance maritime control in the areas of responsibility of the

5th Fleet, which includes the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Somali waters, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf. The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a multinational naval force led by the U.S. and significantly relieving the burden of the 5th Fleet, includes CTF 151, a highly effective force supported by about 15 countries, tasked with combating piracy (Combined Maritime Forces, 2010a; 2010b). Among these 15 countries, Pakistan (10 times), Türkiye (6 times), South Korea (6 times), Singapore (5 times), and Japan (4 times) have been the most active in assuming command duties every six months; while the United States, Kuwait, Denmark, Thailand, New Zealand, UK, Brazil, Jordan, Philippines, and Bahrain have tended to be relatively passive. The effective presence of CTF 151 has led to the eastward expansion of the area of maritime piracy activities in the Horn of Africa waters during 2009-2012 (Morabito, 2016).

Alongside CTF-151, which controls the southern entrance of the Red Sea, a multinational naval force named Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153), composed of U.S. and Egyptian warships, was established on April 17, 2022, for the security of the Red Sea (Combined Maritime Forces, 2010a). The United States, seizing the opportunity of the Yemeni Civil War spilling into the Red Sea, clearly intends to solidify its position in the region using CTF-153. Indeed, CTF-153 has targeted the asymmetric capabilities of the Houthis in Yemen that can be used at sea. According to U.S. sources, the number of Houthi attacks on Israel-linked civilian trade ships in the Red Sea starting on November 19, 2023, rose to 23 by December 31, 2023; most of these attacks failed to hit their targets, and the drones that did hit caused no significant damage (Anadolu Ajansı, 2023; Gambrell, 2023).

The United States, aiming to eliminate the Houthis' weak attempts to regain control of Yemeni waters, invited Saudi Arabia, Israel, UAE, Bahrain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the UK to join CTF-153 (Bowman, 2023). However, when the United States launched "Operation Prosperity Guardian" against the Houthis on December 18, 2023, Egypt withdrew from CTF-153, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE, hostile to the Houthis, refused to join.

According to a U.S. Department of Defense statement dated December 18, 2023, "Operation Prosperity Guardian" was joined by the United States, UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain. On December 21, 2023, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder stated that about 20 countries intended to support the operation, but Spain and Italy were considering withdrawing their support (Helou, 2024). Like CTF 151, CTF-153 should be seen as blocking the geopolitical power of East Africa's seas. The gradual decline of maritime piracy incidents in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, and Somali waters from 2012, and their almost negligible level from 2018, can only be attributed to "imperialism," using Houthi attacks as a pretext for the persistent presence of CTF 151 and CTF 153 in the region (Kalay, 2023).

Global Power Rivalry for Establishing Military Bases on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, attempting to recover from the economic slowdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, experienced in 2020 the worst locust invasion in the last 70 years, leading to significant agricultural production losses and a food security crisis

(Smith, 2020). However, in recent years, African countries where China has invested have generally exhibited economic performance above the world average (Mürsel, 2018). Among these states, Ethiopia and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa particularly stand out. While the IMF predicts a global growth average of 2.9% in 2024, the figure is projected to be 6.2% for Ethiopia and 6% for Djibouti (Visual Capitalist, 2023). Ethiopia, promising as an agricultural country, is unfortunately landlocked. Djibouti, Ethiopia's eastern neighbor with a 370 km coastline, acts as a lifeline for Ethiopia's foreign trade. Since the end of the Ethiopia-Eritrea War in 2000, Ethiopia, having lost hope of accessing the sea, relies on Djibouti for 90% of its imports. Djibouti, with a population of only 1 million and a GDP of \$5.6 billion, is a dwarf in terms of national power but a geopolitical giant due to its location at the entrance of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Lacking the capacity to utilize its geopolitical potential independently, Djibouti has recently turned into an international military garrison (Cabestan, 2019).

Presence of the European Union on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

French air and naval base, hosting about 1,450 troops (1,000 of which are elite Légion étrangère soldiers), has been present in Djibouti since 1978. Since 2009, this base also accommodates 30-80 German and 50 Spanish soldiers providing support for the Atalanta Operation conducted by EUNAVFOR; they use the Kempinski and Sheraton Hotels in the region for accommodation and rest. Additionally, an Italian air base is located in the same area (Styan, 2020; Cabestan, 2019; Downs, 2017).



French Naval Base in Djibouti (Photo: SSI, 2017).

U.S. Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

In October 2002, the U.S. established a military unit called ‘Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa’ (CJTF-HOA) under CENTCOM, consisting of 1,500 personnel (200 civilians), and stationed it at Camp Lemonnier, a former French base in Djibouti. The operational area for CJTF-HOA includes all the land and airspace of Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Seychelles, and Yemen, along with their coastal waters in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. CJTF-HOA was established to “identify, disrupt, and defeat international terrorist groups operating in the region (Ploch, 2007),” and its additional tasks include:

- Providing freedom of movement for the United States in East Africa,

- Protecting U.S. military personnel, diplomats, facilities, and interests in the region (Yüksel, 2016).

As the rationale behind the establishment of CJTF-HOA suggests, the United States uses terrorist organizations to legitimize its military presence in Africa (Şimşek, 2020).

On February 6, 2007, U.S. President Bush directed the establishment of a new structure called ‘U.S. Africa Command’ (U.S. AFRICOM). Using the headquarters infrastructure of ‘U.S. European Command’ (EUCOM), AFRICOM became an independent command under the U.S. Department of Defense on January 1, 2008, with its area of responsibility being all of Africa, except Egypt (Yüksel, 2016). The decision by the United States to approach Africa holistically is thought to be driven by the increasing influence of many new actors in Africa, including China, Russia, Brazil, Japan, and Türkiye.

The rising competition in the African continent has been interpreted by some experts as a “New Cold War unfolding in Africa (TASAM Afrika Enstitüsü, 2020).” Some sources summarize the establishment purpose of AFRICOM as U.S. desire to expand its “offshore balancing” strategy, compete with China’s growing diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural presence in Africa, increase trade and investment with African countries around mutual interests, and improve the United States’ tarnished image (Conteh-Morgan, 2018; Özel, 2020; Bekar, 2021).

The creation of an independent strategic command for Africa reflects the continent’s increasing geopolitical significance and indicates the long-term nature of the U.S. military policies towards Africa

Prior to AFRICOM, responsibility for Africa was divided among the European Command (EUCOM), responsible for Europe, the Central Command (CENTCOM), responsible for the Middle East, and the Pacific Command (PACOM), responsible for the Pacific and countries with Pacific coastlines. The creation of an independent strategic command for Africa reflects the continent’s increasing geopolitical significance and indicates the long-term nature of U.S. military policies towards Africa (Yüksel, 2016). AFRICOM has supported operations aimed at stabilizing conflict zones, establishing strategic relationships, and promoting military cooperation, as well as supporting the efforts of U.S. soft power institutions like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Buğra, 2012).

With the transfer from CENTCOM to AFRICOM, the strength of CJTF-HOA was increased to 2,000-2,500 military and civilian personnel. Although CENTCOM retains primary responsibility against “maritime piracy” in the waters of the Horn of Africa, the regional CFTF-HOA force under AFRICOM plays a critical role in providing land support to the U.S. “blue water” navy operating in the region (Ploch, 2007). Today, CJTF-HOA carries out its missions using Camp Lemonnier Naval Base, which accommodates 4,500 U.S. troops (2,000 of them marines), and Chabelley Air Base located in the desert area of Djibouti. Since 2017, the U.S. Camp Lemonnier Naval Base has also hosted a British platoon. Since 2011, the U.S. has used Chabelley Air Base for continuous MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) flight operations over Yemen and Somalia (Cabestan, 2019).

Despite the presence of numerous U.S. bases in Africa, the U.S. military presence is perceived as an occupation in many parts of Africa, still bearing the fresh traces of Western colonialism. Consequently, no African state has agreed to host the AFRICOM headquarters, so it remains in Stuttgart, Germany. This situation has created an irony of an Africa command not located in central Africa (Yüksel, 2016).

In recent times, China’s use of the allure of its economic investments in Ethiopia and Djibouti to gain military presence in Djibouti has forced the United States into economic competition with China. The \$1.55 billion, 550 km long Horn of Africa (Djibouti-Ethiopia) Fuel Pipeline is a product of this competition, an investment by the U.S. Extending from Damerjog Port in Djibouti to a storage facility with a capacity of 950,000 barrels in Awash, central Ethiopia, the 20-inch



Map of the World showing the Locations of AFRICOM and CENTCOM (Photo: USNI, 2013).

diameter Horn of Africa Pipeline can transfer 240,000 barrels per day. Completed in 2018, this pipeline enables the United States to transport refined diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel from Africa or the Middle East to Ethiopia (VOA, 2015; Ecofin Agency, 2015; Sudan Tribune, 2015; CGTN Africa, 2023).

The spillover of the Yemeni Civil War into the Red Sea since 2015 has served as a pretext for the West, supported by UAVs or warplanes from imperialist bases in Djibouti, to establish a firmer presence in the Red Sea and engage in shows of force. For instance, on October 1, 2016, a high-speed hybrid catamaran military cargo vessel owned by the UAE, *Swift-1*, was damaged by a C-802 missile launched by the Houthis from land. Subsequently, on October 10, 2016, the *USS Mason*, a U.S. destroyer, and the *USS Ponce*, a U.S. amphibious ship,

assessed two objects launched from the Yemeni coast while crossing the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait as a suspected guided missile attack. The *USS Mason* quickly launched two Standard Missile-2 (SM-2) and one Evolved Seasparrow Missile (ESSM) air defense missiles towards the aerial objects, also deploying Nulka decoys as a passive measure. The Houthis, through the Saba News Agency, denied the allegations of attacking the *USS Mason* and *USS Ponce* (Lagrone, 2016; Vaughan, 2016). There is no available information on whether the two aerial objects were anti-ship missiles, launched by the Houthis, targeted at U.S. ships, or if they were shot down by the SAMs launched by the *USS Mason*. However, the U.S. government, sharing its military sources' speculative information and reactions with the global public, has created the perception that the Houthis attacked U.S. warships.

Japanese Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

Since 2009, Japan, maintaining a constant naval presence in Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden, has built a runway suitable for fighter jets at its logistical base in Djibouti in 2016, which houses 600 troops (Pajon, 2017).

Israeli Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

It is claimed that since 2012, Israel has had some small naval units stationed in the Dahlak Archipelago and Massawa in Eritrea and even an intelligence facility on Mount Soira (Amba Sawara) in Eritrea to monitor Iran's activities in the Red Sea. Indeed, in 2017, a Houthi spokesperson threatened that Israeli targets in Eritrea could be struck (Melvin, 2019).

Chinese Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

In recent years, China's peaceful policies in global competition, challenging the dominance of the United States, are based on principles of:

- Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity,
- Non-aggression,
- Non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
- Equality,
- Mutual benefit (Yüksel, 2016).

These peaceful policies have facilitated China's investments in Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A 2019 study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that China is involved in at least 46 of

the existing, operated, and planned port projects among 172 Sub-Saharan African ports, having a role in the construction of 41, financing 27, and controlling 11 of them (CSIS, 2014). In short, Sub-Saharan African port investments have become one of the primary ways for China to establish commercial superiority in the region. This is believed to provide strategic depth to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in meeting future logistical needs (CSIS, 2014; Devermont, Cheatham, & Chiang, 2019).

Since its first military presence in Africa in 2003 with peacekeeping duties in the Democratic Republic of Congo, China has increased its trade relations with Ethiopia over the last 20 years (Cabestan, 2019). This economic relationship has also benefited Djibouti, Ethiopia's gateway to the sea. Indeed, the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway, originally built by France in 1890, was renovated by Chinese companies China Railway Group Ltd. and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation as part of a \$3.95 billion project from 2011-2017 and opened in January 2018 (Downs, 2017). The railway line, now with a capacity of 3,500 tons per trip (seven times its original capacity), reduces the travel time between Addis Ababa and the Doraleh Port from three days to 12 hours, also cutting the cost of freight transport by a third (Çelik, 2023). Following the completion of this large-scale transportation infrastructure, China continued its investments in Djibouti with the \$340 million Doraleh Port, a \$320 million daily 100,000 m³ capacity freshwater pipeline between Ethiopia and Djibouti, the \$64 million Ghoubet Port, and the \$30 million Djibouti International Free Trade Zone (Downs, 2017).

Since 2008, China has conducted anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, where 40%

of its total imports pass, and until 2017, tried to support its warships sent for this purpose from regional civilian ports (Cabestan, 2019). It is claimed that some Chinese warships could not port for 124 days during these missions (People's Daily, 2013). Between 2009-2013, Chinese warships made at least 23 port visits in Djibouti (Downs, 2017). During this period, as economic relations between China and Djibouti continued to rise, they also began to gain a military dimension. Indeed, a security and defense agreement signed between China and Djibouti in 2014 was vehemently protested by

the United States. In 2015, China and Djibouti signed agreements for 14 mega projects worth \$9.8 billion as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (Edens, 2015).

During this time, China frequently expressed the need for a naval base in Africa to evacuate hundreds of thousands of Chinese nationals when necessary, citing the evacuation of 36,000 Chinese citizens from Libya in 2011 as an example (Cabestan, 2019). Indeed, China's use of civilian ports in Djibouti to evacuate 900 Chinese nationals from Yemen in March-April 2015 confirmed this thesis (Zhen, 2016).



Evacuation of Chinese Nationals from Yemen to Djibouti (Photo: People's Daily, 2019).

In November 2015, China announced its decision to establish a logistics facility to escort merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters and to support UN peacekeeping/humanitarian aid/evacuation missions (Cabestan, 2019; Jacobs & Perlez, 2017). Although the Chinese Government tries to mask it as a military area, this facility possesses all the characteristics of a military base.

The Chinese Djibouti Naval Base, operational since August 2017 under a 10-year leasing agreement between China and Djibouti, houses approximately 2,000 military personnel (Wong, 2015; Cabestan, 2019). According to some sources in Western media, China has built the base in Djibouti with the capacity to accommodate up to 10,000 soldiers (Winsor, 2016; Dube, 2016; Cabestan, 2019).

The Chinese Djibouti Naval Base, adjacent to the Doraleh Multipurpose Port and costing \$590 million, allocates one of its six docks for Chinese warships (Zhen, 2016). This particular dock can

accommodate all Chinese warships except aircraft carriers and Type 071 Yushao-class amphibious transport docks (LPD) (Downs, 2017).

The Chinese Djibouti Naval Base, situated 8 miles from the U.S. Base at Camp Lemonnier, covers 36 hectares. The base includes four-story logistics warehouses, a helipad with a helicopter runway, hangars, and maintenance facilities. It also has a hospital and sports facilities and is surrounded by an 8-meter high security wall and patrol roads. The helicopter runway (Bhat, 2017) is suitable for drone take-offs and landings, but a major disadvantage of the Chinese base is the absence of a runway suitable for aircraft take-offs. The Chinese Djibouti Naval Base is five times smaller than the U.S. Base at Camp Lemonnier (Cabestan, 2019).

Since the opening of the Chinese Djibouti Naval Base in 2017, regular heavy weapons firing training exercises have been observed for the security of the base's Chinese military units (Zhao, 2017).



Satellite map showing the locations of 1.China Djibouti Naval Base, 2.Doraleh Multipurpose Port and 3.Doraleh Container Terminal (Photo: BRIQ, 2024).

The U.S. forces in Djibouti meet their logistic needs through the Doraleh Container Terminal, located near the Chinese Djibouti Naval Base. This situation, implying an additional security problem for the U.S. Base at Camp Lemonnier, is uncomfortable for the United States (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020).

In Djibouti, due to the proximity of the bases, tensions between China and the United States are on the rise. For instance, it has been alleged by the United States that “10 separate laser attacks were carried out from the Chinese Djibouti Naval Base against U.S. warplanes, resulting in serious eye injuries to two U.S. pilots (Dahir, 2018).” Besides these “allegation-level” tensions, the U.S. Government closely monitors multinational exercises conducted by the South African, Chinese, and Russian Navies in the southern waters of Africa and by the Iranian, Russian, and Chinese Navies in the Indian Ocean. According to reports presented to the U.S. Congress, during joint military activities, China has allowed Russian warships to use its base in Djibouti (Shainn, 2020).

Russian Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

Seeking to increase its influence in the Red Sea, Russia has been searching for a base near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait since 2009 (Ramani, 2018). Amid the Russia-Ukraine tensions and seeking political support internationally, Russia’s visibility in Africa began to increase, leading to the signing of 19 military cooperation agreements with African countries between 2015 and 2019 (TASAM Afrika Enstitüsü, 2022). Although not officially acknowledged by the Moscow administration, Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group are stationed in Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Sudan,

which has a coastline on the Red Sea (Siegle, 2021; Lindén, 2023).

According to statements made in August 2017 by former RF Naval Forces Commander Admiral Feliks Gromov, Russia’s need for a naval base in the Gulf of Aden has become vital. The Moscow-based Institute of Oriental Studies, after extensive research, has suggested Yemen’s Socotra Island as an ideal location for a Russian naval base. Russia continues negotiations with the al-Hadi Administration in Southern Yemen regarding this. Similarly, Russia has been intensively pursuing the establishment of a naval base in Eritrea since September 2018, alongside a logistics center, to facilitate trade in agricultural products and minerals in the Red Sea and in Berbera, a major trade port in Somaliland on the Gulf of Aden (Ramani, 2018; Tesfa News, 2018).

Since May 2019, Russia has been in talks with the Sudanese Government and successfully signed a military cooperation agreement in November-December 2020. This agreement granted Russia a “logistical support point” in Port Sudan and allowed for the establishment and operation of a military facility by 300 Russian military and civilian personnel for 25 years, providing Russia with the convenience of basing in the Red Sea for short-term shelter of warships. However, this agreement was canceled in April 2021 (Kollakowski, 2022; Saballa, 2021). Negotiations between Sudan and Russia continue regarding the reinstatement of the military cooperation agreement (Reuters, 2022).

In recent years, Russia’s persistent search for permanent military bases in African countries, including Sudan, Egypt, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Madagascar, and Mozambique, particularly in the Red Sea waters, has been closely monitored by the global community (Ersozoglu, 2021; Lindén, 2023; Nia, 2020).

Saudi Arabian Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

Led by Saudi Arabia and with the participation of some Arab countries, a coalition launched military operations against the Houthi-Saleh forces starting March 25, 2015 (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2014). Due to the multifaceted Yemeni Civil War, weapons like anti-ship missiles, naval mines, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used in the south of the Red Sea have impacted a small number of merchant ships, in addition to the warships participating in the conflict (Kozanhan, 2020). Particularly, the attacks by the Houthis on Saudi Arabian war/commercial ships using drones, boats, and explosive devices (especially during 2017-2018) have been a major topic in the global public discourse (Kalay, 2023).

In an attack near Yemen's Al-Hudaydah Port on January 30, 2017, a fast boat loaded with an unmanned bomb used by the Houthis struck the Saudi Al-Madinah (RSN 702) frigate near its helicopter platform, resulting in the death of two and injury of three Saudi soldiers. Saudi Arabia reported that the attack involved two remote-controlled, bomb-laden fast boats, of which two were detected and evaded by Al-Madinah, but the third boat hit the ship (Lagrone, 2017; BBC, 2017; RSN AL Madinah, 2017).

Months after this incident, in 2017, Saudi Arabia joined the list of countries with military bases in Djibouti (Downs, 2017; Cabestan, 2019; Al-Abyadh, 2017). The number and function of Saudi personnel in Djibouti remain largely undisclosed.

During 2018-2019, Saudi Arabia entered into close military cooperation with Egypt in the Red Sea, exemplified by their joint execution of "The Red Wave" Exercise in December 2018 in the Red Sea. Following the drone attack on two Saudi oil facilities in the Persian Gulf on September 14, 2019, the armed forces of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Sudan, Djibou-

ti, Yemen, and Somalia decided to make "The Red Wave" series of joint exercises a regular event to be repeated annually in the waters of Jeddah in the Red Sea. The fifth of these series, "The Red Wave-5," was conducted in June 2022 (Muhammed, 2019; Khan, 2019; Arab News, 2022).

United Arab Emirates Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

To support its military operations in Yemen, the UAE, which has deployed troops in Eritrea and Somaliland, had its 2015 request to establish a naval base rejected by Djibouti (Cabestan, 2019; Meester & Lanfranchi, 2021; Chegraoui, Lyammouri, & Skah, 2021). Although the UAE's military activities have recently decreased, it has a naval and air base in Assab, Eritrea, which it has leased for 30 years since April 2015 for use against the Houthis in Yemen. The Assab base in Eritrea has also served as a transportation terminal for the transit of 10,000 Sudanese fighters to Yemen and is alleged to have been used for transporting military equipment to Haftar in Libya (Taşkömür, 2023; Alexandre, 2020).

Turkish Presence on African Coasts near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

In 2002, Türkiye only had 12 embassies in Africa, but with its "Africa Opening Policy," it has increased this number to 44 in 20 years. Today, Türkiye has the second-highest number of embassies in Africa after France. Similarly, while only 10 African countries had embassies in Ankara in 2008, this number has now risen to 37. Expanding rapidly in Africa, Türkiye opened embassies in Somalia in 2011, and in Eritrea and Djibouti in 2013, and then began to implement its "Africa Partnership Policy." Closely monitoring terrorism, civil wars, coups, social and humanitarian crises, political

chaos, and security threats arising from climate change in Africa, Türkiye has gained sympathy as an advocate of “African solutions” by sharing its experiences (TASAM Afrika Enstitüsü, 2022).

The port visits to 24 African countries by the Barbaros Turkish Naval Task Group, consisting of two frigates, one corvette, and one replenishment oiler, during its 102-day journey starting from Gölçük on March 14, 2014, have strengthened Türkiye-Africa relations (Mavi Vatan, 2023).

Following the economic hardship caused by 20 years of U.S. sanctions and the loss of over 70% of its oil revenues, with South Sudan’s independence in 2011, Sudan under Omar al-Bashir’s regime grew closer to Türkiye after 2014.

Türkiye’s use of the waters of Africa, including the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, stands at a high level. In fact, according to 2019 figures, 5.3% of the north/south cargo transported through the Suez Canal consists of Türkiye’s imports and exports. Among the countries using the Suez Canal, Türkiye ranks:

- 5th for southbound petroleum products,
- 7th for southbound ore and metals,
- 4th for southbound fertilizers,
- 1st for southbound processed metals,
- 3rd for northbound petroleum products,
- 5th for northbound LNG,
- 4th for northbound chemicals,
- 2nd for northbound processed metals,
- 4th for northbound vegetable oils,
- 1st for northbound coal,
- 2nd for northbound fertilizers (Mavi Vatan,

2023; Suez Canal Authority, 2019).

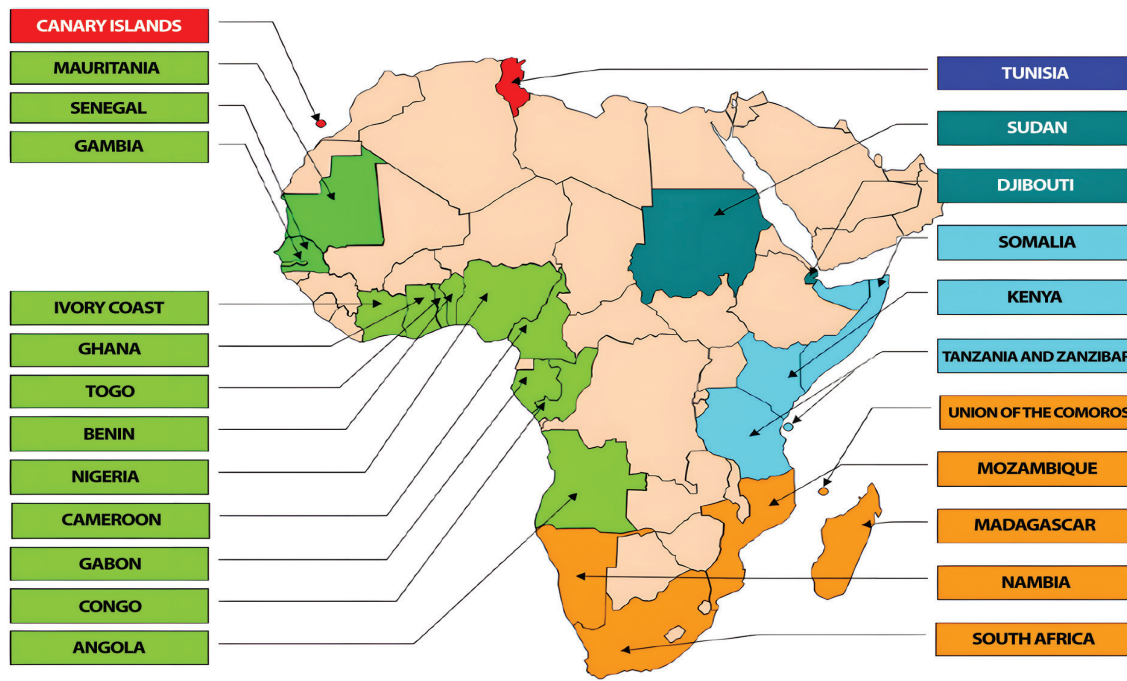
According to these statistics, Türkiye is among the

top users of the Red Sea. As can be seen, Türkiye, which vitally depends on the waterways of the Afro-Asian junction, is compelled to have a military presence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, where Western imperialism is militarily concentrated.

