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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye Political and Economic Relations: Challenges and Opportunities

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**POST-2018 ETHIOPIA-TURKIYE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Türkiye)
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CIF	Cost, Insurance, and Freight
EIC	Ethiopian Investment Commission
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOB	Free On Board
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development (East Africa)
MLA	Mutual Legal Assistance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEBE	National Electoral Board of Ethiopia
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TİKA	Turkish International Development Cooperation Agency
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States

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Abstract

The period since 2018 marks a significant transformation in Ethiopia Turkiye diplomatic relations, characterized by enhanced political, security, and economic cooperation. Focusing especially on political engagement, military and security cooperation, and economic ties, this study looks at the development of bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye since 2018. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study makes use of official records, government reports, key informant interviews, and body of current literature. The results show that Ethiopia's political change under Dr. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has helped to boost diplomatic interactions, strengthen security alliances, and raise Turkish investments in sectors including manufacturing, textiles, and infrastructure. Despite this increase, challenges still exist including Ethiopia's increasing trade deficit and policies influencing bilateral economic cooperation. According to the study, Ethiopia Turkiye relations have significantly improved since 2018 and present great possibilities for ongoing cooperation provided economic and legal challenges can be properly addressed.

Keywords: *International Relations, Political Relations, Economic Relations, Ethiopia, Turkiye*

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

At the outset, let's begin by examining the broad field of international relations (IR), which includes a variety of cross-border interactions involving both state and non-state actors. Khan (2019) defines international relations as political activity and other types of interactions between two or more states. According to Robert A. McClelland & Robert Pfaltzgraff (2023), International relation is the study of the relations of states with each other and with international organizations and certain subnational entities such as bureaucracies, political parties, and interest groups.

Based on the explanation provided above, it is clear that International relations involve examining how countries and non-governmental entities interact within various domains such as politics, economics, and security. In this study, readers can conceptualize International Relations as a field of study dedicated to examining the entirety of interactions among states and non-state entities transcending their domestic boundaries.

Ethiopia has a rich history of diplomatic relations with various countries across the globe, spanning different cultures and civilizations. Like other states engaging in foreign relations, Ethiopia has sought to establish and maintain cordial relations with other nations, both near and far (Masrie, 2021).

Since the mid 1990's countries like China, India, Brazil, Turkiye, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Gulf States began to emerge as an alternative foreign relation partner to the various African states (Sebsebe, 2015). According to Sebsebe 2015, As compared to the approaches adopted by the traditional Western powers, these rising countries articulated new forms of engagement under the frame work of the 'South-South cooperation'. This new form of collaboration is characterized by a two-way or equal partner relationship that doesn't rely on conditionality in the one hand and a cooperative relationship that incorporates trade, investment and finance flows on the other.

Ethiopia is one of the fifty-four African countries its foreign policy and strategy is extremely influenced by this new form of international relation. Turkiye is one of the most well-known emerging economies that attracted recent global attention and it has been building its position as a leader in South-South cooperation (Sebsebe, 2015).

According to available literatures the beginning of the historical ties between Ethiopia and Turkiye trace back to the Ottoman era. Diplomatic contact between Turkiye and Ethiopia kicked off in 1896 with the exchange of delegations during the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II and Emperor Menelik II (ENA, 2023). Turkiye established its first diplomatic presence in Africa in 1912 by opening a consulate in Harar, Ethiopia, a city revered as the fourth holiest site in Islam. According to Sebsebe 2015, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and establishment of the Republic of Turkiye also the two countries continued their economic and diplomatic relation.

This diplomatic outpost marked a significant step in Turkiye's engagement with the African continent. In 1926, further solidifying its ties with Ethiopia; Turkiye inaugurated its embassy in Addis Ababa, becoming the first sub-Saharan African nation to host a Turkish embassy. (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023). Ethiopia opened its embassy in Ankara in 1933 and it had remained active until the Communist Derg regime closed it in 1984. In April 2006 Ethiopia reopened its embassy in Ankara (JIMA, 2021). Furthermore, TIKA- Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency also opened its first office in Africa in Addis Ababa in 2005. Turkish Airlines began flights to Addis Ababa in 2006 (Tilahun, 2019).

Following the political transition in Ethiopia in 2018, many countries portrayed their interests towards the change and other aspects. The government has established friendly relations with many states including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Turkiye (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023).

The new government has sought to strengthen ties with Turkiye. As Ethiopian Ambassador in Turkiye, Ambassador Adem Mohamed, Turkish investors are second largest investors in Ethiopia and created large job opportunities for many peoples (Fana Broadcasting Corporate, 2022).

The relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye has been marked by a significant transformation since 2018, driven by a convergence of political and economic factors. This thesis explores the

intricacies of this evolving relationship, examining the opportunities and challenges that have emerged in recent years.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a significant shift in international power relations due to emerging economies in developing countries gaining more and more influence from the previous dominance of the global north (Verdonk, 2018). Starting from the mid-1990s, nations such as China, India, Brazil, Turkiye, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Gulf States started to surface as alternative foreign relations partners for numerous African states.

These rising countries articulated new forms of engagement under the framework of the “South-South cooperation”. South-South cooperation is a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical domains. It is the mutual exchange of knowledge and resources between countries in the Global South, including Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa (Vlasov, 2022). Turkiye has garnered significant global attention as one of the prominent emerging economies. Ethiopia’s economy and foreign policy are greatly influenced by this new form of International Relations.

In February 2018, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Haile Mariam Dessalegn, resigned from office. Subsequently, in April 2018, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) elected Abiy Ahmed as both the party leader and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia (Jima, 2021). The Prosperity Party was formed and formally recognized by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) in December 2019. The new government has sought to strengthen ties with Turkiye, which has emerged as a key partner for Ethiopia in the region. The relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye has flourished since the 2018 political transition (Georgio Cafiero & Corrado Cok, 2020).

Ethiopia is the pivotal power in a conflict ridden Horn of Africa in which multiple conflicts have continued to proliferate bogging down the country into internal ethnic based conspiracies and conflicts, huge international pressure attempting to disrupt the peaceful development of the country (Dibaba, 2023). This pressure is manifested in a constellation of conspiracies by the western countries, including EU and the US, Egypt and Sudan over GERD, TPLF’s war of

destabilization and economic sabotage. At this point in time, Türkiye is one of the countries that have offered to support Ethiopia in every aspect. In the wake of mounting criticism from the U.S. and the West, particularly concerning their domestic policies, Türkiye and Ethiopia have forged an even stronger alliance (Bishku, 2022). Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed tweeted Ethiopia will never forget the critical time cooperation the people and government of Türkiye extended to us. In August 2021, summit diplomacy was conducted between Türkiye and Ethiopia that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with President Tayyip Erdoğan. During the meeting, they discussed on the areas of cooperation such as technology, military, economic, and social issues between the states and regional and international situations like international security (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023).

Turkish and Ethiopian officials signed a military cooperation agreement in the presence of the leaders of the two countries. They also signed an agreement on skill sharing and the financing of resources for water management (Fakude, 2021). The recent Ethiopian-Turkish cooperation agreement transforms the two countries' relations from an economic-based alliance to a strategic alliance, which will enhance the Turkish presence in the Horn of Africa (EPC, 2021). Ethiopia has sought better relations with Türkiye in recent years, keen on enlisting Turkish support against the Arab backing for Egypt and Sudan in the escalating row over the waters of the Nile (Tastekin, 2021).

While the number of Turkish companies investing in Ethiopia in 2003 was only 1 and the number of employed people was 5, it is noteworthy that the subsequent data, as of 2022, reflects a significant transformation. Turkish business people have become one of the largest private sector employers in Ethiopia by employing more than 20,000 Ethiopians with approximately 200 Turkish companies. Total investment volume surpassed 2 billion dollars, 13 projects have been completed. This information provides a comprehensive snapshot of the substantial growth and impact of Turkish investments in Ethiopia, as of the year 2022. Turkish Government provides undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships for Ethiopian students. As of 2020, 632 Ethiopian students have been awarded scholarships at various Turkish universities (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

Despite the developments in the relationship between Ethiopia and Türkiye since 2018, there is a notable dearth of scholarly attention on the subject. Yet, there are few works of study that worth

mentioning in the field. Edme Alem & Yared Ayele (2023) expounded on the diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries, elucidating the potential inherent in their interaction. Bishku, (2022) also delved into the historical interactions and converging interests between the two nations. Both studies omitted the examination of challenges and opportunities within the political and economic relations of the two countries.

Miftah's 2024 analysis reveals a significant invigoration of Ethio-Turkish relations in the past two decades, despite their long-standing historical connections. This renewed dynamism, particularly noticeable since 2002, is largely a result of Turkiye's "Africa Opening" initiative and Ethiopia's adoption of market-oriented economic reforms. Tilahun, (2019) examined economic relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye, with a specific focus on trade and foreign direct investment. Nevertheless, the existing literature solely delineates the economic relations between the two countries and does not delve into the political ties between Ethiopia and Turkiye. Therefore this study attempts to contribute to the scanty literatures available in the field by addressing the gaps.

This research aims to explore the multifaceted aspects of their bilateral relationship, analyzing the challenges and opportunities that have emerged. It explores the dynamics of the bilateral relationship, analyzing the key political and economic factors that have shaped their interactions. By assessing the challenges faced and identifying potential opportunities, this research aims to provide insights into the evolving nature of Ethiopia-Turkiye relations and the implications for both countries. The researcher opted to investigate the years from 2018 onward due to the occurrence of political transition in Ethiopia during that period.

1.3 The Central argument

The central argument of this study is that Ethiopia-Turkiye political and economic relation is increasing after 2018, marking not only the strengthening of bilateral ties but also the emergence of diverse opportunities and challenges within this evolving framework.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to assess the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye Political and Economic Relations, identifying the key Challenges and Opportunities. It also addresses the following specific objectives:

1. To analyze the political aspects of the Ethiopia-Turkiye relationship in the post-2018 period.
2. To assess the economic dimension of the Ethiopia-Turkiye relationship since 2018.
3. To identify the challenges in the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye relations.
4. To identify the opportunities in the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye relations.

1.5 Research Question

The core research question of the study is that what are the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye political and economic relationship, identifying challenges and opportunities? The study attempts to answer the following specific research questions:

1. What are the political aspects of the Ethiopia-Turkiye relationship in the post-2018 period?
2. What is the economic dimension of the Ethiopia-Turkiye relationship since 2018?
3. What are the challenges in the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye relations?
4. What are the opportunities in the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye relations?

1.6 Research Methodology

The methods and processes used to find and examine data related to a particular study topic are referred to as research methodology. It is a procedure whereby researchers plan their study to use the chosen research tools to accomplish their goals (Streekumar, 2023). By identifying which problems are worthwhile to investigate, how to formulate a problem for exploration, how to create suitable data creation, and how to establish a logical connection, methodology offers guidance on how investigations should continue between the issue, the information gathered, the analysis, and the findings.

The proper research methodology, including sampling strategy, data gathering tool, data analysis process, and presentation, was chosen by the researcher while carrying out this investigation. To meet the objective of the research the study employs qualitative research approaches. The utilization of a qualitative approach is chosen for its capacity to illuminate the comprehension, encounters, and perspectives of research participants. It delves into the functioning of political

processes, institutions, and discourses; unveiling the significance of the meanings they generate (Mason, 2002).

1.6.1 Sampling Technique

The researcher used the purposive sampling technique in accordance with the research problem that the study seeks to solve. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers deliberately choose participants based on particular attributes pertinent to their study. It is also referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling (Bullard, 2024).

Eight individuals were interviewed by the researcher while this study was being conducted. Positions, experience, closeness to the study, and familiarity with Ethiopia-Turkiye diplomatic relations were taken into consideration while choosing participants.

1.6.2. Sources of Data

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources in this investigation. While the primary sources are found in the data gathered from key informant interviews, the secondary sources included books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, letters, and websites.

1.6.3. Data analysis procedure

Regarding data analysis, the researcher has employed a thematic approach to data analysis. The researcher first transcribed the information gathered from key informant interviews and document analysis, after which they categorized the information thematically.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the post-2018 Ethiopia-Turkiye political and economic relationship, highlighting the opportunities and challenges that have emerged. By examining the factors driving this relationship, the thesis seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics shaping Ethiopia's engagement with the broader Middle East.

This study has a fundamental value to anyone who is interested in similar areas. It would also serve as a springboard for further study in the area. Since there is a dearth of literature on the subject, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature and provide new insights into the political and economic relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye since 2018.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of this paper is limited to Ethiopia-Turkiye political and economic relationship and analyzing opportunities and challenges that have emerged. The study focuses on the time period of post 2018. The researcher chose to investigate the years from 2018 onward specifically because of the political transition that occurred in Ethiopia during that period

1.9 Limitation of the study

The study faced a few limitations that needed attention. First, the study period, which started in 2018, meant that finding sufficient resources was difficult. This lack of diverse, detailed resources left a gap in our understanding of Ethiopia-Turkiye relations post-2018. Second, the heavy dependence on Ethiopian sources leaned toward bias, and did not provide a fully balanced view. Finally, it was difficult to get the opportunity to interview people involved in these affairs. This restricted the possibility of obtaining firsthand information and expert views, which affected the depth and quality of the main data.

1.10 Organization of the study

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter included an introduction part under which the background of the study, statement of the problem, the central argument, objective of the study, research questions, research methodology, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, organization of the study. The second chapter deals with the conceptual frameworks and review of related literature that consist of theoretical conceptual frameworks and empirical review. The third chapter deals with Ethiopia-Turkiye historical relations in brief. The fourth chapter of the study, on the other hand, focuses on Ethiopia-Turkiye political relations and the fifth chapter explains economic relations since 2018. Finally, the sixth chapter provides a conclusion and recommendation.

Chapter Two

Conceptual and theoretical perspectives

This chapter delves into the conceptual framework, theories and empirical review elucidating the political and economic relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye. This chapter will define and discuss key and relevant concepts and theories that help explain Ethiopia and Turkiye political and economic relations. To that effect, this chapter is divided into three major sections: the first section deals with international relations, political relations and economic relations, the second section appraises theoretical perspectives and the third section discusses empirical review.

2.1. Definition of concepts

2.1.1. International Relations

Scholars in the field have different views on the optimal interpretation of its subject matter, encompassing both conceptual and theoretical aspects, as well as its methodologies for knowledge acquisition. There are therefore competing definitions. According to Khan (2019), International Relations (IR) or an international affair commonly refers to international studies, global studies, or global affairs. It is the study of interconnectedness of politics, economics and law on a global level. According to Devetak (2011), IR is external relations among nations, states, and peoples. According to Sutch and Elias (2007), international relations delve into the interactions among sovereign states or nations (as cited in Dessalegn, 2021).

While 'international' originally refers to interactions between nations, these interactions among sovereign states are shaped by both international governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, our enquiry must encompass a wide range of actors and forms of interaction within the international system to fully understand its complexity.

Actors in international relations are the entities that make international relations work. These include state actors or countries and non-state actors, like intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and multinational enterprises (Reiss, 2023). According to Kurt (2021), International relation is both the practice and the study of the relations of nation-states and other entities in the international system. According to Hepler (2023), International relations is an academic discipline that focuses on the study of the interaction of the actors in international

politics, including states and non-state actors. International relations is the study of the relations of states with each other and with international organizations and certain subnational entities (Charles McClelland & Robert Pfaltzgraff, 2024).

According to the above literature International relations involves the interactions of various actors, including states (countries) and non-state actors (like international organizations, NGOs, and multinational corporations). These actors participate in the practice and study of relationships within the international system. In International Relations (IR), bilateral and multilateral relations are crucial frameworks for state interaction.

