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# The Rising Security Cooperation of Turkey In Africa: An Assessment From The Military Perspective

Alexe Fridolin Kenfack Kitio

Oslo Research School on Peace & Conflict

[fridolin.kkaf.82@gmail.com](mailto:fridolin.kkaf.82@gmail.com)

## Abstract

In a context where many eyes focus on the security and strategic cooperation between Turkey and the official Government of Libya, Ankara's military presence in this country, as much impressive as it may seem, does not reflect their broader partnership that is gradually being established in Africa at large. It is therefore surprising to see that so far no serious mainstream analysis has captured this dimension. This research paper thus answer the question how does Turkey use the security and military approaches to give more volume to its foreign policy towards Africa? At the core of these exchanges lays a network of security and military agreements concluded with more than twenty African countries. This partnership then extends through various training programs and defense industries' cooperation. The Turkish military facility base in Somalia, the first of its kind in "Black Africa", also remains a perfect example of projection and military proactivity in the new grammar of Turkey's foreign policy, and an answer to traditional westerns powers in Africa despite various challenges.

## Keywords

Turkey, Africa, Foreign Policy, Security, Military, Cooperation

## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey is successfully increasing its presence in Africa. The 2000s played an important part in this as in the aftermath of the so called "Opening policy" of Turkey to Africa in 1998, everything went very quickly. Successively 2005 is marked "Day of Africa in Turkey", while Turkey is officially declared 'strategic partner' of the African Union in 2008. In this dynamic, Turkey's presence in Africa has generally been analyzed through topics such as political and diplomatic partnership, the strengthening of economic and trade cooperation, development and humanitarian assistance cooperation, as well as diversified

cultural partnerships. And yet these aspects alone are not enough to account for the rich content of the partnership between Turkey and Africa, which has continued to diversify, particularly in terms of security and military as reflected in the principle of the multifaceted diplomacy that shaped the new Turkish foreign policy since early 2000s (Davutoğlu 2012). Indeed, while security cooperation was already included in the general report of the first two Turkey-Africa Summits in 2008 and 2014, it can be surprising to see how main stream analyses still fail to capture this new dimension of Turkey's foreign policy in Africa.

It should be noted that the security and military cooperation of Turkey in Africa is a major trend of its foreign policy. This is particularly well underscored in their new partnership in Africa where after a first decade of "opening strategy" to the continent from 1998 to almost 2010, the new approach of their foreign policy as depicted in 2010 under the concept "the strategy in Africa", covers a large contribution of strategic administrations unlike before. This includes the Ministry of external relations, the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff, the National Defense Ministry, the Under-secretariat of Defense Industry and the Police General Directorate (Genelge 2010/7).

In order to conduct this research, we relied on the Turkish Official Gazette Drive (Turkish Official Gazette 2019) which confronted us with a methodical and careful selection in the midst of thousands of agreements and the imperative of exegetic and content analysis methods. And for the purposes of an in-depth analysis, the main focus has been put on the military and security agreements, featuring more than twenty African countries. As written in the preambles of those agreements, the military co-operations are based on principles of sovereign equality and mutual benefit between Turkey and its African partners. Many legal instruments operate here including memorandums of understanding (MoUs), contracts, protocols, amendments and other technical arrangements or agreements (Framework Agreement Ethiopia 2006).

This policy paper thus answer the question how does Turkey use the security and military approaches to give more volume to its foreign policy towards Africa? As such, this article aims to highlighting the security, and mainly, the military dimension of Turkey's foreign policy in Africa and the new partnership underpinning this approach. At the core of these exchanges lays a network of security and military agreements concluded with more than twenty African countries (i). It is a cooperation that can be assessed and exemplified through various security training programs (ii). This partnership then extends through cooperation on security and intelligence as well as the promotion of exchanges at the level of military industries (iii). Beyond all this, the security partnership with Libya, and the Turkish military facility base in Somalia (iv), the first Turkish base of its kind in "Black Africa", also remain perfect examples of proactivity in the new grammar

of Turkey's foreign policy of security in Africa.