Since 2017, the Turkish Task Force in Somalia has been based in Mogadishu to provide training support to the Somali Armed Forces (Al-Jazeera, 2017). However, the distance from Mogadishu to the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait is about 1,400 nautical miles by sea. There have been reports that Türkiye, seeking a base closer to the strategically important Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, has acquired land for a military base in Djibouti (Erandaç, 2018). It is unclear if the land mentioned in these reports is the 500-hectare area allocated to Türkiye for 99 years to establish a “Special Economic Zone” under an agreement signed on December 10, 2014 (DEIK, 2023).

Following the economic hardship caused by 20 years of U.S. sanctions and the loss of over 70% of its oil revenues, with South Sudan’s independence in 2011, Sudan under Omar al-Bashir’s regime grew closer to Türkiye after 2014 (Mashamoun, 2022). In this positive atmosphere, on December 29, 2017, Türkiye and Sudan signed 22 agreements, including leasing Suakin Island for 99 years for \$650 million and increasing bilateral trade volume to \$10 billion annually. Although Türkiye claimed it intended to restore the dilapidated old Ottoman port on Suakin Island and turn the island into a cultural and tourism center, this assertion was not found credible by Egypt, UAE, and Saudi Arabia (Cagaptay, 2019; Habertürk, 2018’ Arpa, 2019; Mashamoun, 2022; ASSAM, 2022). According to some reports in the Turkish and Egyptian media in 2018, Türkiye planned to complete the construction of a military base on Suakin Island by 2020 and additionally make a \$4 billion investment to renovate Suakin Port (Mourad, 2018). These reports triggered the formation of a reflexive anti-Türkiye axis comprising Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt in the Red Sea (İnanç, 2023).

Figure 3. Port Visits of the Barbaros Turkish Naval Task Group in 24 African Countries in 2014



Barbaros TGDD travelled the entire continent in 102 days (Figure: Bilgen, 2023).

In 2019, Sudanese Vice President Ibrahim es Senusi stated that Türkiye would not establish a military base on the island, but he found it difficult to understand the reaction to this agreement by those who did not object to the many foreign military bases in the Red Sea (Bag, 2019). Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said that Türkiye would first construct a port on the island for the repair and maintenance of military and commercial ships (Kaya, 2021).

After the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir’s regime in Sudan in 2019, the transitional government canceled the lease agreement of Suakin Island to Türkiye (Sofos, 2022). Abdulfettah el-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese Transitional Military Council formed in 2019, announced on social media his opposition to the allocation of Suakin Island to Türkiye for 99 years and his intention to work for its cancellation.

Amid increasing debates, former Sudanese Minister of International Relations Idris Suleiman defended that the agreement was legally signed at the state level and could not be changed (Kaya, 2021). Despite these controversies, the momentum between Türkiye and Sudan did not diminish, and in a bilateral meeting between Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay and Sudanese Sovereignty Council Deputy Chairman General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, it was stated that the agreements signed during the Omar al-Bashir era between the two countries would remain in effect (Mashamoun, 2022). Moreover, Türkiye expressed its willingness to mediate the ongoing issues between Sudan and Ethiopia (Orakçı, 2021). Finally, in August 2021, President Erdogan met with Sudanese Sovereignty Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to sign a series of agreements and restart cooperation (Sofos, 2022).

Conclusion

This article has highlighted events such as the mysterious seabed mines in the Red Sea in 1984 causing minor damage to a few merchant ships over about a month, the descent of impoverished Somali fishermen into piracy due to the theft of fish resources and pollution of marine ecosystems in the early 2000s, the transformation of regional piracy into a profitable finance sector for terrorist organizations, and the spillover of the Houthi struggle for survival into the Red Sea since 2016.

These incidents, occurring at different times and involving different actors, share two overlooked common features. First, contrary to popular belief, none of these incidents were severe enough to halt or significantly slow Red Sea traffic. Second, Western imperialism, despite creating a contrary perception, has used these incidents as pretexts to seize or consolidate control over the Afro-Asian junction comprising the Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden. The geopolitical power of this Afro-Asian joint area, an area of common power for Africa and Asia, has historically belonged neither to Africa nor to Asia. Africa and Asia must work to remove imperialism from these semi-enclosed seas and their surroundings.

During World Wars I and II, the homelands of imperialists, other than the United States, were turned into ruins as they became battlegrounds. With the current expectation of a transition to multipolarity, or even significant shifts in hard power, the question arises, "Will the upcoming wars, involving a struggle for power, occur in the homelands of these powers and their surrounding seas?" It seems plausible that global/continental/regional power centers, unlike previous world wars, might prefer to conduct their power struggles in geographies far from their own territories and living spaces. The African continent, being a potential geography for a bloody, hybrid-natured world war aimed at changing the world order, could be the most likely - and expendable - choice. Such a scenario would spell new devastation for Africa.

African nations, historically unaware of their own geopolitical power, now face an urgent need to embrace the Red Sea as a geopolitical lifebuoy, considering its strategic importance as a busy and narrowing waterway. The Red Sea, which fortuitously did not become a primary battleground in previous world wars, could be at the very center of a potential Third World War. To prevent this, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia, still not fully aware of their responsibilities, need to urgently seek policies to end the imperialist military presence in the Afro-Asian junction, without further delay. 🌸

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The Changing Dynamics of Cooperation Between China and African Countries: A Global Public-Goods Approach



DENNIS MUNENE MWANIKI*

Director of Research and Executive Director of the
China-Africa Centre at the Africa Policy Institute

**Dennis Munene Mwaniki is Director of Research and Executive Director of the China-Africa Centre at the Africa Policy Institute in Nairobi, Kenya. He is a PhD candidate in Development Economics at the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (UCASS). He completed Master of Arts in International Conflict Management at University of Nairobi in 2019. As a governance and international relations consultant, he has more than 10 years of experience in promoting peace and security, supporting sustainable development and addressing global challenges. Some of his studies include “China-Africa Cooperation on Climate Change and Energy Transition”, “Africa’s Industrialization Process, Challenges, Opportunities and the Role of the Energy Sector”, “Research on the Resources, Development, and Utilization of Key Minerals in Africa”, “China-Africa Energy Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. He speaks English and Swahili.*

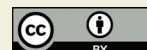
munenemwaniki@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

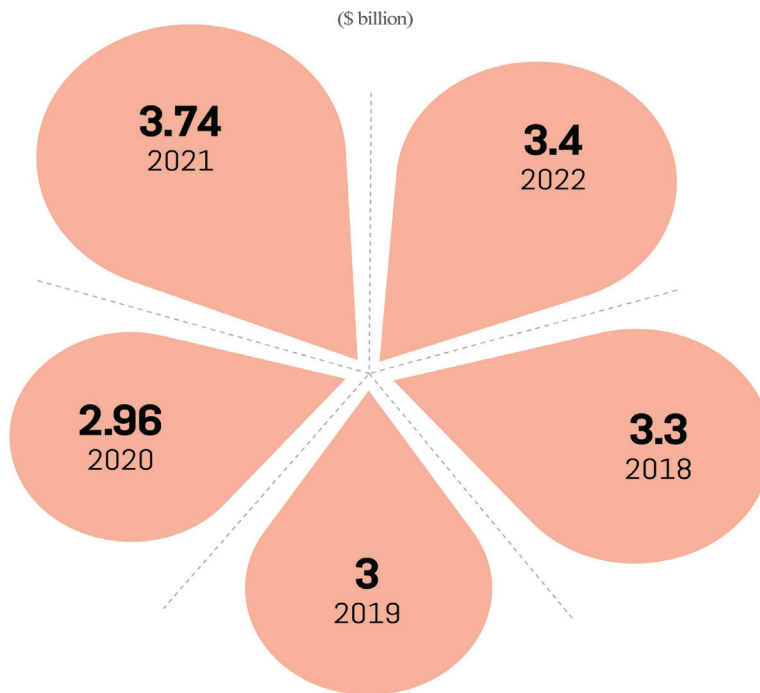
This paper examines the impact of China's emergence as a global power on various African nations, emphasizing the provision of "global public goods" as a key mechanism for fostering development. Global public goods are defined as those with benefits extending to all citizens worldwide. Employing a desktop literature review methodology, the paper conducts an in-depth examination through a process tracing of China's major initiatives labeled as global public goods from 2000 to 2023. Notable initiatives include the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in transforming Africa into a hub of development by leveraging mechanisms such as government concessional loans, grants, aid, commercial financial institution credit funds, special investment and financing funds, and promoting direct Chinese investments in Africa. Despite these positive outcomes, China's growing influence in Africa, particularly through the provision of global public goods, has elicited diverse reactions, especially from traditional Western partners of African nations. Accusations of entangling Africa in a "debt trap" and other myths have been a recurring critique. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the evolving dynamics of cooperation between China and African countries within the framework of a public-goods approach.

Keywords: Africa, China, debt trap, neo-colonialism, public goods.

FOR DECADES, CHINA HAS LONG HAD a comprehensive and strategic relationship with African countries. The relationship classified as both multilateral (within the African Union framework) and bilateral (individual member-states) has evolved in the 21st century and it is demonstrating substantial efficacy in consideration of Beijing's new goals of building a modern socialist country in all respects and advancing national rejuvenation on all fronts (Long, 2022). In common, both civilizations (China and Africa) had in recent centuries been "politically and economically dominated by external powers while experiencing very low per capita incomes and high rates of poverty and under-development", (Ajakaiye & Kaplinsky, 2009). Accordingly, as the cooperation between the two civilizations continues to grow, the paper tackles the following questions: how do China's initiatives contribute to global

public goods and the modernization of African countries? How do traditional Western partners react to China's increasing influence in Africa? What criticisms, particularly regarding the "debt trap," have been leveled against China? In tackling these questions, this paper uses a desktop literature review to assess the debt trap thesis and other Western-centric propaganda myths, which involves gathering information from existing sources, combining the results, and analyzing them for interpretation (Kariuki & Msuya, 2022). The analysis of China's contribution to global public goods and how China's relations with Africa have historically evolved is conducted using process tracing. Process tracing, resembling detective work, is a method focused on logical analysis and evidence collection, where the interpretivist approach allows for a flexible narrative shaped by key actors and events (Gürcan, 2020).

Figure 1. China's Direct Investments in Africa



China's direct investment in Africa between 2018-2021 in billion dollars (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

As observed, with the rise of China as a global power in 21st century, political scientist Joseph Nye vexed that Beijing might make the same fatal mistake as the United States, which failed to provide “global public goods” after replacing Britain as the leading power by the turn of the 20th century (Nye, 2017). These led to the disastrous decade of the 1930s where the global system experienced the great depression, genocide as democracies were on retreat, and a tragic world war. For Nye and other sinologists, the concern is whether China will make the same mistake as it power and influence continues to grow. However, in studying the historical events that led to a lost decade for civilizations, China has embarked on a “modernization doctrine” of providing “global public goods” such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, the

Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa to stabilize the global system and build a post-COVID-19 world order that is prepared to mitigate another pandemic in the future.

Global Public Goods

Conceptually, global public goods are identified as enablers of “international economic stability, international security (political stability), the international environment, international humanitarian assistance and knowledge” (Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern, 1999).

Further, Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern (1999) state that global public goods must satisfy two

essential criteria. Firstly, their benefits must exhibit pronounced qualities of publicness, characterized by nonrivalry in consumption and non-excludability, thereby classifying them within the broader category of public goods. Secondly, these benefits should demonstrate quasi-universality, encompassing multiple countries, catering to diverse population groups, and extending across generations. This attribute designates humanity as the collective beneficiary, rendering the entirety of humanity as the publicum of global public goods.

Similarly, Nye (2017) observed that “in domestic politics, governments produce public goods such as policing or a clean environment, from which all citizens can benefit and none are excluded. At the global level, public goods – such as a stable climate, financial stability, or freedom of the seas – are provided by coalitions led by the largest powers”. Nye’s observation is in tandem with China’s offer of public goods to provide a central rationale for global collective action to secure a future for all mankind.

Stability through the offer of global public goods such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) among other initiatives became the major focus in China’s policy toward Africa.

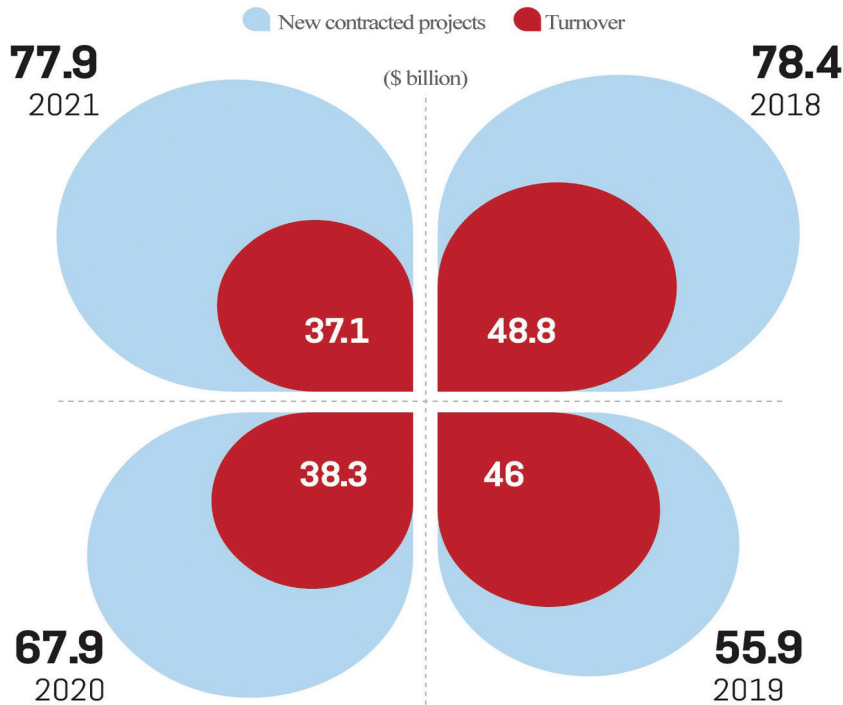
Having emerged as the 21st century’s leading economic power (Kariuki, 2022; Gürçan, 2022), China began a noble drive to offer global public goods to both developed and developing countries to mitigate the conflicts described in Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilization thesis (Huntington, 1996). For China, a peaceful environment is necessary to develop a stable

economy. Thus, stability through the offer of global public goods such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) among other initiatives became the major focus in China’s policy toward Africa. According to China, development must not be a monopoly of a few countries, or specific classes or segments of society. It must be a shared prosperity. Therefore, the rationale underlying China’s strategic expansion beyond its territorial confines resides in its endeavour to foster economic prosperity within various regions of Africa and other global locales, with the ultimate objective of cultivating harmonious coexistence and facilitating sustainable development.

Consequently, the “Going Global” strategy especially in developing countries, has resulted in China’s cumulative investment in Africa to exceed over USD 200 billion (Wencheng, 2023). As part of the “tangible global public goods”, Chinese companies have built railways, highways, ports, airports, special economic zones and industrial parks, and other forms of infrastructure in Africa, greatly improving the economic development of the continent, attracting foreign investment, promoting local employment, freeing people from poverty, and gradually moving towards a prosperous and well-off life (Wencheng, 2023).

Thus, the primary objective of this paper is to analyze and comprehend the implications of China’s role as a provider of global public goods on the modernization and development of African nations, exploring the mechanisms employed and the reactions elicited from traditional Western partners. Through this research, the aim is to contribute valuable insights into the changing dynamics of international cooperation between China and African countries, specifically within the context of global public goods.

Figure 2. Chinese Infrastructure Projects in Africa



China's infrastructure projects in Africa between 2018-2021, in billion dollars (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

China-Africa Relations

The debate on China-Africa cooperation forms part of the 'solidarity thesis' that enchants the enduring relationship between the two civilizations whose friendship is deeply rooted in ancient times and hardened in the trenches of mutual struggles against imperialism and shared aspirations for freedom and development (Kagwanja, 2016). This phenomenon was observed on two discrete instances. First, in December 1982 Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang visited eleven African countries. His visit was to promote the 'Four Principles' of Chinese cooperation with Africa: equality and mutual benefit; an emphasis on practical results; diversity

in form; and economic development (Uchehara, 2009). Second, the May 1996 visit by then President Jiang Zemin to six African countries and his keynote speech delivered at the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor to the African Union, laid out a five-point proposal for the development and need to set up an institutional platform for consultation and cooperation with African countries to promote in-depth development of China-Africa relations (Anshan, 2012). These guiding events marked a new era in China-African relations and a new shift of sustaining its offer of public goods to a continent that was impoverished by under-development in all-fronts.

Essentially, the collaboration between China and Africa is deeply rooted in the longstanding historical connections between their civilizations. It is founded upon the extensive and enduring history of relations between China and Africa, stretching back centuries to a time when African traders, travelers, and scholars engaged with China, and Chinese sailors undertook numerous voyages to the African continent. Moreover, this collaboration mirrors contemporary China's commitment to humanism, advocating for the belief that every individual deserves dignity, and respect, and the promotion of values that uphold freedom and independence (Meinert, 2010 and Liu, 2015). Discussing how China's offer of global public goods could contribute to the modernization of the African continent, the paper adopts a desktop literature review method (desk study). This also involves an in-depth process tracing analysis (Gürçan, 2020) of process China's key initiatives, which the paper refers to as global public goods from 2000 to 2023 such as the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa that have transformed the Continent of Africa to become a hub of development.

China and the Making of a Modernized Africa: A Process-Tracing Analysis

In the 1980s, dubbed the “lost decade” for Africa (Adjei, Kyei & Kwadwo, 2014), the externally borrowed model of modernization plunged the continent into a complex socio-economic crisis. One-party tyrannies, military coups, and personal dictatorships undermined Africa's efforts to chart an alternative path to modernization and economic recovery. Africa's traditional partners in the West, through the Bretton Woods system (World Bank and International Mo-

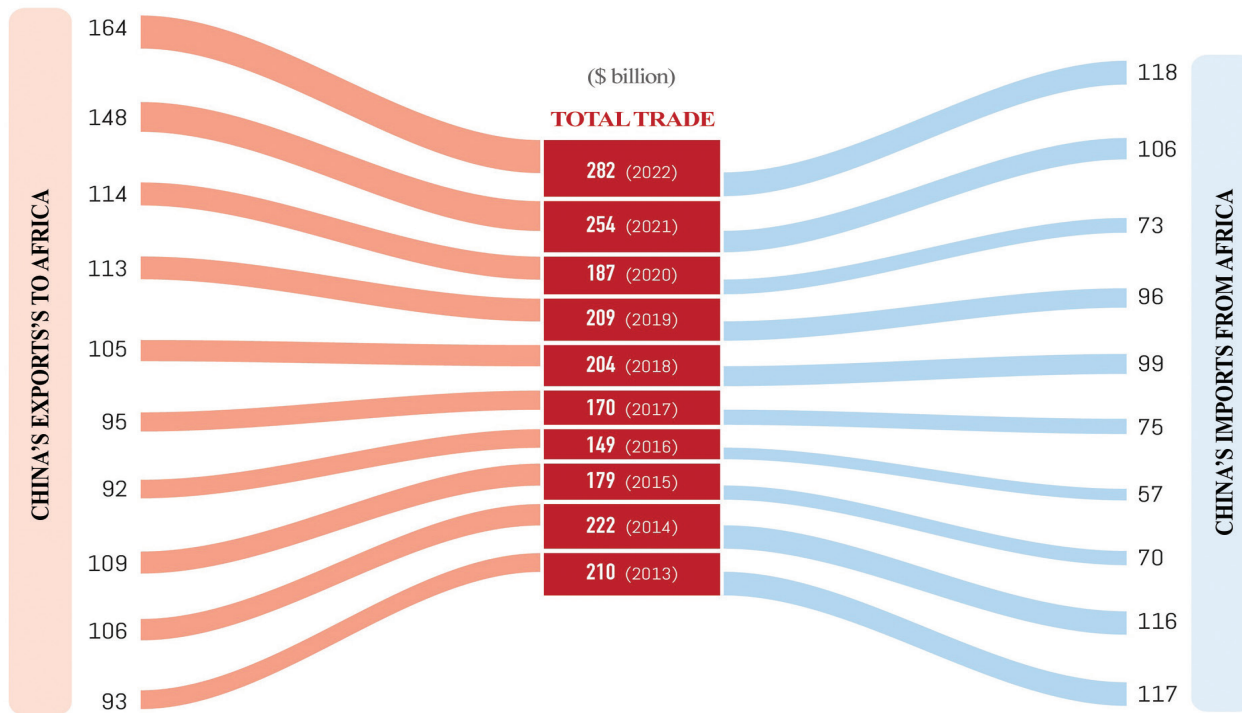
netary Fund), responded by imposing the ruinous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which destroyed the continent's economies rather than saving them (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2001). Modeled to adopt the colonial way of governance, most African countries were plagued by weak economic foundations. Diseases, instability, and poverty became the trinity of discord in Africa. The Continent of Africa quest for modernization was halted.

The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘equal partnership’, ‘mutual cooperation’, and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a common future and shared prosperity.

At the turn of the 21st century, success in Chinese modernization began to inspire a spirit of African renaissance and the continent's independent path to modernization. The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘equal partnership’, ‘mutual cooperation’, and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a common future and shared prosperity (Kagwanja 2016). China through its offer of global public goods tapped into the spirit of Pan-Africanism as the ideology driving African modernization.

To effectively concretize the cooperation between the two civilizations, China's offer of public goods has revolutionized Sino-Africa relations. Through process tracing, the paper will scrutinize the key initiatives (global public goods) from the year 2000 to 2023 that are playing a vital role in modernizing Africa and strengthening the Sino-Africa cooperations in the 21st century era.

Figure 3. 2013-2022 China-Africa Trade



Total trade between China and African countries exceeded \$2 trillion in 10 years (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

First, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2000, became the premier official policy forum driving the engine of China-Africa relations (Kagwanja, 2020). A significant marker of South-South cooperation, FOCAC signifies the needed dialogue of civilizations in our divided and polarized global community facing the anti-globalization trends. Today, the “FOCAC Community” comprising China and 54 African countries with an estimation of more than 2.8 billion people has become an integral story of the “Africa Rising narrative”. The formation of FOCAC expressed the need to set up an institutional platform for consultation and cooperation with African countries to promote in-depth development of China-Africa relations (Anshan, 2012). Subsequently,

every three years, the two civilizations meet to chart new ways to enhance their strategic relations.

Taking stock of the triannual summit that has become an anchor on China-Africa Cooperation, in December 2003, the second Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The primary focus of this conference was to strengthen collaboration in human resource development, marked by China’s commitment to training over 10,000 African professionals in diverse fields. Additionally, China expanded its market access, granting tariff-exempt status to certain commodities. The conference also highlighted tourism cooperation, identifying eight African countries as potential destinations for Chinese tourist groups.

Notably, the proposal for a China-Africa Youth Festival was introduced during this event (MFA, 2023).

Regarding education, capacity building, and technology transfer, China made several commitments, including the formation of a China-Africa Science and Technology partnership.

The third Ministerial Conference and FOCAC Summit took place in Beijing in November 2006. During the summit, China allocated USD 5 billion in loans and buyers' credits, along with an additional USD 5 billion in China-Africa Development Funds (CADF). These funds were designated to support Chinese companies investing in Africa. As part of its commitments, China promised to construct an African Union Conference Centre and expand the list of African export items from 190 to over 440, some of which would enjoy zero-tariff status. Primarily, health issues were included in the agenda for the first time, with China vowing to contribute to the fight against malaria by establishing prevention and treatment centers and providing anti-malaria drugs. In the realm of education, China pledged to build one hundred rural schools across Africa and double the number of annual scholarships to 2,000 by the year 2009 (China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of African students studying in Chinese universities, marking a notable departure from the previously 'preferred traditional study destinations' for most students during the post-independence era.