2.1.2. Bilateral Relations

Both bilateral and multilateral relations are essential components of international relations (IR). Bilateralism involves direct negotiations and agreements between two countries, while multilateralism entails engaging multiple nations through international organizations and forums (Ananya Raj Kakoti and Gunwant Singh, 2023). Multilateral diplomacy may be defined as the practice of involving more than two nations or parties in achieving diplomatic solutions to supranational problems. Multilateral diplomacy is also the means to negotiate international treaties that improve the state of the world (Mahbubani, 2022). According to Commonwealth of Nations organization (2020), Bilateral refer to ties between two states and multilateral denotes relationships of more than two states, often within an intergovernmental organization such as the UN.

Bilateral relations involve formal agreements between two countries to establish diplomatic ties and facilitate cooperation in various areas such as political, economic, and cultural exchanges. These relations are regulated by international laws, particularly the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, which sets the framework for diplomatic interactions, including the rights and duties of diplomats, the establishment of embassies, and the protection of diplomatic personnel and premises. Bilateral relations are typically rooted in mutual benefit and aim to foster peaceful cooperation between the two states. (Cornago, 2008).

Countries also maintain their bilateral relations via summits and other meetings of heads of state. Countries maintain their bilateral relations through regular summits and meetings between heads of state, where they discuss and negotiate key issues to strengthen diplomatic ties and foster

cooperation. Bilateral diplomacy is essential for any country to engage directly with other countries, whether they are in their immediate neighborhoods or beyond (Diplo, 2023).

International Relations is the academic study of the intricate interactions, both diplomatic and non-diplomatic, among states and non-state actors across international boundaries, encompassing diverse dimensions such as politics, economics, and social dynamics (Chris Brown & Kirsten Ainley, 2005). International cooperation involves the coordination of policies among states and other entities to align their actions with existing or expected preferences. It encompasses the practice of collaborative efforts among nations, particularly in the realms of politics and economics. Considering the various definitions and attempts to conceptualize International Relations, one could define it as a comprehensive examination of the interactions among nation-states, international organizations, and non-state entities across the globe, incorporating political, economic, and social dimensions. So the international relations between states could be seen from two major aspects; political and economic ties.

2.1.3. Political Relations

At the international level, political relations refer specifically to the interactions between sovereign states and other international actors. This complex web of interactions shapes the global political landscape and influences a vast array of issues. Political cooperation often takes place via treaties, which are formally approved agreements between two states. It also takes place through military alliances, collaborations between the armed forces of two states or agreements between states surrounding the use of sanctioned force (Whittemore, 2014).

Diplomacy is an essentially political activity and, when well-resourced and skillful, a major ingredient of power (Brridge, 2010). Using different diplomatic methods, states are involved in diplomatic relations at bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral levels. By using personal or direct diplomacy through visits, correspondence, and telephone conversations, heads of government and foreign ministers, envoys and other senior leaders establish contacts, promote their country's image, or try to improve bilateral, official, and other relations. Personal diplomacy through visits is also used frequently to put the seal of approval on a major project or agreement. Visits of this kind, whether they be ceremonial, psychological, or have a substantive purpose, reflect the growing involvement in the diplomacy of the head of state or government and a variety of key

representatives of banks, corporations, regional institutions, and other organizations(Barston, 2014 (as cited in DESSALEGN, 2021)).

Political relations involve interactions and connections among states, governments, organizations, political parties, and others in the political world. These interactions can include diplomacy, negotiations, cooperation, or conflicts, as well as forging alliances or pursuing shared goals. They influence government decisions and actions, and help maintain the stability and functioning of political systems both within nations and internationally. Political Cooperation is an exercise in cooperation or coordination but not a common foreign policy. Political cooperation, fundamentally, entails collaboration among sovereign governments (Hurd, 1981).

Political institutions play the role of representing and facilitating relations at state level. Most diplomatic representations are often a sign of the existence of political relations between states. In addition, visits by leaders, bilateral consultation forums, civil societies and institutions are some indicators for political and social relations between states. Diplomatic institutions include embassies and related offices that represent a given state in other states (Nagayo, 2015).

Considering all the above definitions and attempts to conceptualize political relations, at the international level, political relations encompass interactions between sovereign states and other global actors, shaping the political landscape and influencing various issues. These interactions occur through treaties, military alliances, and collaborations on sanctioned force. Political relations involve diplomacy, negotiations, cooperation, conflicts, alliances, and pursuing shared goals among states, governments, organizations, and political parties. Political cooperation involves coordination among sovereign governments without necessarily establishing a common foreign policy.

2.1.4. Economic Relations

Until recently, economic diplomacy was largely overlooked in the field of international relations. States Economic Cooperation is an element of international cooperation that seeks to create favorable conditions essential to enhance the processes of trade and financial integration in the international arena (Dessalegn, 2021).

The international economy is one in which the principal entities are nation states, and involves the process of the growing interconnection between national economies. It involves the

increasing integration of more and more nations and economic actors into market relationships (Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, 1992). The economic relations of states could be seen from the commercial or economic diplomacy perspectives. According to Brridge (2010), commercial diplomacy includes the use of embassy resources to promote exports and inward investment, as well as the cultivation of aid donors in the case of poor countries.

In order to enhance their economic ties, governments appoint trade and economic representatives within their embassies and consulates to gather market intelligence, facilitate trade missions and business ventures from their home countries, and aid in negotiating bilateral commercial deals. Consequently, in recent decades, not only governments but also export promotion agencies have become prominent entities in many nations, serving as effective tools to boost exports, both in developed and developing economies (Marie, Mina, and Peter, 2010).

Export promotion agencies, operating at private and joint venture levels with no support from the business community and the public sector, look to access foreign markets in other countries. They began to use the network of embassies and consulates abroad for hands-on information about potential markets. So, embassies and consulates become a means to foster bilateral trade and exports between countries. In line with this, and unlike in the past, states have widened the scope of operation of their embassies and consulates to oversee and facilitate trade and investment opportunities for their growing business firms and companies. To make that happen diplomats started to pay attention to what is known as 'low politics' like trade and investment (Dessalegn, 2021).

The International Economic Relations field focuses on the consequences of the economic interaction among countries and the policies that affect these interactions and their economic outcomes. Interactions include trade in goods, services, assets, and technologies. The interdependence of national economies has increased in recent years mainly through a greater integration of goods and asset markets (Jocelyn Horne & Paul R Masson, 1987).

Considering all the above definitions and attempts to conceptualize economic relations, international economy is characterized by the increasing interconnection between national economies, facilitated by the integration of more nations and economic actors into market relationships. Economic cooperation, as a facet of international cooperation, aims to create

favorable conditions for trade and financial integration globally. Economic relations between states are viewed through commercial or economic diplomacy perspectives, which have evolved significantly over time. Traditionally, commercial work was often delegated to consuls or specialized foreign trade services, but nowadays, states actively promote exports and investment through their diplomatic missions. Export promotion agencies also play a crucial role in facilitating trade and accessing foreign markets. Economic diplomacy influences bilateral trade flows by leveraging tools such as export promotion, official visits, and networking via embassies and consulates. The field of International Economic Relations focuses on understanding the consequences of economic interactions among countries, including trade in goods, services, assets, and technologies. This interdependence among national economies has increased notably in recent years, driven by greater integration of goods and asset markets.

2.1.5. Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is a nation's overall approach to managing its relationships with other countries and international groups. It involves a wide range of global concerns, from international relationships to domestic politics, all of which influence the decisions a country makes on the world stage (NMAD, 2025). A state's foreign policy is its approach to how it interacts with other nations. It's the set of strategies a central government uses to engage with other sovereign states and the global system to achieve specific goals (Rizwan, 2019). A country's foreign policy is its set of strategies for protecting its interests both domestically and internationally. It determines how the country engages with other nations and global entities, with the ultimate goal of defending its national interests through either peaceful or military means (Frazier, 2019).

According to the above definition, a country's foreign policy is its overall strategy for dealing with other nations and international organizations. It is the framework that guides how a country protects its interests both at home and abroad, defining how it will interact with the world. This involves a dynamic process of setting goals and using a variety of tools such as diplomacy, trade agreements, or even military force to achieve them. The ultimate purpose is to defend national interests, which can range from ensuring national security and economic prosperity to promoting a country's core values.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives

Theories in social science in general and IR, in particular, are very crucial to analyze and explain social and political phenomena and reveal any sort of findings (Sharp, 2009). Through various theoretical vantage points, the study of international relations offers insightful theories that help us understand and interpret the world. Each theory offers a distinct perspective on world affairs.

The three IR theories of constructivism, neorealism, and neoliberalism are particularly pertinent to the political and economic relations between Ethiopia and Türkiye because they provide complementary explanations of the behaviors and motivations underlying the two countries' relationship. Neoliberalism offers a framework for understanding how international organizations and economic interdependence have shaped the relationship. The constructivist viewpoint emphasizes how crucial shared identities, values, and historical narratives are in shaping bilateral cooperation. Although neorealism offers a perspective for analyzing security issues, its applicability to Ethiopia-Türkiye relations is also significant.

2.2.1. Neoliberalism

The theory of Liberalism in International Relations seeks to elucidate the motives and mechanisms behind the interactions among various actors on the global stage. Liberalism is a prescriptive theory that promotes the establishment of regimes to address common issues in the otherwise anarchic international arena in order to create the conditions for world peace. International actors are interdependent, according to liberals. Each relies on others to provide essential goods and services, ranging from security to food to investment. Liberals claim that interdependence decreases conflict by encouraging a harmony of interests – shared goals that can be achieved through cooperation (Cox, 2016).

Neoliberalism is essentially a resurgence or revival of classical liberalism. It focuses on the central role of international institutions and organizations in the international political system or politics (Yahaya et al, 2019). According to Smith (2024), Neoliberalism is an ideology and policy model that emphasizes the value of free market competition.

It argues that the universal condition of world politics is globalization. States are, and always have been, embedded in a domestic and transnational society, which creates incentives for economic, social and cultural interaction across borders (Moravcsik, 2010). According to

Connell (2010), Neoliberalism broadly means the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market.

According to liberals the interests of states are multiple and changing. Mutuality of interests will grow with increased interdependence and the spread of democratic values; states and other actors will be better able to understand their common interests with improved knowledge and communications (Jane et al, 2010). Liberal schools claim that institutions can play a positive role in increasing cooperation between states in various fields (Sıradag, 2018).

It believes countries can have many different and evolving goals, including both self-serving interests and a willingness to cooperate. They argue that as countries become more interconnected and democratic, they'll find more common ground. Liberals believe strong institutions and good diplomacy can create a world where countries work together for mutual benefit and avoid conflict. Their vision extends beyond national borders, promoting peaceful cooperation both domestically and internationally.

Liberalists regarded economic interdependence as the main factor that affects states' foreign policy. Promoting cooperation rather than conflict is depicted as states fundamental behavior. For liberalists the driving force behind a state foreign policy is cooperating with other states and building international institutions to facilitate that interdependence (Sebsebe, 2015).

This approach is rooted in the idea that human cooperation is valuable and essential. Liberal policies and programs aim to maintain and expand this cooperation for the betterment of humanity. According to Chris Brown & Kirsten Ainley (2005), neoliberalism is predicated on the idea that there are several avenues of access between societies, various governmental agencies and non-state entities.

2.2.2. Constructivism

The rise of constructivism in IR studies is linked to the end of the Cold War. This is because traditional theories like realism and liberalism couldn't explain how the Cold War ended (Theys, 2018). According to Jakson and Sorensen (2010), "since the late 1980s and early 1990s, constructivism has become one of the major schools of thought within international relations" (as cited in Dessalegn, 2021).

According to Theys (2018), Constructivism sees the world, and what we can know about the world, as socially constructed. This view refers to the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge that are also called ontology and epistemology in research language. According to Varghese (2021), Constructivism is a theory in International Relations which holds that developments in international relations are being constructed through social processes in accordance with ideational factors such as identity, norms and rules. Furthermore, Varghese (2021) pp 93 provides the following explanation:

Constructivism in the academic discipline of IR argues that international relations are a social construction. States, alliances, and international institutions are the products of human interaction in the social world. They are being constructed through human action imbued with social values, identity, assumptions, rules, language, etc.

Constructivism challenges the idea of a fixed reality in IR. It argues that our understanding of the world, including how countries interact, is shaped by social ideas and interactions (socially constructed). This perspective applies to both what we know (epistemology) and the nature of reality itself (ontology) in the study of IR. In contrast to traditional theories, constructivists believe international relations are not predetermined but rather constructed through social processes. These processes are influenced by ideational factors like national identity, shared norms, and international rules. Essentially, constructivists see states, alliances, and institutions as products of human interaction, shaped by social values, identities, and the way we communicate with each other.

Constructivism primarily seeks to demonstrate how, contrary to the assumptions of neorealism and neoliberalism, core aspects of international relations are socially constructed, that is, they are given shape by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction (Wendt, 1999). Constructivists argue that ideas and shared values, like human rights norms, fundamentally shape how countries view themselves and their goals. These structures don't just dictate actions, they influence what countries even imagine as possible. Shared norms act as a communication tool, allowing countries to understand each other's expectations, while also setting boundaries for acceptable behavior. Ultimately, these ideational factors condition what countries see as practical and ethical options in the international arena (Burchill et al, 2005).

Constructivists assert that power politics is socially constructed and not given inherently. Social interactions, shared values and ideas, rather than material interests, have been shaping international politics and focusing on the impact of social relations on world politics. Constructivist's claim that states define their interests and identities according to their social structure and identities whilst new ideas and shared values can create peace and security among states and reduce the possibility of war and conflict. States could encourage cooperation and prevent war and conflicts by establishing a common identity and shared values (Sıradag, 2018).

2.2.3. Neorealism

Neorealism is an outgrowth of traditional realist theories of international relations and was first articulated by Kenneth Waltz in 1975 and 1979 (McKeown, 2019). Kenneth Waltz's book "Theory of International Politics" (1979) breathed new life into the realist approach to international relations. It essentially replaced Hans Morgenthau's earlier work, "Politics among Nations," as the key text for realists in the field. According to Humphreys (2013), Neorealism, also known as structural realism, is a specific variant of realism associated with scholars like Kenneth Waltz. Neorealism focuses on the systemic structure of the international political system, particularly the distribution of power among states (ibid).

According to Mesquita (1999), Neorealism is a theory of international relations that emphasizes the role of power politics in an anarchic international system. It argues that states, as rational actors, are primarily concerned with maximizing their security and increasing their power. According to Donnelly (2000), in the absence of a world government, countries have to build their own strength to feel more secure in the unpredictable world of international relations. The absence of a 'world government' to enforce rules of game forces state to rely on their capability in dealing with others (Waltz, 1979).

Neorealism focuses heavily on the role of power in shaping international politics. The theory holds that the state is a unitary rational actor in the international arena. These independent nations, free from any higher authority, compete to increase their own power. For these countries, self-interest reigns supreme, leading them to pursue goals that maximize their power on the world stage. Ultimately, a nation's power dictates its success in international relations. The most important goal of states is to maximize their national interests and minimize threats and

challenges. The realist school also assumes that there is an anarchic structure in world politics that motivates states to increase their military power and focus on high politics (Sıradag, 2018).

2.2.4. Linking the theories

The inclusion of all three theories is justified by their complementary insights into the multifaceted nature of international relations. Neoliberalism emphasizes economic interdependence and the critical role of institutions, suggesting that the relationship between Ethiopia and Türkiye is shaped by mutual economic benefits and cooperation. By establishing embassies in each other's capitals (Addis Ababa and Ankara), Ethiopia and Türkiye significantly improved communication channels between the two nations. Ethiopia-Türkiye relations involve interactions between governmental and non-governmental entities. This includes Ethiopian and Turkish Airlines, and numerous Turkish businesses operating in Ethiopia, serving as channels facilitating connections between the two nations.