### **The framework of security and military agreements between Turkey and Africa**

Beyond the issue of training facilities, these agreements reflect the initiative to restructuring relations with African countries sharing with Turkey an old common heritage dating back to the Ottoman Empire as highlighted here by the Protocol Agreement in military history and museology, concluded with Algeria on October 19, 2010, as well as many other countries (Protocole Accord de Coopération Algérie 2010). This also includes participation in scientific research courses organized by both parties and the involvement of experts and specialists in reference areas for training purposes, as well as seminars, conferences, archives or publications in military journals of both parties.

The security and military agreements between Turkey and Africa give rise to diverse arrangements according to the needs expressed by the parties. A very illustrative example in this sense is the helicopter pilots training Agreement with Tunisia concluded in 2012 for a period of one year. Following the terms of that Agreement, the Turkish Republic Land Forces TRADOC Army Aviation School was to provide training for Tunisian Armed Forces members. To that effect, UH-1 helicopter was to be used for field exercises (Flight and Technical Protocol Tunisia 2012).

More recently, taking the case of a country like Libya and in application of the General Framework Agreement between the two parties, a "Logistics Foreign Military Assistance (Donation) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and Libyan Presidency Council" was signed on January 8, 2017. The aim of the Agreement was to "further strengthen the military cooperation, to contribute to the structuring of the Libyan Presidential Guard and to fulfill" their logistic requirements. To put it simply, the purpose was to equip the Libyan presidential guards with high quality uniforms. In that perspective strategic logistic materials were provided including: Battle dress uniform, camouflage, boots (private and summer), caps (new type camouflage, summer), belts, and different types of complete clothing assortments of elite military units (Logistics Agreement Libya 2017).

The military cooperation with Libya is gradually becoming a major lever for the Turkish foreign policy of security, especially since the agreement signed in November 2019 by which Turkey undertakes to guarantee support and stability to the internationally recognized official government of Tripoli. The concretization will be quickly materialized by a decision of the Turkish parliament authorizing the deployment of Ankara military support from January 2020. This is quite interesting because, although Turkey is a member of NATO which, under the

leadership of France and Great Britain organized the collapse of the regime of Colonel Gadhafi, they have always seemed to occupy a secondary role in this issue so far. And Ankara even appeared reluctant with the Western solution of military intervention; and later on we could appreciate the consequences.

However, the remarkable presence of Turkey during the Berlin Conference held on January 19, 2020 over the situation in Libya, with a preponderance of the Ankara-Moscow axis in particular due to their strategic presence in the operational field, is a fundamental fact.

Still in the field of strategic agreements, let's also mention here the Protocol between Turkey and Senegal regarding the opening by Turkish Armed Forces of a Turkish Language Teaching Center in Dakar, signed on July 13, 2011. Together with other existing Yunus Emre Institutes, this will prove to be a tool of high impact in an environment marked by a historical domination of French or English, usually giving priority to traditional partners. It further facilitates the perception of Turkey as a security and military training destination. The table under gives an insight of the security and military agreements concluded by Turkey in Africa so far.

**Table:** African Countries Linked to Turkey with at Least one Military or Security Agreement

African Countries Linked to Turkey with At Least one Military or Security Agreement	
Field of Cooperation	Countries
Military Training, Science & Techniques	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia
Gendarme Training	Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya
Police Training	Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinee Bissau, Niger, Somalia, Tunisia, Uganda
Defense Industry & Scientifique Cooperation	Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan

*Source: Data compiled by the author from the Turkish Official Gazette 2019*

## Agreements on military training between Turkey and Africa

### *Fields of the training*

The military agreements here mainly comprise “Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Military Field” between Turkey and dozens of African countries. The agreements are usually concluded for a duration of five years, with an automatic extension of one year each time at the expiration of the initial periodicity, unless a party raises an objection.

