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EMERGING POWERS IN AFRICA

KEY DRIVERS,
DIFFERING INTERESTS,
AND FUTURE
PERSPECTIVES

Authors:

Khalid Chegraoui, Rida Lyammouri & Maha Skah

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Russia in Africa	7
Turkey's expanding footprint in Africa	14
Israel in Africa	21
Gulf countries in Africa	32
Conclusion	46

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been characterized by a shifting balance of power, with some analysts even predicting a new international order in the making. Emerging powers are contributing to the changing power dynamics by competing to increase the influence they have in political, economic, and security spheres. Africa is one of the key spaces where such strategic efforts have been taking place.

In such a context, this paper assesses key drivers of emerging powers' growing engagement in Africa, makes some comparisons of the roles they have played during the pandemic, and discusses how this may affect their future relationships with African countries. More specifically, the paper explores how Russia, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Iran have sought to establish relations and advance their interests throughout the African continent.

Scope and delimitation of the study

There is no standard definition of what can be considered an 'emerging power'. The list of states considered as "emerging powers" is the source of contention and differs depending on the research topic¹. Overall, the term indicates a recognition of the increasing presence of some countries in global affairs. It has been mostly associated with countries in the global South that are in the process of increasing their economic and political weight faster than the rest². Initially, the term was connected with the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa)³. Although these states remain the core emerging powers, the list is often complemented with other countries, including Mexico, Indonesia, and Turkey. In recent years, it has also been argued that Iran could be considered an 'emerging power', specifically because of its growing influence across the Middle East⁴. Gulf countries have also shown increasing potential and elements of 'emerging power' status⁵. For the purposes of this paper, the following two characteristics have been identified in order to determine which countries can be considered as key emerging powers in relation to the African continent, in contrast to more traditional, actors:

- 1) countries that have recently pursued an ambitious strategy for engagement with the continent;
- 2) countries that seek regional dominance/hegemony and whose African policy is central to their aspiration to play a more assertive role on the global stage;

1. Mateja Peter, "Emerging powers and peace operations: An agenda for research", Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, October 2014, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/186253/PB-Peter-10-14.pdf>

2. Oliver Stuenkel, "Emerging Powers and BRICS", Oxford Bibliographies, last modified on February 26, 2020, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0187.xml>

3. Jim O'Neill, "Building better global economic BRICs", Global Economics Paper No: 66, Goldman Sachs Economic Research Group, November 30th, 2001, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf>

4. Ibid.

5. Edward Burke et al., "The Gulf in the new world order: a forgotten emerging power?", Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), September 2010, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130701/WP101_The_gulf_in_new_world_Set10.pdf

Asia's two largest economies with a long-standing presence in Africa, China and India, are therefore not included in the study. Given that Brazil is currently experiencing a retreat from the world stage, it is also not included.

See the Atlantic Council's report on "African Agency in the New Cold War: Traditional Power Competition in the Post-COVID-19 African Landscape" here: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/african-agency-in-the-new-cold-war-traditional-power-competition-in-the-post-covid-19-african-landscape>

Russia in Africa

The decline of the BRICS, along with sanctions imposed on Russia in 2014 following the war in Ukraine, led the Kremlin to explore alternative markets. Russia's historical ties with some African countries and the ongoing political instability and power vacuum in those countries provided ideal re-entry points for Russia into Africa. Despite growing competition from China, European countries, and the U.S., Russia was able to increase its footprint throughout the continent thanks to technical and military cooperation and the "exportation of security" services.⁶ As a result, in 2019, Russia hosted the first Russia-Africa Summit, in Sochi, Russia, with the participation of 43 African state leaders⁷.

The Wagner Group

Russia's presence in Africa occurred during the past decade for the most part through a private military company considered to be a semi-state informal military and mercenary group. The organization is called Wagner Group and is owned by a Russian entrepreneur who enjoys a close relationship with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Russia's current foreign policy in Africa using Wagner Group has been successful in striking both security and business deals in conflict-affected countries and states run by authoritarian regimes. These target countries also appear to be under sanctions imposed by the United Nations (UN) and/or European countries, and are looking for alternative allies.⁸ Meanwhile, Russia's bilateral political, economic, and diplomatic efforts in more stable and somewhat democratic countries remain less developed compared to the U.S., China, and European countries.

The Wagner Group's background is complex and murky. Its owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, developed close ties to Vladimir Putin while working at the mayor's office in St. Petersburg. Simultaneously, Prigozhin became the owner of chain restaurants and Putin one of his regular customers, earning Prigozhin the nickname "Putin's cook"⁹. Prigozhin followed Putin to Moscow, where he secured catering and cleaning contracts for public schools and eventually for the Ministry of Defense.

In 2017, soon after the U.S. elections which cemented the relationship between Putin and Prigozhin, Russia started showing a strong interest in Africa, channeled through the Wagner Group and Prigozhin. In the face of the already well-established presences of China, the U.S., European countries, and Gulf countries, Russia

6. Sergey Sukhankin, "Sociétés militaires privées russes en Afrique subsaharienne: atouts, limites, conséquences", *Russie.Nei.Visions* n°10, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI), September 2020 https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/sukhankin_societes_militaires_privées_russes_afrique_2020.pdf

7. Henry Foy, "Russia turns on the charm at first Africa summit", *Financial Times*, October 24th, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/b042bd8e-f648-11e9-9ef3-eca8fc8f2d65>

8. Kimberly Marten, "Russia's Back in Africa: Is the Cold War Returning?", *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 42, 2019 - Issue 4, 155-170, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1693105>

9. Neil MacFarquhar, "Yevgeny Prigozhin, Russian Oligarch Indicted by U.S., Is Known as Putin's Cook", *New York Times*, February 16th, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/world/europe/prigozhin-russia-indictment-mueller.html>

was uncertain about the level of success it would be able to achieve in Africa. For instance, trade between China and Africa amounts to \$204 billion annually, and Beijing committed during last Africa-China summit on September 2018 to spending \$60 billion on development projects across the continent¹⁰, which stands in sharp contrast to the \$12.5 billion promised by Russia after the 2019 Sochi summit, and to the \$39 billion committed by the U.S. in 2019.¹¹ Furthermore, Russia is struggling economically because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global drop in oil prices. It is therefore unimaginable that Russia's economic ambitions could match those of China, the U.S., or the European Union, which all have longstanding experience in Africa¹². Another element to consider from a Russian perspective is the growing competition of Turkey, Japan, and Brazil¹³. While achieving political and economic influence in Africa would require considerable financial and diplomatic efforts from Russia, its recent and current efforts appear to be mainly focused on subversion and disinformation—key pillars of the Grey Zone concept¹⁴, a tactic that relies on “using asymmetric tools of political warfare— information operations and cyberattacks—to project power, undermine democratic institutions, and influence public opinion”.¹⁵

Wagner Group soldiers have been present in Africa at least since 2017, most notably in Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Mozambique. Unlike Ukraine and Syria, where Wagner Group mercenaries have been involved in combat, their role in Africa has been more focused on providing security services to African leaders in conflict-affected countries and fragile states, in addition to training local forces that are outside of the scope of other training missions led by the international community¹⁶. Most of the countries where Russian mercenaries have been operating share similar characteristics. They are either under sanctions, governed by dictators, or affected by conflicts¹⁷.

10. Joe Penney, “Vladimir Putin signed dozens of MOUs with African countries this week but can’t match China”, Quartz Africa, October 25th, 2019, <https://qz.com/africa/1735708/vladimir-putins-russia-africa-promises-wont-match-china/>

11. Danielle Paquette, “As the U.S. looks elsewhere, Russia seeks a closer relationship with Africa”, Washington Post, October 25th, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/as-the-us-looks-elsewhere-russia-seeks-a-closer-relationship-with-africa/2019/10/25/7e329124-f69e-11e9-b2d2-1f37c9d82dbb_story.html

12. Kimberly Marten, “Russia’s Back in Africa: Is the Cold War Returning?”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 42, 2019 - Issue 4, 155-170, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1693105>

13. Ibid.

14. Rida Lyammouri and Youssef Eddazi, “Russian Interference in Africa: Disinformation and Mercenaries”, Policy Center for the New South, June 30th, 2020, <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/russian-interference-africa-disinformation-and-mercenaries>

15. Alina Polyakova, “Hearing on “The Global Engagement Center: Leading the United States Government’s Fight Against Global Disinformation Threat”. United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, March 5th, 2020, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/030520_Polyakova_Testimony.pdf

16. Nathaniel Reynolds, “Putin’s Not-So-Secret Mercenaries: Patronage, Geopolitics, and the Wagner Group”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 8th, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/07/08/putin-s-not-so-secret-mercenaries-patronage-geopolitics-and-wagner-group-pub-79442>; see also Brian Katz & Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. “Moscow’s Next Front: Russia’s Expanding Military Footprint in Libya”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 17th, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/moscows-next-front-russias-expanding-military-footprint-libya>

17. Dionne Searcey, “Gems, Warlords and Mercenaries: Russia’s Playbook in Central African Republic”, New York Times, September 30th, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/30/world/russia-diamonds-africa-prigozhin.html>

Libya

In Libya, between 800 and 1,200¹⁸ mercenaries affiliated to the Wagner Group have reportedly traveled to the country since 2017 in order to train, equip, advise, and fight on behalf of General Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA)¹⁹. With their support, territories held by the LNA expanded, occupying most of Eastern Libya. For months until May 2019, the LNA tried to take control of the capital Tripoli from the United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). With Gen. Haftar's failure to capture Tripoli and recent setbacks, Russia moved to try to establish more air presence and control over the strategic Al Jufra airbase. "It is a facility from which the LNA protects Sirte. At the same time, it gives the LNA the option to project military power into the southwest. Should the LNA lose Al Jufra, it may have to retreat hundreds and hundreds of kilometers to the east," said Jalel Harchaoui, Libya expert²⁰. In May 2020, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) showed satellite images of Russian fighter jets being flown in Libya by state-backed Russian private military contractors²¹. Although Wagner's mission to help Haftar capture Tripoli has failed so far, Russian control of a Libyan airbase through its military contractor would be problematic for the U.S. and its European and northern African allies.

The Central African Republic

Simultaneously, Russia has launched multiple security and non-security efforts in the CAR. These activities include training the local army, rebuilding state institutions, and establishing media outlets²². Military trainers, mostly former Russian special forces, were directly in charge of training CAR forces, separately from other international training missions carried out by the UN and European countries. This means that Russia had independent channels into security forces that are not trained according to European and American standards in terms of human rights, civil-military relations, and respect for democratic procedures. This was made possible because, prior to its engagement in the CAR, Russia convinced the UN National Security Council to partially lift sanctions against the country. This allowed European countries, the U.S., China, and Russia to sell weapons to the CAR. With a market share of over 35%, Russia is the top weapons supplier to African countries. Algeria remains the biggest recipient of Russian arms in Africa, followed by Egypt, Sudan, and Angola²³.

Furthermore, Russia has moved to strengthen its relationships and presence in CAR to challenge France. For instance, Russia developed very close relationships with the country's president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra by providing him with security personnel. In parallel, Russia swiftly isolated state officials perceived to be

18. Michelle Nichols, "Up to 1,200 Deployed in Libya by Russian Military Group: U.N. Report," Reuters, May 6th, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-sanctions-idUSKBN22I2XW>

19. Owen Matthews, "Putin's Secret Armies Waged War in Syria – Where Will They Fight Next?," Newsweek, . January 27th, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/2018/01/26/putin-secret-army-waged-war-syria-782762.html>

20. Jalel Harchaoui, Twitter post, June 24th, 2020 https://twitter.com/JMJalel_H/status/1275837624033427456?s=20

21. US Africa Command. "New Evidence of Russian Aircraft Active in Libyan Airspace", June 18th, 2020, <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/32941/new-evidence-of-russian-aircraft-active-in-li>

22. Luke Harding & Jason Burke, "Leaked Documents Reveal Russian Effort to Exert Influence in Africa," The Guardian, June 11th, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/11/leaked-documents-reveal-russian-effort-to-exert-influence-in-africa>

23. Oliver Towfgh Nia, "Russia building military bases in Africa: Report", Anadolu Agency, August 4th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/russia-building-military-bases-in-africa-report-1931550>

close to France²⁴.

Wagner Group mercenaries in the CAR are also in charge of guarding gold mines. The profit the group generates from providing security to gold mines remains unclear. However, these mines are located in conflict areas and the Wagner Group is likely helping launder gold and diamonds to conflict-free zones to avoid the Kimberly Process, which is attempting to limit the flow of gold and diamonds from war zones. As the chair of this year's Kimberly Process, Russia's mission is to help lift the limits on diamond exports from the CAR²⁵.

Sudan

Similar to its mission in the CAR, in January 2019 the Wagner Group sent 100 mercenaries to Sudan to help put down anti-government protests. Their role consisted of guarding government officials, training local forces, and protecting mining sites²⁶. Reportedly, the group was also involved in advising the Sudanese president on other matters, such as economic and financial issues, and how to address ongoing protests²⁷. The Sudanese president was ousted following a coup in April 2019. Russia tried to demonstrate loyalty towards an ally. However, this demonstrated the limitations of Russia's efforts when domestic sociopolitical issues require more than a few mercenaries. Russia's support for the former Sudanese president was not enough to prevent political change in the country.

Mozambique

In September 2019, the first reports emerged of Russia's presence in Mozambique²⁸. Reportedly, Russian soldiers, elite troops, helicopters, and weapons arrived in the country to assist the local government's fight against the Islamic State Central African Province (ISCAP) branch in the northern part of the country²⁹. This came weeks after Mozambique's president thanked Russia for writing off the country's debt, and promised further trade collaboration and lucrative contracts to Russian businesses³⁰. At the same time, the Russian government denied any presence of Russian troops in Mozambique. However, in October 2019 at least five Wagner Group soldiers were killed in an ambush along with Mozambican soldiers, confirming Russia's presence in the country. This also confirmed Russia's dependence on the deployment of cheap

24. Luke Harding & Jason Burke, "Leaked Documents Reveal Russian Effort to Exert Influence in Africa," *The Guardian*, June 11th, 2019.

25. "Russian KP Chair Wants to Expedite Diamond Exports from CAR", *The Diamond Loupe*, February 27th, 2020, <https://www.thediamondloupe.com/rough-market/2020-02-27/russian-kp-chair-wants-expedite-diamond-exports-car>

26. Nathaniel Reynolds, "Putin's Not-So-Secret Mercenaries: Patronage, Geopolitics, and the Wagner Group", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 8th, 2019.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia Prepares a Foothold in Mozambique: Risks and Opportunities", *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 16 Issue: 142, October 15th, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-prepares-a-foothold-in-mozambique-risks-and-opportunities/>

29. *Ibid.*

30. Edward Chesnokov, "President of Mozambique: Russia has Written off 90% of our Debt, we Value Such Partners" (Translated), *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, August 21st, 2019, <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27019.4/4081204/>

private contractors to conflict-affected countries in Africa³¹. Along with Russian mercenaries' involvement, Mozambique witnessed a sharp increase in violence related to violent extremist groups, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies' (ACSS) July 2020 report on violence in Africa³². Since 2017, at least 1,000 people have been killed while 210,000 people have been displaced³³.