Constructivism highlights the importance of shared identities and historical narratives, which are essential for understanding the cultural and ideological dimensions of their bilateral ties. Constructivism, a theory in international relations (IR), emphasizes how social ideas and norms shape international politics. This theory could be useful for understanding the diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and Türkiye. Constructivists would argue that social practices within both countries, as well as international norms, influence how Ethiopia and Türkiye interact diplomatically.

Neorealism offers a framework for examining security dynamics, especially as they relate to the influence of power and strategic interests. We can analyze Ethiopia's and Türkiye's diplomatic ties as separate players in the global system, each conducting its own affairs free from the influence of outside authorities, using the realist viewpoint previously described. Ethiopia and Türkiye have different economic capacities, with Türkiye having more economic influence than Ethiopia, demonstrating Türkiye's superiority in this area. Both nations aim to optimize their strategic advantages. Türkiye's readiness to invest and offer development assistance without the strict political requirements that often accompany Western aid is advantageous to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is an important ally of Türkiye in its efforts to assert its dominance in Africa.

This chapter investigates the conceptual and theoretical frameworks essential for understanding the political and economic relations between Ethiopia and Türkiye. In order to highlight the connections between international politics, economics, and law, it starts by defining important terms like international relations, political relations, and economic relations. The chapter highlights how both state and non-state actors shape these dynamics while discussing the various interpretations of international relations. It highlights the significance of bilateral and multilateral relationships and explains how international frameworks and laws, like the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, regulate them.

In exploring political relations, the chapter examines the complex interactions between sovereign states, including diplomatic initiatives, treaties, and military alliances. It emphasizes the value of political cooperation, which is defined by alliances and discussions, and how political institutions make these exchanges possible. The conversation about economic relations highlights how crucial economic cooperation and diplomacy are becoming to boosting trade and financial integration.

By looking at how different factors interact, this framework provides a comprehensive analysis of Ethiopia-Türkiye relations. Economic factors like trade, investment, and economic interdependence are all taken into account. It also explores historical and cultural influences, including the effects of social interactions, cultural ties, and shared history. Additionally, it analyzes the impact of power imbalances and security concerns while taking into account the power dynamics between the two nations. We can develop a more sophisticated understanding of the intricate dynamics influencing Ethiopia and Türkiye's bilateral relationship by combining these components.

2.3. Empirical Review

Several researches have been carried out which offer similar empirical viewpoints on the changing ties between Ethiopia and Türkiye in the context of international politics and economic relations since 2018. These studies have analyzed aspects including diplomacy, financial integration, investment flows, security partnerships and the significance of strategic partners.

Alem and Ayele (2023), in their exploration of Ethiopia-Türkiye diplomatic relations, highlighted how political transformations in Ethiopia after 2018 provided fresh momentum for bilateral engagements. They observed that the relationship has evolved from being essentially economic in nature to having

political and security elements. They in particular stressed that Ethiopia's diplomatic initiatives since 2018 were driven by the need to establish strategic partnerships to relieve the pressure from Western and regional foes, above all over differences related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) with Egypt and Sudan. Alem and Ayele contended that the role played by Türkiye, both in terms of its diplomatic supportive statements and physical military cooperation agreements, indicates a neoliberal conception in which cooperation is based on mutual economic and political interests as opposed to ideological alignment alone.

Similarly, Bishku (2022) conducted an empirical evaluation of Ethiopia-Türkiye relations and observed that there is a discernible shift in current relations toward shared strategic interests. The study claims that Türkiye's readiness to strengthen its political and military ties with Ethiopia is indicative of realism and points to a calculated Turkish strategy to increase its power in the strategically delicate Horn of Africa. The military cooperation agreement signed during President Erdoğan's 2021 visit to Ethiopia was a practical reflection of this engagement. Additionally, the strengthening of Türkiye's geopolitical position in the Horn of Africa through strategic alignment with Ethiopia, which allows both nations to assert greater influence in regional politics, is indicative of this realist foundation.

From an economic perspective, Dagmawi (2019) evaluated Ethiopia-Türkiye economic relations with a focus on trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). According to data Dagmawi provided, Ethiopia's economic liberalization policies and the ensuing opening of its markets to foreign investors have been the main drivers of the significant growth in Turkish investments in Ethiopia, especially in the manufacturing, construction, and textile sectors. By highlighting the proactive role of Turkish state institutions like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and the direct participation of Turkish embassies in fostering bilateral trade and investments, the study emphasized neoliberal principles of economic diplomacy. With over 20,000 Ethiopians employed by Turkish businesses by 2022, they ranked among the biggest employers in Ethiopia's private sector, demonstrating the significant economic interdependence promoted by neoliberal economic principles.

Miftah (2024) offers a comprehensive socio-economic appraisal of Ethio-Turkish relations over the past two decades, emphasizing that despite centuries-old ties, a distinct “new momentum” emerged post-2002 under Türkiye's “Africa Opening” and Ethiopia's market-oriented reforms. Miftah records that Türkiye's development and humanitarian aid, which is primarily provided through TIKA and AFAD, is more reactive to crises than strategically planned. It also documents the growth of bilateral trade, which increased from about USD 200 million in the early 2000s to over USD 650 million by 2021, as well as Turkish foreign direct investment (FDI) of about USD 2.5 billion in industries like manufacturing, hospitality, and construction. Through neoliberal lenses (economic interdependence through trade and

investment), neorealist motivations (Turkiye's strategic gateway to the Horn of Africa), and persistent constraints (trade imbalances, regulatory barriers, and aid unpredictability), the study interprets these developments. These factors highlight the need for more institutionalized, predictable frameworks to sustain and balance this changing partnership.

In conclusion, existing empirical research on Ethiopia-Turkiye relations post-2018 highlights the complex interplay of neoliberal, constructivist, and neorealist dimensions shaping their bilateral interactions. Empirical findings clearly indicate that neoliberal economic cooperation greatly strengthens bilateral relations. At the same time, constructivist-shaped mutual perceptions and shared historical narratives have a big impact on diplomatic and political interactions. Finally, much of the recent strategic alignments are based on security and geopolitical considerations informed by neorealist theories, suggesting that the Ethiopia-Turkiye relationship is developing into a various and strategically important alliance. The theoretical frameworks of neoliberalism, constructivism, and neorealism are thus supported by this empirical synthesis as being essential to comprehending and interpreting current Ethiopia-Turkiye relations, offering a thorough context for the ongoing developments after 2018.

Chapter Three

Historical Development of Ethiopia-Turkiye Relations

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Ethiopia-Turkiye historical relations, which also examines the two nations' particular bilateral relationship as well as the larger framework of Turkiye's involvement with Africa.

Ethiopia has a long and varied history of relations with countries in the Middle East. Among these, the sixteenth-century bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye is notable for being one of the oldest. The dynamics of this relationship have changed over the centuries, greatly impacted by changes in the domestic and global environment. These historical developments, which have been influenced by major changes both domestically and internationally, have culminated in the current state of relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye.

The chapter will first examine Turkiye's broader historical relations with Africa, which have deep roots extending back to the Ottoman Empire. It will then focus on the specific interactions between Ethiopia and Turkiye, tracing their historical relationship through key moments.

3.1. Turkiye Africa relations

Turkiye and Africa have a long history of relations dating back centuries. Their social and cultural relations predate the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and can be traced back to the predecessor, the Ottoman Empire (Uchehara, 2008). According to Ozkan (2010),

“Turkiye's relations with Africa can be divided into three periods. The first period covers the Ottoman state's relations with Africa until the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, during which the Ottomans had considerable relations with Africa. The period from 1923 to 1998 can be seen as one where Turkish-Africa relations were at their lowest level, if they even existed. Since 1998, with the acceptance of the Africa Action plan, there has been a revival in Turkiye's interest in Africa. Although initially this was a passive approach, after 2005 it turned into an active interest in developing relations with Africa”.

The Ottoman Empire had a strong economic relationship with Africa for centuries. They controlled Egypt and traded with other North African and Sub-Saharan countries. Ottoman first Contact with Africa started after the conquest of Egypt in 1517 by the Ottoman forces, marking the end of the Mamluks regime that had ruled Egypt for three centuries (Ozkan, what drives Turkey's involvement in Africa?, 2010).

When the Ottomans took over Egypt in 1517, it became a key part of their empire. Egypt's large population, fertile land, and existing trade routes made it valuable economically and strategically. Controlling Egypt also gave the Ottomans power over the Nile River and the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Ottomans also played a strategic economic role in sub Saharan Africa. Such states as Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, etc. had trade relations with the Ottomans (Hazar, 2000).

The Ottoman Empire economic hegemony and trade influence in Africa began to disintegrate in late 19th century and was tacitly replaced with European trade model and values. Egypt adopted capitalist ideals, values, and technology from Europe and this led to tremendous improvement in agricultural productivity and increased economic activities in Africa. The resultant effect was the ultimate financial and economic dominance of the African economy by France, Portugal, and Britain, leading to the Institutionalization of colonialism. By the time of the First World War, the collapse of Ottoman economic hegemony in Africa was completed and their former African provinces emerged as modern states, often under a European colonial umbrella and became the peripheral states of Western capitalist powers (Chigozie Enwereaa & Mesut Yilmaz, 2014).

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. After the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the country was no longer a power on the world stage. And with the foundation of the Republic of Turkiye on October 29, 1923, with Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) as its first President, the new Republic did not have the resources and capability to project its powers beyond its own borders (Dodo, 2016).

According to Dodo (2016), thus from 1924 to the Second World War, the new regime was mainly committed to implementing internal reforms and engaging in the process of secularization of its society. By then, relations with Africa as a whole were therefore at its lowest point. At the same time, the majority of the African countries were also becoming colonies of the

Western European countries. As a result, throughout the decades of '30s, '40's and '50s, relations between Türkiye and Africa were practically non-existent. However, during the decolonization years of the '50s and early years of independence of many African countries, Türkiye supported the liberation movements of many African countries and recognized the independence of the new States.

The dynamics of the Cold War compelled the Turkish government to forge a close alignment with the West, thereby emphasizing Türkiye's role as a key player within the US-led Western bloc. During this period, alliance with Western countries was considered one of the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy. Indeed, Türkiye paid such special attention to its relations with Western countries. Following the European Union's rejection of Türkiye's membership application at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit and a perceived decline in its strategic importance to the West after the Cold War, the Turkish government decided to pursue a more multidimensional foreign policy, moving beyond a singular focus on Western alignment. In its search for foreign policy alternatives by playing a more dynamic and constructive role in world politics in the post-Cold War period, Türkiye adopted its Opening to Africa Policy in 1998 when Ysmail Cem was the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Tepeciklioglu, 2017).

After decades of isolation from world politics, Africa is returning to international attention with its rising strategic and economic status in the restructuring global balance of power. Emerging powers such as China, India and Brazil have recently developed multi-billion dollar projects in some energy-rich African countries. Türkiye, too, has recently begun to show closer economic and political interest in the continent. Economically, both sides benefit from increasing trade between Türkiye and Africa, which creates employment and investment. Moreover, Turkish international aid and development projects in Africa have steadily increased over recent years through TİKA and other international organizations (Mehmet Ozkan & Birol Akgun, 2010).

According to Dodo (2016), the emergence of the globalized economy after the end of the Cold War (1991) and Africa's growing population made it attractive to the emerging powers. Further, the advent of global terrorist activities and networks, organized crimes and transnational issues, and the migration of millions of Africans towards Europe also opened new areas of cooperation between African countries and the rest of the world.

Until the late 1990s, African affairs held a secondary position in Turkish foreign policy. However, this perspective shifted with the adoption of the Action Plan for Opening up to Africa. This plan prompted Turkish politicians to elevate the importance of relations with African countries (Tepeciklioglu, 2017). According to Ozkan (2010), in this document, Türkiye sought to develop its future political, economic and cultural ties with African countries; it outlined some policy recommendations which became guidelines in the years to come. However, the plan was not implemented successfully because of political and economic instabilities in Türkiye.

Since the AK Party came to power in 2002, Türkiye has established significant relations with Africa (Sıradag, 2018). In 2003, the Undersecretary for Foreign Trade formulated a Strategy on the Development of the Economic Relations with African Countries. And subsequently, the declaration of the year 2005 as the “Year of Africa” by the Administration of the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is to be considered as the beginning of Türkiye’s new focus on Africa (Dodo, 2016).

The first Türkiye-Africa Cooperation summit was held under the theme “Solidarity and Partnership for a Common Future” from 18 August - 21 August 2008, in Istanbul. The summit is considered by many as a success, in terms of Turkish-African economic relations. It has achieved several concrete results, including a decision that the next summit is to be held in an African country in 2013 (Ozkan, Turkey’s Rising Role In Africa, 2011). The first and second Türkiye-Africa Summits have been held in Istanbul and Equatorial Guinea in 2008 and 2014 respectively (ibid).

Türkiye obtained observer status with the African Union on 12 April 2005, and had its embassy in Ethiopia accredited with the African Union on 5 May 2005. The African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa in January 2008 declared Türkiye a 'strategic partner. In May 2008, Türkiye joined the African Development Bank and has strengthened relations with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa and the Economic Community of West African States. AKP has assumed a greater role in regional and world politics, with its engagement with African countries being an important part of this new foreign policy vision (Tepeciklioglu, 2017). In order to improve ties with African countries, the AKP government in Türkiye has employed development and humanitarian aid as instruments, coordinating these initiatives to support

Turkiye's commercial interests. Türkiye has extended its humanitarian efforts throughout Africa through organizations like TİKA (the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), providing vital assistance to many nations. Furthermore, a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in African countries, increasing Türkiye's prominence and impact in the area. Together with business associations, these NGOs have been instrumental in advancing Türkiye's "Opening Up to Africa" program.

The AKP government has adopted a strategic approach to Africa by utilizing development assistance and humanitarian aid, coordinated by organizations like TİKA and AFAD, to give African nations the support they require in order to increase ties and create an atmosphere that is favorable to Turkish business interests. This strategy fosters goodwill and lays the groundwork for Turkish economic participation throughout the continent. By collaborating with businesses and governmental entities to support the goals of Türkiye's Africa-focused policy, NGOs also help the country expand its influence and presence in Africa.

Tepeciklioglu (2017) claims that as a result of this policy change, Türkiye consistently increased its diplomatic presence in African nations, strengthened ties with regional organizations, implemented a number of economic relations strategies, and attempted to advance its political ties with African nations on both bilateral and multilateral levels.

With the growing involvement of NGOs, the Turkish government also pledged to increase aid flows to Africa. Turkish business circles now view Africa as a promising region for investment, and more Turkish companies have expanded their operations and made investments in African nations. With their growing trade and humanitarian endeavors in Africa, these business and civic circles have strengthened Türkiye's position on the continent. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye (2022), Türkiye has 44 representative offices as embassies in African countries. Similarly, the African countries have more than 38 representative offices as embassies and honorary consulates general in Türkiye.

To summarize, a significant shift in Turkish foreign policy saw a focus on Africa. They ramped up their presence through a multi-pronged approach: increased diplomatic missions, stronger regional ties, diverse economic strategies, and political engagement on both bilateral and

multilateral levels. Turkiye also boosted its commitment by increasing aid, attracting company investment, and leveraging NGOs. This resulted in a flourishing relationship, with a surge in embassies on both sides reflecting the growing connection.

3.2. Historical development of Ethiopia Turkiye relations

3.2.1. Ethiopia ottoman relations

The second quarter of the 16th century represents the earliest period of active engagement between Ethiopia and Turkiye. This was a time when Ethiopia was in the midst of a civil war, and the strategic importance of the Red Sea sparked intense competition between the major powers of the era: the Ottoman and Portuguese empires.

The 15th and 16th centuries in Ethiopia were a period of intense conflict between the lowland Muslim Adal Sultanate and the Christian Highland Kingdom. This rivalry significantly shaped the country's subsequent political, social, economic, and cultural development. Additionally, population movements had also tested the existing demographic and political arrangements of the country. The hostility between the Muslim Adal Sultanate and the Christian Highland Kingdom has a remarkable place in the fifteenth and sixteenth century's political dynamics of Ethiopia.