The analysis of the Framework Agreement with Ghana as signed in 2011 for instance, has the advantage of providing a large and detailed field of the military cooperation between Turkey and its African partners (Framework Agreement Ghana 2011). The article 4 of this Agreement thus includes at least 17 fields of cooperation as followed:

“Cooperation in military training and instruction; Cooperation between military institutions and contact visits; Participation in exercises/training, sending observers to exercises; Cooperation in defense industry; Military cooperation between the Armed Forces; The organizational structure of the Armed Forces; The structure and equipment of military units, personal management; Cooperation in military intelligence; Cooperation in military medicine and health services; Cooperation on communication, electronics and information systems; Cooperation in operations other than war, such as peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and counter piracy operations; Exchange of information on military legal systems; Cooperation in the field of mapping and hydrography; Exchange of personnel for professional development; Cooperation in military scientific and technological research; Social, sportive and cultural activities; Other areas to be agreed upon by the Parties”.

The other fields of this military cooperation also include military history, military archives, military publications and museum, military geography; the military science and technology researches. Referring to the scope, it is stated that the agreements shall include the exchange of personnel, material, equipment, information and experience in the various fields of reference, and other fields as may be determined by complementary and implementation agreements, MoUs, protocols, and other arrangements to be signed by the parties in respect of their “General Framework Agreements”.

### *Assessing some cases of Africans' military training in Turkey*

#### *African training at the Turkish National Defense University (TNDU)*

The Turkish National Defense University is a military higher education institution created in July 2016, in the aftermath of the 15 July military coup defeated by the Turkish people. It is easily understandable that in order to ensure a better control and coordination of the army, several military schools all around the country were closed. Those that remained were all reformed according to the Governmental Order 669 under the title of “Taking Precaution within the State of Emergency and Foundation of National Defense University and some other Amendments”, thus founding the National Defense University (Turkish NDU 2019a).

Assuming the huge responsibility of coordinating the military education throughout the national territory the University is structured around 10 institutes includ-

ing war colleges, strategic and engineering institutes as well as Military, Naval and Air Forces Academies. As such the TNDU just like the other Turkish military institutions before it, contributed to the training of African officers and NCOs. Turkish military schools already ensured the training of thousands of African military staffs as I could notice through in-depth analyses and interviews. It is stated that by the end of 2014, 2,200 military personnel from African countries received military training in Turkey. Only in 2017 for instance, 176 African militaries completed their training in Turkey. And for the year 2017-2018, 290 other African were to achieve the same path (TRMFA 2019). Almost 104 African officials from diverse nationalities such as Algeria, Gambia, Senegal and Somalia received their training in the Turkish National Defense University since its creation. Only in 2018, the TNDU received two high level visits from Nigerian and Tanzanian Military schools. The visit from the Nigerian National Defence College was led by the Air Commodore Sunday Olanipekun Makinde on May 24, 2018.

Such visits always prepare the ground for further cooperation and exchanges of know-how. It is noteworthy to underline that the current Somali head of military staff is a former trainee of the Turkish National Defense University, where he graduated in July 2016 from his master's degree after studying staff training, commanding a brigade and army management. For more than seven months, General Odawaa Yusuf Rageh, of his name, has been the commander of the land forces in Somalia, though only aged 32 (Maruf 2019). Besides this, already in 2013, the Turkish Armed Forces provided Language courses and the "Officer Basic Indoc-trination Training" to about 200 military from Somalia. Meanwhile, a total of 3,000 Libyan troops divided in groups of 500 received 14 months of training in the field of Internal Security, in the city of Isparta during the academic year 2013-2014 (Sazak & Nazli 2016, p. 13).