Security business

Elsewhere in Africa, Russia continues to exploit opportunities to build economic and security ties. In Guinea, the Russian government backed President Alpha Condé's constitutional change that allowed him to run for a third term.³⁴ Simultaneously, a former Russian Ambassador is now leading a major aluminum company in the country³⁵. In May 2020, Russia announced it will be sending military special advisors to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)³⁶. Russia is also planning to build a military base in the Somaliland coastal town of Berbera, and a naval base in Eritrea³⁷. According to a German Foreign Ministry report cited in August 2020 by German media Bild, the Kremlin is looking to build military bases in six African countries, namely the CAR, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Sudan.³⁸

Disinformation

In addition to its security efforts, Russia has engaged in disinformation campaigns in different parts of Africa. Russia has been using the Wagner Group and disinformation campaigns to prop up regimes and exercise influence across Africa. Russia is not hesitant about employing damaging tactics in host nations to achieve its political goals against the U.S. and European countries.

Russia's military intelligence relied in the past on this tactic to damage the U.S. image among African populations during the Cold War³⁹. The U.S. is not the only disinformation target; Africa has also been

31. "Insurgents Ambush and Kill 20 SDS members and five Russians" (Translated), Carta de Moçambique, October 29th, 2019, <https://cartamaz.com/index.php/politica/item/3469-insurgentes-emboçcam-e-matam-20-membros-das-fds-e-cinco-russos>

32. "Africa's Active Militant Islamist Groups", The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), July 20th, 2020, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-militant-islamist-groups-new-record-violent-activity/>

33. Andre Baptista & Sirwan Kajjo, "9 Civilians Die in Two Attacks in Northern Mozambique", Voice of America, July 30th, 2020, https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/9-civilians-die-two-attacks-northern-mozambique?utm_source=Media+Review+for+July+31%2C+2020+&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+July+31%2C+2020&utm_medium=email

34. "Guinea Constitutional Council clears President Conde's third term bid", Reuters, September 9th, 2020 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-guinea-politics/guinea-constitutional-council-clears-president-condes-third-term-bid-idUSKBN2603G6>

35. Dionne Searcey, "Gems, Warlords and Mercenaries: Russia's Playbook in Central African Republic", New York Times, updated May 4th, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/30/world/russia-diamonds-africa-prigozhin.html>

36. Ibid.

37. Abdi Latif Dahir, "Russia is the Latest World Power Eyeing the Horn of Africa", Quartz Africa, September 3rd, 2018. <https://qz.com/africa/1377434/russias-sergey-lavrov-confirms-plans-for-logistics-base-in-eritrea/>

38. Oliver Towfigh Nia, "Russia building military bases in Africa: Report", Anadolu Agency, August 4th, 2020.

39. Thomas Rid, Active measures: the secret history of disinformation and political warfare. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

a target for Russia's continuing disinformation campaigns⁴⁰⁴¹. For example, "Russia launched several disinformation campaigns to prop up President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and President Alpha Condé of Guinea and set up disinformation campaigns to interfere in elections in Libya and Madagascar. It is also important to note that Russia's coordinated disinformation campaigns targeted other African countries such as Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Mozambique"⁴².

According to the Cyber Policy Center at Stanford University, popular Facebook and Instagram pages run by Russia have been targeting countries listed above⁴³.

- With regards to Libya, these pages focused on supporting General Haftar, while other posts try to evoke a nostalgic sentiment of the Qaddafi era, showing pictures of his son Saif al-Islam. These discreet and difficult to detect accounts and posts have also sought to undermine the UN-recognized government.
- In the CAR, posts concentrated on undermining France's efforts and role in the country.
- In Sudan, fake pages focused on trying to diffuse the protest movement that wanted to oust former President Omar al Bashir and to increase his legitimacy. In Mozambique, just prior to the presidential elections, fake pages were created to support the ruling party⁴⁴.

Despite limited influence, Russia's involvement in these countries shouldn't be underestimated or ignored, as it attempts to score geopolitical wins against the West. Conflict-affected African countries depend on foreign aid, which Russia is unable to offer at the same level as its rivals. As for China, despite some questionable intentions, its economic interest in the continent remains mutually beneficial and key for the continent's economic development. However, opportunities for collaboration between African countries and Russia are not to be excluded if the U.S., France, EU countries, and China abandon some of their commitments to the continent, especially to countries struggling with conflicts and poverty.

Russia's economic and geopolitical interests

Russia is less concerned about General Haftar gaining control over Libya. Rather, its primary motive is establishing a strategic presence to challenge Europe and the U.S. in the Mediterranean. In fact, Russia's Foreign Minister has said that Russia is against Haftar's attempt to control Libya⁴⁵. The Kremlin has reportedly

40. Rida Lyammouri and Youssef Eddazi, "Russian Interference in Africa: Disinformation and Mercenaries", Policy Center for the New South, June 30th, 2020.

41. Clarissa Ward et al., "How Russian meddling is back before 2020 vote", CNN, April 11th, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/12/world/russia-ghana-troll-farms-2020-ward/index.html>,

42. Rida Lyammouri and Youssef Eddazi, "Russian Interference in Africa: Disinformation and Mercenaries", Policy Center for the New South, June 30th, 2020.

43. Shelby Grossman et al., "Blurring the Lines of Media Authenticity: Prigozhin-linked Group Funding Libyan Broadcast Media," Cyber Policy Center at Stanford University, March 20th, 2020 <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/libya-prigozhin>

44. Ibid.

45. "Russia Disapproves Haftar Grab in Libya: Ifax Cites Foreign Minister", Reuters, April 20th, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-russia-lavrov/russia-disapproves-of-haftars-power-grab-in-libya-ifax-cites-foreign-minister-idUSKCN22A23J>

been establishing contact with other influential political leaders in Libya following Haftar's decline⁴⁶.

Similarly to other global powers, Russia is keen on securing access to raw materials through investment. Natural-resources rich African countries also provide Russia and its private companies with golden opportunities to secure contracts. In fact, Russian companies have signed contracts with multiple African countries in the mining sector, for minerals including coltan, cobalt, gold, and diamonds.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for Russian companies and the Russian government in general to cement their relationships in countries where they are present and have interests. While most Russian aid has been directed towards Syria, Russia has also delivered medical supplies to the DRC, Guinea, Algeria, and Egypt⁴⁷. In Sudan, the Meroe Gold company delivered medical supplies in April 2020 as part of its social responsibility obligations towards the Sudanese population⁴⁸.

46. Kirill Semenov, "Is Russia Pulling Support from Libyan Strongman Hifter?" Al-Monitor, May, 13th, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/05/russia-pull-support-hifter-libya-gna-army-aguila-saleh-issa.html> ; see also Abdulkader Assad, "HoR Speaker Says his Political Initiative is Drafted by Russia, Warns of Imminent Defeat in South Tripoli", Libya Observer, April 30th, 2020 <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/hor-speaker-says-his-political-initiative-drafted-russia-warns-imminent-defeat-south-tripoli>

47. Amy Mackinnon, "Russia's Shadowy Mercenaries Offer Humanitarian Aid to Clean Image", Foreign Policy, July 22nd, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/22/wagner-group-russia-syria-libya-mercenaries/>

48. "Russian Company Meroe Gold Delivering Aid to Fight Covid-19" (Translated from Arabic), Suna-sd.net, April 19th, 2020, <https://suna-sd.net/ar/single?id=657728>

Turkey's expanding footprint in Africa⁴⁹

Several factors explain Turkey's extensive engagement with Africa: the need to uncover new economic opportunities and its ambition to establish itself as a major regional power and global player by pursuing a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy. On the occasion of Africa Day on May 25, 2020, Mevlut Cavusoglu, the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote a highly publicized article emphasizing the importance and "priority" Turkey gives to strengthening its relationship with the continent.

Turkey-Africa relations have long been focused on a wide range of humanitarian interventions, development aid, a rhetoric presenting Turkey as an alternative for economic development in contrast to former colonial powers, and religious diplomacy. But Turkish interests in Africa have also taken a security turn, starting with the opening of a military base in Mogadishu in September 2017, where hundreds of Turkish soldiers are now training Somali government forces. Also in 2017, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reached a deal with Sudan's former President Omar al-Bashir to transform Suakin Island—located in the Red Sea south of Egypt and in front of the Arabian Peninsula—into a major tourism hub, by signing a 99-year lease. This was followed by numerous claims that Ankara was planning to station Turkish troops there. There have also been ongoing discussions about possible Turkish military use of Libya's Misrata naval base and Al Watiya air base, which was recaptured in May 2020 by the Turkish-backed Government of National Accord (GNA)⁵⁰. On July 21, 2020, Turkey also signed a Military Training Cooperation Agreement with Niger, which could give Turkey the possibility to build a military base in Niger.

Turkey's extensive involvement in Libya⁵¹, which is closely linked to its involvement with Middle Eastern countries, has further highlighted Ankara's desire for greater external projection of power. Turkey wants to position itself as a leader of the Muslim world. The Turkey-Qatar Axis—both countries supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood networks—has been fighting to extend its influence in the face of bitter regional rivalries with Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. In addition, Turkey is providing support to seven of the several peacekeeping missions present in Africa, which the Turkish government perceives as a useful instrument "to strengthen trade relations with particular African states"⁵². Turkey is also attempting to emerge as a "trusted and reliable mediator" and "arbitrator" in local conflicts in the Horn of Africa⁵³. For

49. See also: Maha Skah, "La Turquie en Afrique : une stratégie d'affirmation", Policy Center for the New South, May 5th, 2020 <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/la-turquie-en-afrique-une-strat%C3%A9gie-d%E2%80%99affirmation>

50. Orhan Coskun and Tuvan Gumrukcu, "Turkey eyes Libya bases for lasting military foothold", Reuters, June 15th, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-turkey-russia/turkey-eyes-libya-bases-for-lasting-military-foothold-source-idUSKBN23M1D9>

51. On November 28, 2019, Faye al-Sarraj and Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed two memorandums of understanding, one on military cooperation and the other on maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Source: Kaan Bozdogan, "Turkey, Libya sign 2 memoranda of understanding", Anadolu Agency, November 18th, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkey-libya-sign-2-memoranda-of-understanding/1657615>

52. In November 2014, Turkey announced plans to send peacekeepers to participate in UN-backed missions in the Central African Republic and Mali. Source: "Turkey Takes Pragmatic Approach to International Peacekeeping", World Politics Review, January 20th, 2015, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/14895/turkey-takes-pragmatic-approach-to-international-peacekeeping>

53. Abdirashid Diriye Kalmoy, "Turkey's Reliable Diplomacy in the Somalia-Somaliland Talks", Politics Today, March 20th, 2019, <https://politicstoday.org/turkeys-reliable-diplomacy-in-the-somalia-somaliland-talks/>

example, after establishing a special relationship with Somalia⁵⁴ in 2011 through aid and investment, Turkey facilitated discussions between Somalia and Somaliland, resulting in a series of talks between 2013 and 2015. Since then, Ankara has been trying to rekindle the stalled talks, even “appointing a special envoy in 2018 to spearhead the effort”⁵⁵.

Another part of Turkey’s African agenda is the backlash against the Gülen movement (also referred to as Hizmet), which was very active in Africa through educational and humanitarian channels. It is well organized “community of people” inspired by the US-based Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen that was blamed for orchestrating the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.⁵⁶ “Following the July 2016 coup attempt, Ankara began taking control of the formerly private Gülenist schools in Africa by establishing a new public institution (the Turkish Maarif Foundation) and placing the schools under its administration”⁵⁷.

54. Turkey and Qatar have been supporting the central government in Mogadishu, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been backing local governments in the federal states of Somaliland, Puntland and Jubaland—which are all seeking independence from Somalia. Source: Stasa Salacanian, “Saudi Arabia and Qatar Race to Increase Their Influence in Somalia”, *The New Arab*, September 20th, 2019, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2019/9/20/the-saudi-arabia-qatar-rift-over-somalia>.

55. Omar S. Mahmood, “The Middle East’s Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa: Has the involvement of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Turkey helped or hurt East Africa?”, *The United States Institute of Peace*, January 28th, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/middle-east-complicated-engagement-horn-africa>

56. “Turkey Coup: What Is Gulen Movement and What Does It Want?”, *BBC News*, July 21st, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36855846>

57. Yusuf Kenan Küçük, “Turkey-Africa Relations: Setbacks Amidst Advances”, *Wilson Center*, February 21st, 2020, <https://africaupclose.wilsoncenter.org/turkey-africa-relations-setbacks-amidst-advances/>

Box 1: Making sense of Turkey's involvement in Libya

Turkey continues to provide military support to forces loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya, supplying them with weapons and military equipment, causing a reversal of the balance of power to the detriment of the Libyan National Army (LNA). Turkey's opportunistic involvement in Libya can be explained by four main factors.

1. Turkey's daring foreign policy aims at increasing the country prestige by positioning itself as a key peace broker, and influencing the outcome of any political solution that might emerge in Libya.
2. Eastern Mediterranean gas is also an important component of Turkey's foreign and security policy in Libya. In November 2019, Ankara concluded a deal with Libya's GNA that delineated their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in such a way that it divides the Mediterranean Sea into two sections, with Turkey claiming the waters east of the line right up to the coast of Cyprus and beyond. This enables Ankara to completely ignore Greece's maritime border with Cyprus, and serves the purpose of hindering efforts led by Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, and Greece to export natural gas to Europe through a pipeline or on LNG vessels⁵⁸.
3. Domestically, Turkey's Libya expedition can also be understood as an attempt by the AKP party to bolster national support against "an existential security threat" – an approach that started with the invasion of northeastern Syria in October 2019.

Turkey's intervention in Libya is also driven by economic considerations and the country's ambitions for "lasting cooperation with Tripoli on oil exploration, construction, banking and manufacturing"⁵⁹.

The countries have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost trade and economic ties, and Turkish firms are expected to play an important role in rebuilding the country. For example, Turkish firms won a tender to build 3,000 prefabricated houses in the Libyan capital Tripoli⁶⁰. Prior to Qaddafi's fall, trade relations between the two countries followed a positive trend for four decades, especially in the construction sector⁶¹. It is worth noting that Qaddafi agreed to the use of Libyan oil exports to repay debts to Turkish contractors⁶².

