

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



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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.

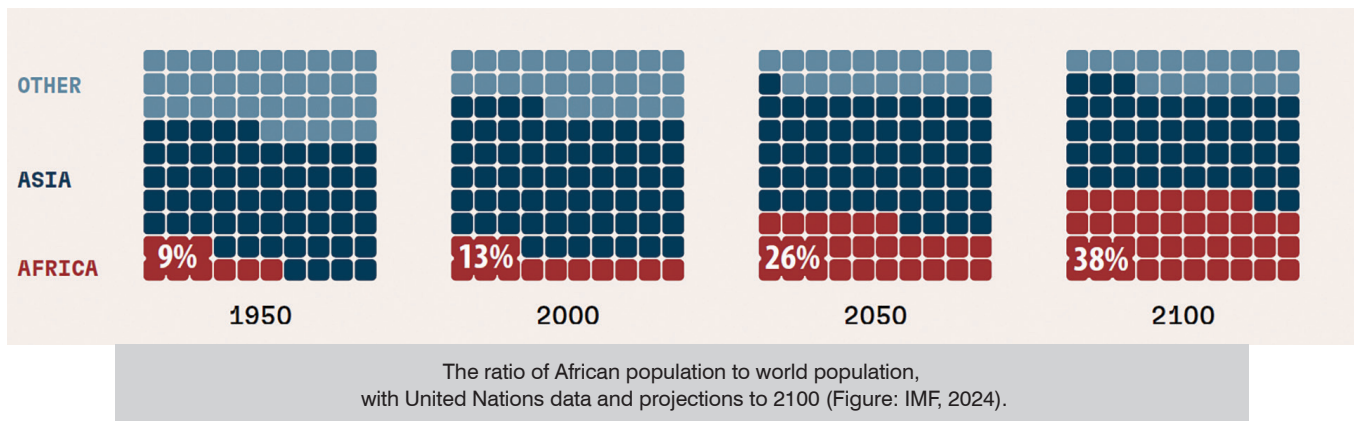
Keywords: Action Plan for Opening Up to Africa, Africa's rise, Africa-Türkiye relations, geostrategic position, win-win.

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-Cheraghloo, 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-Cheraghloo, 2023).

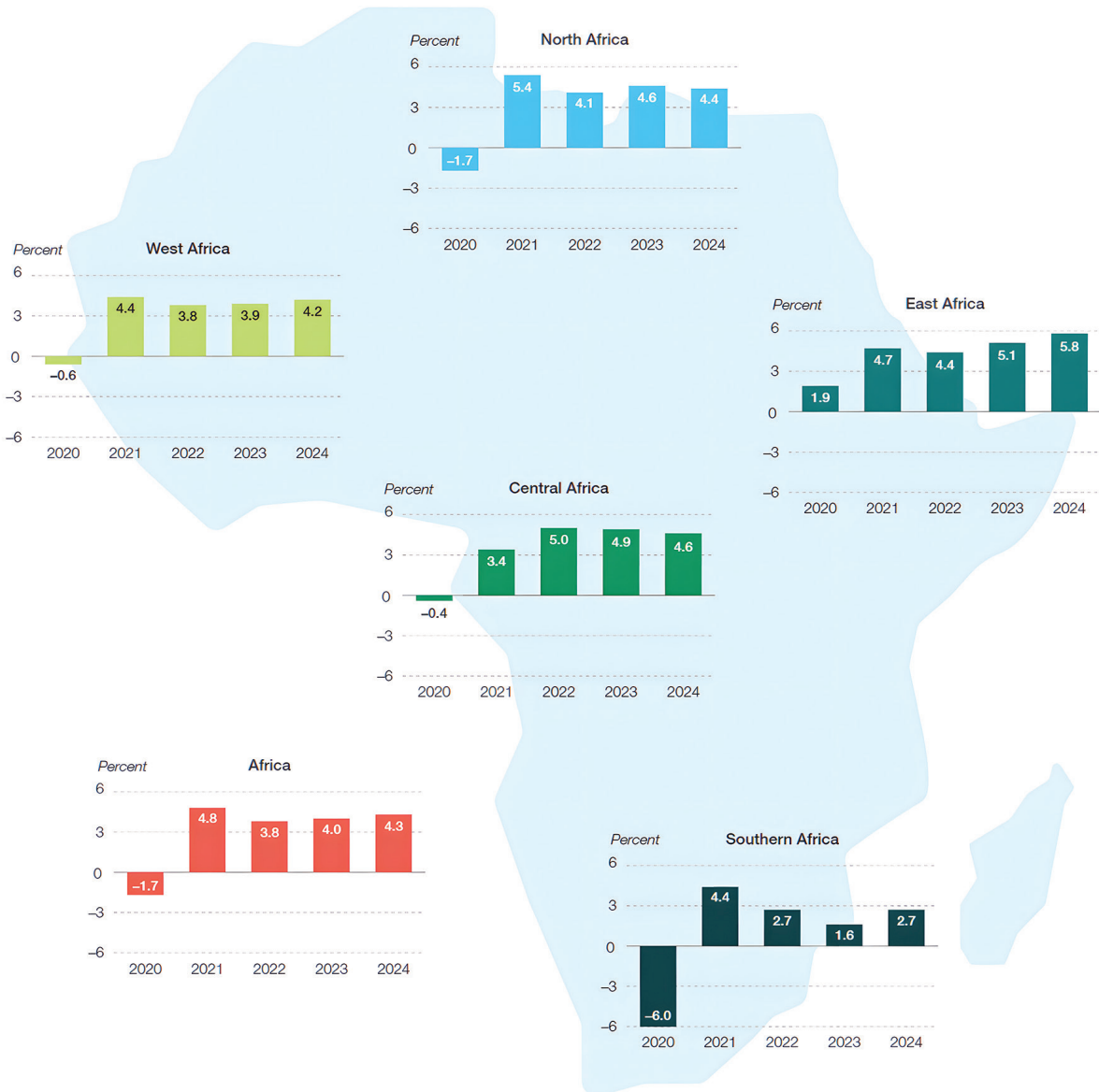
The “Win-Win” Synergy between Türkiye and Africa

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.

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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) (Djamanca & 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 (Djamanca & 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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