#### *African training at the NATO Centre of Excellence-Ankara (NATO-COEDAT)*

As written in the COEDAT-NATO Centre's Brochure edition of 2019, Turkey expressed since 2003 the need of creating a 'Centre of Excellence Defence against Terrorism' (COE-DAT). This is concretized and materialized thanks to a collaboration with 8 NATO countries. By June 2005, the Centre is officially inaugurated and works with many countries and partners on issues related to terrorism and counter-terrorism following different models of framework agreements. The COE-DAT thus conducts courses, mobile education and training activities, seminars, and workshops for the members of NATO, and states member of agreements such as the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Partners Across the Globe (PatG), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), pertinent International Organizations (IOs), and states linked to Turkey by specific bilateral relationship. (COEDAT-NATO Centre, 2019a).

The Centre offers courses like : Defence against Terrorism; Terrorist use of Cyberspace; Defence against Suicide Attack; Critical Infrastructure Protection from Terrorist Attacks; Counterterrorism/ Attacking the Network (AtN); Terrorism and Media, to name a few. Since the Centre has made the fight against terrorism his specialty, many African countries entangled in the struggle against terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al Shabab or Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) seize this Turkish opportunity to train their personnel.

#### *African contingents in NATO-COEDAT training courses*

Since its opening the COEDAT-NATO Centre in Ankara has received several African delegations, either for a training session, either for an institutional visit preparing further partnerships between Turkey and the visiting African country in the field of terrorism and asymmetric security. Since 2013, the COEDAT received at least 14 high level visits from African military staffs (COEDAT-NATO Centre 2019b).

Only within the period from 2016 to 2019 the Centre received a dozen of Cameroonian high civilian and military staff, ranking from captain and beyond, for diverse training purposes. During the field work related to this policy paper, the author personally had the opportunity to meet and to guide some those delegations. This includes the Cameroonian military delegations partaking to the course 'Defense against Suicide Attack' which took place from the 16 to 20 April 2018. The course was designed for NATO, Partnership for Peace (PfP), Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), Partners across the Globe, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative countries (ICI), and relevant International Organizations dealing with counterterrorism. African were highly represented during that session. Some were sent directly by their states, and others by security-based regional International Organizations such as the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which we easily understand, is engaged in the fight against the Boko Haram or Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). 54 participants from 24 countries took part to the training. Among them we had 7 trainees from Africa, including five from Nigeria, one from Cameroon and one from Tunisia.

The specific case of the 'Defense against Terrorism' course training session which took place from the 11th to 15th February 2019, can also be highlighted here, as it brought together high rank African military officers from at least five different nationalities including Cameroon, Senegal, Gambia, Algeria and Tunisia.

#### **Turkey as a rising challenger in the market of defense industries in Africa**

As the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay put it, in order to underscore the country's ambitions, capacities and defense capabilities: 'In 2002, we exported defense and aviation industry products worth \$ 248 million, and by 2018, this

figure had risen eightfold to over \$2.035 billion' (Alhas A., 2019). And still this is not yet enough as Turkey keep moving ahead looking up to its ambitions which are not only matters of national development but also national security defense and identity as a nation, and national pride. This was further emphasized at the last IDEF (International Defense and Exhibition Fair) in Istanbul in May 2019, as the head of Turkish 'Defense Industry Presidency' (SSB), Ismail Demir, announced the 20% increase of the defense exports to Turkey thus reaching \$ 2.2 billion over the same period. He stated that in this sector which employs more than 67,000 people, \$ 1.45 billion has been invested on defense research and development in 2018 (El Watan 2019). An upward trend which should further increase in the future. Certainly to open up to new markets and opportunities apart from those to which Ankara traditionally exports. However, the defense market remains dominated by traditional players both globally and at the African level.

### *Challenging traditional players in defense industry in Africa*

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China were the five largest arms exporters in 2014–18; the five weighed 75% of the total volume of arms exports for the said period. The global arms exports is by far dominated by US as seen in the gap between the top two arms-exporting states: 'US exports of major arms were 75% higher than Russia's in 2014–18, while they were only 12% higher in 2009–13' (World Economic Forum 2019). But Russia leads the market of defense furniture in Africa.