The fourth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC occurred in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on November 8-9, 2009. In attendance were Chinese Premier Wen

Jiabao, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, leaders from 49 African countries, and representatives from the African Union. During the meeting, participants adopted the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration and Action Plan for 2010–2012, outlining the course for enhanced cooperation between China and Africa. Emphasis was placed on addressing climate change, with a commitment to respond proactively by establishing 100 clean energy projects. Further, regarding education, capacity building, and technology transfer, China made several commitments, including the formation of a China-Africa Science and Technology partnership. China pledged support for science and technological research projects and offered to host 100 post-doctoral fellows for research in China. Additionally, the meeting resolved to establish agricultural technology demonstration centers built by China, along with facilities to train over 2,000 African agricultural technicians. To ensure the implementation of the outcomes of FOCAC IV, China provided significant financial support, offering USD 10 billion in concessional loans and an additional USD 1 billion for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, China canceled the debt associated with interest-free government loans due to maturity by the end of that year, demonstrating its commitment to fostering economic cooperation between China and Africa (Eneka, 2010).

The Fifth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC unfolded in Beijing on July 19-20, 2012, coinciding with a shift in leadership within China. Notably, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, participated in the conference for the first time, underscoring FOCAC's burgeoning influence on the global stage. Beijing, in a substantial move, extended a credit line of USD 20 billion to support diverse sectors in Africa, including infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and small and medium-sized enterprises (Zhang, 2015).



In 1976, Chinese and Tanzanian workers lay track on the Tanzania-Zambia Railway. The 1860.5 km railway is a milestone in China-Africa friendship (Photo: FOCAC, 2016).

The financial commitment extended to the China-Africa Development Fund, initially established during the 2006 FOCAC summit, experienced a significant increase from USD 1 billion to USD 5 billion. Moreover, China entered into bilateral agreements on investment protection with 32 African nations and established Joint Economic and Trade Commissions with 45 others. An investment totaling approximately USD 1.806 billion was injected into 53 projects, part of a broader initiative encompassing 61 projects across 30 African countries under the China-Africa Development Fund.

China also introduced new, non-conditional facilities aimed at supporting Africa's infrastructure, mining, manufacturing, and finance sectors. Additionally, a noteworthy commitment emerged with the announcement of the "African Talent Programme," designed to train 30,000 personnel across various sectors. However, the 2012 summit brought attention to unmet

promises concerning technology transfer and highlighted concerns about the prevailing trade dynamics, where Africa continued to export raw materials while importing China's manufactured goods, resulting in a trade imbalance (Bhura, 2016). To address the issues of trade imbalance, China pledged to increase imports of non-mining African goods and expand the list of duty-free goods permitted into the Chinese market, signaling a commitment to rectify the trade disparities between the two regions. Further, through the use of private organizations such as AVIC International Holding Corporation, China initiated the Africa Tech Challenge (ATC) in 2014 to use digital technology and provide African youth with rich knowledge in the vocational education field free of charge (Muthoni, 2023).

The sixth Summit of 2015 took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the agenda shifted towards Africa's industrialization. As a key global public good, President Xi emphasized the importance of "industrial

cooperation” and “strategic complementarity” in shaping China-Africa relations. As part of this new direction, China initiated the relocation of its labor-intensive industries to Africa. Demonstrating a significant commitment, China pledged an unprecedented USD 60 billion in funding to Africa, comprising grants, interest-free loans, and commercial financing. This financial support included USD 5 billion for interest-free aid, USD 35 billion for preferential loans and export credits, an additional USD 5 billion each for the China-Africa Development Fund and the Special Loan for the Development of Africa Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and USD 10 billion as the initial capital for the China-Africa Production Cooperation Fund (Xinhua, 2015).

A Pivotal Moment: 2018 FOCAC Summit

The 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation marked a pivotal moment in the relationship between

China and Africa. By May of that year, all African UN member states had officially recognized the People’s Republic of China as the sole legitimate representative of China, with Eswatini (Swaziland) being the only exception due to its relations with Taiwan. Remarkably, more African leaders attended the FOCAC summit in Beijing in early September than the parallel UN General Assembly meeting. Knowing China’s offer of global public goods has become a key driver for sustainable development in Africa, majority of leaders opted to attend the 2018 FOCAC Summit to secure bilateral agreements. During the summit, President Xi unveiled eight significant initiatives to guide Sino-Africa cooperation. These initiatives encompassed industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, green development, capacity building, healthcare, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security. In support of these pillars, China committed an additional USD 60 billion economic package.



The Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held on 3 September 2018 at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China (Photo: Wang Ye, Xinhua, 2018).

President Xi, in his opening remarks at the FOCAC 2018 summit, pledged USD 20 billion in new credit lines, USD 15 billion in foreign aid in the form of grants, interest-free loans, or concessional loans, USD 10 billion for a special fund dedicated to development financing, and USD 5 billion for a special fund aimed at financing imports from Africa. Additionally, President Xi announced that the remaining USD 10 billion would be contributed by Chinese companies (Xinhua, 2018).

At the 8th FOCAC meeting in 2021, significant announcements were made, and four resolutions were adopted, namely, the Dakar Action Plan, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change, and the Dakar Declaration of the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC. Further, President Xi outlined nine areas of focus for the initial three years of the China-Africa Vision 2035 during the conference. These areas encompass health, poverty reduction and agriculture, trade, investment, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security (Xi, 2021). The 8th

session of FOCAC took place at a time when the world was facing the multi-faceted impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, during the pandemic period, the China-Africa cooperation was tested at great heights. To note, China and Africa exhibit shared perspectives on numerous international and regional matters, maintaining relatively consistent positions.

Africa demonstrates unwavering support on issues central to China's core interests, contributing to the stability of the amicable relations between the two. Amid the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, China not only faced immense pressure in combating the outbreak domestically but also extended substantial assistance to African countries and the African Union. This assistance included the provision of approximately 5.4 million face masks, over a million test kits, and thousands of personal protective gears to bolster Africa's resilience against the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Jack Ma Foundation initiated a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors, contributing around 4.6 million masks, 500,000 pairs of



3 September 2018, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China (Photo: Liu Weibing, Xinhua, 2018).

gloves, 500,000 swabs and test kits, 200,000 face shields, 200,000 sets of protective clothing, 2,000 temperature guns, 300 ventilators, and 100 body temperature scanners for distribution across all 54 African countries. President Xi Jinping further committed to supplying Africa with 30 million test kits monthly, along with 10,000 ventilators and 80 million masks (Mwangi, 2020). Further, in support of the African Union's (AU) aim to vaccinate 60 percent of the African population by 2022, President Xi declared that China would contribute an additional one billion vaccine doses to Africa. This commitment encompasses 600 million doses as a donation and 400 million doses through mechanisms like collaborative production involving Chinese companies and pertinent African nations (Huaxia, 2021). Furthermore, President Xi announced China's commitment to undertake 10 medical and health projects for African countries. Additionally, 1,500 medical personnel and public health experts were dispatched to Africa as part of these initiatives. Actively supporting Africa in its battle against the pandemic, China played a crucial role in strengthening the continent's response efforts (Elnor, 2022).

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implication, is that China has persisted in augmenting its investment capacity in Africa, a void left by the United States, propelled by the strategic significance arising from their compelling economic cooperation and Africa's promising potential as the forthcoming catalyst for global economic growth.

The Crucial Role of the Belt and Road Initiative

Equally important in China's efforts at contributing to global commons in Africa is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In September 2013, President Xi Jinping while on a high-level visit to Kazakhstan, introduced to the world China's grand plan of establishing a Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). A month later in Indonesia, he announced a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) (Jiao, 2013). These two initiatives thereafter became known as China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. However, to create a cohesive economic area, the two initiatives were merged and rebranded as the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (World Bank, 2018).

Currently, the BRI has expanded and connected transport networks and markets, improved production capacity, and facilitated the transit of goods, capital, energy, raw materials, information, people, and culture (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). Wholistically, BRI encompasses the values that strengthen "people-oriented partnership". Thus, in cognizant of its vision and purpose, BRI has and continues to achieve its collective goal of promoting policy coordination, facilitating connectivity, promoting unimpeded trade, promoting financial integration, and fostering people-to-people bonds (NDRC, 2015). Finding common ground with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which push for greater regional integration within the continent, BRI has managed to become the driving architecture of industrialization and manufacturing in Africa (Marais & Labuschagne, 2019).

Further, 10 years after President Xi Jinping announced his grand plan to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe, the 21st century Belt and Road Initiative has morphed into a broad program describing almost all aspects of Chinese engagement abroad (World Bank, 2019). Currently, there are more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations that have signed cooperation documents and participating in the BRI. Globally, there are over 3000 projects that have been implemented under BRI, with a total expenditure of 1 trillion USD (Embassy of PRC in Grenada, 2023). These emancipating projects under BRI in Africa have elicited the debate on ‘debt trap’ diplomacy.

Third is the Global Development Initiative (GDI). Committed to ensuring that there is peace and development for humanity, in the wake of the

COVID-19 pandemic, China moved the concept of peaceful development to a whole new level. Globally, President Xi Jinping unveiled the GDI as China’s new framework for providing global public goods.

GDI’s fundamental purpose is to assist the global community and the United Nations in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and reverse the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on development in developing countries, address the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, poverty alleviation and food security, promote green recovery and the principles of an ecological civilization that harmonize development and natural environment, industrialization, digital economy, and connectivity in the digital era (United Nations, 2023).

Fourth is the Global Security Initiative (GSI). To



Chinese instructor Jiang Liping (right) and trainee Horace Owiti walk past a train carriage with a printed slogan reading “Connecting nations, prospering people” on the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Nairobi, Kenya, 23 May 2023 (Photo: Wang Guansen, Xinhua, 2023).

promote global stability, address common challenges, and safeguard the welfare of future generations and their democracies, China unveiled the Global Security Initiative. The initiative is anchored on six pillars of common security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, legitimate security concerns of all countries, peaceful dispute resolution between countries through dialogue and consultation, and security in traditional and non-traditional domains (PRC, 2023).

The GSI aims to uphold the principles of multilateralism and international solidarity, and the shared desire of all peoples to work together to overcome difficulties at a time when traditional and non-traditional security threats are posing a challenge to the existence of humanity.

For China, without peace, there is no development, and the path to modernization will be rough and slippery. Thus, the GSI aims to uphold the principles of multilateralism and international solidarity, and the shared desire of all peoples to work together to overcome difficulties at a time when traditional and non-traditional security threats are posing a challenge to the existence of humanity. This initiative is key in Africa, due to the continent's fragility in its governance architecture leading to inter and intra-state conflicts.

Fifth is the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa. As indicated above, some of the democracies in the Horn of Africa are

unstable. The region has become the new theater of renewed superpower tensions. The geopolitical tensions from competitive and strategic positioning of vested interest in the region have made the Horn region in Africa more volatile. Learning from experience, China has avoided any military conflict over the last three decades. As a result of a long spell of peace, China has managed to emerge as the most developed and fastest-developing nation in the world. Thus, guided by the ethos of shared prosperity for all mankind, China in January 2022, unfurled the "Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa" in Mombasa, Kenya (Azam, 2022). The initiative seeks to localize the ideals of the GDI and GSI in the Horn region. The initiative aims to support regional countries to address security, development, and governance challenges. Crystallizing the initiative, Beijing also appointed a Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Affairs to help galvanize regional consensus on political, security, and development agenda to realize lasting peace, stability, and prosperity.

Sixth is the unveiling of the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). During the opening ceremony of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting via video link on March 15, 2023, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative and called on world political parties to closely integrate their development with their national modernization drives, to continuously steer the course and marshal strength for modernization (CGTN, 2023). As an initiative, the GCI focuses on respecting the diversity of the world civilization, advocating the common values of humanity, highly valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and jointly advocating robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

According to President Xi, peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Holistically, GCI has become a custodian of humanism to advance modernization among different civilizations, and the epitome of globalization. For Africa, the GCI becomes the crown of jewel that galvanizes the mutual relationship between the two civilizations. It resonates well with the African Governance Architecture (AGA). As a framework guided by the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the AU Shared Values, (AU, 2023) AGA recognizes “good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” as critical enablers and drivers of integration, prosperity, and development of Africa (AU, 2016).

Rekindling of Africa’s Rising Narrative

The offer of global public goods by China (namely – FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, Outlook on Peace and Development in the HoA, and GCI) has inspired a spirit of African rebirth and the continent’s

independent path to modernization (Kagwanja, 2016). The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘mutual cooperation’, equal ‘partnership’ and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a community with common future and shared prosperity. China tapped into the spirit of Pan-Africanism as the ideology driving African modernization. Although China has engaged each of the African Union’s 54 member states bilaterally, its partnership with Africa is on a continental scale. The AU’s architecture of modernization has served as the framework of Sino-Africa partnership and solidarity underpinned by the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

As a result, China has been Africa’s largest trading partner for the 14 years since 2009. According to the China-Africa Trade Index, China’s trade with Africa rose from less than 100 billion yuan in 2000 to 1.88 trillion yuan in 2022, posting a cumulative increase of more than 20 times, with an average annual growth rate of 17.7 percent (Xinhua, 2023).



At the 2009 Beijing Summit Gala Night, Chinese and African dancers performed together (Photo: FOCAC, 2009).

The Global Effects of Sino-Africa Cooperations

China's growing footprint in Africa through its offer of global public goods such as FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, GCI, and the Outlook of Peace and Development in the HoA has fueled a 'cold-war' mentality from liberal democracies. They have labeled China's offer of public goods to Africa as agents of "debt trap". Accusations of neo-colonialism and luring developing or underdeveloped countries to request financial loans for infrastructure projects and later controlling them if they fail to pay off their loans (TRT World, 2019) in time has become the post-truth narrative driving the China-Africa cooperation.

At various FOCAC conferences, China has provided relief for the substantial debts accumulated by heavily indebted and poor countries, as well as the least developed countries in Africa, through interest-free Chinese government loans.

China has also been accused of perpetuating resource extraction from Africa, a continent that is endowed with natural resources such as aluminum, copper, iron ore, cobalt, and lithium, among other rare earth minerals. These resources have become the source of renewed geopolitical competition among global powers to influence Africa to abandon its cooperation with China. In a way to invalidate the propaganda narratives on "debt trap diplomacy", between 2000 and 2019, China has cancelled at least USD 3.4

billion of debt in Africa, and restructured or refinanced about USD 15 billion in African debt (Bartlett, 2022). At various FOCAC conferences, China has provided relief for the substantial debts accumulated by heavily indebted and poor countries, as well as the least developed countries in Africa, through interest-free Chinese government loans. The initial FOCAC conference initiated a debt exemption of RMB 10 billion for relevant African nations. Subsequent conferences, including the 2006 Beijing Summit, the 2009 Sharm el Sheikh Conference, the 2015 Johannesburg Summit, and the 2018 Beijing Summit, successively exempted inter-governmental interest-free loans set to mature by the end of 2005, 2009, 2015, and 2018 (Aiping & Zhan, 2018). This substantial measure significantly alleviated the financial burdens of African countries. Additionally, as part of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, China has entered into debt suspension agreements with 12 African nations. Furthermore, China decided to waive interest-free loans that matured by 2020 for 15 African countries, further contributing to easing the financial challenges faced by these nations (Li, 2020). Thus, the "debt trap diplomacy" narratives hold no water in describing the China-Africa cooperation and its partnership in global public goods. Other post-truth narratives regarding the projects done by China to Africa are regarding the weaponization of environmental concerns—often by lobbies, civil society groups, and researchers. To mitigate environmental concerns, China has done its best to reconcile nature and development through the implementation of strategic measures through its guiding philosophy of enhancing ecological civilization (Gürçan, 2021).

Conclusion

Collectively, the offer of global public goods such as FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, GCI, and the Outlook of Peace and Development in the HoA by China to African countries and other developing nations holds significant benefits for the South–South Cooperation. China’s ties with Africa stand as the paramount and dependable facet of Beijing’s foreign relations with developing nations. Through the provision of diverse “global public goods,” as stated in the paper, China is bolstering connectivity, promoting infrastructure development, promoting ecological civilization, and facilitating industrialization in Africa. China’s remarkable success in its modernization process has not only served as inspiration but has also empowered Africa in its quest for an independent path to modernization. Within the framework of Pan-Africanism, China has actively supported the African Union, Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and cultivated robust connections with Africa’s sub-regional organizations and continental initiatives. The convergence of Chinese modernization and the ‘African Renaissance’ has transformed the continent’s image from that of a “hopeless continent” in 2000 to a “hopeful continent” and a new frontier for global trade and foreign investments more than two decades later. This has elicited criticism from Africa’s traditional partners who over the years have implemented discriminatory policies against the continent of Africa. Consequently, by overlooking such unfounded criticisms, the China-Africa cooperation has engendered a community of shared destiny for mankind. 🌸

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Western Sahara: The Last Colony in Africa*



SALAMA BRAHIM EL-BACHIR**

Secretary-General of Sahrawi Trade Union (UGTSARIO)

***Salama Brahim El-Bachir is a state engineer specializing in urban planning and development. He has served in a leadership role in the Sahra Student and Youth Movement. El-Bachir has a long history of working in the external relations office of the POLISARIO Front. In 2016, he was elected as the President of the Sahra General Workers' Union, a position he was re-elected to in 2021. Throughout his career, he has participated in numerous worker conferences and international seminars. El-Bachir is recognized as one of the leading members of the Polisario Front.*

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3755-1135>

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ABSTRACT

When Morocco violated the 1991 ceasefire on 13 November 2020 after years of obstructing the referendum on self-determination, the Frente POLISARIO declared that it was forced to exercise its right to self-defence and that it was consequently resuming the liberation struggle. As a result, the Territory of Western Sahara has become a zone of open war as military confrontations between the two parties continue and intensify along the Moroccan illegal military wall in Western Sahara. Morocco's violation of the 1991 ceasefire has not only put an end to the UN peace process but also has the potential to endanger peace and stability in the region. Once again, the UN Security Council has remained silent in the face of Morocco's new act of aggression. The question before the international community and the free world comes down to this: do they allow the logic of force and the rule of "might makes right" to prevail in North Africa, and thus allow Morocco's military occupation of parts of Western Sahara to endure with impunity, or do they defend the principles of international law that are crucial to maintaining order, credibility and belief in the rules governing international relations, and consequently allow the Sahrawi people the chance to exercise their right to self-determination and independence freely and democratically? The only option, therefore, is to defend the principles of international law and bring the decolonization of Western Sahara to its conclusion through the free, genuine, and democratic expression of the sovereign will of the Sahrawi people in the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

Keywords: Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, self-determination, Polisario Front, the struggle against colonialism, Western Sahara.

THE CONFLICT IN WESTERN SAHARA, the last colony in Africa, has lasted for almost five decades, and it continues to pose a potential danger to stability and security in the region of North Africa. Despite international and African efforts, the solution to the conflict remains elusive.

Western Sahara is located on the continent's Atlantic coast and bordered by Morocco to the north, Algeria to the northeast and Mauritania to the east and south. Following the Berlin Conference of 1884–5, which divided Africa among European powers, Western Sahara was declared a Spanish protectorate and became to be known as Spanish Sahara.

More than 60 years ago, the United Nations (UN) recognized the then-Spanish Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. The international status of Western Sahara as a question of decolonization on the UN agenda since 1963 entails that the people of the Territory, the Sahrawi people, have an inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960. After years of anticolonial nonviolent resistance against Spanish presence, Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) was created in May 1973 as a liberation movement representing the Sahrawi people and their collective will to national independence.



Western Sahara is located on the Atlantic coast of the continent and shares common borders with Morocco to the north, Algeria to the northeast and Mauritania to the east and south (Map: UN, Western Sahara, 10 May 2022).

As a result of pressure from the UN and the increased military and political actions of the Frente POLISARIO, Spain eventually declared its intention to hold a referendum on self-determination in the Territory in early 1975. Morocco and Mauritania immediately objected to the move and requested the

arbitration of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the pre-colonial status of the Territory. It is important to note that Morocco had also claimed Mauritania, part of Mali, a large part of the western Algerian desert and even a part of Senegal. Morocco's territorial claims were inspired by the expansionist

ideology of the so-called “Greater Morocco”, which was advocated in the late 1950s by Alal al-Fasi, the leader of the Moroccan ultranationalist Istiqlal party, shortly after Morocco gained independence from France in March 1956.

In its historic advisory opinion on Western Sahara, issued on 16 October 1975, the ICJ, which is the UN’s principal judicial organ, established very clearly that there never existed “any tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or the Mauritanian entity”. It also endorsed “the decolonization of Western Sahara” by means of the exercise of “self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the Territory.”

‘Green March’ and the Moroccan occupation

Shortly after the release of the ICJ advisory opinion, King Hassan II of Morocco ordered the so-called “Green March” of 350,000 Moroccans to “peacefully” march into the Territory to reclaim it. Furthermore, by 31 October 1975, Moroccan forces were already advancing and invading the northern part of Western Sahara.

The “Green March” was a major event that triggered a set of events that led to the invasion and partition of Western Sahara by Morocco and Mauritania, following a secret agreement with Spain and the outbreak of the war between the Moroccan-Mauritanian armies and the forces of the Frente POLISARIO. The issue was then brought before the Security Council, the UN’s principal organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the dominant Cold War mindset at the time prevented the Council from taking any decisive action against Morocco, which had aligned itself with the Western block.

In the early seventies, the rule of King Hassan II of Morocco was facing a serious domestic legitimacy crisis. By asserting its claim on Western Sahara, King Hassan II’s tactical move was intended to shift focus away from domestic dissension and to neutralize the threat of the army at a time when the popularity of the Alawite monarchy was at its lowest ebb following two separate coup attempts against the king in 1971 and 1972. Although the king survived both attempts, the mounting discontent in the country, particularly amid the Moroccan military, made the situation even more difficult for the monarchical regime. In addition to Morocco’s increased interest in the abundant natural resources of Western Sahara, particularly phosphate and fish, as well as the Cold War geopolitical game at the time, the monarchy’s dire need for an outlet for its legitimacy crises and growing domestic problems was the main reason behind Morocco’s move to invade and occupy Western Sahara in 1975. This is why Western Sahara has become closely linked to the survival of the monarchy itself.

In the early 1980s, in order to secure its occupation of about two-thirds of the Territory, Morocco began building a 2,700-kilometre heavily mined wall of sand and stone, which divides Western Sahara into two and separates the occupied part from the rest of the Territory.

Mauritania eventually withdrew from the war in 1979. In the early 1980s, in order to secure its occupation of about two-thirds of the Territory, Morocco began building a 2,700-kilometre heavily mined wall of sand and stone (the “Berm”), which divides Western Sahara into two and separates the occupied part from the rest of the Territory.



Auserd refugee camp on 27 February 2021, 45th anniversary of the declaration of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Photo: Instagram.com/saharawivoice, 12 November 2021).

The Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara forced a major part of the Sahrawi population to flee the country and seek protection in southwest Algeria, where they established their refugee camps near the town of Tindouf. There are five main refugee camps (vast tent cities) that are administered by the authorities of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which was proclaimed on 27 February 1976 shortly after Spain's withdrawal from Western Sahara.

In the territories under Moroccan occupation, the Sahrawi population has for decades endured dispossession and repression. As documented by a host of international and local organizations, many Sahrawis have been victims of various forms of vi-

olence, mainly for their political activism. Sahrawis also live predominately in conditions marked by poverty, high rates of unemployment, marginalization, and deprivation of their basic socioeconomic and political rights. The Moroccan authorities have flooded the Territory with thousands of Moroccan settlers, thus converting the indigenous population into a minority in its own country. Morocco has also been engaged in a policy of "moroccanization," which aims at obliterating or supplanting the Sahrawi culture and heritage. Moroccan authorities continue to ban the use of hassaniya, the Sahrawi dialect, or any display of Sahrawi distinct culture, while encouraging the use of Moroccan dialects in the education system and public.

