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Algerian-Turkish perceptions of Africa

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Abstract

This research attempts to identify the convergence of development visions and strategies toward Africa through examining Algeria's efforts as a regional power among African countries, and Turkey's role as a new player in Africa seeking a foothold among emerging actors on the continent. The study also aims to clarify Turkey's outcomes in deepening relations with African countries, given their geostrategic importance globally. Furthermore, the study provides a detailed comparison of the development strategies of both Algeria and Turkey regarding African-focused issues.

Keywords: Algeria, Turkey, Africa, development issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world's poorest populations live in the vast continent of Africa, despite its wealth of natural resources. This reflects a significant paradox, as the continent possesses enormous reserves of oil, gas, and other natural minerals such as gold and diamonds, in addition to agricultural products like palm oil, cocoa, tea, coffee, and vanilla—all essential raw materials for industrial production. Consequently, the increasing need for these industrial supplies creates international pressure on its fragile and underdeveloped countries.

Among the new players on the African stage is Turkey, which has managed to establish itself as a regional power by transforming its domestic and foreign policies. It has employed soft power instruments and cultural diplomacy, becoming a major trading country and one of the most significant competitors in Africa. The period since 2002 has even been termed Turkey's golden age on the continent. Meanwhile, Algeria is attempting to play a pivotal role in Africa, given its status as an African country influenced by its continental, and notably regional, environment. On the other hand, Turkish-Algerian relations are progressing in a balanced manner that aligns with the goals and interests of both parties in Africa.

Problematic of the study: The main research problematic revolves around exploring the convergence of perceptions between Algeria and Turkey regarding Africa, given the diverse roles each has played. The question is as follows:

What are the shared perceptions between Algeria and Turkey regarding Africa?

Hypothesis of the Study: Based on the main research problematic, the following hypothesis was formulated: The Algerian-Turkish approach to Africa contributes to presenting converging perceptions that have made both countries key players in Africa.

Methodology of the Study: To analyze the topic, the descriptive and analytical methods were employed, as required by the scientific necessity of addressing the Algerian-Turkish perceptions of Africa. This necessitated describing events and analyzing some of their implications.

2. Algerian Development Mechanisms in Africa

Within the framework of its development strategy, Algeria has sought an alternative approach to prevent these threats and crises from reaching Algerian domestic affairs. On the ¹. other hand, Algeria supported the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, an approach that includes security, development, governance, and the humanitarian dimension to address the root causes of security and humanitarian crises in the region, at a meeting in the Malian capital, Bamako, on November 5, 2013, attended by 20 African foreign ministers².

2.1: Financial Aid and the NEPAD Initiative

The Algerian development dimension in the Sahel region can be observed through financial aid and the NEPAD initiative.

2.2 : Financial Aid

To support socio-economic development in the region, Algeria provided \$10 million in aid to Mali, allocated to infrastructure, health, and irrigation **projects**. The Algerian regime ³. invested \$200 million in development projects in Mali and Niger. It also wrote off \$902 million in debt owed by a group of African countries, including Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Mauritania, with the latter alone benefiting from \$250 million in debt relief⁴.

2.3: Activating the NEPAD Initiative

Algeria is one of the founding members of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to which it has contributed \$200 million. Algeria affirms its commitment to this initiative, which has established the necessary mechanisms to mitigate the risks of conflict and terrorism and address the problems of the African continent by linking sustainable economic and social development with political development based primarily on democracy, the rule of law, good governance institutions, and respect for human rights, with the aim of achieving security, stability, and individual development⁵.

2.4: Economic projects

In line with its policy of supporting economic development in the region and within the framework of economic and social integration, Algeria participated in supporting two of the most important projects on the African continent.

3. The Trans-Saharan Highway project

Algeria contributed 212 billion Algerian dinars to the project, which was considered a means of increasing trade between the countries it connects: Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Nigeria, and Chad. The highway is expected to improve the living conditions of the region's people and break the isolation of desert regions. Algeria undertook the completion of its share of the 3,400 km section and continued work on the two sections related to Niger (2,400 km) and Tunisia (39 km), representing 95% of the total project by 2016. The completion of the ⁶. project is expected to be announced in June 2021, according to a statement by the Acting Minister of Transport, Mr. Farouk Chiali, to the Algerian News Agency, noting that a local company - whose name he did not mention - will undertake the completion of the remaining part of the project⁷.

3.1: Fiber Optic Cable and Oil and Gas Pipeline Projects

Algeria and Nigeria are jointly involved in these projects⁸, which pass through Niger and Mali. Algeria is also undertaking water well drilling operations. Algeria and Nigeria ⁸.

agreed in 2002 to construct a Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline to export gas to the European market, aiming to transport 30 billion cubic meters of Nigerian gas annually to Europe. The pipeline is 4,128 kilometers long and cost approximately \$10 billion. In this regard, former Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum stated in Abuja, on the sidelines of his participation in the 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, following his meeting with his Nigerian counterpart: "The talks were fruitful, as they addressed strengthening bilateral relations and implementing strategic projects currently under development" ⁹.