In 2014–18 Russia alone represented 49% of total military equipment imports to North Africa, the U.S. for 15%, China for 10%, France for 7.8% and Germany for 7.7%. In the same time, Russia also weighed about 66% of Algerian arms imports (Wezeman et al. 2019, p. 8). The Russian domination extends in sub-Saharan Africa as well where they accounted for 28% of arms exports in 2014–18, while China accounted for 24%, Ukraine for 8.3%, the U.S. for 7.1%, and France for 6.1% (Wezeman et al. 2019, p. 8). This contrasts with 2009–13 period where sub-Saharan Africa had Ukraine as the largest supplier.

As the world's fifth arms exporter, China is gradually also playing a significant part on African defense market, as they rank third in arms exportations behind Russia and the US. Since 2008 China sold 20% of its overall arms production in Africa; which represents a worth of US\$ 3.2 billion, with main importers being from North Africa with Algeria as top customer (China Power Team 2018). Whereas Russia overshadows this African market with arms sales amounting US\$ 14.6 billion since 2008 (mainly to Algeria and Egypt representing 86.6% of acquisitions), followed by the US accounting for \$ 5.6 billion arms exports in Africa (88% of it go to Morocco and Egypt) (China Power Team 2018). On a more



critique view, many international reports established that Chinese arms have been used to fuel conflicts and wage wars in Africa, namely in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. Besides exporting weapons to a country like Sudan, China even set up and operates three military weapons factories near the capital Khartoum. It is also documented that China supplied the country with Scud missiles, ammunitions, Tanks, helicopters and fighter aircrafts and thus breaching the UN international arms embargo hitting Sudan at that time (Hodzi 2018, p. 174). And yet Turkey is still struggling to attract more partners in this African defense market.

### *Turkey's deployment in the African defense industries and security market*

More than forty years later, since the efforts of transforming its defense industry in the 1970s, Turkey have moved from importers of weapons to exporters. This is evidence that important efforts have been made. With low production costs, Turkey has been exporting its arms to the Middle East, Asia and Europe for several years and has recently committed itself to an offensive on the defense industry market in Africa, through a successful partnership of public and private companies. Especially since Africa occupies a non-negligible position in the world trade and circulation of defense equipment. Thus it is without surprise that the world's five largest arms importers in September 2019 include two African countries, Egypt and Algeria, together with Saudi Arabia, India and Australia (Wezeman et al. 2019, p. 6).

### *The rising presence of Turkish military technologies and equipment in Africa*

As said previously, the Turkish defense industries market is very ambitious. Annual export figure of \$ 3 billion appears quite realistic in the next five years. But apart from Tunisia we could see in 2016 that top market of Turkey's exportations were the United States, providing almost a third of all Turkish exports with \$ 587 million worth business. After US we had Germany (\$185 million), Malaysia (\$99 million), Azerbaijan (\$83 million), Saudi Arabia, Britain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Bekdil 2017).

A SIPRI report between 1980 and 2014 shows at most 5 African countries among the destinations of Turkish military equipment exports, including Tunisia with procurement of \$ 3 million (2014), Rwanda for \$ 5 million (2012), Egypt for \$ 4 and 8 million (2011 and 2012) Nigeria for \$ 8 million (2008) and Libya for \$ 23 and 11 million albeit at an earlier date (1980 and 1981) (Réal-Pinto & Anouck 2017, p. 18). Added to this is the fact that Libya, Egypt and Tunisia are more often seen as part of the Middle East than Africa at large; this further contributes to reduce or to undermine the projections of Turkish military industries in Africa. We therefore understand the significance of a whole issue of a strategic reorientation of Ankara towards Africa, which retains the full potential of being a

niche for its defense industries that are very poorly represented there or even not at all. And so far, the type of material sold in Africa by Turkey includes in majority wheeled armoured vehicles: such as Hundreds of BMC's Kirpi 4x4 patrol vehicle sold to Tunisia or the Otokar's Cobra 4x4 armoured personnel carrier currently in service with Mauritania and Rwanda (Efstathiou & Tom 2019). And still, the competition in this area is quite rude since many companies around the world can offer the same system very easily.