The Settlement Plan

By the late 1980s, the huge war costs incurred by Morocco made King Hassan II realize the impossibility of imposing a military victory in Western Sahara. This new situation gave both the UN and the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU, currently the African Union) more chances to intervene to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict. In August 1988, both parties to the conflict, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, accepted a Settlement Plan (peace plan) proposed jointly by the UN and the OAU as a roadmap to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict after 16 years of armed conflict. The plan was approved by the UN Security Council in 1990 in 1991. The Settlement Plan provided for a ceasefire to be followed by a free and fair referendum on self-determination to be held without military or administrative constraints to enable the people of Western Sahara, in the exercise of their right to self-determination, to choose between independence and integration with Morocco. To this end, the Security Council established under its authority the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) on 29 April 1991. The Mission was deployed in the Territory to supervise the ceasefire, which came into effect on 6 September 1991, and organize the referendum.

Instead of holding Morocco accountable for its rejection of the peace plan that it had already accepted, the Security Council stood by and did nothing under the influence of influential members such as the United States of America and France.

The peace plan gave rise to many hopes that a final and lasting solution to this protracted conflict in northwest Africa was finally within reach. However, the

hopes proved short-lived because the referendum on self-determination, which was scheduled to take place in February 1992, could not be held because of the many obstacles put in its way by Morocco. Notwithstanding the ups and downs, in January 2000, MINURSO was able to establish the list of eligible voters for the referendum, thus paving the way for the vote to take place. It was precisely at that moment that Morocco declared that it was no longer willing to proceed with the referendum on self-determination, obviously for fear of losing at the ballot box. Morocco's sudden change of heart was due to its realization that in a free, democratic referendum based on the UN-established voter list, the people of Western Sahara would clearly choose the independence option. Instead of holding Morocco accountable for its rejection of the peace plan that it had already accepted, the Security Council stood by and did nothing under the influence of influential members such as the United States of America and France.

All UN relevant resolutions and legal doctrine, including the ICJ advisory opinion on Western Sahara of 1975, affirm that the essence of the right of colonial peoples to self-determination is a democratic process by which the will of the people concerned is expressed in an informed, free, and genuine manner. This means that the will of the people of Western Sahara, the sole holder of the right to self-determination, must be expressed without any foreign interference of any kind. The expression must also be genuine and direct through the internationally established democratic processes of which the referendum is a widely used process as, for instance, was shown by the case of East Timor, which had many similarities with the Western Sahara situation. The Security Council's self-contradictory approach to self-determination remains the underlying cause of the impasse currently facing the UN peace process in Western Sahara. This situation is compounded by the fact that the UN has remained silent in the face of Morocco's recent violation of the 1991 ceasefire on 13 November 2020.

The seriousness of the situation is further aggravated by the fact that the Security Council, because of its own power dynamics, has been pursuing a passive, ambivalent and predominantly “hands-off approach” to its management of the UN peace process in Western Sahara. This approach has further exacerbated the conflict situation and hampered the quest for a peaceful and enduring solution. The “hands-off approach” has also emboldened Morocco to persist, with complete impunity, in its attempts to impose by force a *fait accompli* in Western Sahara through a series of actions that aim to normalize and consolidate its occupation of parts of the Territory.

These include, for example, changing the demographic nature of the Territory through intensified settlement policies, opening “consulates” of foreign entities, and organizing elections and international conferences in the Territory, among others.

Frente POLISARIO and the Resumption of the Liberation Struggle

When Morocco violated the 1991 ceasefire on 13 November 2020 after years of obstructing the referendum on self-determination, the Frente POLISARIO declared that it was forced to exercise its right



to self-defence and that it was consequently resuming the liberation struggle. As a result, the Territory of Western Sahara has become a zone of open war as military confrontations between the two parties continue and intensify along the Moroccan illegal military wall in Western Sahara. Morocco's violation of the 1991 ceasefire has not only put an end to the UN peace process but also has the potential to endanger peace and stability in the region. Once again, the UN Security Council has remained silent in the face of Morocco's new act of aggression.

No genuine and credible exercise of the right to self-determination in the case of Western Sahara can be envisaged without the Sahrawi people, and only the Sahrawi people, making a free choice to determine their political status under the optimal conditions of freedom, fairness, and transparency and without any military or administrative constraints.

The solution to the question of Western Sahara is clearly defined in successive UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The resolutions call for a peaceful, just, and lasting solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. In this sense, no genuine and credible exercise of the right to self-determination in the case of Western Sahara can be envisaged without the Sahrawi people, and only the Sahrawi people, making a free choice to determine their political status under the optimal conditions of freedom, fairness, and transparency and without any military

or administrative constraints. Any approach or formula that would undermine the free choice of the people of Western Sahara or predetermine the outcome of their choice or limit the options available to them would thus be inconsistent with the right of self-determination under international law and relevant UN resolutions.

The international nature of Western Sahara as a decolonization issue on the agenda of the UN since 1963 is indisputable. Therefore, the question before the international community and the free world comes down to this: do they allow the logic of force and the rule of "might makes right" to prevail in North Africa, and thus allow Morocco's military occupation of parts of Western Sahara to endure with impunity, or do they defend the principles of international law that are crucial to maintaining order, credibility and belief in the rules governing international relations, and consequently allow the Sahrawi people the chance to exercise their right to self-determination and independence freely and democratically?

In a rules-based international order, the answer should be very clear, because the logic of force cannot be an option. As observed by several commentators, Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara stands out as one of the most blatant attempts by a state to expand its territory by force since the end of World War II. The only option, therefore, is to defend the principles of international law and bring the decolonization of Western Sahara to its conclusion through the free, genuine, and democratic expression of the sovereign will of the Sahrawi people in the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. After all, the right to self-determination, in essence, is about the people concerned making a choice, not about someone else making that choice for them. 🌸



Demonstration in solidarity with Sultana Khaya under house arrest in occupied Bojdour, Western Sahara
(Photo: Instagram.com/saharawivoice, 20 November 2021).

Information about Western Sahara

The Western Sahara is located in the northwest of the African continent, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Sahara Desert, with Morocco to the north, Mauritania to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and Algeria to the east. With a surface area of 266,000 km² and a population of 603,253, Western Sahara is bordered by Algeria for 41 km, Mauritania for 1564 km, and Morocco for 444 km out of its 2049 km border. Its 1110-km coastline with the Atlantic Ocean makes this country even more geopolitically important.

Ethnically, the people living in Western Sahara are called Sahrawis. Sahrawi society identifies itself

as Muslim and Arab.

Western Sahara, a Portuguese colony for two hundred years, was one of the first areas of conflict between the British, French, and Spanish colonizers in the history of European colonialism. The Spaniards were the victors in the rivalry between the Western colonizers. After the 1884 Berlin Conference, Spain transformed its colonial rule over the region into a legal structure. Morocco, on the other hand, came under French colonization.

After the Second World War, the struggle for independence began to rise in Western Sahara and Morocco, as it did throughout Africa. The Spanish and French colonizers suppressed these struggles with bloodshed. This suppression united the

Moroccan and Western Saharan independence and freedom movements. On November 16, 1965, the UN, in its Resolution 2072, called on the Spanish government to abide by the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples” No. 1514, adopted on November 14, 1960, for the Spanish Sahara. The resolution called on the Spanish government to urgently implement the right to self-determination in the region and to do so through the UN. These calls by the UN encouraged nationalist movements in Western Sahara, and the Tahrir Movement, led by Mohammed Bassiri, was founded in 1967 to demand the independence of the region. Three years later, the Spanish executed the leader of the Tahrir Movement, Mohamed Sidi Ibrahim Bassiri.

POLISARIO Front and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

In 1972, the discovery of rich phosphate deposits in the city of Bukra in the east of the country whetted the appetites of Morocco, Mauritania, and Spain, which also claimed the region, and Algeria and Libya joined the process. Founded in 1973, the Polisario Front (Popular Front for the Liberation of the Red River and the Golden Valley) also launched a struggle for independence against Spain.

Spain transferred administrative responsibility for Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania in the Treaty of Madrid of 1975. The region was divided between Morocco and Mauritania. After Spain withdrew, the United States supported Morocco’s occupation of Western Sahara, providing intelligence

and arms. The first international reaction came from Algeria. Stating that the treaty would destabilize the region, Algeria announced that it would increase its support for the Polisario.

In 1976, Spain, which entered a new era with the death of Franco, informed the UN that it was withdrawing from Western Sahara and that the issue was completely closed for them. Following Spain’s withdrawal from Western Sahara, the Polisario Front announced the creation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADC) on February 27, 1976. Mauritania reached an agreement with the SADC and withdrew from the region in 1979. Morocco occupied the southern region, from which Mauritania withdrew.

While the conflicts with Morocco continued, the SADC government made a new political move on July 16, 1980, and applied for full membership in the Organization for African Cooperation (OAU). Despite Morocco’s opposition, the SADC government was recognized and approved to join the OAU as a sovereign state. Two years later, in 1984, Morocco announced that it was suspending its membership.

By 2016, the number of countries recognizing Western Sahara had reached 85. More than 30 of these countries were in Africa. Apart from Syria and Yemen, no Arab country or any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council had recognized Western Sahara. Later, as a result of diplomatic moves by the Kingdom of Morocco, 37 countries reversed their decision to recognize Western Sahara, bringing the number of recognizing countries down to 48. 🌸

President of the Association of
Researchers on Africa (AFAM)
Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas*

“Türkiye-Africa Trade Relations Have Increased Tenfold in the Last 20 Years”



**Turkish diplomat, academic, and author Ahmet Kavas was born in 1964. He graduated from Ankara University Faculty of Theology in 1987. In 1996, he completed his master's and doctorate studies in Paris with a scholarship from the Turkish Diyanet Foundation. He received the title of associate professor in 2002. Until 2006, he worked as a researcher at the Center for Islamic Studies (ISAM). In 2009, he was awarded the title of professor. He has served as a faculty member in the Department of Islamic History at the Faculty of Theology of Istanbul University and in the Department of Political Science at Istanbul Medeniyet University, specializing in Political History and International Relations. He has held positions such as Advisor to the Prime Minister on African issues, Ambassador to the Republic of Chad, and Ambassador to Senegal. He is especially active in research on Africa, with published books, articles, and entries in the Encyclopedia of Islam in this field. He is fluent in French, Arabic, and English.*

“As Europe’s neocolonial influence over Africa began to wane, new actors eager to become active on the continent started to establish spheres of influence in different regions of Africa. Many countries acted earlier than Türkiye in establishing contact with Africa. Türkiye began expanding its diplomatic representation network in Africa at the beginning of 2008. Thanks to these efforts, new embassies were opened in 2009. Currently, Türkiye has diplomatic representation in 44 African countries. Following China, the USA, and France, Türkiye is among the countries with the most representations on the continent. Türkiye’s Africa policy has become more pronounced since 2005. The growing Türkiye-Africa relations can be understood as Türkiye balancing its position between Asia and Europe via Africa. Moreover, African countries constitute important export markets for Türkiye. Turkish companies are establishing and operating some of the largest facilities in Africa in the textile and food industries, as well as in the iron-steel and heavy industries, even generating significant foreign exchange income. In the last century, official languages, currencies, and socio-cultural and economic lifestyles in Africa have been largely shaped by the West and continue to exert their influence. It is clear that reversing this influence will take time. It is not easy for African countries to align with China, Russia, the USA, or India. Instead of opposing Europe in Africa, Türkiye acts according to the suitability of current conditions.”

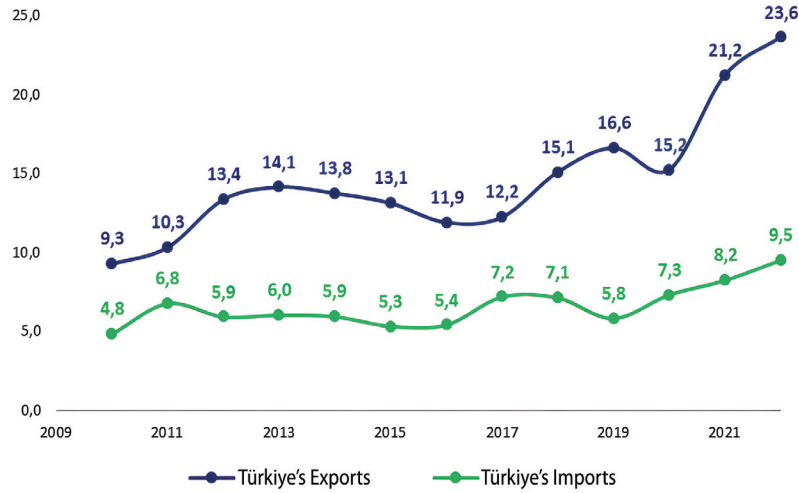
Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas, President of the Association of Researchers on Africa (AFAM), answered Mustafa Altınkaya’s questions.

What is the current state of relations between Türkiye and African countries? How many countries are we in relation with, and at what level? Are there any particularly prominent countries or sub-regions?

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas: The relations that the Republic of Türkiye has established with African countries, most of which gained independence in the 1960s, remained very limited until 2005. I still remember a frequently repeated phrase during conversations in different contexts in the 1990s: “What business do we have in Africa?” This wasn’t a deliberately constructed sentence. It turned into a commonly repeated phrase as if it was being widely used by someone. This artificial perception in our country didn’t start to change

until the beginning of the 2000s, but even so, we don’t closely know the opinion of every segment of our society, and we might still unexpectedly encounter such phrases these days. Nevertheless, our relations started to improve rapidly with a significant momentum based on our new understanding. When the influence of the colonial attitudes of seven European countries waned, states eager to be active on the continent seemed to be looking for new opportunities, suddenly becoming active in various sub-regions of Africa. India, initially leveraged its diaspora, a majority of whom were brought to the continent as workers by the British colonial administration, during the months that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but it soon fell to second place behind China.

Figure 1. 2009-2023 Türkiye-Africa exports and imports (Billion USD)



In 2022, 52.3% of the 23.6 billion USD African exports is to Egypt, Morocco, Libya and Algeria. (Figure: DEİK, Afrika Bilgi Notu, August 2023).

The competition between Japan's close neighbours, South and North Korea, also drew them into this arena. While the USA tended to keep a distance from this geography in the 1990s, Brazil's interest increased in some areas as part of its South-South policy. Cuba engaged with many countries on the continent in the health sector. New actors like Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Gulf Arab countries, Iran, Switzerland, and Israel acted earlier than Türkiye. Türkiye responded most rapidly and expansively to the Africa Union's global outreach action policy adopted in 2005. Over the course of approximately 80 years since the 1920s, the number of African countries with which we established direct diplomatic contacts did not exceed 12. Our network expanded to include Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, and Senegal. In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries like Nigeria, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ghana, Somalia, and Tanzania were added to our network within 50 years between 1960-2009, although the last three were very short-lived. Thanks to efforts initiated in 2008 to expand our diplomatic representation network in Africa, new embassies started opening in 2009, and

currently, Türkiye is in fourth place with representation in 44 countries, following China with 52, the USA with 50, and France with 47.

Türkiye balancing its position between Asia and Europe through its engagement with Africa

How would you describe the main axis of Türkiye's Africa policy? What are the priorities for Türkiye, and what issues are being focused on?

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas: Türkiye's relations with Africa does not represent a shift of axis, but rather can be understood as balancing our position between Asia and Europe through engagement with Africa. This resembles the policy followed by the Ottoman Empire at its peak in the 16th century. Türkiye is expanding its dominance and influence established in nearly half of Africa and across Asian territories, extending to Eastern Europe, Anatolia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Caucasus, with strong ties in modern international relations. This has also become

a desired process for African statesmen. Türkiye, with its geostrategic position capable of responding to this desire, holds a key position due to its geostrategic location between three continents and its rich historical background.

Since 2005, Türkiye's Africa policy has become increasingly evident on its agenda.

Since 2005, Türkiye's Africa policy has become increasingly evident on its agenda. Initially, emphasis was placed on bilateral political relations and diplomatic contacts to expand on the continent. The contacts that started during the Türkiye-Africa Summit in Istanbul in 2008 have turned into effective collaborations. The Africa Strategy Document adopted by the Prime Ministry in March 2010 promoted cooperation in defining and executing contacts with the African Union. Türkiye's Observer Member status in the African Union and its application for membership in the African Development Bank Group, approved in 2008, were officially accepted among the total 78 members, 53 from the continent and 25 from outside, on October 29, 2013. As political and diplomatic relations increased, trade relations, which were at a low level before 2000, have increased about tenfold in the last 20 years. This exceeds the expectations of both African countries and Türkiye. Overseas contracting activities, which started in the 1970s with Libya, have now spread across this vast geography. Infrastructure works, including airports, port constructions, public buildings, roads and sports complexes, and educational and healthcare facilities, have expanded into a wide area. Institutions such as TİKA, General Staff, MAARİF Foundation, Diyanet Foundation, YTB (Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities), AFAD, KIZILAY, Yunus Emre Institute, especially THY, alongside almost every ministry, have established units related to Africa to closely monitor mutual relations. Humanitarian aid organizations are

quickly responding to the needs of people in distress in relevant countries, according to their own set goals.

The terrible toll of colonialism, which started in the late 19th century by seven European states (primarily the United Kingdom and France, along with Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Spain) and ended in the 1960s, informally continued until the 2000s. However, the significant increase in Türkiye's capabilities in all areas since the 2000s, following about 80 years of mostly tense foreign relations with its close neighbors, constitutes a turning point.

In the last 20 years, as African countries have been able to act more freely and independently, it has been easier for us to improve our interactions in development, education, health, defense, humanitarian aid, and socio-cultural issues. In terms of international relations, Africa-Türkiye relations have gained significant momentum in a positive direction, especially under the umbrella of the United Nations, where decisions are made with the votes of all countries. In fact, the vote of 51 African countries was decisive in our country's election to the Security Council's Temporary Membership in 2008.

In my personal opinion, education is one of the foremost priority areas. As we enter 2024, more than 60,000 of the 340,000 international students in our universities come from various countries of the African continent. African youth are receiving education in almost every branch of science in our country in certain proportions. The MAARİF Foundation's most extensive network is in this continent. Tens of thousands of students at preschool, primary, secondary, and high school levels are now receiving education in Africa for future generations. The Turkish language, widely used in Egypt and North African countries in the first half of the 20th century as a legacy of the Ottoman period, had almost completely fallen out of use and could not be taught by the second half of the same century. Nowadays, hundreds of thousands of young people across the continent are learning and speaking our language.

African countries, generally consumers, will be among Türkiye's most important export markets until they achieve a significantly productive position. Most of our trade with the continent is made up of exports, but we're still importing a significant amount of hydrocarbon products from some countries. Some of our companies have started exporting products both within the continent and to other continents from the countries where they have opened production facilities.

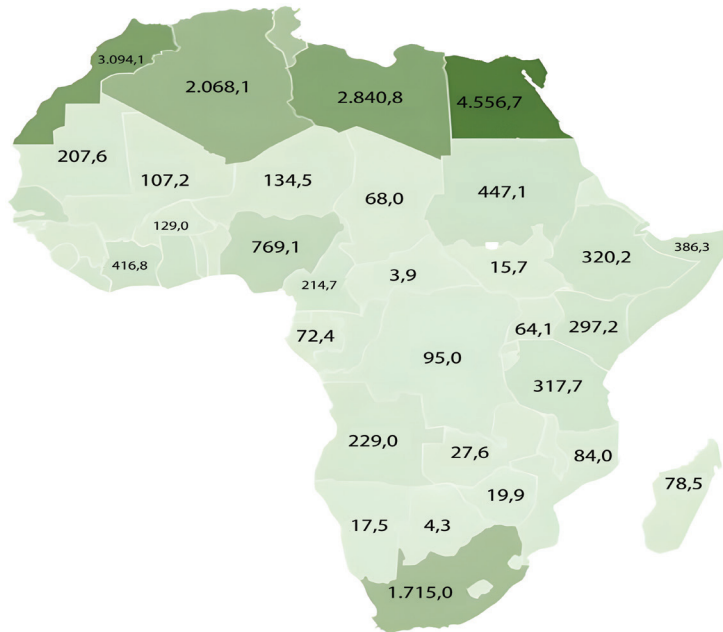
What are the opportunities for economic cooperation and joint projects between Türkiye and African countries, particularly in industry, agriculture, and mining?

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas: Certain specific areas concerning our economic relations, such as investments in food, industry, and agriculture, do not attract much attention on the continent. Though not numerous in Africa, our companies are part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in different countries. In the textile and food industry,

factories in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Senegal are at levels comparable to those in developed countries. Similarly, in iron-steel and heavy industry, as in Algeria, they are establishing and operating some of the largest facilities in both the country and the continent, even generating significant foreign exchange income. Among these, some operate with their own resources, while others are set up and operated jointly, either through build-operate-transfer models or with public support from governments. Particularly, our entrepreneurs in airports, ports, and hotel areas give much importance to this. In joint projects, a considerable number of projects have been completed and launched by taking advantage of both Turkish Eximbank and credit sources from many European countries, depending on the conditions of the invested country.

From the mid-1970s to the 2020s, over about half a century, Turkish businessmen initially turned Libya into a "school" until the early 1990s, and nowadays, hundreds of businessmen are transforming the continent into a network.

Figure 2. Map showing Türkiye's exports to African countries in 2022 (Million USD)



Türkiye's exports to Africa in 2022 increased by 11% compared to 2021
(Figure: DEIK, Afrika Bilgi Notu, August 2023).

Investors from outside Africa, especially from China, bring almost everything, from their own top executives to cooks and drivers, and even the food for thousands of their employees is shipped from their own countries. In contrast, Turkish companies procure almost all their needs except for a limited number of white-collar jobs, craftsmen, and professions requiring specific skills, from local subcontractors. Particularly in many branches of construction, locals are employed. Within a few years, thousands of people become professionals in their own countries, fulfilling the needs of their societies.

Africa prefers Türkiye as a privileged country

In recent times, many African countries seem to be moving away from Western influence and dominance. What does this mean for Türkiye, and what advantages or disadvantages does it create for Türkiye?

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kavas: Since the 1990s, African countries have begun to emerge from the dominant influence of European countries. In the 2000s, they sought cooperation opportunities with new actor states in Asia and America. Türkiye soon became a preferred partner and a privileged country in this regard. Especially when they [the Africans] learned about our country's development model, they saw it as applicable to themselves. Rather than completely breaking away from European countries, they may temporarily distance themselves in certain areas, but many dependencies dating back to the past will continue, whether they want it or not. In the last century, the official languages, currencies, socio-cultural, and economic lifestyles in these countries have been largely shaped by the West, which are still influential. To disregard these and to try to replace them with something of their own or bring from outside will take a significant amount of time. It is not easy for them to adopt many aspects of other countries like China, Russia, the USA, or India. Türkiye, instead of opposing the Europeans in Africa, acts according to the suitability

of current conditions. In MAARİF Foundation schools, if the country's official language is English or French, education is provided in these languages, while Turkish is also taught. We see that Turkish companies work together with Europeans in Africa in some major tenders. However, in the near future, it would be a repetition of history if the African states, throughout the 21st century, fell under the patronage of any foreign country, as was the case in the last century. Our country's business circles, while transferring their own experiences to Africa via mutual relations, not only provide daily subsistence opportunities for the locals but also teach them professions to serve their needs when necessary. First, they enable them to earn, and then they earn themselves. In the famous win-win policy, actually, both sides do not gain equally. The greater benefit tends to favor the countries coming from outside the continent with their own credits. Among Türkiye's disadvantages, especially in bilateral trade, we witness that it does not achieve the desired results in balanced trade with the countries it deals with. As in the case of Senegal, we are exporting over 95% and importing only about 5%. We have not yet reached the desired level in sourcing raw materials or products of African origin directly from the continent, such as coffee, gum arabic, cocoa, which are turned into semi-finished products in Europe. Another significant disadvantage is the lack of a sufficient number of our citizens who are well-acquainted with the continent and familiar with its languages, customs, and traditions. China's monopoly in every field it touches is one of the most serious deadlocks facing our companies. Although we have some presence in every country, we have almost no presence in extremely important areas like banking. Despite the rapid development of our relations with Africa since their inception over a quarter of a century ago, most of our diplomats, officials from our public institutions, and even representatives of non-governmental organizations, with few exceptions, prefer short-term assignments. If the number of those who make the continent their home increases, our country's effectiveness can become more permanent. 🌸

Russian International Relations Expert
Dr. Alexandr Bovdunov*

**“Türkiye and Russia can work together
to liberate Africa from Western
imperialism”**



**Alexander Bovdunov is a Russian international scholar and representative of the Eurasian geopolitical school. Born in 1986, he graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in 2010. In 2013, he defended his thesis for the degree of PhD in Political Sciences. He has worked as a lecturer at Moscow State University, as a political analyst and international journalist for RT, and on a number of other analytical projects. Since 2022, he has been Deputy Director of the Ivan Ilyin Higher Political School Educational and Research Center at the Russian State University for the Humanities.*

“Moscow, unlike the United States and European colonial metropolises, aims at mutually beneficial and equal cooperation. We value our African partners and communicate with them on an equal footing. Russia does not impose any prescriptive political, economic, social or value model on African countries. Russia and Africa, the Eurasian and African regions complement each other seamlessly from an economic point of view. Additionally, when viewed from a broader worldview perspective, it becomes evident that share a common objective in resisting the neo-colonial ambitions of the West, making them natural allies in their pursuits. For example, Burkina Faso and Mali, after leaving the orbit of France, are developing partnerships with Russia, Türkiye and China. Türkiye’s engagement in Africa does not pose a competition to Russia in this region. Since our potentials complement each other, we can work not to compete but to delimit the spheres of our activity. Simultaneously, on the international stage, within international organizations and at the United Nations, we can offer mutual support to both each other and our African allies who are striving to break free from Western dominance. Only by standing together can we challenge the imperialist supremacy of the United States and its allies, thereby affording nations worldwide the opportunity for autonomous development within a multipolar framework of international relations.”