58. Israel, Greece, and Cyprus signed a €6 billion gas pipeline deal as part of the EastMed energy project. The venture aims to bypass Turkey and eventually supply up to 10% of Europe's natural gas. Source: Angeliki Koutantou, "Greece, Israel, Cyprus sign EastMed gas pipeline deal", Reuters, January 2nd, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-cyprus-israel-pipeline-idUSKBN1Z1OR5>

59. Orhan Coskun et al., "Turkish business group plans Libya trip to set post-war plan, sources say", Reuters, July 1st, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-turkey/turkish-business-group-plans-libya-trip-to-set-post-war-plan-sources-say-idUSKBN2425FH>

60. Betül Alakent, "Turkish firms to build 3,000 prefabricated houses in Libyan capital Tripoli", Daily Sabah, July 3rd, 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/turkish-firms-to-build-3000-prefabricated-houses-in-libyan-capital-tripoli/news>

61. "Libya was among the first countries in which Turkish contractors became active abroad (...) When the uprising against Qaddafi's regime started in 2011, more than 200 Turkish firms were carrying out more than 200 projects at more than 100 Libyan construction sites, worth a total of \$2.46 billion". Source: Tankut Öztas and Ferhat Polat, "Turkey - Libya Relations: Economic and Strategic Imperatives", TRT World Research Center, December 2019, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/images/files/reports/Turkey--Libya-Relations-Economic-and-Strategic-Imperatives-r5.pdf>

62. Ian Seccombe and Richard Lawless, "Between Western Europe and the Middle East : Changing patterns of Turkish Labour Migration", *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 2, no 1 (1986): 3758. <https://doi.org/10.3406/remi.1986.994>. Cited in Tankut Öztas and Ferhat Polat, "Turkey - Libya Relations: Economic and Strategic Imperatives", TRT World Research Center, December 2019.

Past two decades: the quest for increased visibility on the African continent

Turkish-African relations date back to the time of the Ottoman Empire, that is, between the seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century. Yet, for the past two decades, relations with Africa have been one of the main orientations of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey adopted a dedicated plan in 1998 to expand relations with African countries, followed by the organization of numerous cooperation summits to promote trade. A first strategy was adopted by Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2003, followed by the milestone Turkey-Africa International Summit of 2005, and the first visit of a Turkish prime minister to sub-Saharan Africa, with two highly symbolic visits to Ethiopia and South Africa. In the same year, Turkey obtained observer status in the African Union (AU) and opened the first African office of its agency for international cooperation and development (TIKA) in Addis Ababa. Today, TIKA has about twenty offices across the continent and provides capacity building services in various fields, including health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure development. In 2008, the first Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit was held in Istanbul and Turkey was declared a strategic partner by the African Union. Around the same time, Turkey became a member of the African Development Bank (AfDB). In 2014, the second Turkish-African Cooperation Summit was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, followed by the announcement of a plan covering the period 2015-2019 that aimed at further promoting Turkish-African cooperation. The third such summit was scheduled in April 2020, but was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2008 and 2018, Turkey almost quadrupled the number of its embassies and consulates on the continent, with 42 representations to date. The Turkish Parliament adopted a law on March 19, 2020, providing increasing Turkey's capital subscription to the AfDB to around \$800 million.⁶³

Active diplomacy

Over the years, President Erdogan has become known as the most active non-African leader on the continent. During his first four years as Turkish president, he visited over 25 African countries and hosted around 30 African heads of state in Turkey, including from Sudan, Senegal, Djibouti, Egypt, Mauritania, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Nigeria⁶⁴.

Only a few days after the Turkish parliament's decision to approve the military deployment to Libya in early January 2020, the Turkish president embarked on an African tour visiting Senegal, Gambia, and Algeria. This visit took place amidst growing tensions between Turkey and Morocco. Trade volumes between the two countries have been consistently rising over the last couple of years, and reached \$3 billion in 2019. However, Morocco asked for a review of the free trade deal it struck with Turkey in 2004, which is reportedly responsible for Morocco's \$2 billion trade deficit.⁶⁵

63. Serkan Demirtaş, "Turkey's Sudden Pledge to Africa Hits \$800 Million", *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 23rd, 2020, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/turkeys-sudden-pledge-to-africa-hits-800-million-153173>

64. Joséphine Dedet, "Infographie : la Turquie en Afrique, une influence grandissante", *Jeune Afrique*, March 23rd, 2018, Last modified August 1st, 2018, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/544975/politique/infographie-ambassades-vols-aeriens-bureaux-de-la-tika-quelle-est-la-presence-turque-en-afrique/>

65. "Le déficit commercial avec la Turquie frôle désormais les 20 milliards de DH", *Media 24*, June 29th, 2020, <https://www.medias24.com/le-deficit-commercial-avec-la-turquie-frole-desormais-les-20-milliards-de-dh-11505.html>

In July 2020, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu's went on a three-nation West African tour, during which he visited Niger, Togo, and Equatorial Guinea. On July 22, he officially opened Ankara's first embassy in Equatorial Guinea's capital Malabo. These visits by high-level Turkish officials have resulted in numerous contracts for Turkish companies, including the Summa construction conglomerate.

Economic relations

In December 2019, during a meeting organized by the Turkish Council for Foreign Economic Relations, Minister of Commerce Ruhsar Pekcan announced that "2020 will be the year of Africa for Turkey". This announcement showed the country's continued economic interest in Africa, which was the destination for about \$16 billion of Turkish exports in 2019. As for the airline sector, the expansion of Turkish Airlines, which now serves more than fifty destinations on the African continent, quickly enabled the country to gain a head start over its competitors. A Turkey-Africa Economy and Business Forum has been announced in October 2020 in Istanbul.⁶⁶

Free-trade agreements

Turkey benefits from free trade agreements (FTAs) with four African countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritius, and Egypt. Agreements with Ghana and Sudan are under approval, while FTA negotiations are underway with Libya, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon, Chad, Algeria, and South Africa⁶⁷.

Infrastructure development

Turkish companies have won major infrastructure contracts in Africa, such as the contract to build the Ethiopian Awash Weldiya Railway, estimated at more than \$1 billion, in addition to airport infrastructures across the continent⁶⁸. Since the 1990s, Turkish construction companies have reportedly earned over \$10 billion from 223 projects in sub-Saharan Africa⁶⁹. Several Turkish construction companies already participate in several large-scale projects. In Senegal, Turkish groups have been awarded the management of the new Blaise-Diagne international airport in Dakar, and in Guinea a concession contract has been signed between the Port of Conakry and Alport Conakry SA, a subsidiary of the company owned by the family of the Turkish Minister of Finance and son-in-law of the President, Berat Albayrak⁷⁰. The same company is also in charge of the port and the international airport of Mogadishu, where it recovers 45% of traffic revenues. The latest Turkey Africa Construction Summit was held in Istanbul in September 2019.

66. Merve Ozlem Cakir, "Turkey to prioritize Africa in 2020", Anadolu Agency, January 16th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-to-prioritize-africa-in-2020/1704440>

67. "Turkey now mulls logistics centres in Africa", The Africa Logistics, December 10th, 2019, <https://www.theafricalogistics.com/2019/12/10/turkey-now-mulls-logistics-centres-in-african/>

68. Moustapha Abdelkerim Idriss, "Turkey-Africa partnership: A development-oriented approach", Anadolu Agency, January 8th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/analysis-turkey-africa-partnership-a-development-oriented-approach/1696640>

69. Mark Andersen, "Construction : comment Ankara pousse ses pions en Afrique", Jeune Afrique, Octobre 24th, 2016, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/365419/economie/construction-ankara-pousse-pions-afrique/>

70. Simon Petite, "La Turquie renforce ses positions en Afrique". Le Temps, January 30th, 2020, <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/turquie-renforce-positions-afrique>

Soft Power

Development cooperation

Through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Turkey has become a key development partner in Africa, although only 2% of Turkish official development aid (ODA) was allocated to Africa in 2018. However, Somalia (\$29 million) and Sudan (\$25 million) were amongst the top 10 recipients of Turkish aid during the same year⁷¹. With 20 offices in Africa, TIKA focuses on capacity building for health, education, agriculture, environment, and infrastructure. For example, the Turkish government has opened “maternal and child care centers in Niger, women’s shelters in Cameroon and a vocational training center in Madagascar”⁷². Turkey’s presence on the continent is also visible via a number of other organizations, such as the Turkish Red Crescent and and Sen de Gel⁷³.

Education

The education sector is a key driver of Turkish soft power in Africa. Turkey offers generous scholarships throughout the continent. In 2018, over 11,000 young Africans were trained in Turkish universities⁷⁴. In many African countries, the Gülenist movement had established itself as a privileged interlocutor by introducing “a Turkish presence in the form of private schools”, aiming to train new African elites⁷⁵. In 2015, there were around 100 Gülenist schools in Africa, in nearly 40 African countries⁷⁶. However, the crackdown on the movement since 2013 (and in particular since the 2016 coup attempt) marked a turning point. Ankara believes that “by promising free education for the children of the political elite, high-ranking military officials and bureaucrats”, the Gülen movement is looking “to establish a network of high-profile individuals” in African countries⁷⁷. With the establishment of the Maarif Foundation directly under the authority of then Prime Minister Binalı Yıldırım, the Turkish government exerted pressure on number of African governments in order to regain control over these schools. Some 20 countries are said to have

71. “Development Co-operation Profiles 2020: Turkey”, OCDEiLibrary, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Accessed September 1st, 2020, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/714276e8-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&_csp_=b14d4f60505d057b456dd1730d8fcea3&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=chapter

72. Asya Akca, “Neo-Ottomanism: Turkey’s foreign policy approach to Africa”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 9th, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/neo-ottomanism-turkeys-foreign-policy-approach-africa>

73. Dilara Aslan, “Turkish NGOs, state agencies reach out to Africa with development programs”, Daily Sabah, September 11th, 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2019/09/11/turkish-ngos-state-agencies-reach-out-to-africa-with-development-programs#:~:text=Considering%20this%20humanitarian%20emergency%2C%20various,people%20in%20Africa%20through%20regional>

74. Moustapha Abdelkerim Idriss, “Turkey-Africa partnership: A development-oriented approach”, Anadolu Agency, January 8th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/analysis-turkey-africa-partnership-a-development-oriented-approach/1696640>

75. Bayram Balci, “Les écoles de la mouvance Gülen en Afrique : Quel avenir après le coup d’État avorté en Turquie ?”, Centre de Recherches Internationales de Sciences Po, October 2016, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/enjeumondial/fr/odr/les-ecoles-de-la-mouvance-guelen-en-afrique-quel-avenir-apres-le-coup-d-etat-avorte-en-turquie.html>

76. Jacques Deveaux, “Erdogan a obtenu la fin des écoles Gülen d’Afrique”. Franceinfo, August 17th, 2018, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/politique-africaine/erdogan-a-obtenu-la-fin-des-ecoles-gulen-d-afrique_3054699.html

77. “Gülen-linked schools in Africa: A lucrative way to exercise political influence, garner economic power”, Daily Sabah, July 14th, 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2018/07/14/gulen-linked-schools-in-africa-a-lucrative-way-to-exercise-political-influence-garner-economic-power>

yielded to Ankara's demands, despite some initial resistance from countries such as Kenya and Nigeria⁷⁸.

Religion

Turkey also refers to its Muslim identity in forging alliances with Muslim African countries. For example, Turkey brought together over 50 African Muslim religious leaders in Istanbul in October 2019, among whom were Sheikh Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu (Chief Imam of Ghana) and Moumin Hassan Barreh, Minister of Muslim Affairs and Culture of Djibouti. Part of this religious diplomacy is carried out by Turkey's Directorate for Religious Affairs (Diyamet). Diyanet is building mosques and schools in several African countries, including in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad. In Djibouti, the largest mosque in East Africa was funded entirely by Turkey and built in the Ottoman style. In Algiers, Turkey's state development aid agency restored the Ketchaoua Mosque, built during Ottoman rule in the seventeenth century⁷⁹. Furthermore, Turkey has been welcoming African students for several years to imam schools and theological faculties. As such, Turkish schools and mosques are thus two key instruments of Turkish ruling party the AKP's soft power in Africa.

Ankara has seized the coronavirus crisis as an opportunity to advance its geostrategic goals by offering humanitarian aid and medical supplies to countries severely hit by the pandemic. Casting itself as a country ready to share its resources and its experience, Turkey has led an active aid diplomacy effort throughout Africa. On April 24, 2020, Turkish media reported that Ankara had sent aid and medical supplies to more than 50 countries, including Libya, Tunisia, Somalia, Guinea, and Lesotho⁸⁰.

78. Jenny Norton and Cagil Kasapoglu, "Turkey's post-coup crackdown hits Gulen schools worldwide", BBC News, September 22nd, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37422822>

79. Ali Ihsan Cam and Sorwar Alam, "Turkey restores symbolic mosque in Algeria", Anadolu Agency, December 16th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/culture-and-art/turkey-restores-symbolic-mosque-in-algeria/1006745>

80. Jeyhun Aliyev, "Turkey sent aid to at least 57 countries to fight virus", Anadolu Agency, July 24th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/latest-on-coronavirus-outbreak/turkey-sent-aid-to-at-least-57-countries-to-fight-virus/1820195>

Israel in Africa

Africa represents numerous political, economic, and strategic opportunities for Israel. In recent years, Israel has pursued a policy of rapprochement, started by establishing non-official relations, and worked towards expanding and strengthening its presence on the continent, culminating with Benjamin Netanyahu's participation in an ECOWAS summit in 2017, and the 2019 restoration of relations with Chad.

There are several main motivators behind Israel's increased diplomatic activity in Africa. First, it is part of a foreign policy strategy seeking to win support for Israel and increasing its political standing in the world. Although Israel has ties with 42 African states, it only has eleven embassies on the continent, in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Cameroon, Angola, and Rwanda⁸¹. The latest Israeli embassy in Africa was inaugurated in Kigali in April 2019 and symbolizes "Israel's return to Africa"⁸².

In particular, Israel has been conducting outreach towards Muslim-majority African countries, which it perceives as key to its own security interests. Israel wants to avoid at all costs a return to the situation of the 1970s, when several African states sided with Arab positions. Second, similarly to other emerging powers, Israel is tapping into the continent's economic potential. In particular, it is winning opportunities pertaining to the arms trade and specialized security technologies, agribusiness, and mining⁸³. Finally, Israel is looking to monitor Iranian influence and Iranian presence in Africa, benefitting from strong support from the US. Despite the peace deals it has reached with Egypt and more recently with the UAE, the African East coast and the Nile basin remain strategic areas for the security of Israel that will drive its Africa policy.