3.2: The Humanitarian Coordination Body in the Sahel

This body was established by a decision of Algeria and the Red Cross societies affiliated with the Sahel region within the framework of development in the Sahara. It collaborates with Red Cross societies in Burkina Faso, Libya, Mauritania, Nigeria, and the Chadian Red Crescent. The body is tasked with developing humanitarian diplomacy through a unit responsible for monitoring the humanitarian situation in the Sahel, headquartered in Algiers. Its creation followed the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region, the worsening of hunger and malnutrition crises, the spread of diseases and epidemics, the increase in displacement, and the rise in terrorist attacks. The body collaborates in providing humanitarian aid with all charitable institutions and organizations that share the same objectives and concerns ¹⁰.

In the context of Algeria's development approach towards the Sahel region, a ministerial coordination conference for Sahel countries was held in Algiers on March 16, 2016. Algeria emphasized that promoting development in the region from its inception would help curb the spread of crime. The conference concluded with an agreement on a number of key points, including:

- The necessity of implementing sustainable development projects to improve the living conditions of the people of the Sahel, particularly those of young people and their integration, with a specific reference to Tuareg youth.
- Linking development projects to security.
- Inter-regional coordination and the activation of bilateral cooperation mechanisms in the areas of maintaining security and peace, building development, and prioritizing the citizen as the foundation for this development ¹¹.

4. Turkey's Development Strategy in Africa (Soft Power)

Turkey's vision for development in Africa includes relief projects and development aid. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has demonstrated his support for humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia since 2011, stating: "While we increase our trade volume on one hand, we alleviate the suffering of oppressed Africans with our humanitarian aid, amounting to \$55 billion, on the other¹²".

4.1: Cooperation and humanitarian relief agencies

Turkey has supported the issues of the African continent in international forums. Turkey's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, called on the international community to support initiatives aimed at achieving economic development in Africa, based on Türkiye's adoption of valuable ethical policies as a "partner for good" «Good Partner»¹³.

Turkey has also entrusted the following bodies with development and humanitarian roles: the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), the Turkish Red Crescent, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Turkish civil society organizations, and the Turkish Relief Foundation (IHH). Turkey's prominent development and humanitarian role is evident in the activities of the following two bodies:

4.2: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)

The agency is active in several fields: health, agriculture, education, irrigation, sanitation, vocational training, infrastructure projects, and the provision of social services. TIKA supported the Dakar Islamic Institute with numerous books and educational supplies and rebuilt the girls' college in less than five months for the 2011-2012 academic year. In Sudan, it equipped a technical and vocational training center, and Turkey provided 10,079 scholarships to African students. In the health sector, approximately 300,000 people¹⁴ benefited from medical examinations and vaccination campaigns provided by the agency, particularly following the Ebola outbreak in Senegal. The agency also supported the construction of a hospital in Somalia through the Turkish Urban Development Corporation (TOKI), another hospital in Niger to combat fistula, a prevalent disease among women, and a 150-bed hospital in the Darfur region of Sudan. Additionally, a maternal and child health center was established in Senegal. The agency's health and development activities in the region were documented for the period 2013-2014¹⁵.

In the agricultural sector, a flour mill in Senegal, run by Turkish businessmen and employing over 200 Senegalese workers, stands out. Somali youth were encouraged to combat drought by establishing a water pipeline project to connect farmers, opening an agricultural school, and supporting their agricultural skills. Regarding access to potable water, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) drilled 53 wells in Niger, 19 wells in Mogadishu, and 28 wells in Sudan¹⁶.

4.3: The Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH)

The Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation works in the field of humanitarian aid, particularly in African countries, with a focus on the Sahel region, which is experiencing deteriorating humanitarian conditions. This work is carried out through the "Opening Up to Africa" plan adopted by the Justice and Development Party since 2002. In the health sector, the foundation has helped thousands of Sudanese regain their sight through the implementation of the "Cataract" program in Sudanese hospitals. Its activities in¹⁷.

ophthalmology have expanded to include Somalia, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The organization also provides food aid to those affected by famine, having donated €23.3 million and approximately 5,726 tons of various food items to Somalia in 2011. It also established agricultural schools in 2013 to train Somalis in agricultural techniques. In addition, it sponsors orphans and supports their education by constructing school buildings, Quranic memorization centers, and sports facilities, as well as building mosques, particularly in countries experiencing war, military interventions, unemployment, and school dropout rates¹⁸.