Russian International Relations Expert Alexandr Bovdunov answered Işıkgün Akfırat’s questions.

What is the overall framework of Russia’s strategy in Africa, and how does it distinguish itself from Western states?

Alexandr Bovdunov: Russian strategy in Africa is explicitly defined in Russia’s new Foreign Policy Concept (dated 2023): “Russia stands in solidarity with African states in their endeavour to establish a more equitable multipolar world and to eliminate the socio-economic inequalities that are increasing due to the sophisticated neo-colonial policies of a number of developed states towards Africa. The Russian Federation intends to contribute to the further emergence of Africa as a distin-

ctive and influential centre of global development”.

Russia’s primary goal in Africa is to safeguard the sovereignty and independence of interested African nations. This includes providing support in crucial areas such as security, food and energy security, as well as military and military-technical cooperation. Russian military experts have already made significant contributions to enhance the security situation in the Central African Republic, where both French military forces and UN peacekeeping forces (MINUSCA) have faced persistent challenges since the early 2010s. Moscow now aims to extend this successful security assistance model to other African nations.

Mali and Burkina Faso are the initial focus, where France's counter-terrorism efforts have encountered difficulties. This raises questions about whether the fight against terrorism was a genuine goal, or it served as a pretext for controlling these countries' economies and the illicit activities of gold, drug, and human trafficking across the Sahel region.

Western governments, often under the guise of providing assistance, particularly in the realm of security, have exploited the resources of African nations without restraint. A telling example is Niger, a country whose uranium reserves are vital for France's energy security. Paradoxically, Niger itself suffers from an electricity shortage despite its uranium wealth.

Moscow, unlike the United States and European colonial metropolises, aims at mutually beneficial and equal cooperation.

Moscow, unlike the United States and European colonial metropolises, aims at mutually beneficial and equal cooperation. We value our African partners and communicate with them on an equal footing. Russia does not impose any prescriptive political, economic, social or value model on African countries. We do not seek to reformat the societies and value systems of these countries along our lines. This, by the way, is the difference between modern Russia and the USSR, although the USSR also interpreted the notions of socialism quite broadly when it came to Africa. Russia needs strong allies, prosperous, with strong statehood, self-sufficient, defending their traditional values like us. And such allies we hope to find in Africa.

What were the significant results of the recent Russia-Africa Summit hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin?

Alexandr Bovdunov: The main thing is that the summit took place despite unprecedented pressure from the West. The second summit of the Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum saw the participation of official delegations from 48 countries, with 27 countries represented at the highest levels. Additionally, five major continental integration associations were present. This demonstrated that African nations are asserting their autonomy in shaping their own policies.

Numerous international agreements were signed during the summit, but what stood out most was the symbolic aspect. One notable moment was the speech delivered by the young leader of Burkina Faso, Ibrahim Traoré, who spoke as the third speaker after the summit's organizers, Vladimir Putin and the head of the African Union, Azaïli Assoumani. In his address, Traoré emphasized the importance of solidarity between Russians and Africans, the necessity to combat neo-colonialism, his commitment to the legacy of Tom Sankara, and his reference to Che Guevara. This speech clearly indicates Russia's orientation in Africa. It is aimed at inspiring young patriots who recognize that breaking the chains of neo-colonialism often requires assertive action against economic dominance, coercive military agreements, pseudo-civil society, and political elites controlled from abroad. Russia lends its support to figures like Captain Traoré and Colonel Assiim Goyta, often regarded as the African counterparts to "Che Guevaras."

Regarding the economic aspects, the key outcomes are as follows: between July 27th and 28th, summit participants finalized 92 agreements with a combined value of no less than RUB 1.004 trillion.

This surpasses the figures from four years ago. Among the most noteworthy agreements were declarations concerning the initiation of a Russian industrial zone dedicated to exports throughout Africa in the Suez Canal vicinity, a proposition to create collaborative commissions and trade missions with the Russian Federation, and a shift towards employing national currencies for transactions with African nations.

What role do you think the African continent will play in the construction of a multipolar world?

Alexandr Bovdunov: I believe that Africa has a pivotal role to fulfill. According to the UN, Africa is projected to account for over half of the global population growth until 2050. The future belongs to Africa, and it is imperative for Africa to assert its sovereignty. This sovereignty encompasses both civilizational sovereignty, a concept discussed by 20th-century Pan-Africanist thinkers and practitioners like Cheikh Anta Diop, Thomas Sankara, and Muammar Gaddafi, as well as contemporary Pan-Africanists such as Kemi Seba, Ibrahim Traoré, and Assimi Goyta.

From both a geopolitical and geo-economic perspective, the integration initiatives in Eurasia and Africa are mutually reinforcing. Friedrich List, a prominent 19th-century German economist who played a crucial role in economically unifying German principalities to create a strong and united Germany, underscored the significance of integrating the resources of both the tropical and temperate zones within one economic framework. This form of meridional integration holds immense importance in achieving self-sufficiency and economic autonomy for such a bloc.

In terms of economic dynamics, the Eurasian

and African regions complement each other seamlessly. Additionally, when viewed from a broader worldview perspective, it becomes evident that Eurasianists and Pan-Africanists share a common objective in resisting the neo-colonial ambitions of the West, making them natural allies in their pursuits.

How can Türkiye, Russia and other Eurasian countries cooperate on their relations with Africa?

Alexandr Bovdunov: I believe that such cooperation is indeed feasible, including in the realm of security. It is widely acknowledged that Russia's primary expertise lies in the realm of Private Military Companies (PMCs), which undertake a diverse array of missions, extending beyond those conducted by Western PMCs. Türkiye's engagement in Africa does not pose a competition to Russia in this region. Instead, Türkiye can supply these same nations with advanced weaponry. Countries like Burkina Faso and Mali, upon disengaging from French influence, are forging partnerships with Russia, Türkiye, and China. Our respective capabilities complement each other, allowing us to collaborate without rivalry and to define the boundaries of our activities.

Simultaneously, on the international stage, within international organizations and at the United Nations, we can offer mutual support to both each other and our African allies who are striving to break free from Western dominance. Only by standing together can we challenge the imperialist supremacy of the United States and its allies, thereby affording nations worldwide the opportunity for autonomous development within a multipolar framework of international relations. 🌸

Assessing the Socioeconomic Impact of Chinese Investments in Nigeria Under the Belt & Road Initiative



LYDIA ALHASSAN *

MSc International Relations
College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University

**Lydia Alhassan is a graduate student pursuing a Master of International Relations at Shanghai University, China. Holding a bachelor's degree in international relations and diplomacy from Afe Babalola University, Nigeria, her academic journey has been marked by a passion for African studies and contributing to peace and security studies.*

With a solid academic foundation, she has gained practical experience through relevant internships and full-time work experience at important organizations in Nigeria. Her professional journey includes positions at the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, the Ministry of Interior, the Petroleum Equalization Fund and a volunteer at the internally displaced persons camp.

Email: Bennynuel101@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3937-9169>

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the socioeconomic impact of Chinese investments in Nigeria and provide an assessment of the long-term viability of these investments in Nigeria's economy. The aim is to contribute to the existing literature on understanding China's global economic expansion, Chinese-Nigerian relations, and the prospective outcomes for both parties involved. Nigeria has benefited from Chinese financing and energy, transportation, and telecommunications projects. It is one of many countries that have shown much interest in the BRI, which has also drawn much investment. Because Nigeria is a developing country and the largest on the African continent, it is in its best interests to capitalize on the BRI's opportunities for economic growth and continued regional integration while protecting its national interests and maintaining its sovereignty. In the meantime, Nigeria needs to find a balance between the benefits of Chinese investment and the transfer of technology on the one hand and socio-economic development on the other.

Keywords: China, cooperation, development, investment, Nigeria.

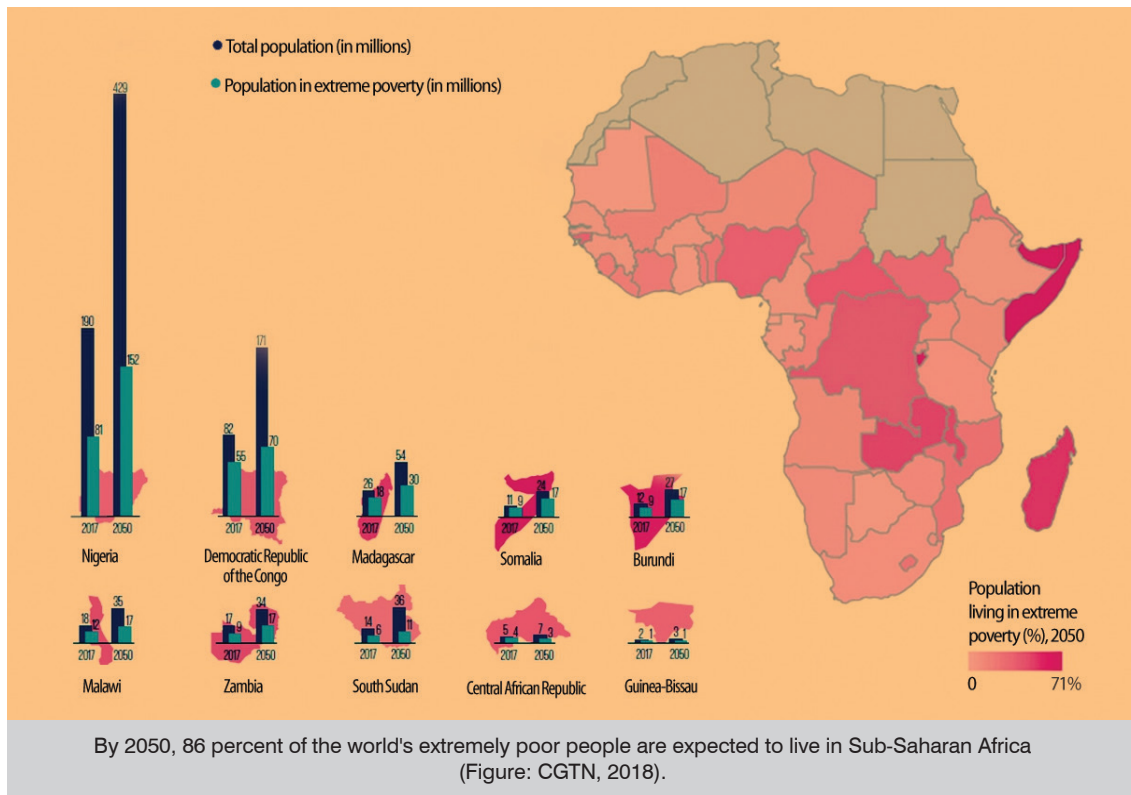
Introduction

THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI), established in 2013, intends to connect East Asia and Europe through economic initiatives. The project has spread across Africa, Oceania, and Latin America, increasing China's economic and political influence (Gürçan, 2022a). However, some experts see it as an extension of China's expanding strength, while the U.S. is concerned about China-led economic growth (McBride, 2023). Driven by rivalry with the United States, economic expansion, and regional development, China's BRI constructs trade channels, strengthens power, and develops interdependence (Jie & Wallace, 2021). China's declared national goals for the BRI are to complement regional development through economic integration, upgrade Chinese industry while exporting higher industrial standards,

and address excess industrial capacity challenges (Hu, 2019). China's BRI has impacted Africa, investing in fifty-two out of fifty-four nations, and planning to enter the 53rd market in Sao Tome and Principe. Over 90% of the fifty-four nations have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), with half in West Africa and the other half in East, North, and Southern Africa (Venkateswaran, 2020). China's position toward Africa has become more firmly established as a result, and the country's influence there in terms of politics and the economy has grown.

Nigeria, also known as the "giant of Africa," is undoubtedly the most significant country and home to the continent's greatest population. Like most of Africa, Nigeria is still underdeveloped despite its wealth of natural resources and colossal landmass, with 63% of its people living below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.).

Figure 1. Population and Poverty Projection, 2050



Any country must focus on development since it is essential to raising residents' living conditions and reducing poverty. Development is crucial in Nigeria's case since it can help reduce the nation's extreme poverty rate and foster social and economic stability. With more than two hundred million people, Nigeria's development is essential for creating jobs and ensuring the residents' long-term well-being. Nigeria is one of the African countries that has attracted the most significant Chinese investment. By 2021, cumulative investment had surpassed 20 billion USD, primarily in the development of free-trade and export-processing zones, oil extraction, home appliances and automobile assembly, agricultural production, and so on (Jian-hun, 2023). These investments have had a profound effect on the country. Certainly, Nigeria also draws international investment and diversifies its economy by spending money on infrastructure and education,

which could pave the way for long-term growth and prosperity. In particular, infrastructure development is critical in Africa to fuel economic development and provide a better standard of living for the people. This includes the need for portable drinking water, reliable electricity, effective transportation, and cutting-edge information technology. (Nuke, 2021; Senadjki et al., 2022). In this context, Nigeria has recently accomplished some developmental goals thanks to the BRI project. The China-led BRI project has significantly aided Nigeria's efforts to develop its infrastructure. Through investments in the transportation, energy, and telecommunications sectors, the BRI has greatly helped enhance connectivity within the country and stimulate economic growth. This being said, additional efforts are still necessary to adequately address Nigeria's infrastructure demands and ensure sustainable growth for its inhabitants.

This article aims to examine the socioeconomic impact of Chinese investments in Nigeria and provide an assessment of the long-term viability of these investments in Nigeria's economy. The analysis will also assess the alleged practice of 'debt trap diplomacy' by China through the BRI and its potential consequences for Nigeria's economic independence. The study also evaluates the efficacy of Nigeria's strategies in overcoming potential challenges and maximizing the benefits of the BRI. In doing so, it will contribute to the existing literature on understanding China's global economic expansion, Chinese-Nigerian relations, and the prospective outcomes for both parties involved. The study of Chinese investment under the BRI in Nigeria can reveal its impact on infrastructure, trade, employment, and local industries and shed light on the opportunities and challenges presented by Chinese investment.

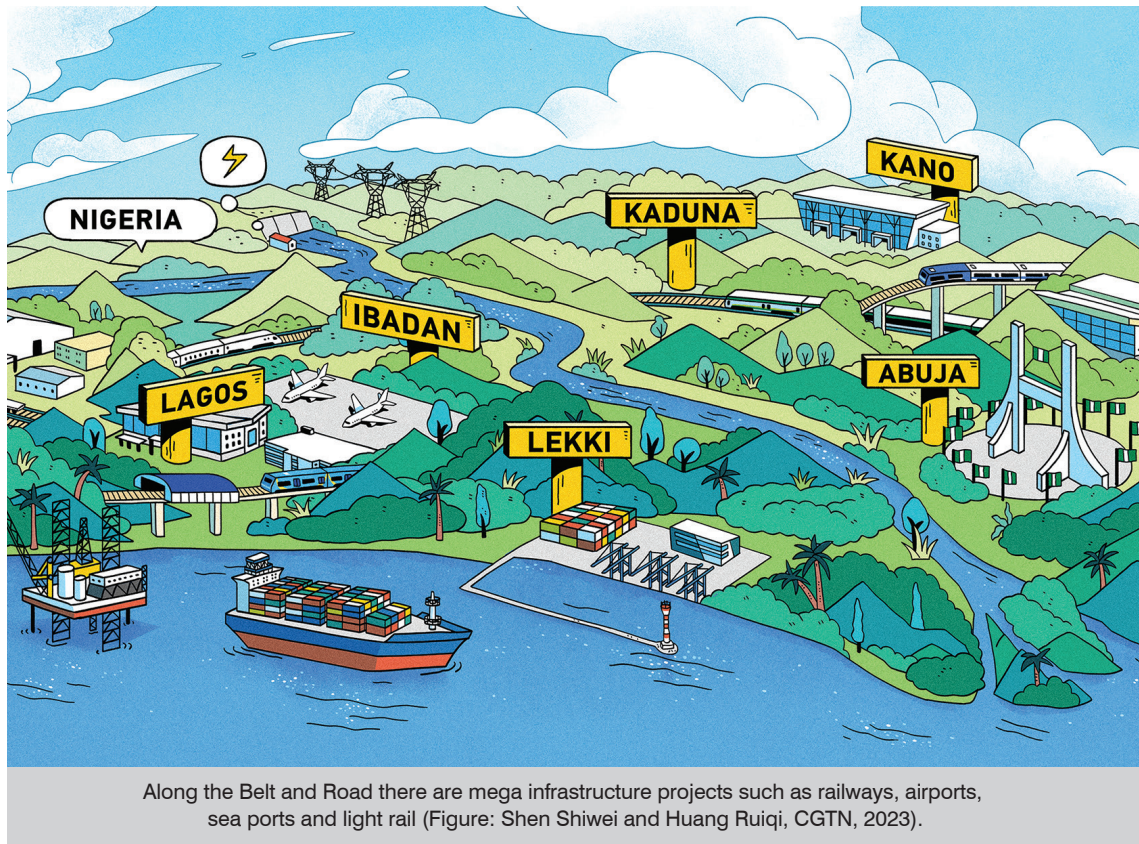
The Sino-African relationship is not a recent development; it first emerged in the 1950s, when China started supporting African nations in their struggle for independence.

This research employs process tracing as its core methodology, enabling a qualitative and interpretative analysis of social processes through empirically-backed logical inferences. By focusing on the tools, motivations, priorities, perceptions, and opportunities of social actors, process tracing emphasizes the importance of critical junctures or historical turning points (Gürcan & Donduran, 2023). In what follows, therefore, this research will review the historical development of the China-Nigeria relationship to establish the basis for the current surge of Chinese investments in Nigeria. Furthermore, it will assess the industries in which these investments are focused and the influence

of the entire process on Nigeria's economic expansion and progress. Analyzing the socioeconomic effects on Nigeria would allow us to assess the overall effect of the BRI in supporting economic development, promoting sustainable development and eliminating economic inequities in the country. In addition, our process tracing will examine the concept of "debt trap diplomacy" to gain insight into both the Western and Chinese perspectives. It aims to comprehend why certain critics contend that Chinese investments could potentially result in a significant financial burden for Nigeria, which will help us determine whether this thesis is rooted in a biased perspective.

Historical Background

Since the Chinese Revolution, Africa has been within the orbit of Chinese foreign policy, with the PRC foreign ministers visiting African countries annually since 1950 (Vines et al., 2023). The Sino-African relationship is not a recent development; it first emerged in the 1950s, when China started supporting African nations in their struggle for independence. China's interactions with Africa can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty era, although improved contacts became frequent after 1949. African backing was critical for China's diplomatic fights and U.N. admission (Rich & Recker, 2013). Sino-African relations also became stronger during the Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement dating back to the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955, when 29 African and Asian states united around China, indicating a solid foundation in relations (Traoré, 2021). China's engagement with Africa further intensified in the 21st century, marked by the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. This partnership has witnessed significant growth in various sectors, including infrastructure development, technology transfer, and capacity building initiatives.



Along the Belt and Road there are mega infrastructure projects such as railways, airports, sea ports and light rail (Figure: Shen Shiwei and Huang Ruiqi, CGTN, 2023).

Nigeria, like other African nations formerly under British colonial rule, attained independence in 1960. However, in the 1980s, oil accounted for 87% of export earnings and 77% of federal government revenue, which made the country heavily dependent on oil, and while this might have been seen as a win for the country, it was merely a resource curse. The resource curse is a phenomenon in which the utilization of natural resources does not result in wider economic growth and wealth for the populace (Gürçan, 2022b, 57). Although the country generates substantial income from oil rents, the lack of proper management, corruption, and insufficient governance mechanisms resulted in a scenario where the country did not experience significant economic growth and development

(Chukwuma, 2014; Kanu, 2022). Sino-Nigerian relations in the beginning were not rosy due to Nigeria's close ties with the United States and its skepticism towards communist ideology. Like other African nations in the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria recognized China as a developing nation. However, it chose not to pursue commercial or diplomatic ties in favor of concentrating on nations in Europe and North America (Utomi Pat, 2008). This was primarily due to Nigeria's recent independence and the need to uphold the ideologies of its former colonial rulers. It should also be noted that Nigeria supported the United States during the Cold War crisis. Since the United States was a close ally of its former colonial ruler, it is safe to say that this influenced Nigeria's decision to establish ties with China.

Nigeria's pro-western posture after independence influenced its foreign policy towards China, resulting in an initial refusal of China's proposed diplomatic relations in 1964 (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). During the dictatorship of Sani Abacha, however, Nigeria pursued a "Look East" foreign policy, expanding the Beijing-Abuja political alliance and fostering trust (Ramani, 2016). In 1971, China and Nigeria established formal diplomatic ties. This was because Western powers harshly criticized Nigeria's military administrations, and Nigeria began looking to the East for alternative strategic relationships, which set the stage for the current context.

China has consistently shown respect towards Nigeria and other African nations, treating them as equals without exerting dominance.

China has consistently shown respect towards Nigeria and other African nations, treating them as equals without exerting dominance. As a result, Nigeria has become China's largest contractor market, second largest trading partner, and a significant investment destination in Africa. In 2018, Nigeria entered into a cooperative agreement with China known as the Belt and Road Initiative. This collaboration resulted in the successful completion of significant undertakings including the Lekki Deep Sea Port, Zungeru Hydroelectric project, Lagos-Ibadan train route, Abuja-Kaduna rail line, Abuja-Keffi-Lafia-Makurdi road dualization, and multiple airport terminals. Nigeria is dedicated to strengthening Belt and Road collaboration with China and augmenting its ties with China (Jianchun, 2023).

Literature Review

The overall outlook on the BRI and Africa is mixed. Some argue that it has brought much-needed infrastructure development and economic growth to the continent, while others raise concerns about debt sustainability and the potential for resource exploitation. It has already been established that the BRI is a collaborative framework designed to foster industrialization and stimulate economic development in underdeveloped countries through South-South cooperation (Zhang, 2023). Guoqiang (2015) investigates the many ramifications of China's 'Belt and Road' project, focusing on its global economic impact, connectivity objectives, and China's envisioned role. He emphasizes the initiative's potential to boost trade, regional integration, and infrastructure development throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. According to Guoqiang (2015), the BRI promotes shared benefits, non-exclusivity, and peaceful cooperation in addressing global challenges in the areas of policy cooperation, infrastructure investments, and mutual economic potential. Some scholars, however, contend that China will eventually face difficulties because of the BRI, particularly in terms of debt sustainability and geopolitical tensions. Peredy, Wang, Jiaxuan, & Zheng (2023) examine the hazards involved with China's BRI, focusing on economic, political, and social issues. Economically, the plan is vulnerable owing to significant infrastructure investments, potential debt defaults, and geopolitical resistance from the United States and regional countries. Infrastructure projects cause societal instability, political transitions, and environmental sustainability concerns. These risks exacerbate the BRI's difficulties, necessitating careful planning, diplomatic dexterity, and proactive steps to navigate economic progress, geopolitical dynamics, and social and environmental sustainability.