81. Kwame Bofo Arthur et al. "Israel and Africa Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future", The Africa Institute of American Jewish Committee and The Harold Hartog School of Tel Aviv University, May 2006, https://secdip.tau.ac.il/sites/socsci-english.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/government/pdf2/2006/3-%20IsraelAfrica.pdf

82. "Israel inaugurates embassy in Rwanda", Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 1st, 2019, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2019/Pages/Israel-inaugurates-embassy-in-Rwanda-1-April-2019.aspx>

83. Dale Sprusansky, "Israel in Africa: Security, Migration, Interstate Politics", Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, The American Educational Trust (AET), August-September 2020, <https://www.wrmea.org/2020-august-september/israel-in-africa-security-migration-interstate-politics.html>

Box 2: Israel-Africa Relations : Latest Developments

- In July 2016, Benjamin Netanyahu went on “a historic visit to Africa, after three decades in which no Israeli prime minister has visited the continent”⁸⁴. Ahead of his trip to Africa, his Cabinet approved a 50 million shekel plan to strengthen economic ties and cooperation with African countries in several areas, including technology, security, and health⁸⁵.
- Netanyahu visited Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, where he made a speech before the Ethiopian Parliament. During his visit to Kenya, President Kenyatta pledged to help Israel gain observer status at the African Union⁸⁶.
- A proposal to open offices of Israel’s Agency for Development Cooperation (MASHAV) in all four countries was also approved, along with an announcement of \$13 million to promote economic relations and cooperation in the region⁸⁷.
- In December 2016, Senegal co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemned the construction of illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Subsequently, Netanyahu recalled Israel’s ambassador to Dakar⁸⁸.
- Netanyahu was scheduled to return to the region in October 2016 to attend an Africa-Israel summit in Togo and meet with leaders of 25 African countries. However, the Israel-Africa summit was postponed because of domestic unrest in the host country. A number of African countries reportedly also threatened to boycott the event, in protest at Israel’s actions in Palestine.
- In 2017, Israeli officials signed a memorandum of understanding to invest \$1 billion by 2021 to advance green energy and power projects across the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)⁸⁹. The partnership was part of the \$7 billion, five-year Power Africa project, started by the Obama administration. It’s aimed at creating 60 million new connections in Africa by 2030⁹⁰.
- In July 2017, Benjamin Netanyahu participated in the 51st Summit of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where he met ten African presidents and vowed to strengthen ties with the continent. He sent a strong diplomatic message, saying that “Israel is coming back to Africa and Africa is coming

84. “PM Netanyahu leaving on historic visit to Africa”, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 3rd, 2016, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2016/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-leaving-on-historic-visit-to-Africa-3-July-2016.aspx>

85. “PM Netanyahu to submit plan to strengthen economic ties and cooperation with Africa”, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 24th, 2016, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2016/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-to-submit-plan-to-strengthen-economic-ties-and-cooperation-with-Africa-24-June-2016.aspx>

86. Raphael Ahren, “Netanyahu to attend inauguration of Kenyan president”, The Time of Israel, November 23rd, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-to-attend-inauguration-of-kenyan-president/>

87. Fahad Yasii , “Israeli Penetration into East Africa Objectives and Risks”, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, September 29th, 2016, https://studies.aljazeera.net/sites/default/files/articles/reports/documents/3397a4faf65c48c8923d5ee0b8f06fdf_100.pdf

88. Ramzy Baroud, “Israel’s scramble for Africa: Selling water, weapons and lies”, Al Jazeera, July 23rd, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/israel-scramble-africa-selling-water-weapons-lies-190722184120192.html>

89. Grace Wermenbol, “Israel seeks new inroads on the African continent”, Middle East Institute, February 19th, 2019, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/israel-seeks-new-inroads-african-continent>

90. Abdi Latif Dahir, “Israel is making a strong play for Africa—but it’s about more than just geopolitics”, Quartz Africa, December 11th, 2017, <https://qz.com/africa/1152285/israels-foray-into-africa-is-driven-by-economic-interests-as-much-as-geopolitics/>

back to Israel⁹¹. As a result of these visits, four new African embassies opened in Israel⁹². However, Israel's presence at the ECOWAS summit was criticized by Senegal, Niger, and Nigeria. Morocco, which was about to make its big comeback at the African Union, canceled its participation for fear that it would be assimilated to normalization with Israel⁹³.

- In 2017, members of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) adopted a resolution calling for the downgrade of the embassy in Israel in order to draw attention to Israel's settlement policy⁹⁴.
- During the December 2017 vote on the UN resolution condemning the U.S. decision to name Jerusalem the capital of Israel, the majority of Africans voted in favor of the text. Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda abstained, and only Togo opposed the UN resolution⁹⁵. In May 2018, a dozen African countries were present for the United States' relocation of its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The twelve countries were: Angola, Cameroon, Congo Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.
- Meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2018, Benjamin Netanyahu and Rwandan President Paul Kagame announced the commencement of direct flights between Tel Aviv and Kigali and the opening of diplomatic missions in both countries⁹⁶. Netanyahu reportedly asked for Kagame's assistance in advancing ties with other African countries⁹⁷. On the other hand, According to The Jerusalem Post, former Israeli officials have been hired by Rwanda to help the country join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and lobby on Rwanda's behalf⁹⁸.
- In 2019, during a visit to Chad, Benjamin Netanyahu renewed its ties with the central African nation, which had broken its relations with Israel in 1972⁹⁹. More recently, on September 8th, 2020 a Chadian delegation met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu Eli Cohen in Jerusalem to discuss possible exchange of envoys. In a separate statement, Israeli Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen said the government would send a business delegation to develop possible mineral projects in Chad¹⁰⁰.
- In February 2020, as the Arab League rejected the Trump administration's Israeli-Palestinian peace

91. Francis Abugbilla, "How Benjamin Netanyahu is resetting Israel-Africa relations", Stroum Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, July 27th, 2020, <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/israel-hebrew/benjamin-netanyahu-resetting-israel-africa-relations/>

92. Grace Wermenbol, "Israel seeks new inroads on the African continent", Middle East Institute, February 19th, 2019.

93. Alhadji Boubou Nouhou, "Une normalisation freinée par la question palestinienne: Lente progression d'Israël en Afrique", Le Monde Diplomatique, December 2017, <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2017/12/NOUHOU/58170>

94. Sella Oneko and Martina Schwikowski, "Israel and South Africa: A 'downgraded' relationship?", Deutsche Welle, April 8th, 2019 <https://www.dw.com/en/israel-and-south-africa-a-downgraded-relationship/a-48256145>

95. Abdur Rahman Alfa Shaban, "Twelve African countries joined U.S. opening of embassy in Jerusalem", Africa News, Last modified May 15th, 2018, <https://www.africanews.com/2018/05/15/twelve-african-countries-joined-us-opening-of-embassy-in-jerusalem/>

96. Grace Wermenbol, "Israel seeks new inroads on the African continent", Middle East Institute, February 19th, 2019

97. Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu says Israel, Rwanda to open mutual embassies", The Times of Israel, September 29th, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-says-israel-rwanda-to-open-mutual-embassies/>

98. Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Former Israeli officials helping Rwanda join OECD", The Jerusalem Post, August 28th, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/exclusive-former-israeli-officials-helping-rwanda-join-oecd-565945>

99. "Israel, Chad renew diplomatic ties, says Benjamin Netanyahu", Al Jazeera, January 20th, 2019 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/israeli-pm-benjamin-netanyahu-heads-chad-restore-relations-190120071759341.html>

100. "Netanyahu and Chad official discuss possible exchange of envoys - Israeli statement", Reuters, September 8th, 2020 <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-israel-chad-idUKKBN25Z2NE>

plan, Sudanese transitional leader Abdel-Fattah Burhan met with Netanyahu in Entebbe, Uganda. This was described as a major diplomatic breakthrough for Israel and Sudan “who were once sworn enemies and still technically at war”¹⁰¹. Following the revolution and destitution of Omar al Bashir, Israel viewed Sudan’s economic hardship as an opportunity for “achieving major political wins at minimal cost”¹⁰² and for intelligence sharing with a country that is strategically positioned in the Horn of Africa astride the Sahel and Red Sea.¹⁰³ The meeting with Netanyahu earned Abdel Fattah Burhan an invitation to Washington from U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, while Sudan hoped that normalizing ties with Israel would convince the U.S. to lift its designation of State Sponsor of Terrorism, which dates back to 1993.¹⁰⁴ After Khartoum expressed interest in a peace deal with Israel, Pompeo briefly visited Khartoum in late August 2020, in the first visit there by a US Secretary of State in 15 years.¹⁰⁵ Another sign of warming ties between Sudan and Israel was the permission for a commercial Israeli airliner to fly over Sudan in June 2020¹⁰⁶.

A brief historical overview

From the beginning, relations between Israel and Africa have oscillated between reluctance and rapprochement¹⁰⁷. Ghana was the first African country to officially recognize Israel in 1956¹⁰⁸. In 1958, Golda Meir, then Israel’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and “the architect of Israel’s legendary technical assistance program in Africa”¹⁰⁹, went on an historic African tour that had a strong economic dimension: cooperation agreements were signed with Ethiopia, Uganda, Zaire (future Democratic Republic of Congo), Kenya, Rwanda, Chad, and the Central African Republic¹¹⁰. Her visit led her to set up of MASHAV, “a Centre

101. Raphael Ahren, “Netanyahu meets leader of Sudan; former foes to move toward normalization”, The Times of Israel, February 3rd, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/sudan-leader-meets-netanyahu-former-foes-to-move-toward-normalization/>

102. Alex De Waal, “Africa and Israel: Re-Opening the Debate”, African Arguments, June 25th, 2020, <https://africanarguments.org/2020/06/25/africa-and-israel-re-opening-the-debate/>

103. Cameron Hudson, “the White House Wants Peace with Sudan. Congress wants Khartoum to pay”, Foreign Policy, September 25th

104. Sudan is one of four nations listed as a “state sponsor of terrorism” by the US, severely impeding investment as businesses worry of legal risks in dealing with the country. Source: “Pompeo seeks Sudan breakthrough before US presidential election”, Al Jazeera, September 23rd, 2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/23/us-seeks-breakthrough-on-sudan-before-election> and Marc Lynch, “Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the Divides”, The Institute for Middle East & Colombia School of International and Public Affairs, June 2020, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FINAL-POMEPS_Studies_40_Web-rev.pdf

105. “Pompeo seeks Sudan breakthrough before US presidential election”, Al Jazeera, September 23rd, 2020

106. Raphael Ahren and Michael Bachner, “In fresh sign of warming ties, Israeli airliner enters Sudan’s airspace”, The Times of Israel, June 4th, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-fresh-sign-of-warming-ties-israeli-airliner-enters-sudans-airspace/>

107. Alhadji, Bouba Nouhou, “Une normalisation freinée par la question palestinienne: Lente progression d’Israël en Afrique”, Le Monde Diplomatique, December 2017, <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2017/12/NOUHOU/58170>

108. Abdelraouf, Arnaout, “Israel eyeing ties with Africa in exchange for know-how”, Anadolu Agency, November 27, 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/israel-eyeing-ties-with-africa-in-exchange-for-know-how/1322963>

109. Yosef, Israel Abramowitz, “The soul of Israel’s schizophrenic Africa strategy”, The Jerusalem Post, October 25, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/magazine/an-enlightened-africa-strategy-605550>

110. Alhadji, Bouba Nouhou, “Une normalisation freinée par la question palestinienne: Lente progression d’Israël en Afrique”, Le Monde Diplomatique, December 2017,

for International Cooperation within Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs”¹¹¹.

According to a release of CIA files, in the 1960s, Israel could count on sub-Saharan African states’ support in international forums: “At the time, most African states had been independent for only a short time and Israel’s modest technical and military assistance was valuable to undertake military and economic development efforts”¹¹². However, after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, almost all African states (except Malawi, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, and South Africa) severed their diplomatic relations with Israel as it began to be perceived as a colonizing state¹¹³. Another reason behind African countries’ severing of relations with Israel was the pressure exerted by Arab countries that promised cheap oil and financial aid, as well as alignment with an OAU (Organization of African Unity) resolution adopted under the aegis of Egypt¹¹⁴. Others, including Kenya, Ghana, and Ivory Coast, maintained contact with Israel through interest sections in third-country embassies¹¹⁵. For example, “an Israeli interest section was hosted in the Swiss Embassy in Ghana”¹¹⁶.

In the 1970s, Israel became increasingly associated with imperialism and racism, a perception that was compounded by its close military and trade ties with South Africa’s apartheid regime. Since the end of the apartheid and the coming to power of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994, Pretoria has displayed “systematic diplomatic support for Palestine at a multilateral level”¹¹⁷. In 2013, Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled plans to attend memorial events for the late South African leader Nelson Mandela¹¹⁸.

The “African embargo of Israel”¹¹⁹ started to ease after the 1978 Camp David Accords and the start of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel in 1980. Following Zaire’s lead, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon, and Togo renewed diplomatic ties with Israel in 1983, 1986, 1986, and 1987, respectively. The subsequent signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 gradually led other African countries to reestablish ties with Israel, including Sierra Leone, Ghana, Eritrea, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Cameroon, Angola, Liberia, South Africa, and South Sudan (following secession from Sudan)¹²⁰. By

111. “Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation”, Embassy of Israel in Serbia, Accessed September 1st, 2020, <https://embassies.gov.il/beograd/Departments/CoursesandScholarships/Pages/AboutMASHAV.aspx>

112. “Israel and Iran in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Central Intelligence Agency Directorate of Intelligence, June 19th, 1975, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T00608R000300070010-2.pdf>

113. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, “Israel's Diplomatic Offensive in Africa”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018, <https://www.frstrategie.org/en/programs/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/israels-diplomatic-offensive-africa-2018>

114. “Israël et l’Afrique subsaharienne”, Israeli Mission Around the World, Accessed September 1st, 2020, <https://embassies.gov.il/abidjan/Relations-Bilaterales/Pages/Israel-Afrique.aspx>

115. “Israel and Iran in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Central Intelligence Agency Directorate of Intelligence, June 19th, 1975,

116. Kwame Bofo Arthur et al. “Israel and Africa Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future”, The Africa Institute of American Jewish Committee and The Harold Hartog School of Tel Aviv University, May 2006,

117. Joan Deas, “South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy on Israel-Palestine”, Middle East Monitor, October 16th, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191016-south-africas-post-apartheid-foreign-policy-on-israel-palestine/>

118. Matthew Norman, “Benjamin Netanyahu’s refusal to attend Nelson Mandela’s memorial service speaks of Israel’s growing isolationism”, December 10th, 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/benjamin-netanyahu-s-refusal-to-attend-nelson-mandela-s-memorial-service-speaks-of-israel-s-growing-8996049.html>

119. Marshall, Edgar S., éd. Israel: current issues and historical background. New York: Nova Science, 2002.

120. Osman Kagan Yucel, “Israel adopts new Africa policy through UAE”, Anadolu Agency, February 20th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-israel-adopts-new-africa-policy-through-uae/1739789>

the late 1990s, Israel had reactivated its ties with 39 African countries¹²¹. By April 2019, Tel Aviv had full diplomatic relationships with 41 African countries and embassies in 11 countries: Rwanda, Senegal, Egypt, Angola, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Cameroon¹²². Historically, Israel has had strong interests two East African countries: in Uganda as one of the Zionist projects for the creation of the State of Israel, and in Ethiopia, where there is a largest community that practices Judaism, called Beta Israel.

Diplomatic and Geopolitical Considerations

Israel's foreign policy priorities include building or rebuilding ties with countries with which its relations have either been suspended or are non-existent. This can be viewed as an attempt to break the isolation imposed by neighboring Arab countries, gain political legitimacy in the international arena, and forge political and military alliances “to pressure, weaken and undermine its rivals in the Middle East”¹²³.