In the 16th century, the intense rivalry between the Christian Highland Princes and the Adal Sultanate indeed reached its zenith. The conflict between the Christian Highland Princes and the Adal Sultanate was primarily driven by commercial and political interests. However, both sides strategically amplified the religious dimension of their rivalry to mobilize followers and secure international support. By emphasizing religious differences, they were able to galvanize their respective constituencies and attract the attention of religious leaders and nations aligned with their faith.

Imam Mahfouz and his successors' rivalry with the Christian Highland Princess coincided with a period of major international developments in the Red Sea region. The primary development in the Red-Sea and Gulf of Aden regions that escalated the hostility between the Adal Sultanate and the Christian Highland Princes was the aggressive diplomacy and rivalry between the Portuguese and the Ottomans over the commercial activities in the Red-Sea and Gulf of Aden. The two mutually rival global powers, the Portuguese and the Ottomans positioned themselves as major

actors of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aiden regions (Nigusu Adem Yimer & Belay Beyene Chekole, 2022).

The Portuguese allied with the Christian Highland Princes, while the Ottomans supported the Muslim Adal Sultanate. The Ottomans provided significant military and material aid to the Adal Sultanate, aiming to exploit the weakness of the Ethiopian Christian Highland Princes and forge stronger ties with emerging regional powers. However, this support sowed the seeds of long-lasting hostility and distrust between the Ottomans and Ethiopia. Consequently, Ethio-Ottoman relations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterized by suspicion, fear, and mutual demonization (Nigusu Adem Yimer & Belay Beyene Chekole, 2022).

The first major confrontation between the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia and the forces of Ahmed Gagn occurred in 1529, with Gagn's forces emerging victorious in the Battle of Shumbura Kure. In 1542, a Portuguese expeditionary mission, led by Christopher da Gama, arrived at Massawa in an effort to assist the Christian Kingdom. However, despite their expertise, the 400 Portuguese troops were defeated, and da Gama was captured. The following year, the Christian forces achieved a significant victory at the Battle of Zaratar, where Ahmed Gagn was killed. The Islamic Sultanate that Gagn ruled fell apart after his death, and his surviving troops reorganized in Harar. Nur al-Din, Gagn's successor, protected the town as a bastion of Islam by enclosing it in a wall. King Gelawdewos was killed in 1559 when Nur al-Din led an attack against the Christian Kingdom. But thanks to the death of its ruler and a lack of Ottoman assistance, the Sultanate of Harar was unable to grow beyond its boundaries.

At the same time, the Ottomans started expressing interest in taking over portions of Ethiopia. Their plan to dominate the Red Sea included landing at Massawa by 1557. However, their occupation was ultimately unsuccessful and lasted only until the Italian occupation of Massawa in 1885, marking the end of Ottoman influence in the region.

The relationship between Ethiopia and the Ottoman Empire after the Gagn War was complex and fluctuating. Geopolitical, economic, and religious factors often led to tension and distrust. However, positive changes in domestic politics in both countries sometimes led to improved relations. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these relations were generally more

cooperative and friendly compared to the previous centuries (Nigusu Adem Yimer & Belay Beyene Chekole, 2022).

Despite some declines in later periods, Ethio-Ottoman relations restarted during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia sent Ato Josef and Kont de Leonitif to Istanbul as Ambassador. The king also sent various gifts and also requested Ottoman support for the protection of Abyssinian properties in Jerusalem, especially the Monastery of Deiru's Saltana. Sultan Abdulhamid II sent a reply with some presents and also made efforts to solve the problem concerning the monastery in Jerusalem (Sebsebe, 2015).

The establishment of modern diplomatic relations between Turkiye and Ethiopia dates back to 1896. This occurred during the reigns of Sultan Abdülhamid II and Emperor Menelik II, marked by the exchange of diplomatic delegations. A significant milestone was Turkiye's decision to open its first African consulate in Harar, Ethiopia, in 1912. Notably, Harar holds a special religious significance as the fourth holiest Islamic city (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023).

Beyond these conflicts, there were also significant commercial ties between the two nations. The trade of coffee and slaves played a crucial role in the early economic relations between the ancient Ottoman Empire and Ethiopia. Coffee, in particular, gained importance as it was first introduced to Yemen and subsequently to the Ottoman Empire during the 15th and 16th centuries. Even when the trade in spices from the Far East saw resurgence in the 1540s, coffee remained a vital commodity, both in terms of volume and value. The inclusion of coffee in the Red Sea trade route significantly boosted the volume of trade and, consequently, the revenue generated from it.

Lij Iyasu, who ruled Ethiopia from 1913 to 1916, unexpectedly fostered closer ties with Turkiye. He attended a Turkish celebration and declared religious connections between the two countries. During World War I, Iyasu attempted to align Ethiopia more closely with the Ottoman Sultan, but this effort was unsuccessful and led to his removal from power (Nagayo, 2015).

Consequently, Lij Iyasu was overthrown from power after his defeat at the Battle of Meisso by the old Showan nobility. Lij Iyasu was replaced by Zewditu as a Queen of Kings and Ras Tafari Mokonen as heir (1916-1930) who later on (1931) was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie I after systematically defeating his power contenders (Dagmawi, 2019).

In conclusion, the history of Ethio-Ottoman relations reveals a complex interplay of rivalry, alliances, and evolving diplomacy, shaped by geopolitical and religious factors. The second quarter of the 16th century marked the beginning of these engagements, with Ethiopia's strategic location in the Red Sea region drawing the attention of both the Ottoman and Portuguese empires during Ethiopia's internal conflicts. Existing tensions became worse by the rivalry between the Muslim Adal Sultanate and Ethiopia's Christian Highland Kingdom, which were backed by the Ottomans and Portuguese, respectively. This led to the emergence of religiously motivated campaigns that gained support from all over the world.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and the Ottoman Empire started to improve despite times of extreme animosity. This was marked by the opening of Turkiye's first African consulate in Harar and the diplomatic outreach of Emperor Menelik II to Sultan Abdulhamid II, which resulted in the development of modern relations in 1896. Ethiopia and the Ottoman Empire also developed economic relations, especially in the coffee trade, which was vital to the Red Sea economy.

In the early 20th century, Lij Iyasu's attempts to align Ethiopia with the Ottomans during World War I signaled an effort to rekindle these historical ties, though it ultimately contributed to his overthrow and the rise of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Thus, the basis for the current diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye was laid by the evolution of Ethio-Ottoman relations from an early stage of fierce rivalry and mistrust to times of reciprocal diplomacy and commercial exchange.

3.2.2. Ethiopia and Turkiye: During Emperor Haile Selassie

Lij Iyasu was replaced by Menelek's daughter, Zewditu. Ras Tafari, the son of Ras Makonnen and a cousin of Menelik, served as Zewditu's regent and heir apparent. Upon Zewditu's death on April 1, 1930, Ras Tafari declared himself Emperor Haile Selassie I. Ras Tafari Makonnen became Emperor outright in 1930 upon the death of Empress Zewditu. Emperor Haile Selassie in 1931 established the first Ethiopian constitution which centralized governmental power under his leadership (Tesfu, 2008).

On 29 October 1923, the newly recognized Turkish parliament proclaimed its establishment and formally marked the end of the Ottoman Empire. . In 1926, a delegation was sent to Ethiopia

under the leadership of Ahmet Munir and this heralded the opening of the Turkish embassy in Addis Ababa and Munir became the Turkish ambassador to Ethiopia. In response, Ethiopia opened an embassy in Ankara in 1933 and Birhane Markos was appointed as Ethiopian ambassador to Turkiye.

Turkiye was also one of the few countries that participated in the coronation of Teferi Mekonnen as Emperor Haile Selassie on 02 November 1930. When the Turkish delegation arrived, the Armenian youths steadfastly refused to play the Turkish national anthem, causing the Emperor significant embarrassment and anger. The Emperor decided to bring the issue before the senior princes and nobles in a council to determine how the Armenians should be punished for defying his orders. When the council demanded an explanation, the Armenians, with tears in their eyes, explained that their conscience would not allow them to honor those who had slaughtered their parents. Ultimately, the council concluded that it was unreasonable to expect the Armenians to show respect to Turkiye's representative, and they recommended that no punishment be imposed. The Emperor accepted this decision, allowing the Armenians to disobey him and refuse to play the Turkish anthem. Despite this incident at the Emperor's coronation, relations between Turkiye and Ethiopia continued to improve, at least until Italy's occupation of Ethiopia in 1935.

The relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye faced challenges in the early 1930s due to Italy's aggression against Ethiopia. Turkiye, along with other members of the League of Nations, ignored Ethiopia's complaints about Italy's actions, likely due to their focus on the Mediterranean region. In April 1935, Turkiye, Yugoslavia, and Greece formed a joint Mediterranean agreement or alliance with Italy. (Negesso, 2021).

Following Italy's aggression against Turkiye, the relationship between Turkiye and Italy deteriorated. In response, Turkiye elevated its consulate in Ethiopia to an embassy, demonstrating solidarity with Ethiopia against Italy's actions. The Atatürk government advocated for international support for Ethiopia to counter the aggression, emphasizing the potential consequences for global peace and security. Ethiopia appreciated this stance, which strengthened their desire to develop closer diplomatic ties. The Turkish government and its media actively supported Ethiopia's struggle for independence and sovereignty. Moreover, some Turkish soldiers volunteered to fight alongside Ethiopian forces. Emperor Hailesillassie visited Turkiye

in 1967 and 1971 so as to strengthen the diplomatic relations of the two countries. (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023).

In short, following the Ottoman Empire's collapse, Türkiye quickly established strong diplomatic ties with Ethiopia, opening the first Turkish embassy in Sub-Saharan Africa there in 1926. This initial warmth faced a challenge during Italy's aggression against Ethiopia, as Türkiye's focus on the Mediterranean and alliance with Italy led them to initially disregard Ethiopia's pleas for help. However, when Italy threatened Türkiye itself, their relationship shifted. Türkiye upgraded its presence in Ethiopia to a full embassy in 1926, condemned Italy's actions, and even received volunteer Turkish soldiers fighting alongside Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie's later visits to Türkiye in 1967 and 1971 solidified this positive turn in relations.

3.2.3. Post-Imperial Ethiopia and Türkiye

On September 12, 1974, the Derg overthrew the Ethiopian Empire's government and deposed Emperor Haile Selassie during widespread national protests. After the revolution, the relationship between Türkiye and Ethiopia, both of which experienced significant political shifts, entered a more turbulent phase. Mengistu Haile Mariam aligned Ethiopia with the Soviet Union and became a staunch supporter of communism. In contrast, Türkiye, particularly under Turgut Ozal's leadership, remained firmly aligned with the West and the United States.

This alignment on opposing sides of the Cold War's bipolar superpowers strained the relations between the two countries. The situation escalated in 1984 when Ethiopia's communist government closed its embassy in Ankara, signaling the end of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Ethiopia. The relationship between the two nations remained fragile until the Cold War ended and the communist regime in Ethiopia collapsed in 1991.

The Derg regime was overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in May 1991. In this period large opportunities were created for foreign investments thereby boosting the economy of the state despite the presence of ups and downs. In this regard, Ethiopia tried to diversify its trade relations with the Western and the Eastern world including the newly emerging powers i.e. China, India, Türkiye, Brazil, Malaysia, and the Gulf states. Regardless of the state's ideological stance, the foreign policy promotes economic relations

which may contribute to the economic development of Ethiopia. This foreign policy orientation opened the door for Ethiopia to conduct trade relations and attract investments.

Turkiye's challenges with the European Union (EU) accession process prompted its government to explore alternative foreign policy options, one of which was the "Opening to Africa" initiative launched in 1998. Numerous Ministers of the Ethiopian government have made formal visits to Turkiye, while Undersecretaries of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish Director General for Security, Dr. Turan Genc have likewise visited Ethiopia. In 1993, Zenawi's government signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation and trade with Turkiye.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin visited Turkiye in March 2000, and two months later, he and his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem signed an agreement to cooperate in health and medicine. It was the coming to power of the Justice and Development (AK) Party in Turkiye in 2002 led to increased focus on Africa, particularly Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, which became key areas of interest.

Trade relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye have been growing since the advent of the AK Party in Turkiye's political field. Unlike in earlier periods, the volume of trade between Ethiopia and Turkiye has grown seven times since 2003. In 2003, the only Turkish company in Ethiopia had five employees. In 2005, the number of Turkish companies had increased to three. After a decade of work on forging stronger relations, the number of active Turkish companies reached 38 in 2015 (Miftah, 2024).

Turkiye's investors engaged in several investment areas such as agriculture, construction, textiles, technology, and so on. Moreover, the trade relations between the two states have been growing even though the trade deficit is from Ethiopia's side. Ethiopia had not had an embassy in Turkiye for many years and the cooperation was very weak particularly from 1984-1991. However, in post 1991 the diplomatic ties between these states have been growing.

In 2004, Turkiye and Ethiopia signed two agreements: one covers culture, education, science, mass media, youth, and sports, and the other establishing a Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) office in Addis Ababa in 2005(ibid). The relations were enhanced when Turkiye opened the Turkish International Coordination Agency's (TIKA) first office in Africa in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa in 2005 and when Ethiopia reopened its embassy in Turkiye,

Ankara, in 2006. In December 2008, Türkiye sent a trade delegation to Ethiopia, which met with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Trade and Industry Girma Biru, and the President of the Oromia Region Abadula Gemedo, as well as visited Turkish-owned textile factories in Ethiopia.

The current Turkey's president or former Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was the first Turkish Prime Minister to visit Sub-Saharan countries. In March 2005, Turkey's then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to discuss Turkish investments in various sectors, including construction, textiles, leather production, and agricultural processing. Additionally, Turkish Airlines, which now operates in more African countries than any other airline, initiated services to Addis Ababa (Bishku, 2022).

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Ethiopia and South Africa in 2015 which helped for the advancement of its relation with Africans in general and Ethiopia in particular. In January 2015, the Turkish President visited Ethiopia and met with Hailemariam Desalegn the then Prime minister of Ethiopia. In the meeting, the president confirmed that Türkiye has had a special place for Ethiopia since ancient times. In addition, he noted that his government has a strong interest in providing crucial technologies which will help to properly utilize natural resources and contribute to the development of the state (Edme Alem & Yared Ayele, 2023).

The post 1991 relationship between Türkiye and Ethiopia is marked by important developments of the post-Cold War era foreign policy approaches of the two countries. Unlike the previous period, Türkiye's foreign policy makers of the post-Cold War era undertook a series of measures that reunite the people of Türkiye with whom they shared common historical and socio-cultural attachments. This enabled Türkiye to strategically reintegrate with its neighbors in Asia, Europe and Africa (Davutoglu, 2012).

Similarly, the post-Cold War era foreign policy and strategy of Ethiopia also aimed to associate the country with whomever that can positively influence its economic development and political stability. Hence, without any ideological restriction Ethiopia opened its foreign policy door. This measure enabled Ethiopia to further strengthen its external ties with former partners on the one hand and with the various emerging powers on the other. Countries like Türkiye, China, India,

Malaysia, Indonesia and the oil rich Gulf countries have emerged as an alternative to the traditional foreign relation partners of Ethiopia (FDRE, Foreign Policy and Strategy, 2002).

The post-Cold War period Ethiopia's external partners in general and that of Turkiye in particular provide special focus on economic cooperation and development endeavors. Turkiye's GOs and NGOs actively engage in various development activities that potentially contribute to those efforts in Ethiopia aiming poverty reduction and sustainable development (Sebsebe, 2015).