In addition, Liu, Zhang, & Xiong (2020) are of the opinion that even though China offers financial assistance for the BRI projects through several means, including grants, concessional loans, development finance, commercial loans, and dedicated funds, the amount of financial resources raised for the BRI project is inadequate when compared to the substantial need for investments in BRI nations, especially in the development of infrastructure. The BRI has sparked debates about China's growing influence and its impact on global power dynamics. According to Zhou and Esteban (2018), secondary powers frequently employ soft balancing methods, which involve offsetting perceived threats from dominating nations through diplomatic, economic, and institutional means. In their view, China uses the BRI to oppose U.S. attempts and increase its influence across Eurasia in the Sino-U.S. rivalry.

The BRI promotes economic interdependence while establishing political power over Eurasian allies and challenging U.S. dominance.

The BRI promotes economic interdependence while establishing political power over Eurasian allies and challenging U.S. dominance. Its ability to persuade allies and adversaries to accommodate strategic interests allows China to challenge U.S. power without directly engaging in combat. From a Western-centric perspective, thereby, the BRI is seen as a means for China to exert its political and economic power, and it is perceived as an integral component of a wider strategy aimed at exerting regional and global influence. Furthermore, it is perceived as a threat to the economic security of the United States because it has the potential to put the United States at a disadvantage in its economic inte-

reactions with countries participating in the initiative and the United States' economic relations with China (Boutin, 2019).

He (2018) proposes a dual perspective on the BRI and U.S. power play. He believes the BRI's management complexities and centralization within the Chinese system have both facilitated and impeded its progress. The initiative's allegedly top-down approach allows for swift and massive projects but also poses significant risks due to a lack of accountability and susceptibility to corruption. China's investment strategy reflects a regime affinity, favoring states like Pakistan, Russia, and Indonesia while facing resistance from Western democratic allies due to differing ideologies. This distinction in regime affinity contributes to the varying responses toward BRI among democratic and authoritarian states. From a Western perspective, there are growing concerns about China's growing influence, and on the other hand, there are more balanced perspectives that present the BRI as promoting economic development, connectivity, and cooperation, which is evident in the member countries of the BRI (Malik, 2020).

The BRI has been criticized due to China's so-called "debt trap" diplomacy, in which countries owe BRI loans to Beijing, allegedly echoing neocolonial practices. The BRI's success is dependent on persuading member countries of its benefits and building momentum. However, major nations such as the United States, India, and Japan are skeptical, complicating its legitimacy and worldwide acceptance (Deng, 2021). Freeman & Tugendhat (2023) are of the opinion that the projects in BRI countries have resulted in corruption, negative environmental effects, and abuses of human rights, leading to the loss of biodiversity and increased pressure on water resources. The lack of transparency in China and the concerns around debt sustainability further exacerbate these matters. But it is important to note that corruption does not stem from the BRI pro-

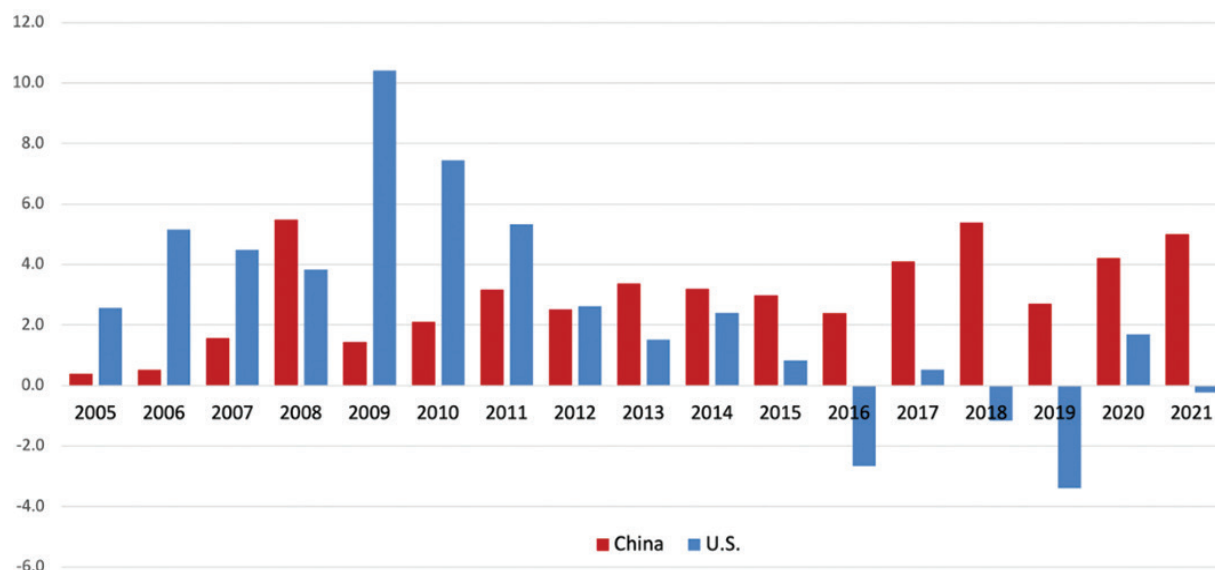
Figure 2. 2003-2019 China and U.S. Direct Investments in Africa (Billion USD)

Chart comparing China's direct investment rate in Africa with the U.S. direct investment rate in Africa (Figure: China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) analysis, April 2023).

jects but rather from existing systemic issues within the countries involved. Additionally, critics argue that the negative impacts of the BRI projects are not unique to China, as similar issues have been observed in infrastructure projects led by other countries. Contrary to Western powers historical advantage in Africa through colonial ties and cultural influence, China's soft power in the region has been less pronounced. While Western nations utilized language, culture, and aid agencies to bolster soft power, China's approach has diverged. Instead of traditional agencies, China's soft power centers around the 'Beijing consensus' a developmental approach emphasizing unique solutions tailored to individual states and a willingness to experiment and innovate (Farooq, Feroze, & Yuan, 2019; Gürçan, 2019). The shifting dynamics of Nigerian leaders and their policies have shaped the country's relationship with China and its trade relations. From 1999 to 2019, Nyiayaana and Jack (2021) investigated the relationship between Chinese investments in Nigeria and the political eco-

nomics of trade. Nigeria improved its trading connections with China during the Obasanjo administration but concerns about Chinese imports arose. During the Yar'Adua administration, the emphasis shifted from trade to foreign affairs and diplomacy. The Jonathan/Buhari era witnessed a return to tighter economic connections with China, with an emphasis on infrastructure development, energy projects, and investments in the oil sector. These economic connections led to a significant increase in Chinese investments in Nigeria, particularly in the infrastructure and energy sectors. Additionally, the partnership between the two countries resulted in the establishment of joint ventures and collaborations, further strengthening their trade relations. Chinese investment increased dramatically, particularly in infrastructure projects such as roads, trains, and ports. Raji & Ogunrinu (2018) hold the view that Chinese investments are not completely harmless to these African states, as other Western-centric scholars have argued.

In contrast to the above opinion, Breuer (2017) emphasizes China's positive image in Africa, which is linked to low-cost Chinese goods and China's economic and infrastructure developments. Additionally, using the difference-in-difference model in his research, Chen (2023) demonstrates that the BRI has had a favorable economic effect on the 130 nations included in the initiative. This effect is primarily attributed to investments in infrastructure and the promotion of common growth principles, which have led to increased trade, improved connectivity, and enhanced economic growth. This being said, the existing body of literature on China-Africa relations frequently exhibits a Western-centric perspective, neglecting to fully comprehend the intricate political-economic dynamics that characterize the relationship between China and Africa. This relationship can be understood as a delicate balance between pursuing strategic domestic objectives and win-win partnerships (Lu, 2023).

As part of the BRI, China has continually collaborated with the Nigerian government to expand ports, establish new transportation systems, and modernize existing infrastructure.

Nevertheless, China's involvement in Africa has undeniably brought about significant changes in the continent's economic landscape, with Chinese investments and infrastructure projects contributing to job creation and development, unlike Western-style neocolonialism and imperialist interventionism. As highlighted by Gürcan and Donduran (2023), the BRI is underpinned by a robust normative framework, known as the "Silk Road Spirit," which emphasizes values like peace, cooperation, transparency, inclusiveness, and mutual

learning. This approach stands in stark contrast to the Western "creditor-oriented model," characterized by structural adjustments, liberal democracy, and conditional loans—a system historically designed by Western powers to maintain their dominance and perpetuate global inequalities. Unlike Western models, the BRI and its related mechanisms reject political conditionality and principles that compromise national sovereignty. Furthermore, the Silk Road Spirit has evolved to incorporate "high-quality development" and "sustainability." This involves fostering technology-intensive industries and low-carbon investments, alongside initiatives for sustainable development, local community engagement, and inclusive social development practices (Gürcan & Donduran, 2023).

Overview of Chinese Investments in Nigeria

From 2003 to 2018, China's yearly foreign direct investments in Africa surged dramatically, from \$74.8 million to \$5.4 billion. China became Africa's fourth-largest investor when flows resumed to \$2.7 billion in 2019 and \$4.2 billion in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic (Fu, 2021).

Over the years, Chinese investments in Africa as a whole and Nigeria have grown dramatically even overtaking the United States in recent years. They span several industries, including infrastructure, telecommunications, manufacturing, and energy, as seen in Figures 1 and 2. These investments have not only helped Nigeria's economy thrive, but they have also given the local populace job opportunities. China's BRI has also strengthened the two nations' economic relationship, opening the door for further investment projects in Nigeria.

Chinese infrastructure development in Nigeria cannot be disregarded; as part of the BRI, China has continually collaborated with the Nigerian government to expand ports, establish new transportation systems, and modernize existing infrastructure. China is investing in infrastructure in 35 African countries, with



The deepest sea port in West Africa, built by China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC) in Lagos, Nigeria (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

a particular emphasis on Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan. Nigeria's infrastructure rehabilitation efforts have relied primarily on China, specifically the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) (Amusan, 2022). In Nigeria, China is funding the Abuja Rail Mass Transit System and the renovation of the Lagos-Kano line (Yuan & Jianxin, 2009). Nigeria's current ports and rail developments, such as the Lekki Deep Sea Port and the Lagos Rail Mass Transit Blue Line, are expected to stimulate economic development and China-Africa collaboration. The projects, which include West Africa's largest deep-sea port, are estimated to generate \$360 billion in economic benefits and 170,000 jobs (Deol, 2023). Chinese infrastructure development has expanded to include airport terminals, trains, and ports. Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Aminu Kano International Airport, Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu, and Port Harcourt International Airport are among the airport terminals funded by the China Exim Bank facility to the Nigerian government (Okeke-Korieocha, 2022).

A robust telecommunications infrastructure is needed to ensure Africa's economic development in the information age. The use of technology, a defining factor in today's power dynamics, is crucial for economic growth (Iwuagwu, 2014). Nigeria's journey towards developing its telecommunications facilities began in 1886 with the establishment of a cable link between Lagos and London. Over time, this network was extended to include government buildings in Lagos, Ilorin, and Jebba (Obi, 2014). However, several challenges have impeded the full realization of the telecommunications revolution in Nigeria. These challenges include infrastructural issues, high costs, and a shortage of digital start-ups, which have limited the sector's impact on the overall economy.

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that despite these hurdles, the telecommunications sector has attracted significant foreign investment, amounting to \$25 billion, and has created 1,135,000 jobs. This influx of capital and job creation has fostered the country's growth in service industries and economic activity (Enahoro & Olawade, 2021).



West Africa's first light rail network built by CCECC, a Chinese company, was opened in Lagos, Nigeria (Photo: China Daily, 2023).

Chinese corporations have played a pivotal role in recognizing Nigeria's digital economic potential and investing heavily in telecommunications. These Chinese firms have invested over \$16 billion in permanent assets and facilities nationwide (Alajemba, 2018). Huawei, a prominent Chinese brand, has been at the forefront of efforts to expand its market share in Nigeria's telecom industry. They have established partnerships with local businesses to provide cutting-edge technology and infrastructural solutions, thereby contributing to the development of Nigeria's digital economy. Huawei has made substantial investments in Nigeria, totaling \$76 million since 1999. The Nigerian government has also entrusted Huawei with the construction of smart cities and e-government software, emphasizing the company's role in driving technological advancements in the country. Huawei and Globacom

have also collaborated to build the Glo2 submarine cable network (Hungerland & Chan, 2021). These developments underscore the importance of robust telecommunications infrastructure in stimulating economic growth and fostering international partnerships and technological progress.

Considering that China has recently experienced rapid industrial growth and has a high demand for energy resources, the energy and power sector is another one where Chinese investment has been significant. Nigeria, Africa's principal oil producer, ranks ninth globally with eighteen pipelines, accounting for 9% of GDP and 90% of export value (Dokua Sasu, 2023). According to an African Oil Week analysis, Chinese businesses CNPC, CNOOC, and Sinopec are Africa's fourth largest energy investors, trailing only BP, Shell, and Eni (Mitchell, 2023).

Chinese investment in the energy and power sectors has played a crucial role in enhancing the country's energy security and promoting sustainable development. Chinese companies, especially the China Exim loan bank, have invested heavily in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, with significant projects such as the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) gas pipeline and the Zungeru hydroelectric power project. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is investing £2.2 billion (\$2.8 billion) in the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano pipeline to carry natural gas from southern Nigeria to central Nigeria. The pipeline aims to utilize Nigeria's excess gas resources for power generation and domestic consumption. The pipeline will carry up to 3,500 million cubic feet of gas per day, with the remainder used as fuel for new power plants and petrochemical industries. The financing is made available by a loan of \$2.8 billion from China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (N.S. Energy, 2020). The Zungeru project, funded by a loan from China Exim Bank, is planned to generate 2.64 billion kWh of electricity annually, satisfying 10% of Nigeria's domestic energy needs. It is projected to cost \$1.3 billion. Additionally, it will offer facilities for fish breeding, irrigation, flood control, water supply,

and employment opportunities for about 2,000 people. In contrast to the federal government's 25% contribution, the China Exim Bank will provide 75% of the financing (Akintayo, 2022).

Implementing these investments in Nigeria, particularly the infrastructure, has not been easy for the Chinese investors as well. With a 66.7 percent crime index, Nigeria is ranked 17th in the world; however, this may be a lower figure because of underreported crime figures. As per the Global Peace Index, the nation has the lowest level of peace, with a non-peaceful index rating of 2.71. The nation is witnessing a rise in terrorism, and it has become the third-largest nation targeted by terrorists. Nigeria is increasingly vulnerable to dangers from drug trafficking, terrorism, and kidnapping. Kidnapping especially is on the rise, and ransom requests from victims' families are common, and those who cannot afford the ransom are killed (Adeounmu, 2021). Since many infrastructure projects are in rural areas, kidnapping has become a major problem for the workers. Incidents resulting in abductions and casualties among security personnel and workers, including Chinese nationals, have become common due to attacks on work sites such as mines (Erezi, 2022; Owolabi, 2022).



The Zungeru Hydroelectric Power Plant was built by Chinese companies. This plant produces the electricity needs of about 10 percent of Nigeria (Photo: Xinhua, 2023).

In the long run, if the government does not take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of these Chinese workers, the ongoing attacks and kidnappings of these workers will essentially discourage more investors from making investments in Nigeria. Furthermore, it will discourage the project and impede the growth of those regions as well as the country. Another issue that comes with these investments is corruption. African nations are known for their corrupt leaders and governance, especially Nigeria, being the largest and the most corrupt nation in Africa. Due to its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, China is not in a position to monitor how the funds it provides are used. However, corruption due to deficiencies in the oversight system can lead to delays and inefficiencies in projects.

Socio-Economic Impact of Chinese Investments

Chinese investments under the BRI in Nigeria are expected to have significant socio-economic impacts. It will contribute to the country's economic growth by crea-

ting employment opportunities and stimulating various sectors, such as agriculture, infrastructure, and energy. Infrastructure development projects are critical for both industrialized and developing countries' long-term development. They entail the development of structures, systems, and facilities that support the economy of a country, including costly technical infrastructure such as highways and bridges (Dalibi & Bello, 2017). Infrastructure development initiatives not only support economic growth but also improve transportation networks and connectivity, making it easier for people to move goods and services across the nation. Analyzing the socioeconomic impact of Chinese investments is crucial because it allows policymakers and stakeholders to understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of such investments. The presence of Chinese investments in Nigeria has had a substantial influence on the country's socio-economic terrain, namely in areas such as infrastructure, industry, energy, and technology. These investments have improved connectivity, alleviated transportation, and strengthened trade, promoting economic growth. In addition, they have generated employment prospects in several industries, thereby accommodating a substantial segment of Nigeria's labor force.



19 September 2023, Abuja, Nigeria. Local workers at the Nigerian Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centre displaying the rice seedlings they harvested (Photo: Xinhua, 2023).

Job creation

Unemployment in Nigeria has been a persistent and formidable obstacle, with a significant number of Nigerian graduates actively searching for employment prospects. Available data suggest that Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 5.3% in the fourth quarter of 2022 and 4.1% in the first quarter of 2023.

Unemployment affects around 23.2 million people in Nigeria, and this is the highest rate observed in the past 13 years and the second highest rate globally (Izuaka, 2023). High levels of unemployment in any country can give rise to a range of social and economic challenges. These issues may encompass heightened levels of poverty, societal turmoil, and a decrease in overall economic expansion.

However, the BRI has the potential to address this issue by attracting Chinese investment and fostering economic growth. In infrastructure, especially railroad construction, Nigeria has seen considerable growth in job opportunities for its citizens. CCECC's localization strategy, which involves a minimum ratio of ten-to-one ratio for local labor, has created jobs in Nigeria, with the Abuja-Kaduna line producing four thousand local jobs and employing roughly five hundred Nigerians (Chen, 2018). The building of the railroad has also provided Nigerians with investment opportunities, and local businesses are benefiting as a result. The Blue Train Line has chosen the Nigerian fintech company Touch and Pay Technologies as the payment gateway. Previously, an international company's services would have been required, but now local businesses can benefit from this decision. More job opportunities for Nigerians have been made possible by constructing new airport terminals, and more will be created as additional terminals are built alongside existing airports across the nation. President Muhammadu Buhari stated that the newly constructed international terminal at Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos will generate 3,000 direct and indirect jobs for Nigerian youth (Mojeed, 2022). Lekki Port, a BRI beneficiary, is planned to help Nigeria by serving as the focal

point of a master plan encompassing the development of an airport, railway, and highways, resulting in the expansion of several firms and the creation of 170,000 jobs (Wang, 2023). This job creation initiative will not stop here, as Nigeria and China have planned to invest in more sectors and create new investment plans that will be beneficial to Nigeria's economy.

Economic growth

Nigeria's economy grew at a 7% annual rate between 2000 and 2014, but growth rates fell from 2015 to 2022 because of economic distortions, debt levels, trade protectionism, and other external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2023, persistent inflation hit 25.8%, putting millions out of work (World Bank, 2023). Infrastructure investments are critical for economic growth and development, accounting for one-third of GDP growth. According to research, well-designed investments boost potential growth and productivity, with beneficial economic spillovers. The impact of public infrastructure on economic growth is enormous (Serdaroglu, 2016).

Economic growth is crucial for any country, and these infrastructure projects are expected to contribute significantly to Nigeria's economy. Rail transit in Nigeria has significantly boosted the economy, with 953,099 passengers traveling by train in the first quarter of 2022, a 124.54% increase over the first quarter of 2021. In addition, the growth rate witnessed a 254.30% rise in products transported, with 32,139 metric tons transported vs. 9,071 metric tons. Passengers generated 2.07 billion Naira in revenue, a 132.82% increase over the previous quarter, and 71.76 million Naira in goods and cargo (Adekola & Huma, 2023). The new international airport in Lagos, Nigeria, measuring 50,887 square meters, will help foster economic development, revitalize the city, and enhance foreign trade, cultural exchanges, and tourism. It would also bridge the geographical divide between Nigeria and the rest of the world, establishing a new aviation milestone (Okeke-Korieocha, 2022).

Trade Relations

Standing as Africa's top trading partner in 2021, China has maintained close economic relations with Nigeria. Even during the COVID-19 epidemic, trade volume between China and Nigeria in 2020 climbed by 0.7% to reach \$13.66 billion, the highest volume in Africa (Lu, 2023). Trade-supporting organizations that have been set up under the BRI, like China Exim Bank, China Development Bank, and China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation, have an impact on the trade relationship between China and Nigeria. These organizations facilitate international trade by providing loans and grants (Akinola, 2015). China and Nigeria's cooperation on the BRI has significantly boosted bilateral trade by funding infrastructure projects like roads and railroads. This has improved transportation and facilitated the flow of goods and services. The BRI is transforming the global markets into a concrete force, with Nigeria's Lekki Free Zone (LFZ) emerging as a crucial hub for economic and trade partnerships between China and Nigeria. The China-Africa Lekki Investment Ltd.-operated LFZ covers 30 square kilometers in Lagos State (Huichen, 2023). It is a zone in which a collection of countries has agreed to decrease or abolish trade barriers, with the primary goal of increasing foreign exchange revenues, developing export-oriented sectors, and creating job opportunities in the host country (Okogba, 2023). The Lekki free zone offers attractive incentives such as tax breaks, streamlined regulations, and access to world-class infrastructure, making it an ideal destination for foreign investors looking to expand their operations in Africa.

Debt Trap and Foreign Investments

The debt trap thesis is a concept circulated by Western centers to cast a shadow over the positive socio-economic impacts of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on Africa and Nigeria. The Debt Management Office reported that Nigeria's total international debt for March 2023 climbed to N49.85 trillion (\$108.30 billion), including the Federal Government's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory's

external and domestic obligations (Olufemi, 2023). Nigeria's major trading partner and lender is China, which accounts for 80% of bilateral lending. Since 2002, Nigeria has received 17 Chinese loans, with six projects in transportation, ICT, energy, agriculture, and water resources. Nigeria's debt to China is \$3.121 billion as of March 31, 2020, compared to a total loan arrangement of \$5.575 billion between 2010 and 2018 (Abdulrasheed, 2021). Critics argue that this serves as a prominent example of the debt trap diplomacy that Western countries promote. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that China does not coerce these nations into accepting these loans or investment prospects, while in the Western case, the transfer of technology and infrastructural development are much limited. Instead, China provides financial aid and supports the construction of infrastructure as part of its economic cooperation efforts. In addition, Nigeria's debt load from foreign financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF is higher than that of Chinese loans, with significantly higher repayment interest. The Nigerian Debt Management Office makes it clear that China is merely one of several multilateral sources from which Nigeria obtains loans. Additionally, it emphasizes three justifications for borrowing from outside sources: multilateral funding, the pressing need for concessional loans to remedy the shortage of domestic infrastructure, and the nation's credibility in preventing foreign lenders from seizing control of the domestic economy (Lu, 2023).

Were (2018) argues that Beijing burdens the African region with unmanageable debt to enhance its geopolitical influence. In his opinion, Africa's mounting debt to China is contributing to a broader apprehension regarding the continent's ability to sustain its entire debt burden. The primary concern with debt revolves around the responsible utilization of debt by a government, the potential impact of debt payments on the government's ability to fund goods and services, and the economic productivity of the debt.

Western-centric academics have dubbed the BRI and Chinese investment in Africa "debt trap diplomacy," arguing that China deliberately builds up unsustainable debt levels to exert leverage and control over African nations. Debt-trap diplomacy is a method in which a lending country

makes loans to another country to increase its political leverage. This frequently entails imposing unduly stringent repayment terms on borrowing countries, compelling them to make economic or political compromises. Some claim that China is pursuing geopolitical objectives in Asia and Africa through this policy, while others see it as an economic opportunity (Ajnoti, 2022).

China has provided financial support for many infrastructure initiatives in Africa, such as the construction of trains, highways, bridges, ports, power facilities, hospitals, and schools.

Al-Fadhat & Prasetio (2022) base their research on debt trap diplomacy. They believe financial aid provided through investment and loan money can occasionally result in a situation where a recipient country becomes trapped in a cycle of debt, unable to repay its obligations in both the short and long term, which is exactly what China is allegedly doing by strategically positioning itself as a lender with the goal of exerting influence on African nations and fostering reliance, leverage, and influence.

In contrast to this opinion, other scholars argue that the debt trap diplomacy narrative is overstated and that China's involvement in Africa is driven by economic interests rather than a deliberate strategy to trap countries in debt. Himmer and Rod (2022) are convinced that the DTD approach is biased in its portrayal of China as deliberately burdening borrowing nations with debt to acquire strategic assets. China's actions to delay repayment of Kenyan debts during the COVID-19 pandemic, marginally reduce Maldivian debt, and decrease Malaysian debt, have proved that China is indeed concerned with the economic stability and development of its partner countries. The financial status of the investigated countries is not completely attributable to China but rather a result of a combination of Chinese partiality and responses to requests made by political representatives.

