

# AFRICAN UNION-TURKEY RELATIONS FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF THE ARAB SPRING

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**Abstract:** The Arab Spring is a transformative quake that has affected not only its epicenter, North Africa, but also the continent of Africa as a whole. The African Union (AU) and the powerhouses within it have adjusted their international relations to the shifting continental balance of power after the Arab Spring. As for Turkey, it appears that neither the existent trade ties and development cooperation projects, nor the regular meetings between the AU and Turkey have been interrupted by the Arab Spring, though Ankara's political rift with Cairo and unusual involvement in inter-African affairs has faced several challenges. This expert brief examines how the continental balance of power has shifted and in what ways it has impacted the AU-Turkey relations. The so-far-favorable perception towards Turkey within the AU is likely to continue, as Ankara ably adapts itself to geopolitical shifts. More to the point, both the AU and Turkey envision a fairer global order and greater African representation at the United Nations Security Council.

## Introduction

Turkey has transformed itself into “a new African power”<sup>1</sup> within a short span of time. Its achievement was motivated by a combination of international, domestic, and individual factors. First, as the emerging powers, particularly China, have attached growing importance to forging ties with African countries, Turkey did not want to fall behind in this turn to Africa and thus integrated its African initiative to its wider interest in gaining the status of a global power.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, Turkey under the reign of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002 has attained a relatively stable domestic environment, which made it possible for the country to wield more soft power through state institutions like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and to increase its competitive capacity in such critical fields as airline transport and defense industry.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, Africa has a remarkable place in the global vision of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has made 53 visits to some 30 African countries - more than any non-African leader in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Africa has undergone profound political and economic changes in the course of the growing Turkish presence in the continent. The Arab Spring in 2010-2012 can be taken as a turning point in the changing landscape on the continent. Cairo and Tripoli, two important powerhouses within the AU, were sidelined for a while following the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Addis Ababa, the seat of the AU, apparently capitalized on this shift and challenged Egyptian hegemony in the Nile basin, which has accompanied a civil war in Ethiopia itself. Morocco, an exception in the Arab Spring, has relatively augmented its influence within the AU vis-à-vis Algeria. The remaining AU powerhouses, Nigeria and South Africa, have emerged as new potential leaders of the union, though their continental influence suffers from some internal disturbances. To

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put it simply, the Arab Spring paved the way for a shift in the balance of power within the African Union (AU) of which Turkey has been a strategic partner since 2008.<sup>5</sup> How the continental balance of power has shifted and in what ways it has impacted the AU-Turkey relations are the main guiding questions of this brief.

### **The Arab Spring and the Shifting Balance of Power in Africa**

Both the intended Arab Spring with its promise to end authoritarian regimes and bring self-government to people, and the resulting winter with renewed authoritarianism and civil wars in the region, has unsettled the continental balance of power to the detriment of North Africa. The vacuum of power with violence being a key component<sup>6</sup> and the resultant decline of North Africa's role in the continental politics is principally linked to the fall of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi had played a pivotal role in enabling the moribund Organization of African Unity (OAU) to transform into the vivid AU. The reform of the funding formula resulted in his country, together with Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, paying over 66 per cent of the annual contributions to the new AU budget.<sup>7</sup> He had also endeavored to turn the AU into a more powerful United States of Africa, but to no avail.<sup>8</sup> As post-Gaddafi Libya became embroiled in a civil war, the country lost its influence in the AU almost overnight.

Egypt has also been directly affected by the Arab Spring and the resultant shift in continental politics. Under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Cairo was so influential in African affairs that the OAU passed a resolution recommending the severing of ties with Israel following the Yom Kippur War in 1973.<sup>9</sup> Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, however, did not sustain the Nasserist impact in sub-Saharan Africa. Although Egypt hosted the 1993 OAU summit where African leaders agreed upon the foundational ideas of the current African security architecture, Mubarak was mostly absent from the subsequent continental meetings after he survived an assassination attempt in Addis Ababa in 1995.<sup>10</sup> During his short term in office, Mohamed Morsi sought to reverse Mubarak's policy of indifference in Africa.<sup>11</sup> The post-Arab Spring Constitution of Egypt affirmed that Egypt "belongs to the African continent."<sup>12</sup> As a sign of greater interest in African affairs, the Abdel Fattah al-Sisi government announced the establishment of the new Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development (EAPD) at the AU Summit in Malabo in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