In general, Turkiye and Ethiopia's relationship was strained during the Cold War due to their opposing alignments. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Derg regime in Ethiopia, bilateral relations significantly improved. Turkiye's "Opening to Africa" initiative, coupled with the AK Party's focus on Africa, led to increased engagement with Ethiopia. Economic cooperation, particularly in sectors like agriculture, construction, and textiles, has grown. Diplomatic ties have strengthened, with both countries exchanging high-level visits and establishing diplomatic missions. Turkiye's strategic reintegration efforts, including its "Opening to Africa" initiative, have contributed to the positive trajectory of the Turkiye-Ethiopia relationship.

Chapter Four

Ethiopia - Turkiye political relations since 2018

In the previous chapter historical interaction between Ethiopia and Turkiye is briefly presented. In this particular chapter the political relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye will be discussed. The analysis of Ethiopia Turkiye political relations since 2018 is supported by data gathered through key informant interviews and published and unpublished documents.

This chapter focuses on Ethiopia-Turkiye political relations after 2018, marking a significant shift in bilateral cooperation. While previous engagements between Ethiopia and Turkiye were largely economic and diplomatic, the post-2018 period has seen a deepening of relations, particularly in military, security, and strategic political alignment. This shift is closely tied to Ethiopia's changing foreign policy under Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed and Turkiye's assertive Africa strategy under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The evolving relationship between the two countries reflects not only their bilateral interests but also broader regional and global dynamics. The expansion of military ties, Turkiye's role in Ethiopia's security landscape, and Turkiye's mediation efforts in the Horn of Africa indicate that this relationship is moving beyond traditional diplomatic interactions. This chapter explores the political relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye after 2018, analyzing key diplomatic engagements, military partnerships, regional geopolitical implications, and the challenges and opportunities shaping the bilateral relationship. By examining the evolving nature of Ethiopia-Turkiye political ties, this chapter aims to provide insight into the significance of their partnership in both regional and global diplomacy.

4.1. Bilateral Political Relations

Foreign policy is dynamic and continually evolves in response to significant domestic, regional, or global developments. Since 2018, Ethiopia has undergone a profound transformation across its political, social, economic, security, and diplomatic domains, marking a distinct transitional era under Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed (Zenebe, 2025). Ethiopia's foreign policy since 2018 has been marked by the personalized and deinstitutionalized conduct of foreign affairs and domestic politics. Under Abiy, Ethiopian foreign policy has been characterized by reorientation of

established policies towards the Middle East states and its immediate neighbors sidelining regional institutions such as IGAD; and personalization of foreign policy (Sarkar, 2022).

Following Ethiopia's political transition in 2018, numerous nations expressed their interest in the changes and other developments. The Ethiopian government subsequently established friendly relations with several states, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkiye (ibid). Key informant (01)¹ said;

Ethiopia's foreign policy approach after 2018 has been characterized by a diversification of its international alliances, with a significant emphasis on strengthening relations with Middle Eastern countries, including Turkiye. The post-2018 shift under Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed has led to a more balanced foreign policy, recognizing Turkiye as a key partner in diplomatic and security affairs.

According to the above expert, in regards to political relation, Turkiye is a relatively liberal country in the region (Middle East). Hence, there is much democratic value to take away from them; because the take away from them is more contextually relevant compared to that of European countries due to contextual similarity between Ethiopia and Turkiye. But this does not imply any political influence. Considering that both countries are on relatively equal footing that could be contextualized, this does not afford them to impose any humanitarian, democratic value or otherwise like the other European countries; and thus, the political nature of the countries has a manner that grows together. In support of the above key informant, key informant (02)² said;

Relations should be diversified. Ethiopia's relation with the Middle East and Europe is vital for the sake of our national security and interest. Thus, and among the countries we intend to maintain this relation with is Turkiye. Turkiye also consider Ethiopia as an entry point to Africa because Ethiopia is a seat of the African union and they want to hold Ethiopia in order to get into Africa. The relation between the two countries has grown since 2018; it was either economic or investment between the two countries

¹ Amare K. (phd) Director General and Lead Researcher of Middle East Affairs Research at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

² Mohammed Seid (phd), senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

before; yet now, this has grown in the military sector, and it is growing stronger and expanding wider.

Key informant (04)³ said Turkish relations with Ethiopia are currently progressing in a positive direction in many ways. Turkish long presence in Addis Ababa, being the political capital of Africa, helps them strengthen their ties with the continent as well.

According to the experts above, a significant shift in Ethiopia's foreign policy following the 2018 political transition under Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed, marked by a reorientation towards Middle Eastern states, including Türkiye. This new approach is characterized by a more personalized style and a diversification of alliances with Middle East and other countries. Türkiye has emerged as a key partner, driven by mutual strategic interests, a perceived contextual relevance in political development, and expanding cooperation in diplomatic and security affairs, with Ethiopia serving as a potential gateway for Türkiye into the broader African continent.

State visits are an essential tool for reinforcing political and diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Türkiye. Since 2018, there has been an increase in high-level visits between the two countries, reflecting a shared commitment to deepening bilateral ties. Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed has visited Türkiye on multiple occasions, engaging in discussions with President Erdoğan on political, military, and economic cooperation. Similarly, Turkish officials and high-ranking diplomats have frequently visited Ethiopia to strengthen diplomatic relations.

Key informant (02)⁴ said the reinforcement of political relations between Ethiopia and Türkiye has been demonstrated through high-level visits and increased bilateral engagements. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has made multiple official visits to Türkiye, meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other high-ranking officials to discuss political, security, and economic cooperation. The Ethiopian Embassy in Ankara and the Turkish Embassy in Addis Ababa have also played active roles in facilitating diplomatic dialogue, policy discussions, and cooperation agreements. Additionally, Ethiopian senior military officials, including General Adem and

³ Anonymous, diplomat at Turkish embassy

⁴ Mohammed Seid (phd), senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

General Birhanu Jula, have visited Türkiye on multiple occasions, signaling the depth of the bilateral relationship beyond traditional diplomatic engagements.

The nature of these visits indicates that Ethiopia-Türkiye relations have evolved beyond economic partnerships to include strategic political and security cooperation. These engagements also signal Ethiopia's recognition of Türkiye as an influential global player with the capacity to shape regional and international politics.

Since 2018, Ethiopia and Türkiye have steadily deepened their partnership through a series of targeted agreements spanning infrastructure, defense, justice and transport. Below is a narrative account of each major accord.

According to Fana Broadcasting Corporate (2021), on 18 August 2021, Ethiopia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Redwan Hussein, together with Defense Minister Dr Kenea Yadeta, signed with their Turkish counterparts a Water-Resource Development and Military Financial Cooperation Agreement in Addis Ababa. The water-resource component envisages joint feasibility studies, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing on irrigation, watershed management and hydropower planning to boost Ethiopia's agricultural and energy infrastructure. In parallel, the military-finance pillar establishes Turkish-government credit lines for Ethiopian defense procurement and training, and creates a framework for joint exercises; officer exchanges and capacity-building programs all intended to reinforce Addis Ababa's security capabilities while solidifying trust between the two capitals.

Just one day later, on 19 August 2021, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed paid an official visit to Ankara marking the 125th anniversary of diplomatic ties to sign a four-fold package of instruments that built on the previous day's accords. In 2021, Ethiopia and Türkiye signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in military, economic, and diplomatic areas. The agreement focused on strengthening defense ties, with Türkiye providing military training, technology transfers, and potential drone sales to Ethiopia, which reportedly played a role in the Tigray conflict. Economically, the deal aimed to boost trade and investment, building on Türkiye's existing investments in Ethiopian textiles, construction, and infrastructure. With Türkiye presenting itself as a possible mediator in Ethiopia's internal disputes, the two

countries diplomatically committed to greater cooperation in regional and global fora. Human rights organizations, however, criticized the deal because Ethiopia uses Turkish drones in combat, which raises concerns about civilian casualties. All things considered, the MoU gave Ethiopia crucial military and financial support during a time of internal unrest while also reflecting Türkiye's expanding power in Africa.

Ethiopian State Minister of Justice Alemante Agidew and Türkiye's Deputy Minister of Justice Yakup Mogul signed two companion treaties on May 11, 2022, in Addis Ababa: an agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and an agreement on extradition, according to Ethiopian News Agency (2023). The extradition treaty defines the catalogue of extraditable offences from terrorism and money-laundering to human-trafficking and lays out procedural steps for formal requests, provisional arrests and transfers, subject to the principle of dual criminality. Its MLA counterpart creates channels for sharing evidence, bank records and witness statements, and even permits joint investigations and asset-tracing across borders. Both accords are expressly designed to streamline judicial cooperation and crack down on transnational crime.

According to Fana Broadcasting Corporate (2022), on 30 September 2022, the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority and the Turkish Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services. This MoU authorizes Turkish Airlines and Ethiopian Airlines to deploy wide-body aircraft (A330/A350 class) on the Addis Ababa–Istanbul route, grants fifth-freedom traffic rights for onward carriage, and establishes an initial flight-frequency schedule with scope for expansion as demand grows. The deal is expected to boost Ethiopia's aspirations to become a pan-African aviation hub and further Türkiye's "Africa Open Door" policy by opening up new passenger and cargo capacity.

These accords collectively show a multifaceted Ethiopia-Türkiye partnership that links defense cooperation, judicial cooperation, air connectivity, and water and infrastructure development all of which are seen by both governments as essential to their common political and economic goals. A number of specific agreements in the areas of infrastructure, defense, justice, and transportation have defined Ethiopia and Türkiye's expanding partnership since 2018. These agreements indicate a growing degree of cooperation and a strategic alignment of interests.

These accords, ranging from water resource development and military finance to extradition treaties and air service agreements, illustrate a multifaceted engagement aimed at bolstering Ethiopia's development and security while advancing Türkiye's influence in Africa. It is clear that both parties stand to gain strategically and economically from this developing bilateral relationship.

4.2. Military Cooperation and Security Partnerships

A key pillar of the Ethiopia-Türkiye political relationship post-2018 has been military cooperation. As Ethiopia faced internal security challenges, particularly during the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, Türkiye became one of its primary military partners. Unlike many Western countries that imposed arms restrictions on Ethiopia, Türkiye provided military assistance, including the sale of advanced drones and artillery. This cooperation played a critical role in strengthening Ethiopia's defense capabilities and stabilizing the central government.

In this regard key informant (03)⁵ says military cooperation relations have increased more recently since 2018. The unrest within Ethiopia has paramount after 2018; and there was a need to reinforce the national defense both with weaponry and otherwise. On the other hand, there was a great need to work with other countries. Türkiye was also aiming in bridging the gap observed. There are circumstances where the military relation between Türkiye and Ethiopia is growing. Particularly in regard to the conflict in the Northern part of our country they had engagement with military cooperation including equipment assistance and selling drones.

According to the above expert Türkiye's military support for Ethiopia also reflects its broader geopolitical ambitions in the Horn of Africa. By positioning itself as a key defense partner, Türkiye has gained increased influence in Ethiopia's security landscape. This partnership has also expanded into knowledge exchange, with Ethiopia sending military officials to Türkiye for training and security consultations. Türkiye's military cooperation with Ethiopia, including the sale of drones and artillery, has strengthened Ethiopia's defense capabilities.

Beyond Ethiopia's internal security concerns, military cooperation between the two countries extends to regional security matters. Türkiye has shown interest in collaborating with Ethiopia on

⁵ Anonymous, senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

counterterrorism efforts, particularly in addressing extremist threats in the Horn of Africa. Given Turkiye's extensive involvement in Somalia, including military training for Somali forces and the establishment of a military base in Mogadishu, its engagement with Ethiopia in security matters is seen as part of a broader strategy to shape stability in the region.

4.3. Cooperation at Regional and Global Levels

According to key informant (03)⁶, Turkiye has positioned itself as a key diplomatic player in East Africa, particularly in mediating regional conflicts. A notable aspect of its diplomatic engagement has been its involvement in the Ethiopia-Somalia-Somaliland dispute. While Turkiye officially recognizes Somalia's sovereignty, it has sought to mediate tensions following Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland, which Somalia strongly opposed. Turkiye's role in the mediation process has been viewed as an attempt to maintain stability in the Horn of Africa while protecting its broader regional interests.

According to key informant (01)⁷, Ethiopia did accept when Turkiye approached as a negotiator in the case of Somalia. This acceptance was derived from the pretense that Turkiye is neutral. Ethiopia also trusted Turkiye to respect the international principles in regards to Somalia and Ethiopia as well; because we have history, we have diplomatic relations, and also economic cooperation; thus, we confided in the neutrality of Turkiye.

In this regard key informant (03)⁸ said In regard to multilateral cooperation, Turkiye is a lead actor; and it is considered a strong player towards Ethiopia, in the UN, and also in regards to regional organization. Most often, the engagement is in the best interest of the nation in regards to regional and international organizations. The shared goals between the two countries tend to respect international and institutionalism based on respect to more liberal values.

⁶ ibid

⁷ Amare K. (phd) Director General and Lead Researcher of Middle East Affairs Research at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

⁸ Anonymous, senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

According to key informant (04)⁹, at the United Nations level, Türkiye acknowledges Ethiopia; thus, it is a country appearing to be supportive towards Ethiopia at international level; for example it has never been opposing Ethiopia on UN platform concerning GERD. Türkiye is one of the countries that have never stood against Ethiopia during the North war; it has even sold weapons to Ethiopian.

Ethiopia, recognizing Türkiye's increasing influence in the region, has welcomed Türkiye's mediation role in addressing disputes with Somalia. However, there are underlying concerns about Türkiye's close ties with Somalia, given that both countries are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Despite these complexities, Ethiopia sees Türkiye as a neutral actor with the ability to facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties.

The relationship between Türkiye and Ethiopia is also impacted by its geopolitical clout in the Middle East. Ethiopia is wary of Türkiye's recent attempts to normalize relations with Egypt. Ethiopia keeps a careful eye on Türkiye's changing foreign policy in the region because of the tense relationship between Egypt and Ethiopia, especially with regard to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Türkiye's rapprochement with Egypt raises concerns about its long-term position in Ethiopia's regional disputes, even though it has remained largely neutral on the GERD issue.

As part of its larger geopolitical strategy to gain more influence in Africa, Türkiye is expanding its presence in the Horn of Africa. Türkiye has expanded its military, diplomatic, and economic ties throughout the region in the last ten years, especially in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia. The Horn of Africa is a vital region for global powers with economic and security interests because of its strategic location along important international trade routes.

Ethiopia, as one of the most influential countries in the Horn of Africa, plays a central role in Türkiye's foreign policy objectives in the region. Türkiye views Ethiopia as a gateway to expanding its influence in Africa, especially given Ethiopia's strategic position as the headquarters of the African Union (AU). By deepening its political and security ties with Ethiopia, Türkiye aims to solidify its position as a key player in African affairs, countering the

⁹ Anonymous, diplomat at Turkish embassy

influence of other global powers such as the European Union (EU), China, and the United States. Türkiye's geopolitical strategy in the Horn of Africa is also driven by its broader Middle East policy. As Türkiye seeks to redefine its regional alliances, securing strong relations with Ethiopia allows it to maintain a foothold in East Africa, a region with growing economic and security significance.

Türkiye's long-term foreign policy strategy has come under scrutiny due to its delicate balancing act between Ethiopia and Arab nations, especially Egypt and Somalia. Throughout Ethiopia's internal strife, Türkiye has consistently defended Ethiopia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, considering the long-standing tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Türkiye's recent rapprochement with Egypt presents possible diplomatic challenges for Ethiopia.

By greatly increasing its military presence in East Africa, Türkiye has established itself as a key player in regional security. Türkiye's military base in Mogadishu, Somalia, serving as a training ground for Somali forces, is among the most prominent features of this expansion. Given Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland, this military engagement has raised questions about how Türkiye's security interests in Somalia may affect its ties with Ethiopia.