The West has accused China's investments in developing

countries, especially in the BRI, of creating a debt trap. This concept was derived from apprehensions regarding China's escalating global influence and its repercussions on worldwide integration. Western nations cited Sri Lanka as an example of being ensnared in Chinese debt-trap diplomacy; however, the primary cause was excessive borrowing from Western capital markets. Chinese investments in Angola and Venezuela, both experiencing infrastructural deficits, served as proof that there was no debt trap. This thesis is nothing more than an unsubstantiated claim devoid of concrete evidence (Hao, 2021).


China has provided financial support for many infrastructure initiatives in Africa, such as the construction of trains, highways, bridges, ports, power facilities, hospitals, and schools. These loans have played a significant role in fostering local development and generating employment opportunities. China's loans are viable and capable of facilitating the industrialization and modernization of developing countries. China has taken action to tackle the issue of debt by implementing the Global Development Initiative and reaching an agreement with 19 African nations. China is providing debt relief by utilizing market-based collaboration approaches. To effectively tackle the debt problem, it is necessary to implement synchronized worldwide initiatives and enforce more robust measures from developed nations and international financial institutions (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union, 2022).

Conclusion

Nigeria's best interest lies in the opportunity to capitalize on the BRI for the nation's economic growth and its continued journey towards regional integration. All this while safeguarding the country's national interests and preserving sovereignty. Nigeria must, therefore, take measures to ensure that BRI initiatives and infrastructural developments are regulated in a balanced manner. Moreover, while focusing on the infrastructural development that the BRI provides, Nigeria should also seek investment opportunities in other sectors, such as education.

According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Nigeria requires 20,000 schools and 907,769 classrooms to accommodate the rising number of out-of-school children. According to UNESCO, Nigeria has an estimated 20 million children who are not attending school and around 31% of adults who are unable to read or write. If Nigeria collaborates with the BRI to invest in educational infrastructure, it will lead to significant developmental advancements. By improving literacy rates, individuals will have access to the necessary information and skills required to participate in various economic endeavors, thereby stimulating substantial economic progress. Enhanced productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship subsequently lead to economic growth and attract foreign capital.

Nigeria's approach should encourage economic partners to collaborate with a broader spectrum of domestic companies. Should the Nigerian government make choices that disregard the needs of indigenous enterprises and industry, this would encourage brain drain within the nation and negatively affect the nation's growth. Brain drain is an issue affecting Nigeria's socioeconomic and technical development; it depletes the country's natural intellectual and valued people. In addition to raising the expense of replacing Nigerians with foreign workers, this increases dependency on foreign assistance (Evaristus Elechi, 2013). As a result of foreign investment takeovers, many talented Nigerians, especially recent graduates, have been unable to bring their ideas to fruition.

As noted previously, the BRI has given developing nations the chance to develop, and it is crucial that they seize this chance. Regardless of how developed a country is, the BRI has proven to be a win-win scenario for all of them. Based on the current situation, one could safely argue that the advantages of this project appear to outweigh the drawbacks. Beyond the Western-biased thesis of debt-trap diplomacy, Nigeria will significantly benefit from this project; in this regard, the opportunities presented by the BRI should not be underestimated but should be further diversified in a planned manner. 

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Türkiye's Place in Africa's Future: Towards Closer Cooperation Based on a Win-Win Understanding



ÖNDER ÇAYNAK*

Civil Engineer
Senior Company Manager - Dakar, Senegal

**Önder Çaynak was born in 1979 in Izmir. After completing his primary, secondary and high school education in Izmir, he graduated from Eastern Mediterranean University, Department of Civil Engineering in English in 2003. After working in the construction sector in Russia between 2004-2007, he returned to Türkiye. He worked in different positions in various companies. He worked in Algeria between 2010-2013. Then he returned to Türkiye in 2013 and realized various projects with his own construction company. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he started working as a country representative of a construction company in Africa-Senegal in 2020. He took part in tender and project processes in many African countries from Mauritania to Tunisia. He is currently working on market research and business development in this region, especially in infrastructure projects, mineral and energy.*

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ABSTRACT

Africa stands out as a strategic continent that plays an important role in during the multipolarization process due to its strategic location, potential population, and unmatched wealth both below and above the surface. It is attracting increasing attention as a major potential market for foreign investments and trade. Africa has been keenly awaiting new partnerships since the COVID-19 pandemic, with its accelerated economic growth, young and dynamic population, expanding consumer base, and government officials and business leaders eager to engage in reciprocal relations. The continent hosts approximately 30% of the world's mineral reserves, 12% of its oil reserves, and 8% of its natural gas reserves. It is home to 40% of the world's gold reserves and possesses the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, uranium, and platinum. Additionally, 30% of the world's rare earth element deposits are found in Africa, making the continent a central resource for strategic high-tech industries like semiconductors, batteries, and green energy. Africa, with 65% of its arable land, plays a critical role in global food security. Türkiye, in terms of its capacity, knowledge, and workforce, is sufficiently equipped to serve Africa in many areas, and most importantly, it emerges as a preferred partner for African counterparts. The Turkish government encourages all companies to engage in business, investment, and trade in Africa, and our consulates and commercial attachés on the continent provide all possible support to Turkish entrepreneurs. However, there is still a need for the further development of bilateral trade agreements and customs agreements between countries.

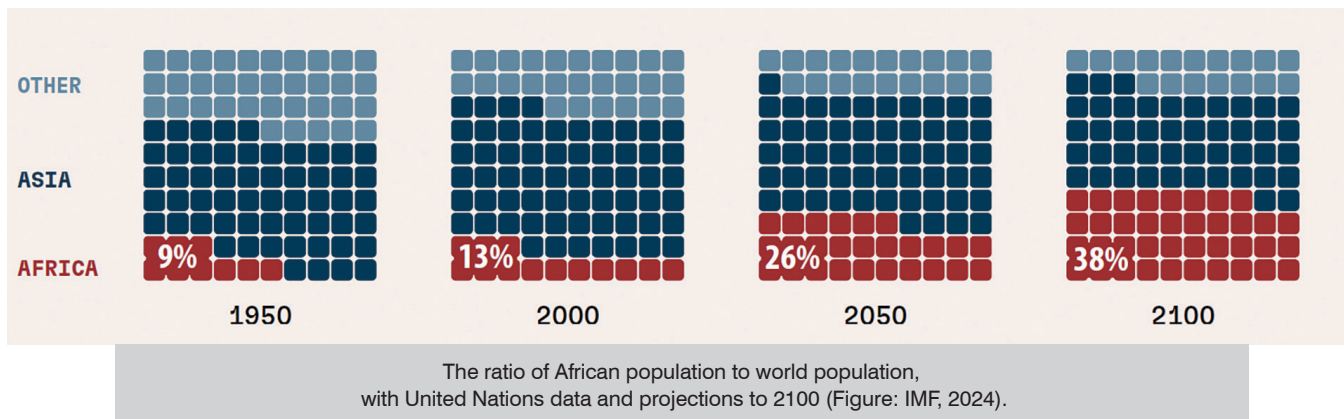
Keywords: Action Plan for Opening Up to Africa, Africa's rise, Africa-Türkiye relations, geostrategic position, win-win.

Africa's Economic Potential

AFRICA, PREPARING TO ESTABLISH ITSELF as a distinct pole in the new world, has recently become one of the most debated regions in national and international media. The continent, with its population increasing exponentially (see Figure 1), is expected to host 2.5 billion people by 2050 and reach a population of 4.3 billion by the end of the century, accounting for 39% of the global population (AA, 2017). Particularly, Nigeria is anticipated to become the third most populous country in the world by 2050 (Mohseni-Cheraghrou, 2023). In this respect, Africa is attracting increasing attention as a major potential market for foreign investments and trade. Although Africa's share in the world economy is below 3%, its demographic weight has approached 18% (The Cable, 2023). While the wor-

ld economy is expected to grow by 2.8% in 2024, Rwanda is projected to grow by 6.8%, Mozambique by 6.4%, and Ivory Coast by 6.2%. Ethiopia and Uganda are expected to experience a 5.5% growth in their Gross National Product (GNP) (Sputnik, 2023). Africa has been keenly awaiting new partnerships since the COVID-19 pandemic, with its accelerated economic growth (see Figure 2), young and dynamic population, expanding consumer base, and government officials and business leaders eager to engage in reciprocal relations. While the proportion of the elderly population is increasing in all regions of the world, in Africa, only 3% of the total population is over 65 years old, which places Africa in a privileged position in terms of consumer markets (Mohseni-Cheraghrou, 2023). Figure 3 strikingly demonstrates Africa's potential with its young population.

Figure 1: Observed and Projected Population Size of Africa (1950-2102)



Africa hosts approximately 30% of the world’s mineral reserves, 12% of its oil reserves, and 8% of its natural gas reserves. It is home to 40% of the world’s gold reserves and possesses the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, uranium, and platinum. Additionally, 30% of the world’s rare earth element deposits are found in Africa, making the continent a central resource for strategic high-tech industries like semiconductors, batteries, and green energy. Africa, with 65% of its arable land, plays a critical role in global food security. Renewable energy resources, strong solar radiation, and key minerals used in battery technology (such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel) position Africa as a significant player in the global energy transition and the fight against climate change. Particularly, it is estimated that solar power plants covering just 1% of the Sahara Desert could meet the electricity needs of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Green hydrogen produced in countries like Morocco has the potential to be transported to Europe via existing oil and gas pipelines (Mohseni-Cheraghrou, 2023).

Africa is poised to play a primary role in global trade, thanks to the surrounding seas and oceans. While 38 of the 54 countries on the continent have access to open waters, landlocked countries can achieve this

access through neighboring nations. Geographically situated between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Africa can establish effective trade routes and connections between regions like the Middle East and Europe. It also hosts significant maritime trade routes, with critical paths like the Gulf of Guinea, the Red Sea, and the Cape of Good Hope facilitating intercontinental trade. Africa’s proximity to the Suez Canal is a major advantage. Moreover, rich in natural resources, Africa’s strategic location supports the export of these resources to global markets and trade partnerships that promote economic activities (Mohseni-Cheraghrou, 2023).

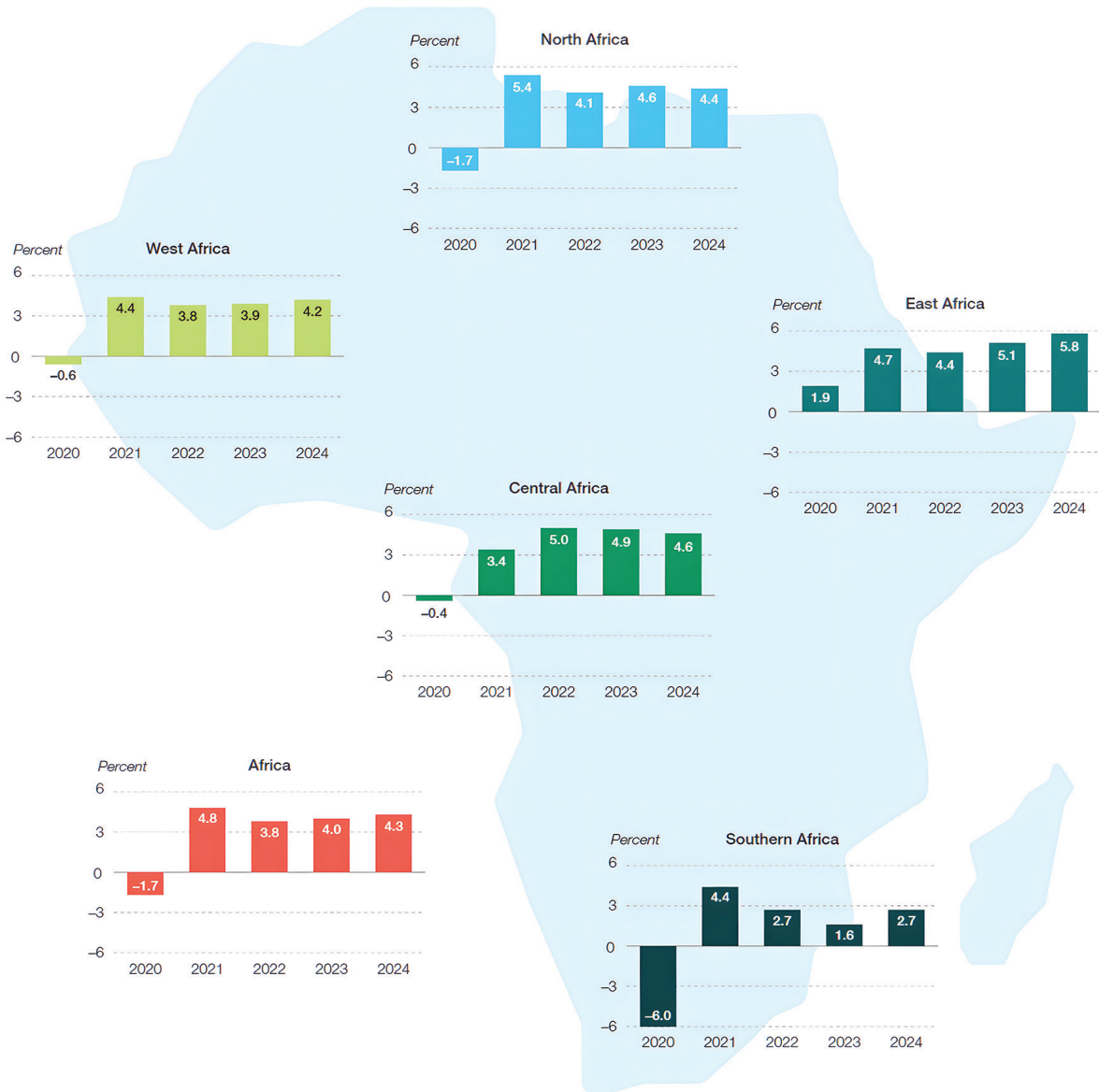
The “Win-Win” Synergy between Türkiye and Africa

Türkiye, in terms of its capacity, knowledge, and workforce, is sufficiently equipped to serve Africa in many areas, and most importantly, it emerges as a preferred partner for African counterparts. The trade volume between Africa and Türkiye, which was around 5 billion dollars in 2003, has increased to 22 billion dollars by 2022. Türkiye’s investments in the African continent have reached 7 billion dollars (Kavak, 2023). Türkiye has also become a signi-

ficant stakeholder in Africa's food security. Wheat from Russia is converted into flour in Türkiye and then transported to the continent. In these times, when former colonial powers are being forced to leave the continent one by one, and Africa begins

to take control of its independence, Türkiye has demonstrated a Win-Win strategy to these countries, working with them within a framework of mutual respect and becoming one of the preferred partners in the continent.

Figure 2: Observed and Projected Real Economic Growth in Africa (2020-2024)



2020-2024 Growth ratio by region in Africa (Figure: AFDB, 2023).

With many of the world's fastest-growing economies and considerable national incomes, Africa's future must significantly include Türkiye. Aware of this situation, Türkiye has shown a willingness to develop collaborations with emerging countries and considers Africa among its priority regions.

The “Action Plan for Opening Up to Africa”, implemented in 1998, has been a significant turning point in the relations between Türkiye and Africa.

The “Action Plan for Opening Up to Africa”, implemented in 1998, has been a significant turning point in the relations between Türkiye and Africa. The designation of 2005 as the “Year of Africa” is also noteworthy in this context. Relations were intensified from 2005 to 2011. In 2008, Türkiye was recognized as a strategic partner by the African Union. Türkiye's diplomatic presence has been strengthened through the opening of new embassies. Türkiye's response to the 2011 famine crisis in Somalia and its leadership in this matter played a significant role in the development of Türkiye-Africa relations. Under the “Partnership Policy with Africa” launched in 2013, three important summits have been held between Türkiye and African countries. The first “cooperation” themed summit (Istanbul-2008) was followed by a “Partnership” themed summit (Malabo-2014), while the most recent summit was themed around “Enhanced Partnership for Development and Prosperity” (Istanbul-2021) (Djamañca & Çağlar, 2023). By 2022, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during his tenure as Prime Minister and President, had visited more than 30 African countries a total of 53 times. As such, Erdoğan has become the head of state with the most visits to the African continent (Kavak, 2023).

Within the framework of ever-increasing and strengthening relations with countries in the African continent, the Turkish Maarif Foundation is active in 27 of the 49 countries in Africa. The Presidency for Foreign Turks and Related Communities offers significant scholarship opportunities to African students. The Yunus Emre Institute has also expanded its activities to the African continent over time. Currently, Türkiye's cultural centers in Africa are located in Algiers (Algeria), Rabat (Morocco), Johannesburg (South Africa), Cairo (Egypt), Dakar (Senegal), Khartoum (Sudan), Mogadishu (Somalia), and Tunis (Tunisia). Anadolu Agency continues its operations globally through its broadcast centers, offices, and representations. In this context, it has broadcast centers in Addis Ababa and Tunis; offices in Abuja and Khartoum; and representations in Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) conducts a wide range of activities, particularly in education and development, through its 23 offices in various areas of Africa. Today, Africa has become the continent where Türkiye-based non-governmental organizations are most actively involved. TİKA opened its first office in Ethiopia in 2005 and has since established offices in African countries such as Algeria, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, South Africa, Guinea, South Sudan, Cameroon, Kenya, Comoros, Mozambique, Egypt, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Chad. Among TİKA's projects are the opening of the Mogadishu Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Education and Research Hospital in Somalia, training programs in modern agricultural techniques and greenhouse farming to African farmers, restoration works of the Ottoman heritage Keçiova Mosque in Algeria and the Nur'ul Hamidiye Mosque in South Africa, maintenance works for the tomb of Ottoman Islamic scholar Ebubekir Efendi, the restoration of the Nejashi Tomb, those related to the improvement of the quality of life for children in Djibouti, projects for developing egg

IMPORTANT DATA ON TÜRKİYE-AFRICA RELATIONS



- Some data on Türkiye-Africa Relations:
- Our **President** has visited **30 African countries** so far, including the period when he served as the Prime Minister.
- The number of our Embassies on **the African continent increased from 12 in 2002 to 43.**
- The number of Embassies of African countries in Türkiye** increased from **10 in 2008 to 37.**
- Our total trade volume with the African Continent, which used to be **5.4 billion dollars in 2003**, amounted to **25.3 billion dollars by the end of 2020.**
- The total value of our direct investments in Africa exceeded **6 billion dollars.**
- The value of **1,686** projects undertaken by Turkish contracting companies in Africa is close to **78 billion dollars.**
- With the aim of improving economic cooperation, **96** Agreements are in force with the African countries:
 - ▶ Agreements on Trade and Economic Cooperation with **48** countries,
 - ▶ Agreements on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments with **32** countries
 - ▶ Agreements on the Prevention of Double Taxation with **16** countries.



Background information about 3rd Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit
(Figure: Twitter.com/MFATurkiye, 2021).

poultry farming in Somalia, and the construction of an additional building for the Mekone IV Primary School in Cameroon. These projects, numbering close to 7,000, aim to improve the quality of life of the African people and contribute to global cultural heritage (Djamañca & Çağlar, 2023; Kavak, 2023).

The Turkish government encourages all companies to engage in business, investment, and trade in Africa, and our consulates and commercial attachés on the continent provide all possible support to Turkish entrepreneurs. However, there is still a need for the further development of bilateral trade agreements and customs agreements between countries. Establishing direct relations between Turkish and African banks has also emerged as an important need. In Türkiye, the Central Bank and public banks need to play a more active role.

In 2021, Turkish contractors undertook projects

worth a total of 30.7 billion dollars abroad. The value of projects undertaken in Sub-Saharan Africa alone has reached 5 billion dollars. Our trade volume with African countries, which was 5.4 billion dollars in 2003, has reached 41 billion dollars by 2022 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade, 2023).

The expertise of Turkish firms in the iron and steel sector has translated into investments worth billions of dollars in Algeria. Similarly, an investment project signed by our companies in this sector with the government of Senegal is a perfect example of the Win-Win model (e.g., Steel Radar, 2023). The extraction and processing of raw materials underground, and their use in both the Senegalese market and contribution to exports, are of great importance. Additionally, there is the matter of establishing a 'Special Industrial Zone' and ensuring that local firms operate in this area (The North Africa Post, 2019).

In Tunisia's Hammamet and Dakar, Senegal, there are airport investments constructed and operated by Turkish firms. Similarly, a Turkish company operates seaports in Conakry, Guinea, and Somalia (Africa Intelligence, 2023; Daily Sabah, 2022; Reuters, 2008). It should be noted that Turkish firms engaging in port operations in the region is a significant development for Turkish entrepreneurs. Therefore, these investments hold strategic importance for our country. In the energy sector, there is an ongoing electricity power plant project in Senegal, and various Turkish firms have power plant investments in Mali, Ghana, and the Republic of Congo. Additionally, a Turkish company, which provides energy through ships – a rare 'Know-How' in the world – is supplying electricity to countries like South Africa, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Senegal using energy ships. In the health sector, a private hospital opened by a Turkish company in Libya and preparations by another globally renowned Turkish firm to establish pharmaceutical production facilities in Algeria and Senegal are underway. Moreover, Türkiye's defense industry exports have increased from \$248 million in 2002 to \$4.4 billion in 2022, and our country, which also provides military consultancy to Africa, has a military base in Somalia (Dedet, 2023).

Africa is a continent that can sustain itself with its own energy, workforce, underground and aboveground riches, and unique natural beauty.

In the defense industry, beyond supplying armored personnel carriers and armored security vehicles, the delivery of Bayraktar drones has been observed to greatly benefit countries like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso in their fight against separatist terrorists. These are not just commercial agreements but also signify that these countries are not alone in their fight against terrorism and that

we stand with them. Türkiye has provided significant trust to these countries, which face various weapons embargoes from Western countries (Dedet, 2023).

All of these win-win investments can foreseeably provide numerous benefits in the region, from preventing migration in Africa by creating jobs to contributing to demographic development through innovation and technology. It is important to understand that Africa is a continent that can sustain itself with its own energy, workforce, underground and aboveground riches, and unique natural beauty.

The significance of Turkish Airlines (THY) in this context is undeniable. As of 2022, THY has become the airline with the most frequent flights to Africa (Fualdes, 2022). Having such frequent flights to African countries helps bring together both African and Turkish businesspeople. The suitcase trade once conducted in the Soviet geography is now being carried out by African local traders to their own countries. In this way, large suitcases in the passenger lines of planes flying from Istanbul to Africa immediately catch the eye at the airport. Turkish goods are increasingly gaining a positive reputation in the continent as being of European product quality, and sometimes even of higher quality and more affordable. In this case, in addition to the quality of our products, the unique affection felt for the Turkish people also contributes to the overall situation. When you tell people that you are Turkish, a smile immediately appears on their faces. It is also worth reminding that in countries like Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, there is also a long-standing trust. If Türkiye continues to approach Africa without exploiting this trust through a colonialist and imperialist attitude, it will be a win for both Africa and our country, as well as humanity.

Conclusion

Underdeveloped oil fields in Africa are being halted by the U.S. and the EU under the pretext of clean energy. International banks are reluctant to provide loans to

Africa, thereby pushing project implementers in Africa to seek new financing. Projects in this context, especially aimed at improving access to energy, water, and sanitation, are being supported by funds from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, other development banks in Europe, Chinese state organizations, and the Gulf Countries. Particularly, it is observed that the leadership demonstrated by BRICS in Africa in terms of infrastructural and social development is limiting the economic influence of Western countries. The financial support provided to Africa by countries like China and Brazil is reducing the impact of hegemonic institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b). However, Türkiye has remained weak in this area. At this point, joint projects in Africa could be jointly developed with Russia, China, the Gulf countries, and even some European countries despite our differences.

According to the World Bank, 48% of Sub-Saharan Africa lacks access to electricity, and while the continent's need for electricity is expected to increase eightfold by 2050, there are pressures and sanctions to enforce an unjust transition to green energy. Africa is being set with impossible tasks to accomplish. On the other hand, global warming is affecting African countries the most, and the situation is becoming even more severe with drought and desertification on a continent where access to clean water is already difficult. According to UN data, 29% of the continent's population cannot access drinking water services, and diseases caused by contaminated water sources are presented as primary tasks for the governments (AA, 2022; Clean Energy, 2022).