As such, Israel's actions in Africa are part of a wider diplomatic effort aimed at blocking Palestine's pursuit of international recognition. Indeed, African countries possess 54 votes at the UN, which has the potential to significantly tilt the balance. Amid the recent expansion in relations between Israel and some African nations, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas—who enjoys observer status in the African Union (AU)—spoke at the 32nd meeting of the African Union in February 2019 and asked for “additional support for the Palestinian issue to achieve full membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations”¹²⁴. However, it appears that the fate of Palestine is no longer viewed by sub-Saharan African countries “from the angle of national liberation”¹²⁵. Instead, according to Na'eem Jeenah, Executive Director of the Afro-Middle East Center (AMEC), “For some countries of the continent, the concept of solidarity is being replaced by the concept of special interests”¹²⁶. Furthermore, Yotam Gidron explains that African countries' “awareness of Israel's desire to use the continent as an avenue to project diplomatic, geopolitical and economic strength” has provided significant leverage to African leaders, while “much of the leverage Israel has in Africa comes from Washington rather than Jerusalem”¹²⁷.

Due to their proximity to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, Horn of Africa and East African countries are essential to Israel's commercial and strategic interests. For example, Israel supported Ethiopia in the Eritrean War of Independence, which it perceived as an extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, while “various Arab countries supported the Eritreans, assuming that an independent Eritrea would adopt a pro-

121. Ramzy Baroud, “Israel's scramble for Africa: Selling water, weapons and lies”, Al Jazeera, July 23rd, 2019.

122. “Table of Contents: South Africa”, Jewish Virtual Library, Accessed September 1st, 2020, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/table-of-contents-south-africa>

123. Yotam Gidron, “Why is Israel in Africa?”, Africa Is A Country, March 26th, 2020, <https://africasacountry.com/2020/03/who-is-israel-in-africa>

124. Rina Bassist, “Abbas' speech at African Union, an Israeli failure?”, Al Monitor, February 12th, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/02/israel-african-union-palestinians-chad-rwanda-mahmoud-abbas.html>

125. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, “Israel's Diplomatic Offensive in Africa”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

126. Alhadji, Bouba Nouhou, “Une normalisation freinée par la question palestinienne: Lente progression d'Israël en Afrique”, Le Monde Diplomatique, December 2017.

127. Dale Sprusansky, “Israel in Africa: Security, Migration, Interstate Politics”, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, The American Educational Trust (AET), August-September 2020.

Arab foreign policy”¹²⁸. Israel forged close ties with Eritrea after the country’s independence. Although it has been refuted by Eritrean officials, several media outlets¹²⁹ have reported the existence of Israeli military bases on Eritrean territory on the islands of Fatima and Dahlak, in addition to a military base in the port of Massawa¹³⁰.

Following the 1998 US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the Mossad became active in the East Africa region to help combat terrorism¹³¹. In 2013, during an attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi by Al-Shabab, Israeli forces quickly intervened in support of Kenyan troops to regain control of the mall.

South Sudan is also among Israel’s allies in Africa. Both countries shared the same hostility towards former President Omar Al-Bashir’s regime in Sudan, which had developed close ties with Iran. Israel viewed South Sudan “as a potential ally in an otherwise hostile neighborhood”¹³².

Furthermore, Israel is seeking to push back into Africa as a way to confront Iran’s infiltration in Africa, including Hezbollah’s activity in West Africa. For example, in 2013, Israel supported Nigeria in uncovering a Hezbollah cell accused of spying for Iran¹³³. Israel was also particularly concerned by Iran’s willingness to improve relations with Sudan and Eritrea¹³⁴. More recently, Iran’s ambitions have created “a convergence of interests between the predominantly Sunni Arab states and Israel”¹³⁵, which is embedded in the wider competition taking place between Middle Eastern powers in Africa.

Another noteworthy dynamic of Israel’s outreach on the African continent is the use of “intermediary states” to become closer with countries with Muslim majority populations, with which Israel’s relations are suspended or non-existent¹³⁶. For example, the meeting between Benjamin Netanyahu and Sudan’s transitional leader al Burhan was held through the mediation of the UAE. Against the backdrop of shared concerns about the growing influence of Iran, China and Russia’s in Africa, both countries are seeking to consolidate their positions¹³⁷.

128. Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, “Iran in the Horn of Africa: Outflanking U.S. Allies”, Middle East Policy Council, Volume XIX, Number 2, Summer 2012, <https://mepc.org/iran-horn-africa-outflanking-us-allies>

129. Muhammed Salahuddin, “How Israel Casts Its Dark Shadow Over Horn Of Africa”, Arab News, August 31st, 2006, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/288615>

130. “What is behind Eritrean move on Yemeni island of Honish?”, Yemen Press Agency, June 2nd, 2020, <https://en.ypagency.net/172134/>

131. Fahad Yasii, “Israeli Penetration into East Africa Objectives and Risks”, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, September 29th, 2016,

132. Haim, Koren, “South Sudan and Israel: A love affair in a changing region?”, The Moshe Dayan Center, February 28, 2019, <https://dayan.org/content/south-sudan-and-israel-love-affair-changing-region>

133. David Lewis, “Insight: U.S. and allies target Hezbollah financing, ties in Africa”, Reuters, September 20th, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-hezbollah-africa-insight/insight-u-s-and-allies-target-hezbollah-financing-ties-in-africa-idUSBRE98J04L20130920>

134. David Simonds, “A search for allies in a hostile world”, The Economist, February 4th, 2010, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2010/02/04/a-search-for-allies-in-a-hostile-world>

135. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, “Israel’s Diplomatic Offensive in Africa”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

136. Osman Kagan Yucel, “Israel adopts new Africa policy through UAE”, Anadolu Agency, February 20th, 2020.

137. Denis Korkodinov, “What determines the interest of the USA and Israel in Africa?”, World Geostrategic Insights, March 18th, 2020, <https://wgi.world/what-determines-the-interest-of-the-usa-and-israel-in-africa/>

Security cooperation

Africa represents an attractive market for Israel's high-tech and arms companies. A number of African countries, including Chad, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, and Cameroon, have turned to Israeli security technologies and solutions, particularly since the Arab Spring of 2011 and the insecurity it has prompted in neighboring countries.

In 1957, Israeli experts trained the army of former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie and helped reorganize his secret services. Then Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion also pledged to support Ethiopia in its dispute with Egypt over the control of the Nile waters¹³⁸. More recently, Ethiopia became "Israel's closest continental ally and a big buyer of defense equipment" to confront Islamist militias backed by nearby rebels in Somalia.¹³⁹ Nigeria is also a customer of Israeli security military equipment. In 2014, following the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping, Abuja tried to buy Cobra helicopters from Tel Aviv¹⁴⁰.

In the context of increasing security threats posed by extremist groups (such as Boko Haram and ISIS-affiliated groups), there has been a growing demand for Israeli military know-how and Israeli expertise, especially in the fields of IT, cyber security and counter-terrorism. For example, in 2017, Israeli software company Elbit Systems won a contract worth \$240 million to provide a wide array of defense electronic systems "to an unnamed country in Africa"¹⁴¹. Additionally, an Israeli-Canadian company, Visual Defence, is responsible for security at Abidjan's international airport and port. As a consequence, the flow of individuals and goods through the country is subject to Israeli monitoring¹⁴². In 2016, Israel's defense exports to Africa amounted to \$6.5 billion.¹⁴³¹⁴⁴. According to Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, the continent represented only 5% of total Israeli defense exports in 2017, "but the African market remains promising"¹⁴⁵. Furthermore, Israeli experts continue to provide training and weapons to East African countries. "This is clearly revealed by the Kenyan and Ugandan forces' Israeli-manufactured weapons, especially aircraft, gunboats, artillery, electronic devices and communications equipment"¹⁴⁶.

Economic interests

Tel Aviv has been trying to engage more strategically by advancing Israeli businesses and economic ties in Africa. Israeli companies work in various industries and are well established in the African market,

138. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, "Israel's Diplomatic Offensive in Africa", Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

139. David Simonds, "A search for allies in a hostile world", The Economist, February 4th, 2010.

140. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, "Israel's Diplomatic Offensive in Africa", Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

141. Tova Cohen, "Elbit gets \$240 million Africa deal to protect aircraft from missiles", Reuters, September 26th, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-elbit-systems-contract/elbit-gets-240-million-africa-deal-to-protect-aircraft-from-missiles-idUSKCN1C112G>

142. "What are Israel's goals in West Africa?", Al Jazeera, July 7th, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/israel-goals-west-africa-170701021641836.html>

143. "Augmentation de 40% des ventes d'armes d'Israël", Juif.Org, May 2nd, 2018, <http://www.juif.org/economie-israelienne/223358,augmentation-de-40-des-ventes-d-armes-d-israel.php>

144. Tania Kraemer, "A history of Africa-Israel relations", Deutsche Welle, April 18th, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/a-history-of-africa-israel-relations/a-43395892>

145. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, "Israel's Diplomatic Offensive in Africa", Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

146. Fahad Yasii, "Israeli Penetration into East Africa Objectives and Risks", Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, September 29th, 2016,

especially in water access, renewable energy, and health. Israel's expertise in areas such as drip-irrigation, enabling the cultivation of crops in arid areas, water recycling, and desalination technologies, are proving particularly valuable for African countries to strengthen food security¹⁴⁷:

- In Rwanda, the Israeli firm Energiya Global has already helped build the country's first commercial-scale solar power plant¹⁴⁸;
- In Liberia, the Israeli company Energiya Global signed a development agreement for a solar park of \$20 million at Roberts International Airport;
- The American-Israeli organization Innovation: Africa is implementing solar energy solutions in ten African countries, including Uganda, South Africa, Cameroon, and Ethiopia¹⁴⁹. Since 2008, the organization has completed over 300 solar and water installations impacting more than 2 million people in 10 African countries¹⁵⁰;
- In South Africa, Israel is building a desalination plant in Cape Town;
- In Kenya, Israel was working on the flagship Galana-Kulalu project. In August 2014, the Kenyan National Irrigation Board (NIB) signed a 14.5 billion Kenyan shillings contract with Israeli firm, Green Arava Limited, to start irrigated maize farming in the Galana-Kulalu¹⁵¹. However, the project was marred with corruption allegations and Green Arava abandoned it in 2018, citing "sustained failure of Kenya's National Irrigation Authority to honor payments when due"¹⁵². The firm and the agency are embroiled in a dispute over the amount owed to the former;
- Major Israeli companies are operating in Nigeria, , such as the huge construction firm Nigersal, and the electrical and mechanical engineering firm Etco Limited.

Israel's well-known diamond industry imports diamonds from African countries including South Africa, Liberia, Congo, and Ivory Coast¹⁵³. In 2018, Israel imported close to \$3 billion worth of rough diamonds¹⁵⁴. This cooperation is based on a number of agreements with diamond-producing African countries, such as "a landmark memorandum of understanding" between the Israeli Diamond Institute (IDI) and Liberia to assist the government in establishing its diamond infrastructure¹⁵⁵. Israeli businessman, Dan Gertler, who is close to former Congolese president Joseph Kabila, has been accused of creating a number of shell companies to

147. Angus MacKinnon, "Israel to use crop, water technology in Africa", Yahoo News, August 27th, 2015, <https://news.yahoo.com/israel-crop-water-technology-win-friends-africa-193748852.html>

148. Rebecca Mckinsey, "Israeli group kicks off \$23m energy project in Rwanda", The Time of Israel, February 19th, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-group-kicks-off-23m-energy-project-in-rwanda/>

149. Alan Rosenbaum, "How Israel is bringing water and energy to Africa", The Jerusalem Post, August 5th, 2020 <https://www.jpost.com/jpost-tech/how-israel-is-bringing-water-and-energy-to-africa-608412>

150. Innoafrica is a non- profit organization that brings Israeli solar, water and agricultural technologies to rural African villages Source: <https://innoafrica.org/about-us.html>

151. Eunniah Mbabazi, "Galana Kulalu Project to be Revived", the Kenyan Wall Street, March 3rd, 2020, <https://kenyanwallstreet.com/galana-kulalu-project-to-be-revived/#:~:text=Israeli%20Ambassador%2C%20Oded%20Joseph%2C%20has,on%20food%20security%2C%20into%20fruition.&text=Currently%2C%20the%20Galana%2DKulalu%20project%20stands%20at%2085%25%20complete.>

152. Julius Sigei, "Kenya: Agency Seeks Sh9 Billion for Galana-Kulalu, Green Arava", All Africa, March 14th, 2020, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202003160060.html>

153. Hassan Al-Assi, "Israel's dirty trade in Africa: Diamonds, weapons and settlements", Middle East Monitor, August 2nd, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170802-israels-dirty-trade-in-africa-diamonds-weapons-and-settlements/>

154. "Israel, Angola to beef up diamond trade", Jewellerynet, March 18th, 2019, <https://www.jewellerynet.com/en/jnanews/news/23074>

155. "Israeli diamond industry expands activities in Africa", Sunday Standard, November 25th, 2007, <https://www.sundaystandard.info/israeli-diamond-industry-expands-activities-in-africa/>

acquire Congolese mining permits at a low price¹⁵⁶. In Namibia, Israeli diamond tycoon Lev Leviev engaged in “large-scale prospecting and owns the largest gem-cutting factory on the continent”¹⁵⁷.

Israeli companies also intervene in Africa’s mining sectors. For example, the Beny Steinmetz Group Resources (BSGR) company operates in Angola, Namibia, Sierra Leone, or Botswana. In August 2020, Sierra Leoneans living next to the country’s largest diamond mine filed a complaint to the ECOWAS court of justice against Ocea Limited, a subsidiary of BSGR¹⁵⁸.

According to data from the Israel Export Institute, in 2017, after several years of decline, Israeli exports to African countries grew by around 5% compared to 2016, to a total of \$860 million, around 1.6% of Israel’s exports¹⁵⁹. In 2017, Israel imported more than \$413 million worth of products from Africa¹⁶⁰.

However, according to the Jerusalem Post, “For all the Africa talk and high-level meetings of the past five years, little is happening on the ground because the Israeli government has little ability to follow up with meaningful actions after the high-profile fly-in of Israeli leaders. Instead, the vacuum is being filled in part by Jewish and Israeli NGOs and companies, but with only a fraction of the footprint because of lack of Israeli government coordination and support”¹⁶¹.

Development cooperation

Another entry point for Israel to Africa is through development cooperation. For decades, Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) has implemented various development programs in Africa, and has offered training in Israel for African experts in order to share Israeli expertise in agriculture, water management, irrigation, and solar energy¹⁶². For example, Israel runs an agricultural studies program to provide advanced training in modern agriculture to students from developing countries¹⁶³. Of all students admitted from Africa, Uganda takes up the biggest quota¹⁶⁴. During the Ebola outbreak in 2014, Israel sent teams of medical professionals and equipment to assist with quarantine¹⁶⁵. In 2017, Israel dispatched first-

156. “Billionaire Gertler Hits Back At NGOs Over Congo Investigation Into Evading U.S. Sanctions”, All Africa, July 7th, 2020, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202007080415.html>

157. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, “Israel’s Diplomatic Offensive in Africa”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

158. Cooper Inven, “Sierra Leoneans Sue Government for Alleged Environmental Failings at Diamond Mine”, Reuters, August 21, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/journalists/cooper-inveen>

159. Amir Sabhat, “Is Israel Dropping the Ball on Africa’s Economy?”, Ctech, July 27th, 2018, <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctech/articles/0,7340,L-3743180,00.html>

160. Alhadji Bouba Nouhou, “Israel’s Diplomatic Offensive in Africa”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, December 21st, 2018.