Ethiopia-Türkiye relations are important in the larger framework of international diplomacy, which goes beyond regional geopolitics. Ethiopia is progressively establishing itself as a major force in African and global politics, while Türkiye has positioned itself as a growing global power with a strategic interest in Africa. Through this diplomatic alliance, Ethiopia can take advantage of Türkiye's expanding influence on the international scene while balancing pressures from Western nations. As part of its larger plan to improve ties with African countries, Türkiye gains from its alliance with Ethiopia.

Türkiye is actively expanding its influence in the Horn of Africa through strategic political agreements. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is forging closer ties with Somalia and Ethiopia by signing memoranda of understanding with their respective ruling parties. These agreements aim to facilitate cooperation through joint research, training, and information sharing, allowing Türkiye to share its governance experience. Türkiye also intends to extend this

cooperative framework to Djibouti, demonstrating a broader regional strategy. Beyond political agreements, Türkiye has positioned itself as a key mediator in the region, particularly in the recent tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. By facilitating negotiations, Türkiye helped resolve a significant point of contention regarding Ethiopia's access to the sea, while affirming Somalia's territorial integrity (Soylu R. , 2025).

By mediating an important deal between Ethiopia and Somalia, Türkiye has cemented its role as a major diplomatic actor in the Horn of Africa. Due to its landlocked condition since Eritrea's independence, Ethiopia has long needed secure sea access, which this agreement addresses. Türkiye prevented a crisis that may have destabilized the entire region by successfully defusing a potentially explosive scenario through negotiation facilitation. The agreement, which respects Somalia's sovereignty while granting Ethiopia access to its ports, represents a significant diplomatic victory for Ankara. However, the agreement is not without its complexities. The unresolved status of Ethiopia's earlier memorandum with Somaliland, a self-declared independent region of Somalia, remains a point of contention. This situation creates a delicate balancing act for Ethiopia, which must navigate its relationships with both Somalia and Somaliland. Additionally, the agreement's implications extend beyond the immediate parties, impacting regional dynamics. Egypt, which has historically sought to limit Ethiopia's influence, faces a setback as Türkiye's mediation strengthens Ethiopia's position. Ultimately, the success of the Ethiopia-Somalia agreement depends on sustained cooperation and the resolution of remaining ambiguities. Türkiye's role in this process has significantly enhanced its regional influence, positioning it as a vital mediator in the Horn of Africa. However, the region's complex geopolitical landscape characterized by competing interests and shifting alliances, presents ongoing challenges. Türkiye must carefully manage its growing presence, balancing its strategic ambitions with the sensitivities of other regional and global actors, to ensure the long-term stability and prosperity of the Horn of Africa (Aguilar, 2024).

Ethiopia has initiated formal discussions to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Reports indicate that Ethiopia's bid has garnered support from influential OIC member nations, including Türkiye, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates. In a parliamentary address, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) highlighted the importance of assessing Ethiopia's engagement with the Middle East. He stated, "Everything Ethiopia has previously pursued regarding the

Middle East has been completely misguided.” This marks a paradigm shift, as Ethiopia had maintained a “closed foreign policy” towards Middle Eastern Arab countries for centuries. Enhancing engagement with Middle Eastern states and multilateral organizations might help redress past foreign policy mistakes. In this regard, Ethiopia’s membership in the OIC could fill one of the diplomatic lacunas with the Middle East. Beyond this, Ethiopia’s bid (potential) to join the OIC may help the country strengthen its global alliances based on the organization’s working principles. Türkiye has formally requested to join BRICS. During this year’s annual BRICS summit in Russia on 22–24 October, Türkiye made a formal application to join the BRICS group of countries. However, the summit did not end with Türkiye as a new member of the international bloc.

Ethiopia’s move to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Türkiye’s application to join BRICS reflect a broader shift in geopolitical strategies, with both countries seeking to diversify their alliances beyond traditional Western-aligned partnerships. Ethiopia’s potential OIC membership marks a significant departure from its historically closed foreign policy toward the Middle East, signaling a strategic pivot toward deeper engagement with Muslim-majority nations. This could open doors for increased economic investment, diplomatic support on key issues like the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and stronger ties with influential OIC members such as Türkiye, Pakistan, and the UAE. However, Ethiopia may face resistance from countries like Egypt, which remains opposed to Ethiopia’s stance on the Nile, requiring careful diplomacy to navigate potential objections.

Meanwhile, Türkiye’s bid to join BRICS underscores its desire to balance its Western alliances with stronger ties to emerging economies. As a NATO member with growing economic and military cooperation with Russia and China, Türkiye’s inclusion in BRICS would further solidify its role as a bridge between East and West. While its application was not immediately approved, the move signals Ankara’s long-term strategy to reduce dependency on Western-led institutions and engage more deeply with alternative multilateral frameworks. If successful, this could enhance Türkiye’s influence in Africa, including in its relations with Ethiopia, where it is already a major investor in infrastructure, textiles, and defense.

The convergence of Ethiopia's OIC aspirations and Türkiye's BRICS ambitions presents opportunities for deeper bilateral cooperation. Türkiye, as a key OIC member, could champion Ethiopia's bid while also leveraging its potential future role in BRICS to foster economic and geopolitical collaboration between the two nations. Both countries share an interest in diversifying their international partnerships, which could lead to stronger trade, investment, and security ties. However, challenges remain, particularly where their regional interests diverge such as Türkiye's military presence in Somalia, which has occasionally strained relations with Ethiopia over competing influence in the Horn of Africa.

In the end, these changes show that emerging economies are increasingly pursuing flexible, multipolar diplomacy. As the world order changes, countries are adjusting their foreign policies, as seen by Ethiopia's involvement with the OIC and Türkiye's approach to BRICS. This could result in more cooperation between Ethiopia and Türkiye, but it also necessitates negotiating intricate regional dynamics where conflicting interests might surface. If managed strategically, their parallel multilateral pursuits could reinforce each other, creating new avenues for partnership in an increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape.

4.4. Opportunities and Challenges in Bilateral Relations

4.4.1. Challenges in Ethiopia-Türkiye Political Relations

4.4.1.1. Diverging Views on Somalia and Regional Stability

One of the most pressing challenges in Ethiopia-Türkiye relations is their differing positions on Somalia. According to key informant (01)¹⁰ Türkiye has maintained strong diplomatic and military ties with Somalia, including training Somali forces and establishing a military base in Mogadishu. As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Türkiye officially recognizes Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

However, Ethiopia's recent agreement with Somaliland, which was to grant Ethiopia access to a naval base in exchange for recognizing Somaliland's autonomy, has caused tensions with Somalia. Türkiye has expressed opposition to Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland, aligning itself with Somalia's position that Somaliland is an integral part of its territory. According to the

¹⁰ Amare K. (phd) Director General and Lead Researcher of Middle East Affairs Research at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

above expert this divergence in views has created a political challenge in Ethiopia-Turkiye relations, as Ethiopia seeks to strengthen its maritime security while Turkiye prioritizes its alliance with Somalia.

According to key informant interview(02)¹¹ While Turkiye has positioned itself as a mediator in Ethiopia-Somalia tensions, Ethiopia remains cautious about whether Turkiye's role in the mediation process will remain neutral, given its long-standing support for Somalia. This issue has the potential to strain diplomatic relations, particularly if Ethiopia's naval ambitions in the Red Sea conflict with Turkiye's broader regional strategy.

The broader instability in the Horn of Africa, including conflicts in Sudan, tensions in the Red Sea, and growing competition among global powers in the region, complicates Ethiopia-Turkiye relations. Turkiye's engagement in regional stability efforts is an advantage for Ethiopia, but it also means that shifting regional dynamics could impact their bilateral cooperation.

4.4.1.2 Ethiopia's Concerns over Turkiye's Middle East Alliances

According to key informant(03)¹² Ethiopia has historically maintained complex relations with Arab nations, particularly Egypt, due to disputes over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and regional power dynamics in the Red Sea. Turkiye's recent rapprochement with Egypt, which has been a vocal opponent of Ethiopia's control over the Nile, presents a new challenge in Ethiopia-Turkiye relations.

Turkiye has not openly sided with Egypt on the GERD issue. If Turkiye strengthens its alliance with Egypt and other Arab nations, Ethiopia could face diplomatic pressure in multilateral forums where Turkiye has historically been supportive. This uncertainty presents a strategic challenge for Ethiopia, which must balance its growing partnership with Turkiye against potential shifts in Turkiye's regional alliances.

¹¹ Mohammed Seid (phd), senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

¹² Anonymous, senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

4.4.1.4 Lack of a Fully Strategic Partnership

According to key informant (02)¹³ Although Ethiopia and Türkiye have developed strong political and military ties, their relationship has not yet reached the level of a fully strategic alliance. Ethiopia continues to pursue a diversified foreign policy, engaging with multiple international partners, including Western countries, China, and the Gulf States. Similarly, Türkiye's engagement with Ethiopia is part of its broader Africa strategy rather than an exclusive partnership.

One of the barriers to achieving a more strategic relationship is the temporary nature of many of Ethiopia's engagements with Türkiye. While military cooperation has been strong, other sectors such as governance, institutional collaboration, and long-term diplomatic planning have not been as deeply integrated. For Ethiopia-Türkiye relations to become more strategic, both countries must expand their cooperation beyond military and economic engagements to include deeper political and institutional ties.

4.4.2 Opportunities in Ethiopia-Türkiye Political Relations

Despite challenges, Ethiopia-Türkiye political relations present several key opportunities that can further solidify their partnership. By leveraging diplomatic engagement, military cooperation, and regional mediation efforts, both countries can achieve long-term strategic benefits. Strengthening ties beyond military and security affairs into areas such as governance, counterterrorism, and multilateral diplomacy will help ensure a more balanced and resilient bilateral relationship.

4.4.2.1 Türkiye as a Key Partner in Regional Stability

Türkiye's increasing engagement in East Africa, particularly in Somalia and Ethiopia, offers an opportunity for Ethiopia to collaborate with a diplomatic partner capable of contributing to regional stability. Türkiye has positioned itself as a mediator in regional disputes, particularly in the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict. If Türkiye can remain neutral in its mediation efforts, Ethiopia could benefit by de-escalating tensions with Somalia while preserving its strategic interests in Somaliland.

¹³ Mohammed Seid (phd), senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

According to key informant (04)¹⁴ Moreover, Türkiye's counterterrorism efforts in Somalia, especially in combating Al-Shabaab, align with Ethiopia's security priorities. Ethiopia has long been involved in peacekeeping missions and counterterrorism initiatives in the Horn of Africa, and strengthening military and intelligence cooperation with Türkiye could improve Ethiopia's ability to manage regional security threats. Türkiye's extensive experience in military operations in conflict-prone areas such as Libya, Syria, and the Caucasus may also provide Ethiopia with new strategic insights on stabilizing volatile regions.

The other key element that can favorably affect the two nations' interactions is their geopolitical setting. Ethiopia is situated at the intersection of the Red Sea, the Middle East, and Asia in the Horn of Africa; it is home to African United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the African Union (AU). Türkiye, on the other hand, is a NATO member, borders Europe and Asia, and is nearer the Middle East (ibid).

Additionally, Türkiye's role as a diplomatic player in the Middle East and Africa offers Ethiopia a chance to build stronger regional alliances. Türkiye's expanding influence in Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia means that Ethiopia can engage in trilateral or multilateral security frameworks, potentially facilitating greater regional integration and coordination on defense policies.

4.4.2.2 Strengthening Military Cooperation for Security Benefits

According to key informant (03)¹⁵ One of the most tangible benefits of Ethiopia-Türkiye relations post-2018 has been military cooperation. Türkiye's supply of drones, artillery, and other defense equipment has provided Ethiopia with critical military support during internal conflicts. This cooperation presents further opportunities for Ethiopia to modernize its defense capabilities through expanded military training, knowledge-sharing, and technology transfers.

Ethiopia has an opportunity to explore joint military exercises with Türkiye, which could improve the operational capabilities of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). In

¹⁴ Anonymous, diplomat at Turkish embassy

¹⁵ Anonymous, senior researcher on middle east affairs at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

particular, Türkiye's expertise in drone warfare and counter-insurgency strategies could be valuable for Ethiopia's security forces in managing internal and regional conflicts.

In addition to purchasing military equipment, Ethiopia could negotiate for local assembly or maintenance facilities for Turkish defense technology within its borders. This would reduce Ethiopia's reliance on foreign suppliers and enhance its domestic defense manufacturing capacity. Türkiye has already undertaken similar initiatives in countries like Azerbaijan and Qatar, providing a model that Ethiopia could adapt.

Another opportunity is in joint intelligence-sharing agreements, which could facilitate better security coordination against terrorist threats in the Horn of Africa. If Ethiopia and Türkiye establish direct channels for intelligence exchange, both countries could strengthen their ability to respond to emerging security risks in the region.

4.4.2.3 Diplomatic Support on International Platforms

According to key informant (01)¹⁶, Türkiye has been a consistent diplomatic ally to Ethiopia in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Unlike Western countries, which have sometimes pressured Ethiopia on governance and human rights issues, Türkiye has largely respected Ethiopia's sovereignty while providing diplomatic backing.

Ethiopia can strategically leverage its alliance with Türkiye to counterbalance external pressures from global powers that seek to influence its internal affairs. As Türkiye continues to expand its role in global diplomacy, aligning with Türkiye in multilateral discussions could amplify Ethiopia's voice on key issues such as:

- The **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** – While Türkiye has remained neutral on the dispute between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan, Ethiopia could seek stronger diplomatic backing from Türkiye to reinforce its position on equitable water-sharing agreements.

¹⁶ Amare K. (phd) Director General and Lead Researcher of Middle East Affairs Research at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

- **Regional security matters** – Ethiopia could collaborate with Türkiye in advocating for African-led security initiatives in the Horn of Africa.
- **Trade and economic diplomacy** – Türkiye’s influence in international economic institutions can be used to support Ethiopia’s access to foreign investments and financial aid.

Furthermore, Ethiopia’s position as the headquarters of the African Union (AU) offers an opportunity to integrate Türkiye more deeply into African affairs. By positioning itself as Türkiye’s key diplomatic partner in Africa, Ethiopia could attract greater political and security investments from Türkiye, while also strengthening its standing in regional and international forums.

4.4.2.4 Political and Institutional Exchange

According to key informant (04)¹⁷ beyond military and diplomatic engagements, Ethiopia and Türkiye have the opportunity to expand their political and institutional cooperation. Türkiye’s governance model, which blends democratic governance with strong executive authority, provides potential lessons for Ethiopia in managing security, economic development, and administrative reforms.

Establishing formal institutional collaborations such as intergovernmental dialogues, policy exchanges, and governance training programs could strengthen Ethiopia’s political and administrative structures. There are several areas where Ethiopia could benefit from Türkiye’s expertise:

- **Security and law enforcement** – Türkiye’s experience in managing internal security through integrated police and military operations could provide insights for Ethiopia’s security reforms.
- **Judicial and legal cooperation** – Engaging Türkiye in legal and administrative reforms could help Ethiopia strengthen its governance and state institutions.

¹⁷ Anonymous, diplomat at Turkish embassy

- **Parliamentary diplomacy** – Establishing structured exchanges between the Ethiopian and Turkish parliaments could improve legislative collaboration and political understanding.

Additionally, Ethiopia can explore collaborations with Türkiye in educational institutions, public administration training, and governance research. Türkiye has a growing presence in international academic cooperation, and establishing exchange programs between Ethiopian and Turkish universities could enhance Ethiopia's human capital development.

Since 2018, the remarkable surge in high-level visits, joint economic commissions, and new bilateral agreements has woven a dense network of institutionalized cooperation between Addis Ababa and Ankara. From a liberal vantage point, each state visit and memorandum whether on air services, judicial assistance, or water-resource development serves as a building block in a broader architecture of interdependence. As Turkish firms invest in special economic zones and Ethiopian exporters gain easier access to Middle Eastern markets, both governments find their domestic welfare increasingly tied to the other's economic health. These mutual gains create powerful incentives to maintain and deepen diplomatic dialogue, just as regular ministerial meetings, investment protection treaties, and business delegations reinforce the rules and norms that liberal theory predicts will reduce conflict and foster long-term collaboration.