#### *Aselsan the Turkish security and military champion in Africa*

Turkey is gradually taking root in the African defense market with the help of companies like Aselsan, which are building various partnerships on the continent. In 2011 the South African branch of Aselsan is established with the aim of developing high end electro-optical systems for airborne military use. Nowadays Aselsan South Africa shapes, "develops and manufactures high performance electro-optical systems for its owner and also for the South African military aerospace and maritime markets" (Martin 2015). In September 2014 for example, in order to further extend its activities, Aselsan-South Africa concluded a MoU with Paramount Group, the largest African defense company. Since then, Aselsan exports to more than 48 countries around the world including South Africa and six other African states.

Despite the presence of American, Russian, Chinese or French companies which, with their efficient and old network on the continent do not facilitate the challenges, Aselsan nevertheless begins to conquer some business opportunities. With strong arguments, notably emphasizing its willingness to share its technology, and also thanks to its outstanding and recognized performances, Aselsan begins to create its way on the continent, particularly with some contracts concluded with Tunisia and Algeria (El Watan 2019). And negotiations in the same direction are underway with Morocco.

Of course, Aselsan is far from being the only Turkish defense company interested to the African market. Other structures such as Roketsan, Nurol Makina or AVS are also gradually active.

#### *The Increase of Turkish military attachés in Africa*

Since 2008 we witnessed a tremendous growth of Turkish embassies in Africa, with 42 diplomatic missions hitherto. This trend is almost the same concerning the positions of military attachés. Turkey has indeed considerably increased their number in their embassies in Africa since 2002 as can be seen in the table below. And this is far from being a mere coincidence.

**Table: Turkish Missions of Military Attachés in Africa**

The Offices of the Military Attaches of the Turkish Armed Forces in Foreign Countries		
No.	Country	Attache
1	Nigeria	Office of the Military Attaché in Abuja
2	Ethiopia	Office of the Military Attaché in Addis Ababa
3	Ghana	Office of the Military Attaché in Accra
4	Mali	Office of the Military Attaché in Bamako
5	Algeria	Office of the Military Attaché in Algiers
6	Djibouti	Office of the Military Attaché in Djibouti
7	Senegal	Office of the Military Attaché in Dakar
8	Tanzania	Office of the Military Attaché in Dar El Salam
9	Sudan	Office of the Military Attaché in Khartoum
10	Egypt	Office of the Military Attaché in Cario
11	Uganda	Office of the Military Attaché in Kampala
12	The Democratic Republic of Congo	Office of the Military Attaché in Kinshasa
13	Guinea	Office of the Military Attaché in Kinshasa
14	Somalia	Office of the Armed Forces Attaché in Mogadishu
15	Kenya	Office of the Armed Forces Attaché in Nairobi
16	South Africa	Office of the Armed Forces Attaché in Pretoria
17	Morocco	Office of the Military Attaché in Rabat
18	Tunusia	Office of the Military Attaché in Tunis

*Source: Turkish Armed Forces 2018, compiled by the author*

Out of 72 Turkish military mission attachés in the world, 18 are located in Africa, which represents the  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total. It just informs on the importance of the continent to Ankara. And it should also be noticed that most of these Mission attaché positions start opening only as from 2002.

In this sequel between Turkey and Africa, it can also be seen that Cooperation Agreements in the fields of security and defense has been revitalized both in their content and in their number. The signing of several agreements in the field of defense industries cooperation between the two parties, thus crystallizing the rooting strategy of Turkish defense industries in Africa is eloquently illustrative in this sense. While there was almost none before, there are more than a dozen of these agreements since the 2000s. These missions of military attachés play a crucial part in promoting Turkey's military technology and doctrine in Africa.