161. Yosef Israel Abramowitz, “The soul of Israel’s schizophrenic Africa strategy”, The Jerusalem Post, October 25th, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/magazine/an-enlightened-africa-strategy-605550>

162. Marine Henriot, “Israël renforce ses liens avec le continent africain”, Vatican News, January 21st, 2019, [https://www.vaticannews.va/fr/monde/news/2019-01/relations-israel-afrique-interview-bouba-nouhou.html](https://www.vaticannews.va/fr/monde/news/2019-01/rerelations-israel-afrique-interview-bouba-nouhou.html)

163. Yael Levy and Shifra, Levy, “Israel’s special agriculture program aims to create a better world”, The Jerusalem Post, August 6th, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israels-special-agriculture-program-aims-to-create-a-better-world-637684>

164. Derrick Kiyonga, “Israel eager to collaborate with Africa on agric, ICT and security”, Daily Monitor, August 2nd, 2020, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/Israel-eager-collaborate-Africa--agric-ICT-security-ambassador-/689844-5602878-qroedk/index.html>

165. “Israel Joining International Efforts to Combat Ebola”, Haaretz, September 21st, 2014, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-upping-effort-to-fight-ebola-1.5304210>

aid rescuers to Freetown, Sierra Leone, during the landslide.

Finally, migration of Africans to Israel plays a significant role, and has even threatened to overshadow Tel Aviv's relations with Africa. In its early years, Israel opened its borders to thousands of African Jews. Since the mid-2000s, sub-Saharan African asylum seekers, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea, have reached Israel via Egypt¹⁶⁶. However, Israel has implemented a rather unwelcoming policy towards African refugees in recent years¹⁶⁷. This includes a proposal to relocate Eritreans and Sudanese asylum-seekers and refugees elsewhere in Africa or to imprison them in Israel¹⁶⁸. Receiving countries would reportedly receive US\$5,000 per asylum seeker they accept to take them in. In April 2018, Israel even struck a deal with the United Nations to send thousands of African migrants to Western countries¹⁶⁹. According to the Israeli Immigration Authority, around 40,000 African migrants lived in Israel in 2018¹⁷⁰. The UN. refugee agency estimates there are around 38,000 African asylum seekers in Israel, the majority of whom are from Eritrea and Sudan¹⁷¹.

166. Rebeca, Raijman, "A Warm Welcome for Some: Israel Embraces Immigration of Jewish Diaspora, Sharply Restricts Labor Migrants and Asylum Seekers", Migration Policy Institute, June 5th, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/israel-law-of-return-asylum-labor-migration>

167. Abdulaziz Ahmet Yasar, "Israel wants to be 'in Africa' but to keep Africans out of Israel", TRT World, January 9th, 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/mea/israel-wants-to-be-in-africa-but-to-keep-africans-out-of-israel-23196>

168. "UNHCR concerned over Israel's refugee relocation proposals", UN Refugee Agency, November 17th, 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/11/5a0f27484/unhcr-concerned-israels-refugee-relocation-proposals.html>

169. "Israel strikes U.N. deal to send thousands of African migrants to Western countries", Reuters, April 2nd, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-strikes-u-n-deal-send-thousands-african-migrants-western-n861956>

170. Abdulaziz Ahmet Yasar, "Israel wants to be 'in Africa' but to keep Africans out of Israel", TRT World, January 9th, 2019.

171. Shirli Nadav, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Eritrea and Sudan in Israel", The association for civil rights in Israel, February 1st, 2018, <https://law.acri.org.il/en/2018/02/01/review-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-from-eritrea-and-sudan-in-israel/>

Gulf countries in Africa

The contradictions of the Middle East are exported to Africa

The presence of the Gulf countries on the African continent is no doubt related to their ancestral connections with East and North Africa, in addition to the important links they have with the Arab part of the African continent, which continue to play an important role within the Arab League.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are trying to assert themselves as mediators and actors for stability and peace in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. By skillfully combining their respective assets, they are slowly consolidating their sphere of influence in the region.

The African policies of the Gulf countries are in line with a trend of renewal of both their leaderships and their foreign policies. This strategic redirection has been notably facilitated by the following events:

- The Iranian revolution of 1979;
- The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan;
- The Iran-Iraq war;
- The fall of the Soviet Union and the advent of a new world order after 1945;
- The two Gulf wars and the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime;
- The end of pan-Arabism and the hope of a unified Arab world with the illusion of an Arab League;
- The emergence of Qatar as a major player and the genesis of Al Jazeera TV;
- The revival of Islamist currents and different forms of political Islam in general, notably with the coming to power of Turkey's AKP Party;
- The Arab Spring;
- The weakening of multilateralism;
- The political retreat of the European Union (EU) and the decline the former colonial powers, mainly France and the United Kingdom, particularly because of the lack of resources granted to their foreign policies;
- The resurgence of Russia, with President Putin's Tsarist and Soviet undertones;
- China's attempt to regulate international trade and control sea crossings (Indian and Atlantic, Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea) with gigantic projects (e.g. the Belt and Road);
- Israel having almost won its conflict with Arab countries after the war in Syria and the episode of the Islamic State (ISIS).

These various events have led to significant changes in the strategic visions of the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. While the first two countries seem to be pursuing a new direction in their external relations, with fairly extensive deployment, particularly on the African continent, Qatar – which had been sidelined by the first two – has been more low key, maintaining some Arab friendships and seeking allies elsewhere. As a foothold, Qatar has entered into an alliance with Turkey, which is also back on the Arab and African scenes.

These countries invest significantly in North Africa and in East Africa, via multiple connections (personal, religious, cultural, and economic relations). There is also a renewed interest in West Africa, and a new strategic anchoring in Southern Africa, particularly on the part of the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia

Traditionally, Saudi diplomacy was mainly directed at predominantly Muslim African countries (the Maghreb, West Africa, and the Horn of Africa) where its influence was exerted mainly through the religious sphere (Mecca, visas, Saudi charities), and at South Africa. The Saudi presence in Africa was notably reinforced after the Iranian revolution of 1979 to counter the spread of Shiism on the continent. More recently, Saudi Arabia has also tried to curb its Qatari neighbor's quest for influence. In 2017, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, and Senegal joined Riyadh's efforts to isolate Doha. As a result, these countries are becoming completely subject to Mohammed Bin Salman's whims.

Saudi Arabia plays an undeniable role in the political processes of several African regions, notably through massive investments from 2010 to 2019, reaching almost \$20 billion divided between Tunisia, Algeria to a lesser extent, and Egypt. Another \$20 billion has also been invested by Saudi Arabia in South Africa during the same time period.¹⁷² In 2018, Saudi Arabia created the new position of Secretary of State for African Affairs, responsible for coordinating Saudi diplomatic efforts on the continent.

After years of relatively modest commitment, the Horn of Africa and East Africa have become Riyadh's primary objectives. The rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea and between Djibouti and Eritrea took place under the auspices of the Saudi Arabia-UAE duo.

The development of the Red Sea area is at the heart of the Vision 2030 plan, the flagship initiative of Mohammed Bin Salman. In January 2020, the leaders of five East African countries (Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea, and Egypt) and three Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Jordan) signed the Red Sea Pact, a new framework to enhance trade and security along the Red Sea corridor, through which some 13% of world trade currently flows. This region, which could eventually be linked to the Mediterranean, would greatly expand Saudi Arabia's economic opportunities.

Riyadh also sees this region as crucial in deterring potential threats to its own security. In December 2018, Riyadh proposed the creation of a grouping of seven states of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and Jordan) to "prevent any external power from playing a negative role" in this strategic region, particularly on the part of the Houthis and Iranians¹⁷³.

172. "Guide de l'Investisseur", Invest Saudi, <https://investsaudi.sa/media/1634/investor-guide-brochure-fr-compressed.pdf> ; Romain Calvary, "Saudi investments in the Horn of Africa: the example of Mohamed Al Amoudi, a Saudi businessman in Ethiopia", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2014/3 (N° 90), p. 61 -74 ; "Afrique du Sud : l'Arabie Saoudite prévoit des investissements massifs dans l'énergie", *La Tribune Afrique*, January 20th, 2020, <https://afrique.latribune.fr/finances/investissement/2019-01-20/afrique-du-sud-l-arabie-saoudite-prevoit-des-investissements-massifs-dans-l-energie-804465.html>

173. Mourad Belhaj, "A. Saoudite : Le roi Salman appellera à la tenue d'un sommet sur la mer Rouge et le golfe d'Aden", *Anadolu Agency*, January 6th, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/politique/a-saoudite-le-roi-salman-appellera-%C3%A0-la-tenue-d-un-sommet-sur-la-mer-rouge-et-le-golfe-daden/1694063>

Riyadh is also present in Sudan, Libya in the conflict between Marshall Haftar and Fayeze El Sarraj, Somalia, and Djibouti. This presence is supported by significant investments (in 2018, Saudi Arabia was already ranked fifth among investors in Africa, with nearly \$4 billion dollars invested in projects in the region), control of key infrastructure, and development aid. Saudi assistance in East Africa (Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti) – as well as the Somaliland region of Somalia – has helped improve African governments' perceptions of Saudi Arabia's role in the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

Another channel of influence for Saudi Arabia is funds provided in the form of loans and grants by the Saudi Development Fund (SDF). Since its creation in 1975, the SDF has made significant contributions to Africa (52% of total amounts paid out, a total of \$7 billion).¹⁷⁴ The SDF contributed €1.2 billion to ongoing projects in Africa.¹⁷⁵ Of this amount, more than 60% went to the Maghreb (40% for Egypt alone). Another country that stands out in terms of aid is Djibouti, which receives a fifth of total SDF loans allocated to East Africa. In addition, Saudi Arabia can also count on its noteworthy influence within the Islamic Development Bank (IDB; Saudi Arabia holds 23.5% of the capital), which is based in Jeddah. Africa currently receives 23% of IDB funding. The main African countries involved are Senegal (9% of total IDB funds worldwide), Egypt (5.9%) and Morocco (4.9%)¹⁷⁶.

Saudi Arabia also seeks to invest in agriculture in Africa by acquiring arable land. Indeed, only 2% of Saudi Arabia's total land area is productive, making the country highly dependent on food imports, while its population will reach nearly 45 million by 2050, leading to an inevitable increase in food demand. Over the past decade, Riyadh has attempted to mitigate this historic dependence by investing heavily in agricultural partnerships in East Africa, involving the purchase of thousands of hectares of land by Saudi companies. In 2008, King Abdullah's Initiative for Saudi Agricultural Investment Abroad was launched to meet the kingdom's food needs.

The UAE

Saudi Arabia's renewal is coupled with major change in the UAE, since the death in 2004 of its founding father, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyane. The United Arab Emirates is aware of its economic weight, which contrasts with its geographical weight. The UAE is also aware of its history and the fragility of its legitimacy, which are linked to the difficulty of establishing a nation-state. This poses many problems in view of the emergence of governance models and political identities that can become a source of trouble (e.g. Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman in the south, Iraq and Syria to the north).

In this context, and in order to strengthen its legitimacy, the UAE decided to turn to the maritime domain.

174. In reality, Saudi Arabia doesn't invest too much in Africa. For example, Saudi and Emirati investments together are equivalent to Qatar's investments in Morocco.

175. Figures available on the "Islamic Development Bank Investor Presentation", Islamic Development Bank, November 2019, www.isdb.org

176. Benjamin Augé, "Saudi Arabia's Policy in Africa : Vectors and Objectives", *L'Afrique en questions*, n°52, IFRI, February 6th, 2020, https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/editoriaux-de-lifri/lafricque-questions/saudi-arabias-policy-africa-vectors-and-0#_edn10

Control of African port infrastructure

In particular, the UAE developed an increased interest in port control to consolidate its presence in the region and especially in the Horn of Africa¹⁷⁷.

Box 3: Emirati port infrastructure

Investment in port infrastructure has become a key element of Abu Dhabi's foreign policy in the Horn of Africa. To this end, the UAE relies on its significant financial resources, but also on the expertise of Dubai Ports World (DP World), a global port management giant linked to the Emirati ruling families, which has become the economic arm of UAE maritime diplomacy. DP World oversees and controls 77 ports worldwide.

The priority given by the UAE to the Horn of Africa can be explained by strategic, economic, and security concerns. On the strategic and security side, Abu Dhabi sought to eliminate Iran's presence in the Bab El-Mandab region, particularly in Eritrea, while combating the smuggling of arms to the Houthis in Yemen. In addition, the UAE needed facilities to station its air and naval forces fighting in Yemen. On the other hand, countries in the Horn of Africa were in great demand for new port infrastructure to support their growth, particularly landlocked Ethiopia.

Djibouti

DP World won its first concessions on the coast of Djibouti in the 1990s. The Emiratis were then among the few investors interested in the small and poor former French colony. DP World built and operated a new container terminal there, Doraleh, which became the country's largest employer and the government's largest source of revenue. However, the government of Djibouti nationalized the port and took control of Doraleh in February 2018, claiming that the contract between the two parties infringed on Djibouti's sovereignty¹⁷⁸. This episode came after DP World created another corridor for imports to Ethiopia via the port of Berbera, endangering Djibouti's virtual monopoly on Ethiopian imports. Djibouti has seized equipment and requisitioned staff to continue port operations, relying on the support and expertise of the Chinese CMHI¹⁷⁹.

Somaliland

The Emiratis then tried to rebound on the Somali coast, but ran up against the Somali government, supported by Turkey and Qatar. By contributing to the costly investment needed to build a world-class port, the UAE strengthened its presence in the Red Sea, notably by controlling the security forces of this state and its economy. In 2016, DP World won a 30-year concession to develop the infrastructure and operate the port of Berbera in

177. Benjamin Steck, "Introduction to Africa's ports and corridors: how to formulate the interaction between logistics and development", Cahiers de géographie du Québec, 59 (168), 447–467. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1037258ar>

178. "Djibouti seizes control of Dubai-run Doraleh port", Al Jazeera, February 24th, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/djibouti-seizes-control-dubai-run-dolareh-port-180223200900708.html#:~:text=The%20government%20of%20Djibouti%20has,damaging%20the%20sovereignty%20of%20Djibouti.>

179. Michel Lachkar, "La stratégie contrariée des Emirats arabes unis dans la Corne de l'Afrique", Franceinfo, June 9th, 2018 https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/economie-africaine/la-strategie-contrariee-des-emirats-arabes-unis-dans-la-corne-de-lafrique_3054277.html

the separatist region of Somaliland, with an investment of \$442 million. The agreement stipulates the division of this very strategic port between the three partners: 19% for Ethiopia which benefits from a maritime outlet there, 30% for Somaliland, and 51% for DP World based in Dubai. In 2017, DP World also signed a contract with the government of the state of Puntland, in northeast Somalia, to expand and manage the port of Bosaso, located in northeast Somalia.

Eritrea

In 2018, DP World was awarded a 30-year concession to develop the Eritrean port of Assab. The UAE also announced a pipeline project linking Addis-Ababa in Ethiopia to Assab in Eritrea, which would give the Emirati and Saudi Arabian people better access to Ethiopia's agricultural production, which is essential to their food security¹⁸⁰.