A constructivist lens aids in shedding light on the basis of shared narratives and changing identities that lie beneath these institutional ties. Ethiopia's reform agenda under Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed aligns with Türkiye's self-portrayal as a fellow "emerging" democracy that blends open markets and strong executive leadership. The two capitals have created a tale of respect for one another by portraying one another as equals who are learning from each other's paths rather than as far-off patrons or aid providers. This framing, reinforced by repeated affirmations of "contextual relevance" and "reciprocal growth," shapes how diplomats, military officers, and business leaders interpret every handshake and signed MoU, embedding new norms of cooperation into the very fabric of bilateral interaction.

At the same time, the rapid deepening of military ties, drones, artillery transfers, joint exercises, and officer exchanges reflects the notion of realism. In an unstable neighborhood marked by

competing external actors, Ethiopia's acquisition of Turkish defense hardware and expertise strengthens its deterrent posture and fills capability gaps left by other partners. For Türkiye, the decision to equip and train the Ethiopian National Defense Force enhances its strategic reach in the Horn of Africa while signaling to rival powers that Türkiye is a major security player beyond its immediate region. Accordingly, every defense agreement and capacity-building initiative is less an act of charity and more a practical attempt by both states to increase their security and power in anarchic global governance.

Chapter Five

ETHIOPIA TURKIYE ECONOMIC RELATIONS SINCE 2018

Ethiopia's post-2018 political ties with Turkiye were discussed in the previous chapter, with particular attention paid to military collaboration, diplomatic contacts, and geopolitical factors. The conversation emphasized Turkiye's participation in Ethiopia's security environment and mediation activities in the Horn of Africa, as well as how the relationship changed from historical ties to contemporary strategic alliances.

The economic aspects of Ethiopia-Turkiye relations after 2018 become the main focus of this chapter. Trade, investment, and economic cooperation continue to be the main pillars of bilateral ties, even though political cooperation has been instrumental in their development. One of Ethiopia's biggest trading and investment partners, Turkiye has contributed significantly to infrastructure development, industrialization, and job creation. The dynamics of economic cooperation are still shaped by issues like trade imbalances, regulatory restrictions, and investment risks.

The chapter begins by analyzing trade relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye, including trade volume, Ethiopia's exports and imports, and the impact of existing trade agreements. It then explores Turkish investment in Ethiopia, particularly in sectors like textiles, construction, and agro-processing, along with its contributions to employment and technology transfer. The next section discusses opportunities for strengthening economic ties, such as increasing Ethiopian exports, expanding Turkish investments, and leveraging bilateral trade agreements. Finally, the chapter examines challenges affecting economic cooperation, including Ethiopia's trade deficit, regulatory barriers, and logistical constraints, before concluding with an overview of key findings and recommendations for improving Ethiopia-Turkiye economic relations.

5.1 Trade Relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye

According to key informant (06)¹⁸, Turkiye is one of the major trade partners of Ethiopia and Ethiopia sees Turkiye as an important trade partner and has encouraged Turkish companies to invest in the country. Political willingness and diplomatic relation has its impact in the economic

¹⁸ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

relation between both countries. Travel of the senior leadership of the government to visit the country played paramount contribution such that Turkish leadership including the investors to come to Ethiopia, and observe the favorable conditions, and take advantage of the opportunities, followed by engagement in Ethiopia, which also influenced the current investment circumstances. Various cooperation and bilateral agreements that have not existed before, with additional trade promotion engagements have generally impacted the economic relation of the two countries.

5.1.1. Ethiopia's Imports from Turkiye

According to key informant (06)¹⁹, among the items imported by Ethiopia from Turkiye are Machine and Industry predicts. Construction materials such as steel and corrugated iron and iron sheets are among the extensive imports from Turkiye. On the other hand, raw materials for textile production are also imported from Turkiye; while pharmaceutical products and household use items such as edible oil and spaghetti are also Turkish products imported.

Ethiopia's imports from Turkiye are dominated by industrial and food products, reflecting the country's demand for processed goods and raw materials. The highest-value import is cooking and edible oil totaling \$760.6 million, followed closely by steel products with deformations at \$723.1 million, indicating significant infrastructure and construction-related demand. Crude oil is another major import, contributing \$405.9 million.

Food imports include wheat flour (\$109.7 million) and uncooked pasta (both regular and infant-use varieties, totaling \$89.4 million combined), highlighting Ethiopia's reliance on processed food products. Industrial materials such as carbon-containing steel (\$72.6 million), refined copper wire (\$37.9 million), and forged metals (\$37.1 million) further demonstrate Turkiye's role as a key supplier of construction and manufacturing inputs. Additionally, machinery parts, such as pump components (\$35.4 million), underscore the import of specialized industrial equipment.

¹⁹ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

Table 1: Top Ten Import Items from Turkiye to Ethiopia from 2018 to 2022

No.	Items Description	Sum of CIF Value (USD)
1	Cooking and edible oil for direct consumption with content of less than 40g s	760,587,089.92
2	Containing indentations, ribs, grooves or other deformations produced during the rolling process or twisted after rolling	723,099,431.47
3	Other(Crude oil)	405,896,432.87
4	Wheat or meslin flour	109,706,141.82
5	Containing by weight 0.25% or more of carbon	72,614,645.00
6	Uncooked pasta , not containing eggs ,not stuffed ,nes	45,131,589.10
7	Uncooked pasta, not containing eggs, not stuffed for infant/invalid use	44,278,680.74
8	Wire of refined copper, maximum cross-sectional dimension =<6mm	37,870,766.37
9	Other(Forged)	37,116,363.12
10	Of pumps	35,375,282.61
	sub total	2,271,676,422.99
	other total	1,344,066,797.94
	Grand Total	3,615,743,220.93

Source: Ministry of trade and regional integration from 2018-2022

The total import value from Turkiye reaches \$3.6 billion, with \$2.27 billion coming from the top product categories and \$1.34 billion from other goods. This data illustrates Ethiopia's dependence on Turkish imports for essential food commodities, construction materials, and industrial supplies, shaping a trade relationship driven by both consumption and infrastructure development needs.

5.1.2. Ethiopia's Exports to Turkiye

According to key informant (05)²⁰, the major exports of Ethiopia are agricultural products. Hence, raw agricultural products are exported to Turkiye, for example Coffee, pulse and oil seeds such as Sesame, legumes such as beans, livestock and locally produced textile and garment products are among the exports too. Similarly, the leather products are also among the items

²⁰ Sisay Ayalew, bilateral and regional trade relations senior expert at Ministry of trade and regional integration

exported to Turkiye. In support of the above expert key informant (06)²¹ said Ethiopia, as a nation, exports mostly agricultural products; and our export to Turkiye is also mostly agriculture products; mostly it is Soya Bean and beans and such legumes.

Table 2: Top Ten Export Items from Turkiye to Ethiopia from 2018 to 2022

No.	Item Description	Sum of FOB_VALUE_IN_USD
1	Sesamum seeds-	67,002,984.82
2	Kidney beans, including white pea beans (<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>)	38,838,871.59
3	Sesamum seeds	23,122,456.58
4	Chickpeas (garbanzos)	18,559,915.14
5	Denim	13,732,020.22
6	Coffee, not roasted or decaffeinated	10,373,050.66
7	Other(Other oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, whether or not broken)	4,370,313.56
8	Other (Soya beans, whether or not broken.)	3,426,504.04
9	Dyed woven fabrics of synthetic filament yarn, >=85% textured polyester	3,219,638.26
10	Of other plastics	2,859,047.72
	sub total	185,504,802.59
	other total	14,941,750.89
	Grand Total	200,446,553.48

Source: Ministry of trade and regional integration from 2018-2022

Ethiopia's exports to Turkiye are diverse, encompassing agricultural products, textiles, and other goods, as evidenced by the above table. The top export item is sesame seeds accounting for a significant \$67 million, followed by kidney beans at \$38.8 million and another category of sesame seeds at \$23.1 million. Chickpeas also contribute notably with \$18.6 million in exports. The textile sector is represented by denim at \$13.7 million and dyed woven fabrics at \$3.2

²¹ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

million. Additionally, unroasted coffee exports amount to \$10.4 million, while other oil seeds and soya beans make smaller contributions. The total export value to Turkiye reaches \$200.4 million, with \$185.5 million attributed to the main product categories and \$14.9 million from other items. This highlights Ethiopia's reliance on agricultural exports while also demonstrating a growing presence in textiles and other sectors.

5.1.3. Balance of Trade between Ethiopia and Turkiye

Observing the trade volume since 2018, the total volume is almost 3.8 billion; however for each individual year, the volume in 2018 was 701 million, and it reduced to 657 million in 2019, and then grew to 790 million in 2020, and it has grown to 896 million in 2021. Hence, the trade volume again fluctuates every year. And this emanates from the import and export features as described above as a reason for the fluctuation. And the increase every year is not that significant. The estimated 3.8 billion in trade volume is because the product imported by Ethiopia is bigger. Ethiopia imports the 3.6 billion; and the export is about 200 million; hence the import is what increased the trade volume. Thus in regards to trade balance; the trade balance between Ethiopia and Turkiye mostly favors Turkiye; this implies the export from Ethiopia is much bigger than the import; so, there is a big difference. The Ethiopian trade balance shows mostly negative factor.

Table 3: Summary of Trade Balance between Ethiopia and Turkiye (2018 - 2022)

Year	Ethiopia's Export to Turkiye (USD)	Ethiopia's Import from Turkiye (USD)	Trade Deficit (USD)
2018	47,799,508.67	653,831,726.41	-606,032,218
2019	41,470,526.64	615,830,487.58	-574,359,961
2020	40,478,226.20	749,551,488.87	-709,073,263
2021	46,023,254.99	850,237,151.07	-804,213,896
2022	24,675,036.99	746,292,367.01	-721,617,330

Source: Ministry of trade and regional integration from 2018-2022

Ethiopia's trade relationship with Türkiye from 2018 to 2022 reveals a persistent and widening trade imbalance, with Ethiopia importing far more than it exports. During this period, Ethiopia's exports to Türkiye fluctuated between \$24.7 million in 2022 and \$47.8 million in 2018, peaking in the first year before gradually declining. The lowest export value occurred in 2022, which may reflect reduced agricultural shipments or broader global market changes. In contrast, Ethiopia's imports from Türkiye remained consistently high, ranging from \$615.8 million in 2019 to \$850.2 million in 2021. The surge in imports in 2021 suggests heightened demand for Turkish industrial goods, processed foods, and machinery, likely driven by domestic infrastructure and consumption needs.

The trade deficit grew significantly over these five years, starting at -\$606 million in 2018 and expanding to -\$804 million in 2021 before narrowing slightly to -\$721.6 million in 2022. This sustained imbalance highlights Ethiopia's heavy reliance on Turkish imports, particularly in key sectors such as edible oils, steel products, and manufactured goods, while its export capacity remains limited. The widening gap underscores structural challenges in Ethiopia's trade dynamics, where its export basket dominated by raw agricultural commodities fails to offset the high value of imported processed and industrial goods.

According to key informant (05)²², the trade has been growing since 2018; particularly the imports from Türkiye to Ethiopia have increased from 2018-2021 extensively; and then slowed after 2022. The exports from Ethiopia have increased in 2021 profoundly. From general point of view, there is growth; yet, as of 2018 the scale is more towards Türkiye. The trade balance is a negative trade balance; however, the trade volume has grown. This growth in volume, however, does not mean that Ethiopian benefited, because trade growth requires increase in both sides of the countries; and the trade deficit should approach zero. Thus, the trade balance is negative, and it favors more towards Türkiye.

To address this imbalance, Ethiopia could pursue strategies such as diversifying its export base, increasing value-added processing of agricultural products, or implementing policies to boost domestic production of high-demand imports like cooking oil and construction materials. Strengthening local industries and fostering trade partnerships beyond traditional commodities

²² Sisay Ayalew, bilateral and regional trade relations senior expert at Ministry of trade and regional integration

could help reduce dependency on Turkish imports and create a more balanced trade relationship in the long term.

5.2 Turkish Investment in Ethiopia

5.2.1. Trends of Turkish FDI Inflow to Ethiopia

According to key informant (07)²³, the investment from Turkiye is mostly concerned with much sophisticated ventures such as textile in regards to Ethiopia. Some are involved in agriculture and the others are in service sector. The investment from Turkiye is mostly involved in these ventures. Other than these, they engage in investment sectors availed to foreign investors. There is no sector particularly availed to only them; yet again, for instance varying investment destinations and investment activities could be proposed to investments coming from Asia, from Europe and North America according to the investment scenarios of their respective countries.

According to the above expert, Turkiye is known for its textile products; and they have investment of such sort; they are also known in farming cotton. Hence, they are more engaged in such sectors; and this is their preference. They can engage in any other sectors that we have availed to other foreign investors. They rather prefer mostly in such investment sectors. China, for instance, does not have any set back in engaging in any of the sectors of investment manufacturing activities; and because mostly their countries are specialized in of the areas, and since they have accustomed to the reference of world manufacturer, we merely open the doors of investment so that they may extend their own potential or capacity to their interest. Hence, it is because Turkiye is more specialized in such sectors that they prefer engaging as such. Our task as a nation is to present favorable conditions for them to be engaged in; so.

Between 2018 and 2024, Turkish investors committed roughly USD 2.5 billion in foreign direct investments to Ethiopia making Turkiye the country's second-largest FDI source after China according to the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC). This capital supported over 200 projects across manufacturing, construction, textiles and services, and generated significant employment: a recent analysis found Turkish backed ventures created 17,030 permanent and 8662 temporary jobs for Ethiopian workers totaling nearly 25,700 positions underscoring the substantial socio-economic impact of Turkiye's involvement in Ethiopia's development drive.

²³ Tenaye Mengitu, Investment Projects Facilitation and Aftercare Directorate at Ethiopian investment commission

Table 4: Summary of Licensed Turkiye Investment Projects (2018 – 2024)

Sector	Implementation (No. of Projects)	Operation(No. of Projects)	Pre- Implementation (No. of Projects)	Total(No. of Projects)
Agriculture	1	0	1	2
Manufacturing	5	3	7	15
Real estate, Machinery and Equipment Rental and Consultancy Service	1	2	1	4
Construction Contracting Including Water Well Drilling	2	3	2	7
Grand Total	9	8	11	28

Source: The Ethiopian Investment Commission, (2024).

The table presents a comprehensive overview of twenty-eight Turkish investment projects in Ethiopia from 2018 through 2024, broken down by sector and project status. In the agricultural sector, Turkish firms have launched two projects, one of which is currently under implementation while the other remains in the pre-implementation stage. Manufacturing dominates the Turkish investment landscape with fifteen projects in total: five are under construction or establishment, three have moved into full operation, and seven are still awaiting commencement. The real estate, machinery and equipment rental, and consultancy services sector accounts for four projects one being implemented, two operating, and one yet to begin.

Construction contracting, including water-well drilling, represents seven projects, of which two are in implementation, three are already operational, and two are in pre-implementation. Altogether, Turkish investors have nine projects under active implementation, eight fully operational ventures, and eleven projects in the pre-implementation phase, illustrating both the significant footprint Turkiye has established in Ethiopia and the continued pipeline of future projects.