#### *Defense industries' comparative advantages of Turkey in Africa*

In general Turkey may benefit significant assets to act as prominent player in the defense industries field in Africa. In fact, given the high sensitive dimension of the military and armament sectors, Africans usually face many obstacles

to acquire defense equipment from traditional countries and major powers. This includes obstacles related to various conditionalities such as the “human rights” constraints and the scrutiny right that these powers always maintain on arms imports and circulation of defense equipment in Africa. In such a configuration, the crisis of trust naturally becomes part of the agenda, especially as the traditional powers in this universe of conditionalities proceed with discriminatory supports according to whether the parties are their allies in their politics in Africa and outside or not. Moreover, according to a confidence reporting of African military officials, in many cases it can happen that the acquired weapons from traditional partners are delivered without technical explanation on the modes of assembly, or an after-sales service not optimal. Sometimes cases of purchased weapons with deliveries of bullets not corresponding to their caliber were also reported. Ankara then seems more reliable to those countries.

In this sense, Turkey has a real comparative advantage with military technologies more adapted to Africa’s financial resources, anthropology and topography as well. It is a production more adapted to African geographical and climatic subtleties. In consequence, delivering a well proofed NATO equipment at a low cost is therefore part of Ankara’s narrative and a strong advertising motto. It should also be highlighted the Ankara’s ability to position itself on foreign market segments suffering issues of conditionalities or embargoes from the West, thus undermining the technology transfer as being the case in Africa. Hence the slogan of some Turkish defense industries based on, “Let’s develop together”, where Western companies limit themselves to “I want to sell to you” (Bekdil 2017).

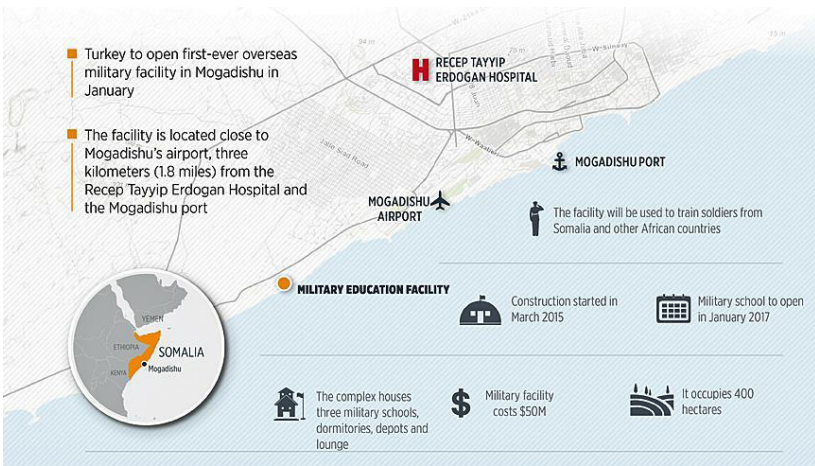
### **Military and security cooperation through strategic positioning in Africa and the military facilities in Somalia**

While Turkey is already present in Africa in the security field through several agreements as observed, the strengthening of ties with the legal and official government of Tripoli in recent times has constantly captured the attention of Westerners, and particularly Europeans (Le Figaro 2019). The agreements concluded in November 2019 between Ankara and the Government of National Accord (GNA), relating in particular to hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean, and the military support to the forces of the official Government of Libya, illustrate this debate. In one of his interventions, the director of communication of the Turkish presidency, Fahrettin Altun, indicated that this new protocol is in fact a larger version of the framework agreement for military cooperation already existing between the two parties. This is in fact, part of a loyalty process for the various strategic partners of Ankara in Africa, particularly in terms of security. Indeed, this testifies to the ability of Turkey to be able to support its allies beyond mere speech and rhetoric.

The agreement between Turkey and the Sudan for the renovation of Suakin island off the Red Sea facing Turkey is also a major strategic issue.