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Egypt's aspiration to reassert its power in Africa was challenged by Ethiopia, the seat of the AU. Addis Ababa's continental significance was aphoristically underlined by Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta: "Ethiopia is our mother. If the mother is not at peace, neither can the family be at peace."<sup>14</sup> History has proven the statement on more than one occasion. At the time of the Arab uprisings, Ethiopian state-owned media portrayed the uprisings as being favorable for Ethiopian interests.<sup>15</sup> Addis Ababa's principal interest was the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Due to the timing of the project, Ethiopia was accused of capitalizing on Egypt's post-Arab Spring instability.<sup>16</sup> Amidst the Egyptian-Ethiopian disagreement on the GERD, a violent insurgency erupted in Ethiopia's Tigray region, followed by the deadly protests in the Oromia region against the government of Abiy Ahmed Ali in October 2019.<sup>17</sup> In turn, Egyptian pro-state media seized the opportunity to describe the events in Ethiopia as the "Abyssinian Spring."<sup>18</sup> Even though its logistical support to the dissenting forces is not verified, Egypt may have preferred to re-negotiate with a less assertive Ethiopia. At the end of the day, the rivalry between the two powerhouses has drained each other's energy and relatively lowered their position in the post-Arab Spring balance of power in Africa.

Another rivalry involving the AU after the Arab Spring is the one between Algeria and Morocco. Mass protests erupted in Algeria after eight years into the start of the Arab Spring, as a result of which Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned in April 2019. In that regard, Algeria can be considered a "late bloomer" in the Arab Spring.<sup>19</sup> Morocco, on the other hand, has been an exception despite the sporadic protests, to which the king responded by giving partial reforms. With his dual legitimacy as head of state and religious leader, King Mohammed VI was able to contain the wave of protests.<sup>20</sup> Morocco's achievement in regime stability was not in parallel with its influence in the continental politics. The Kingdom had left the OAU in 1984 when the majority of the members voted to recognize the self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).<sup>21</sup> It was an obvious Algerian victory in the OAU then. In 2016, on the contrary, 28 African countries called for the suspension of the SADR's membership to the AU, notwithstanding the maneuvers of Algeria and South Africa.<sup>22</sup> The growing continental support for Morocco culminated in Rabat's return to the AU in 2017,<sup>23</sup> which can be interpreted as another testament to the shift in the continental balance of power. However, Morocco-

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Israel normalization in 2020 allowed Algeria to continue vilifying Rabat within the union. Algeria particularly evaluated the suspension in 2022 of the decision granting Israel observer status in the AU as a diplomatic victory against Morocco.<sup>24</sup>

It is impossible not to mention Nigeria's place in the post-Arab Spring political shifts within the AU. Although the West African power's dominant influence in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) far exceeds its activity in the AU, Nigeria's initiatives to reconcile the initial contending positions on African unity, to lead economic integration efforts, and to mediate crises were crucial. The economic and political challenges that currently beset Nigeria make it a "crippled giant," however.<sup>25</sup> A combustible element in the Arab Spring was the large population of largely educated and unemployed youth. In Nigeria, likewise, universities turn out about 4.5 million graduates, who often end up unemployed.<sup>26</sup> The mass protests against abuses by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in 2020 almost became Nigeria's Arab Spring moment.<sup>27</sup> Due to Nigeria's presence, West Africa still remains the potentially most powerful region in Africa. Nonetheless, the Tuareg uprisings that intensified with human and material resources (mainly Libyan weapons) following the Arab Spring have made the Sahel-Sahara an increasingly insecure and militarized zone, which has affected Nigerian national security as well. Nigeria's security is affected by the continuing threats of Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and the al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), as well as the separatist insurgency in Biafra, oil militants in the Niger Delta who have long agitated for a greater share of the profit, the frequent kidnapping of schoolchildren, and violent clashes between nomadic animal herders and farmers due to disagreements over the use of land and water.<sup>28</sup>