Sudan

In April 2020, the Transitional Government of Sudan took steps to cede control of its main seaport to DP World¹⁸¹.

Egypt

In 2010, DP World won a 35-year concession for the port of Sokhna on Egypt's Red Sea coast for an investment of \$700 million¹⁸². Just below the southern entrance to the Suez Canal, this positioning enables the handling of cargo transiting one of the world's busiest trade routes. The port is also a key site for Egyptian exports to Saudi Arabia.

Algeria

In March 2009, DP World took over the management of the port of Algiers, in a joint venture with EPAL. Alongside the Algerian Government, DP World undertook the development of port operations in Djen-Djen¹⁸³.

Mauritania

In June 2018, the UAE obtained the management of Oum Tounsy, the new Nouakchott airport.

Senegal

DP World has been officially commissioned to operate and develop Senegal's busiest container terminal¹⁸⁴.

Mozambique

DP World Maputo has obtained the concession to manage, develop and operate the Maputo Container Terminal

180. Camille Lons, "Saudi Arabia and the UAE Look to Africa", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 23rd, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77561>

181. "UAE taking steps to gain control of Sudan's main port", Al Jazeera, April 25th, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/uae-steps-gain-control-sudan-main-port-200423205443903.html#:~:text=Sudan's%20transitional%20government%20is%20taking,of%20the%20country's%20national%20terminal.>

182. "DP World wins deal to expand terminal at Egypt port", Reuters, October 14th, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/dpworld-egypt-port/update-1-dp-world-wins-deal-to-expand-terminal-at-egypt-port-idUKLDE69D1QW20101014>

183. "About us", DP World, <https://www.dpworld.com/about-us/our-locations>

184. Ibid.

until 2043. The port of Maputo is strategically located between the industrial zones of Southern Africa and the major economic and industrialized regions of East and South Asia¹⁸⁵.

By expanding its network of port terminals, the UAE's primary objective remains the establishment of rear bases on the east coast of Africa to counter the Iranian threat. But the centrality of the UAE provides it with a sense of pragmatism that translates, among other things, into ambivalent relations with Iran.

Abu Dhabi's main goals remain the strengthening of Arab regimes hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood and countering so-called 'moderate' political Islam in the Arab world, embodied by Erdogan's Turkey and supported by Qatar.

Thus, in addition to port infrastructure that provides a form of primacy and control over the geopolitical future of Africa, the UAE is trying to project its military power. But UAE attempts to open a naval base in Djibouti have been rejected, in part because of the close UAE ties with Eritrea, a rival to Djibouti.

In 2015, the UAE began construction of a naval base at Assab in southern Eritrea. The UAE also modernized the former military base of Assab abandoned by the Soviet army at the end of the Cold War¹⁸⁶. Located 500 km south of the Eritrean capital Asmara, Assab is ideally situated on the coast, opposite the Yemeni city of Aden. It has been used in the war waged by Saudi Arabia against the Houthis. It is also believed to be the launch point for an assault on Hodeida, Yemen's main port.¹⁸⁷

The UAE is a major investor in Africa. In 2016, they claimed to rank second after China. In addition, there are more than 12,000 African companies registered in Dubai, mainly South African companies. The Emirates have increased their non-oil trade with the continent by 700% over the last 15 years¹⁸⁸.

With a concentration of investment in the infrastructure sector and the construction of large-scale projects, such as the oil pipeline between Eritrea and Ethiopia, renewable energy projects in the Seychelles, rural infrastructure in Uganda and Tanzania, and investments in Chad, Benin, the Comoros Islands, and Cape Verde, the UAE has become a major player in African economies in both the North and the South.

Libya: a hotbed in North Africa

Between April 2020 and July 2020, Marshal Haftar's offensive in Libya against Tripoli has reached its limits. The Tripoli government, with the support of Turkey, managed to repel the offensive launched against Tripoli

185. "DP World Maputo", <https://www.dpworldmaputo.com/>

186. Michel Lachkar, "La stratégie contrariée des Emirats arabes unis dans la Corne de l'Afrique", Franceinfo, June 9th, 2018

187. "The UAE is scrambling to control ports in Africa, The Economist, July 19th, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2018/07/19/the-uae-is-scrambling-to-control-ports-in-africa>

188. Jim Stenman, "L'Afrique, nouvelle terre d'investissement pour les Émiratis", Euronews, December 6th, 2019, <https://fr.euronews.com/2019/11/28/l-afrique-nouvelle-terre-d-investissement-pour-les-emiratis>

in April 2019. This could have allowed the Libyan National Army (LNA) to impose itself more strongly in any process of conflict resolution, making more likely the establishment of a state system based on the legacy of Qaddafi, and above all providing support to regimes such as that of Al Sissi in Egypt. In addition, Haftar's offensive was carried out with the approval of France and Russia, which both sought to maintain a special relationship with Marshal Haftar. A certain ambiguous neutrality is noticeable on the part of Washington, worried about Moscow's growing influence in Libya. In June 2020, Fayeze al-Sarraj's Government of National Accord (GNA) regained control of the entire north-western part of the country. The Libyan National Army (LNA) withdrew to Sirte, a port city 450 km east of Tripoli.

The deepening crisis, the abuses perpetrated by the LNA, the Hirak revolts in neighboring Algeria and allegations of French intervention¹⁸⁹, including revelations of the adventures of secret agents at the Tunisian borders¹⁹⁰, has led the defenders of Haftar to review their strategies. The UN investigation into possible breaches of the arms embargo against Libya exposed the use by Haftar forces of Chinese-made Wing Loong UAVs and Blue Arrow BA 7 air-to-ground missiles, or at least the subcontracting of their use to other forces present in Libya¹⁹¹. The Chinese have transferred this technology to two countries: Kazakhstan and the UAE¹⁹². At the same time, other sources state that some countries using Wing Loong UAVs could also use the missiles, including Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, and Uzbekistan¹⁹³. Other information notes that it is “almost certain” that these weapons were not supplied directly by the manufacturer or by a state to any party in Libya.

Thus, the Libyan situation and ongoing developments there will surely have an impact on the policies of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in North Africa, knowing that France—with a very ambiguous position—is also beginning to step back, without forgetting its main objective: to counter Turkish intervention in the region, though with little success for the moment.

Because of its proximity to Algeria and the Sahel, Libya is important to French policy in the Maghreb and Africa. In other words, the intervention of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, in addition to the significant support provided by Russia to Haftar, raises questions about the future role of the Gulf countries in the Maghreb region.

189. The presence of French special forces in Benghazi, which Haftar was attempting at the time to extract from groups of Islamist fighters loyal to Tripoli, was revealed when a helicopter on a surveillance mission crashed, killing three French soldiers in July 2016. Source: “Men with French passports crossing from Libya are linked to Haftar: Tunisian source”, Middle East Monitor, April 23rd, 2019 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/men-french-passports-crossing-libya-are-linked-haftar-tunisian-source>

190. “Des militaires français envoyés en Libye pour soutenir Haftar?”, *Courrier International*, April 24th, 2019, <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/conflit-des-militaires-francais-envoyes-en-libye-pour-soutenir-haftar>

191. “Dans le ciel libyen, bataille entre drones turcs et émiratis”, *Le Point*, September 29th, 2019 https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/dans-le-ciel-libyen-bataille-entre-drones-turcs-et-emiratis-29-09-2019-2338367_24.php

192. “Letter from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council”, United Nations Digital Library, November 29th, 2019 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3838591?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

193. Henri Kenhman, “Drone : Chengdu livre les premiers lots de Wing Loong II aux clients”, *East Pendulum* January 2nd, 2018, <http://www.eastpendulum.com/drone-chengdu-livre-premiers-lots-de-wing-loong-ii-aux-clients>

Algeria: a special relationship

There are indications that the UAE is quite present in Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan politics. Former Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika had close contacts with the palace of Abu Dhabi. His generals, including the late Gaid Salah, have been received several times by Emirati officials, as has the new strong man in Algiers, General Chengreïha. In addition, the UAE hosts a significant financial windfall with multiple facets. The banks of Abu Dhabi and Dubai increasingly host the secret accounts of many Arab, Maghreb, and African leaders. Thanks to the close ties they have forged with the Bouteflika clan and with former Chief of Staff Gaid Salah, thanks also to their investments and economic levers (\$10 billion in Emirati investments in Algeria in 2016¹⁹⁴, control of ports, the tobacco market, the construction of military vehicles), the Emiratis play a crucial role in the crisis that Algeria is going through today. In Algeria, the Emirates want to curb popular movements for regime change in the Arab world. Their focus is on reproducing strong regimes that can oppose any emergence of the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood. In connection with this military tradition of politics—as it is maintained in Egypt—the aim is to mainly keep these countries free of Qatari and Turkish influence. In this sense, Morocco’s experience of democratic transition in the 1990s and in 2011 with the rise of the Justice and Development Party in (PJD) has disturbed the Emiratis, who see this as a decline in their influence.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia hope to see the emergence of a power affiliated with them in Algeria. However, this remains difficult to achieve because Algeria has always been keen to balance its relations with the Gulf countries, while maintaining a certain positive vision in terms of the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab politics.

The UAE’s interest for Algeria can also be explained by the existence of strategic hydrocarbons and minerals, especially since the UAE controls the main ports located on the Southern Mediterranean. The Gulf countries, concerned about the fragility of their dependence on hydrocarbon exports, are trying to diversify their economies and at the same time extend their influence internationally.

Mauritania: a multi-faceted strategy

In addition to their strong presence on the African coasts of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, and massive investments in South Africa, the Gulf countries are looking towards the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. The UAE is very interested in, and about to take over the port of Nouadhibou in Mauritania, following the installation of a Saudi base in this country in the wake of the cooperation agreements concluded between Saudi Arabia and Mauritania in 2017¹⁹⁵, further to Nouakchott’s decision to break off relations with Qatar. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are in the process of becoming important partners for Mauritania in terms of economic, religious and security cooperation, with the aim of bringing it into their sphere of influence.

194. Meziane Rabhi, “10 milliards de dollars d’investissements émiratis en Algérie”, *Liberté Algérie*, November 22nd, 2016, <https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/10-milliards-de-dollars-dinvestissements-emiratis-en-algerie-259020>

195. “Mauritanie (II volet), l’offensive des Séoudiens et des Emiratis”, *Mondafrique*, June 20th, 2019, <https://mondafrique.com/loffensive-des-seoudiens-et-des-emiratis-en-mauritanie-2eme-volet-de-notre-enquete/> and “ Les Émirats arabes unis allouent 2 milliards de dollars à la Mauritanie”, *Jeune Afrique*, February 2nd, 2020, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/890424/politique/les-emirats-arabes-unis-allouent-2-milliards-de-dollars-a-la-mauritanie/>

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have supported France's G5 policy in the Sahel with substantial equipment and financial contributions, starting with the construction of a military school in Mauritania 2018. After the UAE took over the management of the new Nouakchott airport Oum Tounsy in June 2018, the company DP World was able to secure the control of the port of Nouadhibou with the help of the Saudis, after delays in the transformation of the port by a Chinese company. This port is in a strategic position for Mauritania, with 4 million tons of goods per year—a figure that is set to increase. The Emirati interest in this port dates from 2014, coinciding with Mauritania's new position in the Sahel as a producer of hydrocarbons and gas. Via Nouadhibou, the whole bay of Dakhla and the Moroccan projects of economic transformation of the region could be jeopardized.

Qatar

Qatar has long suffered from its alignment with Riyadh's policies and the hegemonic aims of Saudi Arabia. The arrival of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in 2013 changed the political situation. The two Gulf wars of 1990 and 2003 had contributed to making Qatar a crossroads of international politics, and especially a major ally of American and Western policies in the region. Qatar's central position has recently been confirmed by the establishment of several bases, and an increased military presence in the Al-Daayen naval base, located 30 km north of Doha. This base of more than 60 hectares is designed to protect the Emirate's offshore oil facilities.¹⁹⁶ Al-Udeid is the largest U.S. military air base in the Middle East, housing some 10,000 to 13,000 U.S. soldiers. These bases are an inherent part of the American strategy to counter Iran and control the Arabian-Persian Gulf, but they also represent a guarantee for Qatar against any possible attack from its Arab neighbors.

While Qatar is also associated with Saudi Arabia in the Wahhabi rite, Qatar doesn't communicate much about it and wishes to present itself as "only Muslim" or even progressive. Beyond religion, Qatar—following the example of the UAE—developed very early on a planned economic vision to free itself from dependence on hydrocarbons. The country's main resource – gas – is gradually being replaced by other activities based on sovereign investments abroad.

The accession to the throne of Emir Hamad in 1995 marked a desire to develop a foreign policy independently of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and to consolidate the role of the United States as the security guarantor of last resort¹⁹⁷. While Qatar used to import 90% of its food by the only road linking it to the peninsula, following the 2017 embargo imposed by Saudi Arabia, it has become imperative for it to achieve self-sufficiency in a hostile geographical environment.

Several African countries took retaliatory measures against Qatar after the embargo was put in place: Mauritania, Gabon, Djibouti, Chad, Comoros Islands, Senegal, Niger, and Gabon recalled their ambassadors. Along with Burkina Faso, Mali was one of the few Sahelian countries not to have broken relations with Qatar in 2017.

196. "Golfe: le Qatar inaugure sa plus grande base de gardes-côtes", Le Point, July 14th, 2019, https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/golfe-le-qatar-inaugure-sa-plus-grande-base-de-gardes-cotes-14-07-2019-2324497_24.php and " Le Qatar se prépare-t-il à une guerre contre l'Iran?", Sputnik News, May 18th, 2019, <https://fr.sputniknews.com/international/201905281041270919-qatar-iran-usa-guerre-base-accord-militaires-coalition-emirats-arabie/>

197. Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen, éd. *Political rationale and international consequences of the war in Libya*. First edition. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016.

With the exception of the Maghreb, Mauritania, and Sudan, relations between Qatar and African countries are relatively recent. Twenty-one African countries, mostly sub-Saharan, have opened embassies in Doha since 2000, and particularly since 2010.¹⁹⁸ Economic opportunities, particularly in the energy and tourism sectors, are the main motivation for Qatar to open new diplomatic representations on the African continent.

In December 2017, Emir Tamim undertook a tour of West Africa, including Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. The objective was to demonstrate the importance given to the region and to express his gratitude to those countries that had not broken off or had quickly restored relations with Qatar. The trip also led to the signing of several cooperation agreements, including with Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara.

The conflict between Qatar and its neighbors further encouraged the strengthening of Qatar's external relations, particularly with other traditional and emerging forces such as Turkey, which is very active alongside Qatar in the economic, political and security fields. This was particularly evident in Libya, where Qatar, after having contributed militarily with NATO to the fall of Colonel Qaddafi in 2011, sponsored Islamist movements and the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, then openly supported Turkey, which has been involved militarily alongside the GNA since early 2020.¹⁹⁹ This represented a break from Qatar's traditional neutral posture, where it previously avoided favoring one side over the other.²⁰⁰

By supporting the GNA, the Emirate became involved in a struggle for influence with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies, which put it under embargo in June 2017, and have sided with Marshal Haftar. Nevertheless, Qatar's alliance with Turkey is fragile because it depends on the policy established by President Erdogan, himself increasingly challenged even by some members of his AKP party—as the loss of the mayoralty of Ankara and Istanbul and the setback during the local elections of 2019 demonstrated.