Thus, Turkey's strategy in Africa indicates that Turkish decision-makers are pursuing several avenues to find opportunities for intervention and to benefit from the region's resources within the framework of legitimacy. This includes supporting the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) and providing aid and development projects within the framework of internationally guaranteed humanitarian assistance.

4.4: Turkey's economic strategy in Africa

Turkey has a range of economic interests in Libya, which led the Turkish Parliament on January 2, 2020, to authorize direct military intervention to protect Turkish interests. These interests were established through numerous economic agreements signed between the two countries since 2010, primarily in the construction and development sectors, with Turkish companies securing approximately 304 commercial contracts in this area. Furthermore, the volume of investment projects has reached approximately \$203 billion since 2018. The Libyan GNA's Foreign Minister attributed the economic progress between the two countries to the fact that "the level of political relations between the two countries has allowed companies to launch projects in Libya, increased trade, and boosted commercial exchanges between the two nations"¹⁹.

Accordingly, some analysts believe that the conclusion of economic agreements between the two countries is due to the decline in the economic growth rate in Turkey, which reached 2.6% in 2016 compared to 7.4% in 2017. Thus, Turkey seeks to revive its economy and get out of the crises it is going through²⁰.

5. Shared Perceptions of Africa Between Algeria and Turkey

In this regard, Turkey is counting on Algeria to ensure the success of the third Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit—the date of which has not yet been set—given Algeria's pivotal role on the continent.

5.1: The Shared Security Perspective

Turkish strategy seeks to play an active role in international politics and secure seats in global decision-making bodies and international institutions through membership in international organizations, most importantly the UN Security Council and the International Monetary Fund. Turkey aims to address vital global issues such as armed conflicts, human rights violations, poverty, and environmental degradation, and to provide humanitarian and

development aid, thereby securing its place among traditional Western donors. It secured a²¹. non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council after receiving the votes of 51 African countries in 2008²².

Therefore, securing votes is a key motivation for Turkey in strengthening its relations with Algeria. Turkish-Algerian relations have included a security dimension, with a 2003 agreement aimed at enhancing military cooperation between the two countries. This agreement allowed the Algerian army to benefit from Turkish military technology through arms contracts related to military equipment. In 2013, an agreement was signed for cooperation in the fields of security and military industry. Turkey aspires to develop relations with Algeria in the defense industries, especially after increasing its share of weapons and military equipment production from 20% to 70% in 17 years, including the manufacture of drones and armored vehicles. However, the divergence in positions and perceptions between the two countries remains evident on regional and international issues. Turkey adopted military intervention in Libya, while Algeria pursued mediation and a peaceful solution. Nevertheless, reciprocal visits between foreign ministers have shown signs of coordination between Turkey and Algeria in addressing the Libyan issue, with both countries supporting a political solution. Turkey seeks to gain Algeria as a strategic ally in the Mediterranean and North Africa²³.

5.2: A shared economic vision

In light of the COVID-19 crisis and its repercussions on the world economically, politically, and socially, relying on African markets will be a key objective for countries in balancing their trade, given that these are consumer markets with limited production. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Algerian policy to engage with Africa through the Turkish-Algerian partnership.

Examples include partnerships in Turkish social infrastructure projects in Senegal, cement manufacturing projects in Mozambique and Senegal, and the construction of industrial complexes in Congo and Rwanda. Other projects also include opportunities for Turkey's non-regional membership in African regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). This aims to support Algeria's presence in various regions of the continent. Furthermore, the Turkish global market presents an opportunity for Algeria to access and promote its products, such as Algerian dates and other food products, and to expand Algerian investments in Turkey through Algerian-Turkish partnerships into sectors beyond hydrocarbons, such as industry, tunnel construction, and tourism²⁴.

Hence, changing the Algerian perception of what can be achieved by developing economic relations with Turkey will achieve important external dimensions and contribute to the economic and social development of the country. Turkey also represents an important experience for Algeria in its trade movement in the African continent, including the idea of

conducting official visits during which a forum for businessmen between Turks and Africans is organized, thus facilitating the acquisition of trade partnerships and investments in the continent ²⁵.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, it is clear that the convergence of viewpoints between Algeria and Turkey, which characterizes both countries, has played a pivotal role in shaping their bilateral relations. They both support humanitarian aid in Africa, in addition to economic aspirations, and share a similar stance on the Libyan crisis.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, agreed to exert efforts to impose a ceasefire as a necessary prelude to facilitating a political solution in Libya. Considering these issues, Turkish-Algerian relations are progressing in a balanced direction that aligns with the aspirations and interests of both parties in Africa.

Therefore, the study reached the following conclusions:

- ü Africa has become a focal point of international interest.
- ü The strategic Algerian-Turkish rapprochement in Africa is likely to open up avenues for cooperation between the two countries in various fields

Footnotes

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