Nigeria's ongoing internal insecurity, the political fragmentation in Libya, Egypt-Ethiopia conflict over the GERD, and the Algeria-Morocco geopolitical rivalry, appear to give the remaining African powerhouse, South Africa, the opportunity to dictate to the AU.<sup>29</sup> Having emerged as an influential force after the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa indeed played a leadership role and silenced the guns, at least for a while, in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even the failure of Gaddafi's attempts to steer the AU to a United States of Africa can be attributed to South Africa's rejection of Libyan domination.<sup>30</sup> Just (albeit not to the same extent) as Nigeria, on the other hand, South Africa's leadership role has suffered



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from the recent internal disturbances, as some groups like the Confederation of Employers in South Africa (COFESA) draw parallels between the conditions that brought about the Arab Spring and those in South Africa, referring to the high unemployment rate in particular.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it is not an easy task for South Africa to make a massive impact on a continent beleaguered by political, economic, and military challenges.<sup>32</sup>

### **The AU-Turkey Relations against the Backdrop of the Arab Spring**

The post-Arab Spring shifts in the continental balance of power have multiple impacts on AU-Turkey relations. Prior to analyzing these impacts, it should be noted that the AU and its relations with Turkey are relatively new, but the partnership between Africans and Turks is durable enough to resist or adapt to the short-term impacts. As a matter of fact, the Turkish presence in Africa is rooted in a long historical continuity starting with the Tūlūnid rule in Egypt and culminating in Ottoman-African cooperation against the European colonialist expansion in Africa's northern and eastern coasts. Indeed, there are still memories of the Ottoman legacy and religious influence from Cape Town to remoter parts of Africa like Agadez. Ankara attaches importance to keeping this legacy alive via cultural projects. For example, TİKA restored the historical Keçiova Mosque in Algiers<sup>33</sup> and the palace of the Sultanate of Agadez in Niger.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, 15 South African descendants of Ottoman scholar Abu Bakr Efendi, whom the Ottoman Empire sent to Cape Town in 1862 to teach Islamic thought and culture to the Muslim community, became Turkish citizens with a presidential decree in August 2020.<sup>35</sup>

After a long period of relative recession in contacts until the early 2000s, Turkey and Africa relations have skyrocketed over the last two decades. While covering just a few cities in North Africa in the early 2000s, Turkish Airlines now flies to 61 destinations throughout Africa.<sup>36</sup> The number of Turkish embassies in African capitals and the number of African embassies in Ankara have risen from 12 to 43 and from 10 to 37, respectively.<sup>37</sup> The same period also saw a boom in Turkish-African trade volume from \$5 to \$35 billion<sup>38</sup> and a growth in the total value of Turkish contracting projects in Africa from \$9 to \$77 billion.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Turkish influence in African security and defense market is increasingly visible with its cost-effective combat vehicles like the Bayraktar TB2 drones.<sup>40</sup>

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Ankara's African initiative has been received favorably within the AU, which rapidly promoted Turkey's status from an observer country in 2005 to strategic partner in 2008, becoming the 22nd non-African state in order of original accreditation to the AU.<sup>41</sup> Turkey has furthermore been a shareholder in the African Development Bank since 2013.<sup>42</sup> The Istanbul Summit in 2008 was the first event that formalized the Africa-Turkey Partnership and set out the areas of cooperation ranging from agriculture to security. The attendance of representatives from 49 African states was a testament to the overall continental interest in the Turkish charm offensive. The uprisings in North Africa did not halt the African-Turkish meetings, as the first Ministerial review conference following the Istanbul Summit was held amid the ongoing Arab Spring in 2011. However, the parties apparently drew a veil over the uprisings, except for a general reference to the situation in Libya. They welcomed "the formation of a new transitional government in Libya" and the country's return to the AU "in its new era."<sup>43</sup>