Turkey's new security and military policy in Africa is further illustrated by the construction of a military facility base in Somalia, making this country a pivotal state in its projection's strategy. This "military facility" with a total investment of more than US \$ 50 million, and whose construction works begin in March 2015, aims as one would naturally expect, to strengthen the operational capacities of the Somali army and to a better stability of the state apparatus. To mark the engagement of Turkey in Somalia, it should be recalled that on June 3, 2016, President Erdogan already inaugurated in the same country the Turkey's largest embassy overseas following the "three-nation East Africa tour" that took him across the Horn of Africa (Aktas & Addis 2016). Turkey already provides Somalia with military aid, education support, infrastructural development and skills training.

**Figure:** Locating the Turkish military facility base in Somalia



Source: (Aktas & Addis 2016)

Since Turkey's official engagement in Somalia as from 2011 onward, security has always been a top priority. Thus an amount of 20 million Turkish Lira is quickly invested from the very beginning, with a view to restructuring the security and defense forces of this country. And together with the support of the Ministry of Foreign affairs, the Turkish General Staff and the General Directorate of Security, operational researches were conducted on how to best restructure the Somali defense and police forces.

Thus a specific development assistance strategy was put in place including the building of infrastructures, configuring and training the Somali police. To this

effect, under the coordination of the General Directorate of Security, more than 60 Somali police personnel benefited intense capacity strengthening sessions in Turkey. And such training exercises are repeated quite regularly. It therefore goes without saying that in the near future, Turkey's ability to operate as a security player will be put to the test, along with major players such as the UN, NATO, France, the United Kingdom and the US. And this is an issue of fundamental interest as this new field of cooperation between Turkey and Africa is not without risks and apprehensions unfortunately. This includes for instance the fear of seeing in a close future the reproduction of the same patterns as with criticized traditional partners.

### **Conclusion: Observations and the way forward**

Keeping the eyes on the security and strategic partnership of Turkey in Libya or Somalia prevents from having a full reading of Ankara's foreign policy strategies in Africa. Especially in the security field. Ankara's security involvement in Africa is part of a double approach. First, a catch-up logic since the international withdrawal of Turkish power following the First World War. Then a logic of equalization and rebalancing in the face of traditional powers which seemed to have quickly rethought the world with the "Anatolian power" reduced to the status of neglected appendage.

Through its military training programs towards Africa, Turkey is gradually establishing itself as an alternative player in an environment long dominated by traditional actors. It thus appears clearly that this training dynamics are firmly contributing to introduce and to boost the Turkish military doctrine in Africa. This will certainly play in the near future as decisive factor to the further opening of the African defense market to Turkish technologies and companies in this sector.

However, this partnership remains beset by various challenges. We can notice for instance that Ankara is offering the same security and military training format that African states already benefit from traditional partners, which makes the competition very tough. Following the field experience and the various discussions with some trainees, the issue of the language might also undermine these training partnerships. Additionally, as a country which is gradually becoming part of a global strategy, Turkey should ensure that its policies and offers in this area of security are not limited to targeting African Muslim countries.

Being also at the forefront of the contact zones of terrorism in the Middle East, it would be appropriate for Ankara to make it a unique branding in its security partnership offers in Africa. Especially since the terrorist challenges of groups such as Boko Haram, AQIM or Al-Shabaab occupy the top of the agenda, similar to challenges already faced by Turkey.

Finally, in terms of technology and infrastructures, although they are still dependent from Western partners in many ways, Turkey must take advantage of the capacity of its military offers to adapt to the structure of African defense markets, generally dominated by small budgets and low sophisticated logistics; something that Turkey can meet more easily than traditional western powers and with a better branding than China.

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### **Bio**

Alexe Fridolin KENFACK KITIO is a Cameroonian Diplomat, he is a PhD holder from the Department of International Relations at Gazi University/Ankara, and Research Fellow at the Oslo Research School on Peace & Conflict. His areas of research interest include Foreign Policy Analysis, the transformation of paradigms (Power and Security), and Emerging Power Politics (Turkey, Brazil and China).

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