Energy, water, and waste management are all interconnected. Proper waste management can generate energy, which can then power water purification plants, thus solving a vital issue like the population's access to water in a natural and self-sufficient manner. The key is to be able to read this continent correctly.

To fully grasp the shortcomings and existing potenti-

al, it is essential to be present on the continent and work on the ground. Therefore, a feasible strategy must be developed based on the priorities of our country and the African continent. Along with all this, we must strengthen our entrepreneurial human capital that is aware of Africa's significance in the next century, established on the continent, speaks the old colonial languages and even local languages, and understands Africa correctly. 🌿

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Post-British Occupation Egypt and Its Interactions with Türkiye*



HALİM GENÇOĞLU**

Assoc. Prof. Dr.
University of Cape Town

***After his undergraduate studies in Izmir, Halim Gençoğlu completed his master's degree in religious studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). His thesis focused on the religious activities of the Ottoman Islamic scholar Abu Bakr Effendi in South Africa in the nineteenth century, using South African, Ottoman, and other archival sources. He then enrolled for his PhD in Hebrew studies on "Socio-political Challenges of "Marginal" Religious Denominations: The Sabetai Sect as a Case Study." He analyzed a controversial figure in history, the self-proclaimed Messiah, the Jewish Rabbi Shabbetai Tzvi. During his academic studies, he also conducted research on broader South African themes using both South African and Ottoman archival sources. During his archival research, he discovered that Dr. Muhammed Shukri Effendi was the first black medical student to graduate from UCT. This discovery was published on the UCT website on April 12, 2016. (<http://www.health.uct.ac.za/news/new-evidencefirst-black-medical-doctors-uct-south-african-history>) More recently, he discovered that the Bo-Kaap museum at 71 Wale Street actually belonged to the Ottoman Turkish religious scholar Mahmud Fakih Effendi. He is currently a Research Fellow in the Department of African Studies at the UCT, where he conducts research in African studies.*

E mail: halim.gencoglu@wits.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4743-1698>

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*The text was written by Halim Gençoğlu in Turkish and English.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the post-British occupation period in Egypt, focusing on its diplomatic and political relations with Türkiye during the early years of its establishment. Following the end of British occupation in 1952, Egypt entered a phase of significant political and social transformation under the leadership of figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser. During this period, Egypt sought to redefine its foreign policy and establish new alliances. The paper delves into the evolving relations between Egypt and Türkiye, two nations with rich historical ties dating back to the Ottoman era. It analyses the diplomatic exchanges, treaties, and collaborative efforts that characterized their interactions in the aftermath of British withdrawal. The study considers the geopolitical context, regional challenges, and shared aspirations that influenced the trajectory of Egypt- Türkiye relations. Key themes include the impact of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism on diplomatic discourse, the pursuit of mutual economic interests, and the geopolitical considerations that shaped the two nations' foreign policies. The paper also investigates the cultural and societal dimensions of their relations, exploring how shared historical and cultural affinities influenced public perceptions and bilateral engagements. Drawing on archival documents, diplomatic correspondences, and historical records, this research sheds light on the intricacies of Egypt's post-occupation foreign policy and its establishment-era relations with Türkiye. By examining the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of this relationship, the paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics that defined the geopolitical landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East during this critical period.

Keywords: British Egypt, Egypt, independence of Egypt, Ottoman Egypt, Türkiye-Egypt.

AFTER DECADES OF BRITISH OCCUPATION, Egypt embarked on a transformative journey towards national sovereignty in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The aftermath of British rule left an indelible mark on Egypt's political, social, and economic landscape, laying the groundwork for a period of self-determination. The British occupation that began in 1882 profoundly influenced the country's political dynamics. In the wake of the occupation, however, Egypt sought to establish a more independent political system. In 1922, the United Kingdom unilaterally eventually declared Egypt's independence, albeit with certain

reservations. This move marked the beginning of a transitional phase in which Egyptians aspired to shape their political destiny. The early post-occupation period witnessed the establishment of a constitutional monarchy under the rule of King Fuad I. However, this era was characterized by political instability, economic challenges, and growing discontent with the monarchy. In 1952, a military coup led by General Muhammad Naguib and later supported by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy, marking a significant turning point in Egypt's history (Stolz, 2018: 213).



In 1925, while Türkiye was dealing with revolutions and rebellions, it did not forget its Egyptian brothers and a sports competition was organized to support them against the British domination in the region. Despite those painful years, Egyptian artists visited Türkiye due to sincere relations.

Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivi (CDA), 180.09/3.19.1, 1925.

Nasser's Rise and Pan-Arabism

Colonel Nasser's ascent to power marked a shift towards a more assertive and nationalist Egypt. Nasser pursued policies aimed at modernizing the country, redistributing land, and reducing

foreign influence. His vision extended beyond Egypt, advocating for the idea of Pan-Arabism, which aimed to unite Arab nations. The nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 further strengthened Egypt's pursuit of economic independence and sovereignty (Mestyan, 2017: 16).

The 1956 Suez Crisis was a turning point in Egypt's post-British occupation era. Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal led to military intervention by the United Kingdom, France, and Israel. However, international pressure, particularly from the United States and the Soviet Union, forced the invading forces to withdraw. The Suez Crisis showcased Egypt's ability to defend its sovereignty on the global stage.

Land reforms were initiated to reduce wealth concentration and redistribute land to peasants.

After the British occupation, Egypt witnessed significant social and economic changes. Land reforms were initiated to reduce wealth concentration and redistribute land to peasants. Industrialization efforts aimed to modernize the economy, but challenges persisted. This period of rapid population growth also brought about social and economic challenges that required innovative solutions. Therefore, one could argue that the post-British occupation era laid the foundation for modern Egypt. Nasser's charismatic leadership and advocacy of Arab nationalism continue to have an impact, despite difficulties and criticism. Subsequent leaders built upon the developments of this era, shaping Egypt into the dynamic and complex nation it is today (Febe, 2011: 65).

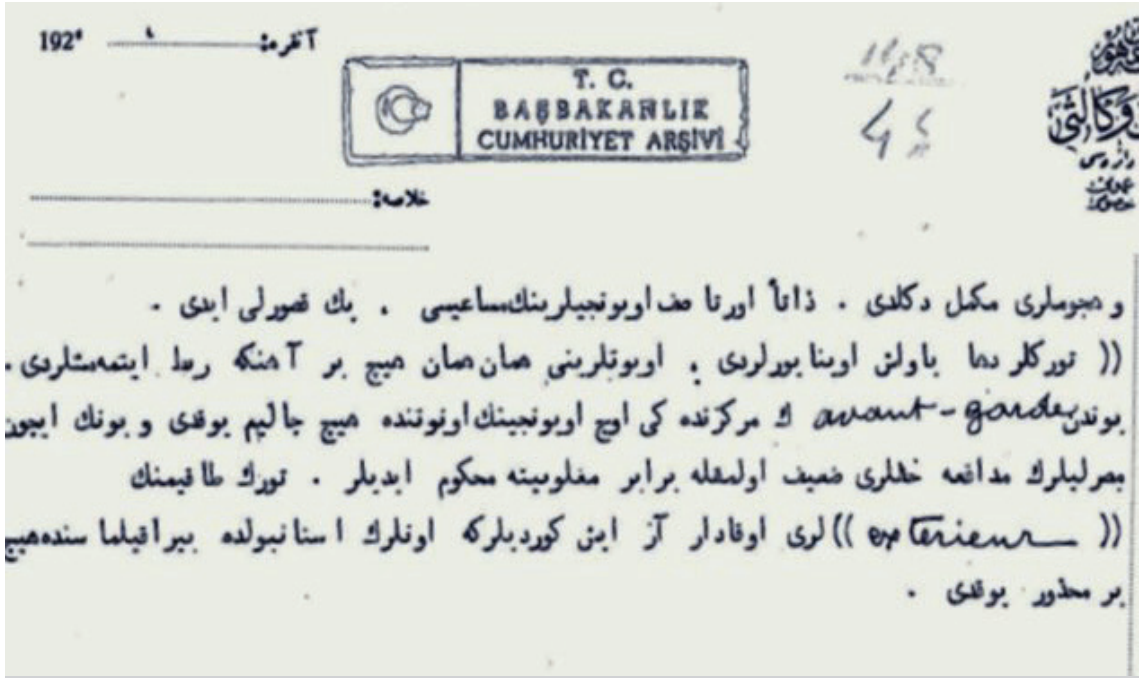
The Twilight of Ottoman Rule in Egypt: A Look at the Later Years

The final years of Ottoman rule in Egypt, spanning from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, were marked by a complex interplay of political, social, and economic changes. As the Ottoman Empire grappled with challenges, both internal and external, Egypt found itself at the center of a transformative period that would shape its destiny for the decades to come.

In the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire struggled with a series of internal reforms known as the Tanzimat, aimed at modernizing administrative and legal systems. However, these reforms proved insufficient to address the deep-rooted issues within the empire, leading to a period of decline and instability.

Egypt, a pivotal province of the Ottoman Empire, also faced unique challenges during this time. This era witnessed the rise of nationalist sentiments and calls for greater autonomy. Charismatic leaders like Egyptian nationalist and military officer Ahmed Urabi played a significant role in shaping the political landscape. The Urabi Revolt of 1881-1882 marked a turning point in Egyptian history. Fueled by grievances against foreign influence and economic troubles, Urabi led a nationalist uprising against the Ottoman-appointed khedive in power. The revolt ultimately resulted in direct British intervention, ostensibly to safeguard their financial interests in the Suez Canal (Alan, 2013: 38).

In 1882, British forces occupied Egypt, effectively ending Ottoman rule in the region. While Egypt nominally remained a part of the Ottoman Empire, it came under British protection in practice. The Ottoman Sultan retained his formal title as ruler, but British influence prevailed, particularly in economic and military matters.



The Turkish announcer described this match as follows: The game could not rise above the average. There are very few admirable elements in the Turkish game. If the Turks faced any Dutch team, they would most likely be defeated. While talking about the second half, which started with four goals scored by the Egyptians, the informant mentions that there was a remarkable movement among the public; The audience, which was initially limited to 2000, has now reached 5000. Aladdin scored a goal and saved the honor of the Turks. The Egyptians played football the English way, and the Turks played their games slowly. The Turkish team's reserves did so little work that there was no harm in leaving them in Istanbul.

Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivi (CDA), 180. 09\3.19.1, 1925.

The formal ties between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were severed during World War I when Egypt came under British protectorate following the Ottoman Empire's alignment with the Central Powers in 1914. The remnants of Ottoman rule disappeared, and the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished in 1922. At this point, one should note that the final years of Ottoman rule in Egypt left a lasting impact on the country's psyche. The experience of foreign occupation, nationalist uprisings, and ultimately transitioning to British influence paved the way for Egypt's pursuit of independence and sovereignty in the ensuing decades (Nomani, 2020: 43).

Türkiye-Egypt Relations during the Nasser Era

The Nasser era in Egypt, spanning from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, was a period of dynamic changes in geopolitics and regional alliances. During this time, Türkiye-Egypt relations underwent a complex evolution shaped by political ideologies, regional dynamics, and charismatic leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following World War II, both Türkiye and Egypt found themselves amidst a changing international landscape. Initially, relations between the two countries were characterized by cautious cooperation driven by shared desires for regional stability and economic development. However, with Nasser's rise to power in Egypt, differences in political

ideologies began to influence the course of Türkiye-Egypt relations (Gençoğlu, 2017: 18).

The Pan-Arabism vision emphasized by Gamal Abdel Nasser, highlighting Arab unity and independence, played a significant role in shaping Egypt's foreign policy. This ideology, combined with Nasser's charismatic leadership, aimed to unite Arab nations against colonial influences and establish a more assertive regional identity. As a result, Egypt's diplomatic priorities evolved and affected its relationships with countries like Türkiye.

In the early years of Nasser's rule, Türkiye was a member of the Baghdad Pact, a defense alliance established in 1955 to counter perceived Soviet influence in the Middle East. Criticizing Western-led alliances, Nasser distanced Egypt from the agreement. Türkiye, committed to maintaining a balance between the East and the West, faced challenges fulfilling alliance commitments while addressing the evolving dynamics in the region. The 1956 Suez Crisis further strained Türkiye-Egypt relations. Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal led to military intervention by Israel, the United Kingdom, and France. Despite being a NATO member, Türkiye expressed concerns about the use of force and maintained a distance from the intervention.

This divergence in foreign policy approaches between Türkiye and Egypt marked a critical period in regional diplomacy. Following the Suez Crisis, both Türkiye and Egypt recognized the importance of regional stability. The weakening of the Baghdad Pact and the emergence of the short-lived United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria prompted Türkiye to reevaluate its approach. In the early 1960s, there were efforts to improve diplomatic ties, as Türkiye expressed its willingness for dialogue and cooperation.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Nasser era left a lasting impact on Türkiye-Egypt relations. While political differences existed during this period, the evolving dynamics laid the groundwork for future interactions. In the subsequent years, changes in alliances

and diplomatic initiatives reflected the complex nature of regional relations (Toprak, 2012: 223-237). In the final analysis, the Nasser era marked a challenging yet transformative period in Türkiye-Egypt relations. Both countries grappled with the complexities of regional politics, realizing the importance of preserving stability in the Middle East while contending with ideological differences. The legacy of this period continues to shape the diplomatic landscape, shedding light on the intricate dance of geopolitics in the region (Gençoğlu, 2020: 14).

To conclude, Egypt's journey following the British occupation was defined by political transitions, economic reforms, and the quest for a national identity. The post-occupation era laid the groundwork for Egypt's pursuit of independence and sovereignty, ultimately shaping the nation's trajectory in the subsequent years. The legacy of leaders like Nasser continues to influence Egypt's political landscape, reflecting the enduring impact of this transformative era in the country's history. Meanwhile, the twilight of Ottoman rule in Egypt witnessed a complex interplay of political turmoil, nationalist aspirations, and foreign intervention. While the Ottoman Empire grappled with internal challenges, Egypt emerged as a focal point of change, ushering in a new era dominated by British influence. This period laid the foundation for Egypt's 20th-century quest for self-determination and independence. 🌸

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HÜSEYİN HAYDAR*



**Hüseyin Haydar, a master Turkish poet of Turkish, was born in 1956 in Yeşilce village of Trabzon. The poems of the famous poet, who expressed the social struggles of our age in his poems, have been translated into world languages such as Russian, Arabic, Persian, English and Chinese. He wrote many articles on literature and art in the national and international press. From Palestine to Iraq, from Venezuela to Rwanda, from China to Iran, from Afghanistan to Syria, from Russia to Cuba, he has been on the side of the oppressed and developing nations that resist imperialism. For fifteen years, he has been publishing his poems every week in the column of "Poet's Labour" in Aydınlık Newspaper. In his work titled "Tablets of the East", he expressed the human tragedy in Eurasia with an intense historical depth. He stood against the attacks of U.S. imperialism on humanity. In the meetings he attended in China, he made an effort to establish the culture, art and poetry part of the One Belt One Road initiative. During his visit to the Shanghai Writers' Union, the proposal of Silk Road Poetry Unions in Eurasia was accepted. Hüseyin Haydar, who is the winner of many awards, called the poets with a fighting spirit, has published several manifestos, such as "The New World manifesto for the poets of great humanity", "The Poet's Mission in Rising Asia", "We Are Establishing the Silk Road Poetry Belt!", "Call for Boundless Art Union!" etc.*

MINUTES OF THE REBELLION*

Lumumba! Lumumba!

A wild leap forward... I am naked.
 I am the boiling blood of Africa... Here I stand.
 I came with bare body... came to be shattered.
 I carry the heart of resurrection, I am Lumumba.
 You can dissolve my body in acid... I am naked.
 But you can never kill my essence... Armored, my spirit is.

Suppressed and squeezed, the flame of honor ignited, I exploded.
 The mountain burst, the brain of the era is spewing lava,
 I carry the music of the Congo, I am Lumumba.
 I bow to the delicate ant of my country, I devour the oppressor,
 I turned the Belgian king into a worm, fittingly.

Born in Africa for brotherhood, we are not slaves.
 The fox outside made a deal with the local servant inside,
 They stole the bread, water, and light of my country,
 They spilled the dreams' blood onto the noble land of Congo.
 I ventilated the underground of the dark continent with my hands.

I registered my name in the book of revolutionary martyrs,
 With a determined life pulse, I rammed my name to the stone,
 I engraved myself, at the forefront, at the very beginning.
 Patrice Emery Lumumba, forget this name.
 But never forget the name of the collaborator Mobutu.

If a poet has the right to speak, I request a place,
 Earthly valor, on behalf of the divine children of Africa.
 We took the floor to complete a half-sentence:
 Lumumba, a naked arrival, a naked departure.
 Stretch your ribs, children, we are late!



PATRICE EMERY LUMUMBA*



**Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961) was elected the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Assassinated by Belgian colonialists and the CIA in 1961. Lumumba was a founder member of the Movement National Congolais (MNC), which led the Congo to independence. Patrice Lumumba is the symbol of aspirations of an entire continent, and he continues to serve as an inspiration to contemporary Congolese and African politicians.*

Lumumba, P. E. (2024). Dawn in the Heart of Africa. Retrieved January 10, 2024 from <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/dawn-heart-africa>

Dawn in the Heart of Africa

For a thousand years, you, African, suffered like beast,
Your ashes strewn to the wind that roams the desert.
Your tyrants built the lustrous, magic temples
To preserve your soul, reserve your suffering.
Barbaric right of fist and the white right to a whip,
You had the right to die, you also could weep.
On your totem they carved endless hunger, endless bonds,
And even in the cover of the woods a ghastly cruel death
Was watching, snaky, crawling to you
Like branches from the holes and heads of trees
Embraced your body and your ailing soul.
Then they put a treacherous big viper on your chest:
On your neck they laid the yoke of fire-water,
They took your sweet wife for glitter of cheap pearls,
Your incredible riches that nobody could measure.
From your hut, the tom-toms sounded into dark of night
Carrying cruel laments up mighty black rivers
About abused girls, streams of tears and blood,
About ships that sailed to countries where the little man
Wallows in an ant hill and the dollar is king,
To that damned land which they called a motherland.
There your child, your wife were ground, day and night
In a frightful, merciless mill, crushing them in dreadful pain.

POEM

You are a man like others. They preach you to believe
That good white God will reconcile all men at last.
By fire you grieved and sang the moaning songs
Of a homeless beggar that sinks at strangers' doors.
And when a craze possessed you
And your blood boiled through the night
You danced, you moaned, obsessed by father's passion.
Like fury of a storm to lyrics of a manly tune
From a thousand years of misery a strength burst out of you
In metallic voice of jazz, in uncovered outcry
That thunders through the continent like gigantic surf.
The whole world surprised, wakes up in panic
To the violent rhythm of blood, to the violent rhythm of jazz,
The white man turning pallid over this new song
That carries torch of purple through the dark of night.
The dawn is here, my brother! Dawn! Look in our faces,
A new morning breaks in our old Africa.
Ours alone will now be the land, the water, mighty rivers
Poor African surrendered for a thousand years.
Hard torches of the sun will shine for us again
They'll dry the tears in eyes and spittle on your face.
The moment when you break the chains, the heavy fetters,
The evil cruel times will go never to come again.
A free and gallant Congo will rise from black soil,
A free and gallant Congo-black blossom from black seed!



ANNE FISCHER*

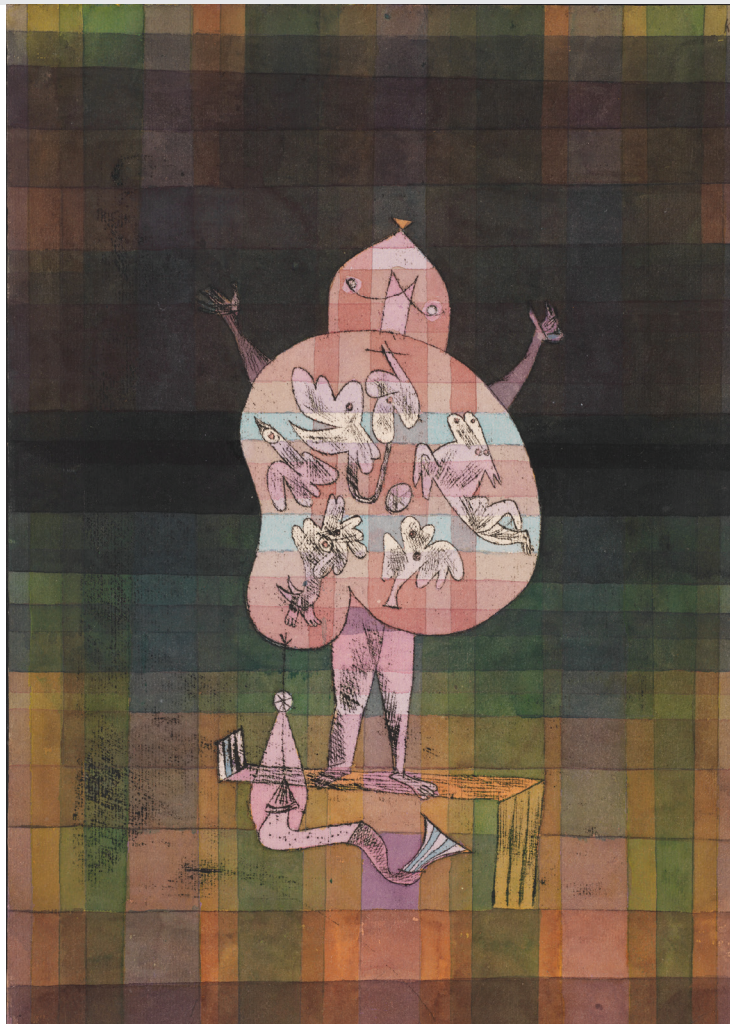


Xhosa woman smoking a pipe, Transkei, South Africa, 1941**

**Anne Fischer (1914-1986) was born in Berlin and trained as a photographer's apprentice in a portrait studio in Germany. In 1937 she came to Cape Town as a Jewish refugee. There she gained a reputation as a good portrait photographer. By the 1960s she was regarded as Cape Town's leading wedding and theatre photographer. Many leading female photographers of the period trained in her studio. Fischer took documentary photographs in Langa, in rural areas of the former Transkei and Basutoland, and in Genadendal.*

**Reproduced from the Anne Fischer Photograph Collection, permission of the University of Cape Town.

PAUL KLEE



Ventriloquist and Crier in the Moor (1923)*

The aesthetics of traditional African sculpture became a powerful influence among European artists who formed an avant-garde in the development of modern art. Paul Klee was also one of them. Klee created transcendental symbolic images while German Expressionist painters referenced African aesthetics through calm colour tones and dynamic, unorthodox formal approaches to depict the anxieties of modern life. He developed a very special abstract style in which mystical connotations are aroused, in paintings like his Ventriloquist and Crier in the Moor; Every detail of the figure stands out like a collage with the driving force of the 'grid' background consisting of earth tones. Imaginary beasts float within a transparent ventriloquist who appears to be all belly. This creatures, we see in the ventriloquist, most likely to symbolise the bizarre voices feels like rise out of him. And a stray fish, looks like it's about to enter the ventriloquist, as if impressed by the revelry above it.

*Watercolour and transferred printing ink on paper, bordered with ink, mounted on cardboard.

VIKTOR BORISOVICH KORETSKIY



Don't Forget While Fighting for Peace (1962)*

It is a poster series titled “Boryas Za Mir - Ne Zabivay” (Don't Forget While Fighting for Peace) by Viktor Borisovich Koretskiy (1909-1998), who created the most famous Soviet posters. This series of posters on the theme of peace and the struggle for independence was published in Moscow in 1962.

*[Viktor Borisovich Koretskiy]. (1962). Boryas Za Mir – Ne Zabivay. Albom-Vystavka, izdatelstvo "Sovetskaya Rossiya", Moskva.





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Africa Rising in a Multipolar World

“The erosion of Western hegemony is unlocking opportunities for Africa’s wealth to be utilized for the benefit of its people, enabling South-South cooperation previously impeded by imperialist actions, and consequently generating positive results for all stakeholders. Through this lens, overcoming neocolonialism in Africa is emerging as a shared objective, not just for African nations but for the entire developing world. The movement to break free from the constraints of neoliberalism and globalization is gaining momentum across Africa. It is becoming clear that the 21st century will be defined not only by Asia’s ascendance but also by Africa’s resurgence.”

FİKRET AKFIRAT
Editor-in-Chief