Turkey was ready to embark on a new African policy when the wave of protests in the Arab world faded by the late 2012. According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the African Initiative Policy was "successfully completed" in 2013 and was thereafter replaced by the Africa Partnership Policy.<sup>44</sup> The policy change was followed by the second Africa-Turkey summit in 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, where the 23rd AU summit was held the same year. A noteworthy result of the post-Arab Spring rupture between Ankara and Cairo was that Egypt did not attend the Africa-Turkey summit in Malabo.<sup>45</sup> As a sign of the inceptive thaw, Egyptian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the third Africa-Turkey summit in Istanbul in 2021, after Egyptian and Turkish diplomats held rounds of exploratory consultations with the aim of normalizing relations. For Egypt, the main issues were Turkey's involvement in Libya and support for the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Wider Impacts of the Ankara-Cairo Rivalry**

Although the regular contacts between the AU and Turkey have not been interrupted by the Arab Spring, the Egyptian case shows that the post-Arab Spring developments have impacted Turkey's relations with some AU powerhouses in various ways. The political rift between Ankara and Cairo after the ouster of Egypt's first democratically elected President Morsi, for instance, sparked off Egypt's attempts to counter the growing Turkish influence in both the eastern Mediterranean (aligning with Greece) and the Nile Basin. Cairo's vigorous contacts with Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Somali, South Sudan, and Uganda had a dual

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objective: to contain Addis Ababa, on the one hand, and to limit Ankara's regional impact, on the other hand.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Turkey was drawn into an inter-African geopolitical rivalry when Egypt claimed that Turkey had offered expertise to Ethiopia over the GERD.<sup>48</sup> The military cooperation agreement between Turkey and Ethiopia in August 2021, coupled with the unconfirmed reports that Turkish drones were used in the Tigray conflict,<sup>49</sup> obstructed both Ankara-Cairo normalization and Turkey's proposal of mediation. Ethiopia insisted that the AU should continue to mediate the GERD dispute when Turkey said it was ready for mediation. Ankara may have compelled Cairo to normalize relations until the former realized that its perceived involvement in the GERD dispute or the Tigray crisis would inflict further damage on its relations with Egypt and would not improve Turkey's image within the AU. Egypt is also aware of the mutual damage if it continues to antagonize Turkey.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Ankara's non-interference in African affairs is convenient for not only ending the mutually detrimental rivalry between Turkey and Egypt, but also highlighting the African agency in line with the mantra "African solutions to African problems."

It is a fact that African agency may fail when needed, and this failure paves the way for third-party interventions. Turkish involvement in Libya and its confrontation with Egypt there can be seen as an indirect result of the AU's limited ability to intervene and implement its self-ascribed mandate.<sup>51</sup> Ankara's support for the internationally recognized Libyan government in Tripoli was challenged by Egypt, along with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), France and Russia, which backed the rival military strongman Khalifa Haftar. Tripoli and Ankara are bound by their November 2019 security deal giving Turkey the right to station troops in Libya, whereas Cairo does not have many options other than diplomacy to counter the actual consequences of the deal in question.<sup>52</sup> Turkey's 2019-2020 intervention accounts for the resilience of the Tripoli government up to now. From this point of view, Turkey appears to have seized the opportunity to turn the tables by actively participating in the Libyan crisis. Nonetheless, the ongoing power struggle between Fathi Bashagha and Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, both of whom have good ties with Ankara, could complicate Turkey's role in the country.<sup>53</sup> Just as the case of Ethiopia, the prolonged strife in Libya has shown that the Ankara-Cairo rift is mutually detrimental and negatively impacts the political process in Libya.