There are different phases to Qatar's meddling in Libyan affairs:

- **From 2011 to 2014** : direct involvement, including helping NATO's campaign, sending armed troops and money to support the rebels who overthrew Muammar Gaddafi's regime, and helping them export oil from Benghazi.²⁰¹ Via the channel Al Jazeera and by setting up a Libya TV station in Doha, Qatar promoted platforms to influence the narrative on the conflict throughout the Arab world.²⁰² Doha admittedly backed Islamist rebels by shipping machine guns, automatic rifles, and ammunition, for which it has demanded reimbursement from Libya's new government.²⁰³ On June 8, 2011 the LNA

198. Benjamin Augé, "Diplomatic Relations between Qatar and Sub-Saharan Africa: An Evolving Affair", IFRI, August 2016, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/notes_qatar_afrique_en_oksl.pdf

199. "Libye: Quels sont les soutiens du Maréchal Haftar?", France 24, March 4th, 2019 <https://graphics.france24.com/libye-marechal-haftar-soutiens/>

200. Ahmad Nassar, "Qatari Intervention in Libya from a media perspective", American University of Beirut, https://www.academia.edu/2288956/Qatari_Intervention_in_Libya

201. Ian Black, "Qatar admits sending hundreds of troops to support Libya rebels", The Guardian, October 26th, 2011 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/26/qatar-troops-libya-rebels-support>

202. Giorgio Caferio and Marco Tulio Lara, "How Qatar fits into Libya's uncertain future", TRT World, September 4th, 2020 <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/how-qatar-fits-into-libya-s-uncertain-future-39472>

203. James Risen, Mark Mazzetti and Michael S. Schmidt, "U.S.-Approved Arms for Libya Rebels Fell Into Jihadists' Hands", The New York Times, December 5th, 2012 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/world/africa/weapons-sent-to-libyan-rebels-with-us-approval-fell-into-islamist-hands.html>

spokesman presented evidence of “massive political and military interference by Qatar in Libya since the 2011 revolution, comprising a wave of assassinations (including an attempt on Haftar’s life), recruitment and transport of Libyan jihadists to Syria, funding of extremist groups and training in bombing techniques via Hamas operatives”.²⁰⁴

- When the civil war broke out in 2014, Qatar (alongside Turkey) sided with the predominantly Islamist parliament and its armed wing “Fajr Libya”.²⁰⁵ According to Frederic Wehrey, “Doha backed Islamist rebels in Libya not because it was committed to a covert Islamist project but rather because it saw them as the most capable fighters”.²⁰⁶ Qatar then took a secondary role in the fighting, offering mainly political and media support and financial backing.²⁰⁷
- After pledging \$15 billion of investments in Turkey in 2018,²⁰⁸ Qatar started funding Turkish military operations in Libya at the end of 2019 in support of the the GNA, including by depositing a \$5 billion currency swaps into the Turkish central bank.²⁰⁹
- In past months, there has been a more direct Qatari involvement in Libya. For example, hundreds of Somalis trained in the Turkish military base in Qatar have been used as supplementary forces by the Turkish army.²¹⁰ In August 2020, Qatar signed an accord with Turkey to send military advisers and instructors for the armed forces of the LNA.

In Sudan, the Qatari government supported and maintained close relations with former President Omar al-Bashir. However, his fall in 2019 hindered some Qatari projects, notably the rehabilitation of the port of Suakin, for which Doha had promised billions of dollars in investment, and which would have enabled its ally—Turkey—to install a military base there, to the great dismay of Cairo.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Qatar sent medical aid to Algeria and Rwanda in Africa.²¹¹

204. Andrew McGregor, “Qatar’s Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who’s on the Lists of Terrorists and Why”, *Terrorism Monitor* Volume: 15 Issue: 14, The Jamestown Foundation, July 14th, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/qatars-role-libyan-conflict-whos-lists-terrorists/>

205. Aude Thomas, “Islamisme, livraisons d’armes, et désinformation : le rôle des puissances régionales dans le conflit libyen”, *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS)*, May 26th, 2020 <https://www.frstrategie.org/publications/notes/islamisme-livraisons-armes-desinformation-role-puissances-regionales-dans-conflit-libyen-2020>

206. Frederic Wehrey, *The burning shores: inside the battle for the new Libya*. First edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.

207. Guma El-Gamaty, “Qatar, the UAE and the Libya connection”, *AlJazeera*, June 12th, 2017 <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2017/6/12/qatar-the-uae-and-the-libya-connection/>

208. “Qatar to invest \$15 billion in Turkey; source says banks the focus”, *Reuters*, August 15th, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-currency-qatar-investments/qatar-to-invest-15-billion-in-turkey-source-says-banks-the-focus-idUSKBN1L01P7>

209. Damien McElroy, “Turkey’s tanking economy sends Erdogan on a trip to Qatar”, *The National*, November 26th, 2019

210. Martin Mateso, “La Libye, un nouveau terrain de chasse pour des milliers de mercenaires”,

211. Said Ibicioglu, Serdar Bitmez and Gulsen Topcu, “Qatar sends virus aid to Iran, Algeria”, *Andalo Agency*, April 29th, 2020 <https://www.thenational.ae/world/turkey-s-tanking-economy-sends-erdogan-on-a-trip-to-qatar-1.943083> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/qatar-sends-virus-aid-to-iran-algeria/1822329>

Iran

The revival of a hostile US policy towards Iran²¹² has heightened the country's feeling of encirclement. This feeling is confirmed by the policies of Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as Israel. Iran, which has faced sanctions and isolation since 1979, must maintain good relations with as many countries as possible to escape the encirclement on the geopolitical level. In particular, the country acts in concert with Turkey and Russia to form a religious and geographical border against the Saudi Arabia.

In order to achieve its strategic objectives (exporting the Islamic revolution, rebuilding the Safavid Empire, imposing Shiism against Sunnism), Iran relies on the great capacity of its diplomacy to work, over a long period of time, on the possibilities of internal economic adaptation, and of self-sufficiency for a fairly large internal consumer market.

Following the examples of Turkey and the Gulf countries, Iran will also increasingly invest in the African continent, motivated by its strategic location, natural resources, economic attractiveness, and large Muslim population²¹³.

On the one hand, nearly half of the 1.3 billion Africans are Muslims, making them a prime target for Iran's aspirations to present itself as the leader of the Muslim world and of the Muslim community originating from immigrants in Europe, mainly from the Maghreb. On the other hand, most of the 54 African countries have experienced European colonialism, which makes them receptive to the anti-Western, non-aligned messages disseminated by Iran. Indeed, the non-aligned position of African states was the official slogan of Iran's foreign policy during the Cold War. Khomeini and his successors wanted to liberate Iran from a Western (mainly American) grip, without falling into the orbit of atheistic communism. Although Iran did not succeed in exporting its model of revolution, the country provided substantial aid to many African countries, which enabled it to gain influence in certain areas, notably in South Africa.

Thus, Tehran has pursued a policy of expansion and influence in the countries where it can rely on its Shiite relays. This strategy is taking place, among other things, in the context of the return in force of Iranian influence in Iraq and Lebanon. Iran appeals to Shiism in two ways:

- On the one hand, via a soft power approach through the Iranian communities and especially the Lebanese diaspora with a Shiite majority in West Africa, involving ideological indoctrination, cultural propagation, the construction of schools, mosques and cultural centers, the proselytism of missionaries linked to the haouzas and husseinites;
- On the other hand, using hard power, in a rather hostile manner, on the part of the Revolutionary Guards and the unofficial but no less dependent and influential armed wing of the Lebanese Hezbollah. This includes financial aid and secret military assistance.

212. In May 2018, President Donald Trump announced that the United States would cease participation in the JCPOA nuclear deal. It is estimated that estimate that US sanctions have denied the Iranian regime direct access to more than \$10 billion in oil revenue. Source: "Advancing the U.S. Maximum Pressure Campaign On Iran", Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, April 22nd, 2019 <https://www.state.gov/advancing-the-u-s-maximum-pressure-campaign-on-iran/>

213. Soli Shahvar, "Iran's Global Reach: The Islamic Republic of Iran's Policy, Involvement, and Activity in Africa". *Digest of Middle East Studies* 29, no 1 (2020): 5375. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12202>.

The interest of Iranians in the African continent and its Muslim communities is expressed through two distinct strategies:

- The 'Shiization' of Muslim communities inside and outside their countries;
- Economic aid and investment and transfer of knowledge to certain countries such as Senegal.

The almost secular status of some African countries allows their inhabitants to practice Shiism more freely. Iran also exploits the disputes and contradictions between the various Sunni Sufi schools in the region in order to establish itself more widely. This is notably illustrated by the relations maintained by the Shiite leaders of Senegal with the leaders of the Mouride brotherhood, mainly between Chérif Mohamed Aly Aïdara, the Supreme Guide of the Senegalese Shiite community Mozdahir, the General Khalif of the Mourides Cheikh Sidy Mokhtar Mbacké and his chamberlain Serigne Mountakha Bassirou Mbacké. A clear evolution of Shiism and its followers can be observed in the Sahel and West Africa, mainly in Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, and Nigeria. In this sense, the Lebanese Shiite community residing in Africa is a very important conduit for this infiltration strategy.

This Iranian presence in Africa is also reflected in the influence of cultural centers, Shiite associations, and civil organizations. Attempts of Shiite proselytism within Sunni Muslim communities and mainly Malikites is a proven fact.

On the other hand, the presence of a fairly unified Islamic corpus within the Sunni Malikite Achaarite School in the Sahel, in West Africa, in the Maghreb more generally, and in Morocco more specifically, reveals an infiltration of the Twelver Shiite Imamite current based on the believers' attachment to the house of the Prophet. This allows the Iranians to introduce the Imamite doctrine, while using other political subterfuge related to the concepts of the Islamic revolution, with the ambition of realizing the Wilayat al Faqih, the enforcement of the Islamic republic, and re-creating the Bilad al Islam (Land of Islam).

This deployment will also result in a presence through various propaganda tools in connection with Muslim communities in North Africa, targeting, first and foremost, the Maghreb diaspora in Europe, particularly in Belgium. By this means, direct contact is established with communities residing in Europe, thus providing an entry point into North Africa.

Another channel of influence used by Shiite followers relates to the relationship with the house of the Prophet, which affects any religious dispute between Sunnis and Shiites. The Shiite community and its networks are very influential in intellectual and development circles. This is notably the case in Mali, where the Shiite community continues to grow under the aegis today of Cheick Abou Jafar Mohamed Diabaté, the spiritual Guide of Ahlul Bayt, and Cheick Adam Sangaré, the President of the association.

Like their Senegalese colleagues, Malian Shiites are very involved in the intellectual sphere, humanitarian actions, and development, particularly in favor of the protection of children and orphans, which gives them a certain popularity. In fact, their actions and work remain focused on understanding their rites and seek to find an agreement to develop serene relationships with other communities. However, their impact and presence on politics remains insignificant compared to the imposing presence of the Sufi and Wahhabi

currents, which, despite the limited number of followers, remain very influential because of their financial power. Shiites are very active and well organized in networks. Information about other communities circulates and is skillfully distilled and analyzed, especially when it comes to the progression of Wahhabism. Some observers go so far as to predict a sure future for Shiism in the politics of West African countries.

Conclusion

It appears that Africa is at the heart of multiple power games. Emerging countries attempting to reform or review “the status quo of the international order”²¹⁴ have indisputably gained new ground on the continent, in line with their global and regional geopolitical and geo-economic interests – but without being fully able to compete on an equal footing against traditional powers’ longstanding domination.

As such, some of these emerging actors could be considered as useful intermediaries to advance traditional powers’ foreign policy agendas. For example, Gulf countries could become key supporters for US and EU ambitions in Africa. In particular, the UAE could play a significant role in supporting the West, especially in combating terrorism or cross-border crime. In addition, the UAE’s control of ports and critical infrastructure across the continent seem like major assets in the event of a military deployment in Africa. Saudi Arabia will continue to play its role as an important economic force, while attempting to control Muslim religious spaces.

A key aspect to watch closely is the dynamic between emerging countries that are present in Africa and another important traditional power to which they are all economically associated; China. In this sense, the relationship between the UAE and China should be monitored, mainly with regards to the financial possibilities of the UAE and what use it will want to make of its presence and political weight in Africa, including through cooperating in the health sector.

Another crucial question that will need to be considered concerns the relationship to Russia; To what extent will Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia stand ready to balance important relations with Moscow with other interests that align with the West?

As for Turkey, despite a looming economic crisis, it will remain a major pro-Western player on the continent. One can expect more economic presence and well-established soft power through the circuit of Turkish schools, including and a new significant focus on North Africa and East Africa, notably through its relationship with Qatar. Admittedly, Turkish interventionism is to be analyzed in light of the security and overall geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, but it is also crucial for rethinking relations with Russia. How will the US appreciate Turkey’s role as an important NATO ally in Africa, in the context of rather contradictory signals within the EU? Turkey remains an economic actor that seems capable, at least on a small scale, of supplanting China’s attractiveness in terms of production and export of products intended for the African continent.

In the same vein, Israel could establish itself as a strategic actor, if its Middle Eastern policies are in line with those of its allies. Since several African countries have already recovered relations with Israel and the recent formalization of Israeli-Emirati diplomatic relations did not pose the same questions for all African countries. In fact, almost all African countries have ongoing relations with Israel due to overlapping economic and security interests. Israel stands particularly well positioned to play a significant role in Africa

214. Fonseca, Pedro Cezar Dutra, et al. « The concept of emerging power in international politics and economy ». *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 36, no 1, mars 2016, p. 46-69. SciELO, doi:10.1590/0101-31572016v36n01a04.

given its expertise in security services. This question of opening up to Tel Aviv, remains a major point of contention between officials and the public of Muslim majority countries that refuse any regularization with Israel as long as the Palestinian question is not resolved. African countries might be faced with the dilemma of satisfying strategic political needs or adhering to popular demand.

The covid-19 pandemic, which occurred at a time where the multilateral order was already being seriously challenged, has revealed both traditional and emerging countries' limits and disparities in terms of capacity and willingness to provide public goods to the African continent.

EMERGING POWERS IN AFRICA: key drivers, differing interests, and future perspectives

The COVID-19 pandemic is characterized by a shifting balance of power, with some analysts even predicting a new international order in the making. Emerging powers are contributing to the changing power dynamics by competing to increase the influence they have in the political, economic, and security spheres. Africa is one of the key spaces where such strategic considerations have been taking place.

In the context of the escalating U.S.-China rivalry, this paper assesses key drivers of emerging powers' growing engagement in Africa, makes some comparisons of the roles they have played during the pandemic, and discusses how this may affect their future relationships with African countries.

More specifically, the paper explores how the following countries have sought to advance their interests throughout the African continent: Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Iran.

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