## Geopolitical Shifts in the Sahel, Maghreb, and beyond

The Sahel region has been increasingly insecure as a consequence of escalation and diffusion mechanisms linked to the post-Arab Spring civil war in Libya.<sup>54</sup> Growing disappointment with the failure of France to prevent regional insecurity has pushed Turkey to present itself as an alternative security partner, an offer the Muslim Sahel states have welcomed. Niger, for instance, signed a military cooperation agreement with Turkey in July 2020 and became the first foreign customer of the Turkish Hürkuş trainer aircraft the next year.<sup>55</sup> As for Mali, the meeting between Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and the junta leader Assimi Goita following the September 2020 coup<sup>56</sup> indicates that the post-Arab Spring developments have taught Turkey a lesson in terms of not committing itself to ideological confrontations like it did with Egypt after the coup against Morsi. Although this realist stance towards the coup in Mali is normally expected to create some challenges concerning Turkey's perception in the region and continent as it contradicts the announcements by ECOWAS to close borders with Mali and by the AU to suspend Mali's membership, it seems that Turkey has amassed good-will among many Sahelians who say they have more in common with Turkey than France, Russia or China.<sup>57</sup> The strongest common bond is Islam. They prefer to see "Muslim countries like Turkey play a more active conflict resolution role" and think that defense agreements with Turkey "will be of great help in improving security."<sup>58</sup> The favorable perceptions towards Turkey in the Sahel are in agreement with the continental-level results of the 2021 AfricaLeads survey according to which Turkey ranks sixth among the most beneficial partners of Africa.<sup>59</sup> It should be noted that Turkey is not the only Muslim country that has built a favorable image in Africa in general and the Sahel in particular. The UAE, for instance, ranks eighth in the 2021 AfricaLeads survey.<sup>60</sup> Abu Dhabi has developed close ties with the military institutions of Sudan and Mauritania where it attempts to replicate the "Egyptian model" to contain the perceived threat of Islamist movements.<sup>61</sup>

The historical rivalry between Algeria and Morocco has been another test for African-Turkish relations before and after the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Representatives of the Algerian-backed Polisario Front tried in vain to meet Turkish officials in Ankara during Turkey's non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council in the 2009-2010.<sup>62</sup> The Arab Spring has not affected Turkey's position regarding the Western Sahara dispute. During his visit to Morocco in June 2013, Erdogan reiterated that Turkey would not recognize the Polisario Front and the self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).<sup>63</sup> That the SADR is a member state of the AU may be expected to adversely affect AU-Turkey relations, but Turkey's principled support for Morocco's territorial integrity appears to be consistent with the post-Arab Spring political shift within the AU in favor of Rabat, given the fact that more than half of the AU members called for the suspension of the SADR's membership to the AU in 2016.<sup>64</sup> Yet, Ankara's pro-Rabat position may jeopardize Turkey's friendly relations

with the rival AU powerhouse, Algeria. Turkey has managed for now to keep its strategic rapprochement with Algeria unaffected,<sup>65</sup> even after Rabat's deal with Ankara in April 2021 to buy Turkish drones amid the heightened tensions with Algiers as the latter accused Morocco of carrying out a drone strike on Algerian trucks in Western Sahara.<sup>66</sup>

A final testament to the fact that Turkey closely follows the post-Arab Spring shifts within the AU is Ankara's progressive engagement with the two emerging AU powerhouses, Nigeria and South Africa. President Erdoğan paid two official visits to each country after the Arab Spring. As a result, both Nigeria's and South Africa's commercial and military ties with Turkey have grown significantly, with South Africa alone accounting for 18 percent of Turkey's trade with sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>67</sup> Turkish Airlines has been flying to three destinations in South Africa since 2015 and four destinations in Nigeria since 2019.<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusion: A Common Vision and Future Challenges**

Turkey's achievement of obtaining a foothold in Africa in a short span of time can be attributed to Ankara's adaptation to the geopolitical shifts within the AU, as well as its commitment to the AU visions like the Agenda 2063<sup>1</sup> and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Turkey's African initiative coincides with the overall readiness in the continent to embrace a new paradigm of partnership that is more consistent with African priorities and less cynical than Western engagement.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Turkey and the AU share a counter-hegemonic approach in that they seek a reorientation of power towards multipolarity.<sup>70</sup> This can be clearly seen in Erdoğan's renowned slogan that "the world is bigger than 5" with reference to the unrepresentative setup of the UN Security Council, and his statement that Turkey and AU members "need to join forces so that Africa can be represented in the Security Council as it deserves".<sup>71</sup> Turkey's rhetorical attempts at a common vision with Africa for a fairer world order apparently resonates with the continental perspective, as AU Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat points out: "Our partnership with Turkey concerns not only Africa but the whole world. Our partnership will bring solutions to major global problems."<sup>72</sup>

Although the AU and Turkey's shared vision for a fairer world order are in agreement with each other, the latent rivalry among the AU powerhouses concerning which country has the right to represent the continent in a new world order, nonetheless, poses a serious challenge

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1- Agenda 2063 is Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. As an affirmation of their commitment to support Africa's new path for attaining inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development, African heads of state and government signed the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration in May 2013. The declaration marked the re-dedication of Africa towards the attainment of the Pan African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena. Agenda 2063 is the concrete manifestation of how the continent intends to achieve this vision within a 50 year period from 2013 to 2063. See, "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want", *African Union*, April 23, 2022, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>.

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for Turkey. Today, even the non-permanent seats at the UN Security Council are subject to competition among African countries. In the future, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa are all poised to vie for permanent power status if the attempt at reforming the UN Security Council succeeds. This projection may compel Turkey to decide whether it will align with any of the AU regional powers or wait out the result of inter-African power struggle.

Turkey is not the only emerging power that aspires for a new world order in which Africa is fairly represented. Other emerging powers, China and India in particular, also use a revisionist discourse with regards to a fairer global representation of Africa. Therefore, Turkey needs to differentiate or elaborate its discourse. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's book titled *A Fairer World is Possible* can be seen as an attempt to elaborate Turkey's vision of world order. Yet, how Turkey positions itself vis-à-vis major emerging powers (whether rivals or partners of Turkey in Africa) should be clarified.

The historical ties that allow Turkey to pursue an influential cultural and religious diplomacy in Africa should not be overstated, as Turkey is not the only Muslim country vying for influence in the continent. The axis of Cairo-Riyadh-Abu Dhabi that has challenged Ankara's influence in Libya and Somali following the Arab Spring is likely to spend itself with the recent normalization steps. This thaw does not necessarily mean that they will cease to compete in other parts of Africa. The power vacuum in the Sahel after the withdrawal of French forces, for instance, provides an opportunity for not only Turkey, but also the UAE to assert themselves in the region. Islamic identity is therefore insufficient in deepening Turkey's relations with the AU, though Muslim states had better capitalize on their common identity as a solid basis for cooperation in Africa. It is to the advantage of Turkey to cooperate with the UAE and other influential Muslim states, notably Qatar, Kuwait, and Malaysia. The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an ideal venue in that regard. Turkey can strengthen its role as it did in the partnership agreement signed between the AU and the OIC in Istanbul in 2015. A partnership agreement between the AU and the Organization of Turkic States is also thought to enhance AU-Turkey relations.

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Both the AU and Turkey need to keep up with the latest developments. A clear example can be seen on the AU website: "The Africa-Turkey Partnership has enormous potentials, but its rate and scope of implementation will need to take off because, as of now, not much progress has been made in terms of the implementation of the Istanbul agreement."<sup>73</sup> The quotation refers to the first Africa-Turkey Summit in 2008, even though two more summits have been held thereafter. The implementation of each agreement and action plan was assessed through multiple review conferences and follow-up mechanisms. Hence, it appears that the AU website has not been updated for a decade, and the Turkish authorities have not contacted the AU authorities to update the imperfect information in question. The lack of communication is a challenge to the institutionalization and international publicity of the AU-Turkey relations.

Previously, Turkey had launched African initiatives in the late 1970s and 1990s, but both of them were not implemented due to domestic political and economic instability. The African initiative in operation has been implemented in the last two decades during which the AKP has been in power. The initiative may cease or stagnate if an isolationist government ascends to power on the back of rising inflation and xenophobic sentiments. When Turkey increased its share in the African Development Bank from 94 million dollars to 803 million dollars in March 2020, the main opposition party argued that "the public funds are invested in the ruling party's African dreams instead of the needs of poor Turkish people."<sup>74</sup> Some opposition figures even find fault with humanitarian aid in Africa "while Turkish people suffer from an economic crisis."<sup>75</sup> Although the rising xenophobic sentiments are mainly targeting Syrians for now, Africans are not free from pressures (changing the names of Somali restaurants, for instance) in Turkish metropolises. Turkey should develop a policy to obviate these pressures, as they may challenge the AU-Turkey relations in the upcoming period, bearing in mind that the reported ill treatment of Africans trying to leave Ukraine might be one of the motives for why half of 54 African countries at the UN avoided taking sides during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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