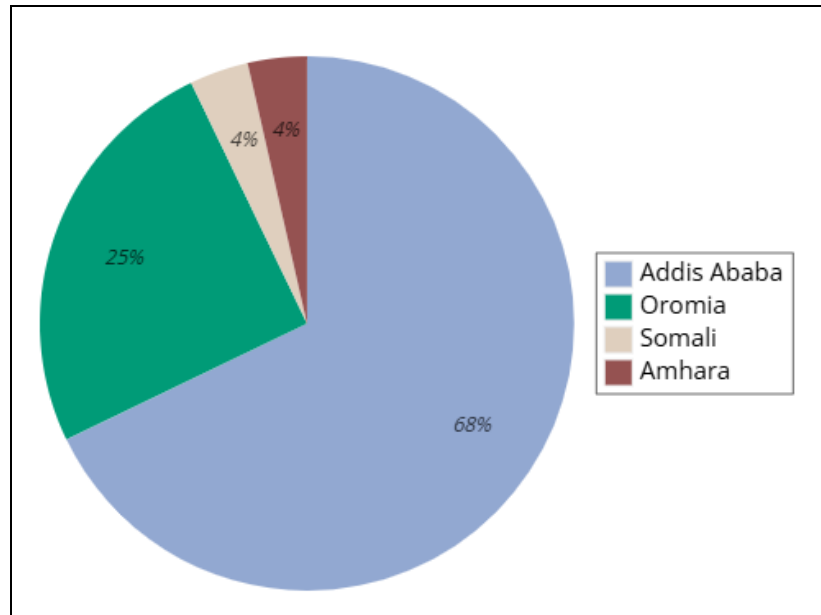


Figure 1: Regional Distribution of Turkish FDI in Ethiopia

Source: The Ethiopian Investment Commission, (2024).

The pie chart illustrates the geographic distribution of twenty-eight Turkish investment projects in Ethiopia between 2018 and 2024. A clear majority—sixty-eight percent—are concentrated in Addis Ababa, reflecting the capital’s status as the country’s economic and administrative hub. Oromia follows with twenty-five percent of projects, underscoring its importance as a manufacturing and agro-industrial region surrounding the capital. The remaining small shares are split equally between the Somali and Amhara regions, each accounting for four percent of the total, indicating nascent Turkish interest in these peripheries but far fewer active ventures compared with the central regions.

According to key informant (08)24, there is different business forums prepared, where a government to government or government to business forums are hosted, and thus will they be availed as a nation to the convenient opportunities highlighted as such. The events in the past 3 to 4 years had an impact in investment endeavors; and not only as a nation, but on international level. For instance, COVID-19 had its impact on the existing investment reducing it from the previous status; and this was a phenomenon that affected the world general, and has limited the countries as well as the ventures that investors prefer to invest in. It did influence them from going to foreign countries for investment. Ethiopia does not have an investment closed because of COVID, it did retain the investments as is. Otherwise, the war between Russia and Ukraine had its own impact. It hampered their ability to invest to the best of their potential. It increases the price of commodities, and this resulted in certain reduction of FDI at international level during these 3 to 4 years. Nevertheless, the attitude towards this from Ethiopian view is to take advantage of this by creating incentives such as industry parks, changing them to special economic zone, with free trade zone and then amending the economic policies very much during the past two years, to become more competent and attractive.

A country such as Ethiopia with much population demands a service to the public with more investment. Hence, there are proclamation, regulation and directives subjected to economic revisions during these two years; and there are several new features introduced recently in the market as well; floating could be considered as an instance; this floating has benefits, because there was a shortage of foreign exchange previously, and other various factors were also present, that were affecting the production; now the investors can have competition to purchase, and venture in to the market, and could also make exports and reap the benefit; and such exports will in turn expand the foreign exchange earnings of Ethiopia. There were several embargoes on foreign investments particularly in retail trade of supermarkets; both in export and import of goods; now these have been lifted. And now, several things are being adjusted as required for the foreign investors. It is not a closed economy as it was before; it is convenient and favoring like any other country, where they are not introduced to a new law as they enter.

²⁴ Mesay W/semayat, investment treaties team lead at Ethiopian investment commission

5.2.2. Benefits of Turkiye FDI for Ethiopia

According to key informant (07), FDI has several advantages not from the view of Ethiopia as developing country but also from investment in general sense for a nation. It is a big foreign exchange earnings, and it did create extensive employment opportunities; it will substitute imports; and we can export better. Furthermore, Ethiopia is known for its raw products of agricultural output; it does have wider coverage in area; thus, such resources should be exploited even more, and be utilized for prosperity and growth of the nation further. Investment is one of the tools for growth. An economy of a county cannot be sought to grow without investment. The investment from Turkiye is as valuable as other Foreign Direct Investments for the national growth.

5.3 Opportunities for Strengthening Ethiopia-Turkiye Economic Relations

Ethiopia and Turkiye have a strong economic partnership, but there remain significant opportunities to enhance trade, investment, and infrastructure cooperation. By strategically expanding exports, attracting more Turkish investments, leveraging trade agreements, and improving logistics and infrastructure, Ethiopia can strengthen its economic ties with Turkiye while fostering long-term economic growth. This section explores key areas where Ethiopia can capitalize on opportunities to enhance its economic relations with Turkiye.

5.3.1. Expanding Ethiopia's Export Market

According to key informant (05)²⁵, Ethiopia's export market to Turkiye is highly concentrated in a few agricultural products, such as sesame seeds, pulses, and coffee. Expanding Ethiopia's export market requires both diversification of export products and value addition to existing raw materials. One key strategy to increase Ethiopia's exports is investing in agricultural processing. Instead of exporting raw sesame, pulses, and coffee, Ethiopia can develop processing industries that produce sesame oil, roasted coffee, and packaged food products, which have higher market value. By exporting semi-processed or fully processed products, Ethiopia can increase its competitiveness in the Turkish market while reducing its reliance on raw commodity exports.

In addition to agricultural processing, Ethiopia can expand its industrial output by developing manufacturing industries tailored for the Turkish market. Turkiye imports a large amount of

²⁵ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

textiles, leather, and industrial raw materials, sectors in which Ethiopia has untapped potential. Encouraging more textile and leather production with direct export to Türkiye can help balance trade relations while providing Ethiopia with new revenue streams. Establishing joint Ethiopian-Turkish manufacturing ventures can further integrate Ethiopia into Türkiye's supply chains and increase the demand for Ethiopian products.

Ethiopia also has the potential to use Türkiye as a gateway to European and Middle Eastern markets. Türkiye serves as a major trade hub due to its geographical proximity to Europe and the Middle East. Strengthening Ethiopia-Türkiye trade relations can provide Ethiopian exporters with easier access to the European Union and Gulf markets, particularly for agricultural products, textiles, and leather goods. To maximize this opportunity, Ethiopia needs to negotiate better trade terms with Türkiye, including preferential access to Turkish distribution networks and export financing initiatives that support Ethiopian producers.

5.3.2. Turkish Investment Expansion in Ethiopia

According to key informant (07)²⁶, Turkish investment in Ethiopia has been instrumental in job creation and industrial growth, but there is still room for further expansion in manufacturing, agro-processing, and infrastructure development. Ethiopia's large workforce, abundant raw materials, and strategic location in Africa make it an attractive investment destination for Turkish businesses. One key sector for expansion is manufacturing, where Turkish investors can establish more textile, garment, and leather factories to take advantage of Ethiopia's low labor costs and export potential. Increasing Turkish investment in heavy industries, machinery, and steel production can also help reduce Ethiopia's reliance on imports while promoting domestic industrialization.

Agro-processing presents another major investment opportunity for Turkish companies. Ethiopia has vast agricultural resources, but much of its produce is exported without processing, limiting its economic potential. By partnering with Turkish agribusiness firms, Ethiopia can develop food processing plants that produce value-added products such as edible oils, dairy products, and

²⁶ Tenaye Mengitu, Investment Projects Facilitation and Aftercare Directorate at Ethiopian investment commission

packaged grains. This would not only boost Ethiopia's exports but also improve food security and create local employment.

To incentives Turkish investors, Ethiopia must implement improved investment policies that address bureaucratic inefficiencies, foreign exchange shortages, and regulatory hurdles. Streamlining business registration, land acquisition, and tax incentives can encourage greater Turkish participation in Ethiopia's industrial sector. Additionally, enhancing public-private partnerships between Ethiopian and Turkish firms can facilitate technology transfer, innovation, and sustainable business growth.

Ethiopian industrial parks and special economic zones can play a crucial role in attracting Turkish businesses. Parks such as Hawassa Industrial Park, Bole Lemi Industrial Park, and Dire Dawa Industrial Park already host foreign investors, providing ready-made infrastructure and export facilitation services. Türkiye can increase its presence in these zones by setting up export-oriented manufacturing clusters, allowing Turkish and Ethiopian businesses to collaborate in joint industrial production for the regional and global market.

5.3.3. Leveraging Trade Agreements

According to key informant interview (07)²⁷, strengthening Ethiopia-Türkiye trade relations requires more structured trade agreements that support Ethiopia's export growth and industrialization goals. Currently, Ethiopia and Türkiye have agreements such as the 2008 Economic, Trade, and Technical Cooperation Agreement, but they have yet to negotiate a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) that could reduce tariffs and enhance Ethiopian market access in Türkiye. Establishing a PTA would significantly boost Ethiopian exports, particularly in processed agricultural goods, textiles, and leather products, making them more competitive in the Turkish market.

Bilateral trade mechanisms should also focus on increasing Ethiopian exports by improving trade facilitation, export financing, and technical assistance. Ethiopia can work with Türkiye to create export promotion initiatives, such as buyer-seller matchmaking events, trade fairs, and direct market linkages, to help Ethiopian producers connect with Turkish buyers. Additionally,

²⁷ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

simplifying customs procedures and reducing non-tariff barriers can encourage smoother trade flows between the two countries.

Joint trade initiatives can further strengthen economic ties. Ethiopia and Türkiye could establish a Joint Trade Council, composed of government representatives, business leaders, and trade experts, to oversee trade policies and resolve challenges facing Ethiopian exporters. Such a council could provide a platform for negotiations on trade barriers, investment incentives, and policy adjustments, ensuring a more structured and predictable economic relationship.

5.4 Challenges in Ethiopia-Türkiye Economic Relations

Despite the growing economic ties between Ethiopia and Türkiye, several challenges hinder the full potential of their trade and investment relationship. These challenges range from Ethiopia's persistent trade deficit, bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles, security risks, and infrastructural constraints. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring a more balanced and sustainable economic partnership between the two nations.

5.4.1. Trade Deficit and Limited Ethiopian Exports

The current trade imbalance is one of the biggest obstacles to Ethiopia-Türkiye economic relations, according to key informant (08). For a number of years, Ethiopia's imports have significantly outpaced its exports, resulting in a negative trade balance with Türkiye. Ethiopia's high reliance on Turkish industrial goods, machinery, and processed products is reflected in its \$700 million annual trade deficit with Türkiye from 2018 to 2022. Conversely, Ethiopia's exports to Türkiye have stayed largely undiversified and at a low level, mostly consisting of raw agricultural products like coffee, pulses, and sesame seeds.

The absence of product diversification is one of the main causes of Ethiopia's restricted export potential. The country relies heavily on primary agricultural exports, which are vulnerable to fluctuations in global prices and seasonal variations. Additionally, Ethiopian exports often fail to meet international quality and safety standards, making it difficult to compete in the Turkish market. Turkish importers require consistent product quality, efficient supply chains, and adherence to strict trade regulations, which Ethiopian exporters sometimes struggle to meet.

To improve export competitiveness, Ethiopia needs to focus on developing value-added industries. Instead of exporting raw coffee, sesame, and pulses, the country should invest in food processing, textile manufacturing, and leather production to create higher-value products for export. Establishing more industrial parks and special economic zones targeted at export industries could help Ethiopia increase its share in the Turkish market, while also reducing its dependence on raw commodity exports.

5.4.2. Bureaucratic and Regulatory Barriers

According to key informant (08)²⁸, another major challenge in Ethiopia-Turkiye economic relations is the bureaucratic inefficiencies and regulatory hurdles that foreign investors face. Turkish companies hoping to invest in Ethiopia frequently run into complicated approval procedures, inconsistent regulations, and administrative hold-ups that hinder project execution. Potential investors may be deterred by the long process of getting trade permits, investment licenses, and foreign exchange approvals.

Turkish companies are frustrated by the delays in trade approvals and investment licensing, especially in industries like manufacturing and construction where prompt decision-making is essential. As significant deterrents, investors frequently point to unclear tax laws, inconsistent enforcement of regulations, and challenges obtaining land for industrial projects. Ethiopia's foreign exchange constraints further complicate the investment environment by making it difficult for companies to import raw materials and repatriate profits.

Ethiopia has taken action to expedite investment procedures in order to address these issues. In an effort to streamline licensing processes and provide tax breaks to foreign investors, the government has enacted new investment laws. Efforts to digitize administrative processes and establish one stop investment centers are also underway. However, more institutional reforms are needed to ensure greater transparency, efficiency, and predictability in Ethiopia's regulatory framework, making it easier for Turkish businesses to operate in the country.

²⁸ Mesay W/semayat, investment treaties team lead at Ethiopian investment commission

5.4.3. Security and Political Risks

According to key informant (07)²⁹, security risks and political instability remain key concerns for Turkish investors in Ethiopia. While Ethiopia has taken significant steps to modernize its economy and attract foreign investment, internal conflicts and regional tensions continue to threaten investor confidence. The Tigray conflict (2020-2022) had a negative impact on business operations, with several foreign-owned factories and industrial plants affected by security issues. Such instability increases investment risks and discourages long-term economic engagement.

Regional instability also affects trade and investment flows. Ethiopia's complex political landscape, coupled with ongoing tensions in the Horn of Africa, including conflicts in Sudan and Somalia, creates uncertainty in the business environment. Additionally, Türkiye's strong economic and political ties with Somalia sometimes lead to diplomatic tensions over Ethiopia's agreements with Somaliland, affecting bilateral relations.

To mitigate investment risks, Ethiopia must prioritize political stability and security. Implementing stronger legal protections for investors, improving law enforcement in industrial areas, and promoting political dialogue to resolve internal conflicts can help create a more predictable business environment. Additionally, Ethiopia and Türkiye should strengthen their security cooperation to ensure that Turkish businesses operating in Ethiopia feel protected and confident in their long-term investments.

5.4.4. Infrastructure and Logistics Challenges

According to key informant (05)³⁰, One of the most critical barriers to Ethiopia-Türkiye trade relations is logistical inefficiencies and high transportation costs. As a landlocked country, Ethiopia relies on ports in Djibouti and Berbera for its international trade, significantly increasing shipping costs and transit times. Limited access to efficient transport networks negatively impacts Ethiopia's export competitiveness, making it difficult for Ethiopian goods to reach the Turkish market at competitive prices.

In addition, Ethiopia's internal transportation system faces challenges such as poor road conditions, outdated railway infrastructure, and inefficient customs procedures. These logistical

²⁹ Endale Hailye, senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations at Ministry of trade and regional integration

³⁰ ibid

inefficiencies result in delays in trade flows, increasing the cost of doing business. The efficient flow of goods is additionally hindered by high port tariffs, traffic at Djibouti Port, and erratic customs laws.

Turkiye could have a significant impact on Ethiopia's transportation industry. Turkish businesses are highly skilled in infrastructure projects, such as port management, railroad development, and road construction. Ethiopian exports could become more competitive in the international market if Türkiye invests more in the country's transportation sector. This would help modernize logistics networks, enhance port connectivity, and reduce trade costs.

Ethiopia should focus on expanding and diversifying its port access, including bolstering trade routes through the ports of Berbera and Lamu, in order to enhance logistics. In order to make trade between the two nations more seamless and economical, Ethiopia and Türkiye can also work together to create more effective customs procedures, digital trade facilitation systems, and enhanced transportation infrastructure.

Key informant (04) states that since 2018, trade, investment, and industrial cooperation have all increased, greatly strengthening Ethiopia's economic ties with Türkiye. Turkish companies have made investments in important industries like construction, energy, textiles, and agriculture, boosting Ethiopia's economy and creating jobs. With Türkiye becoming one of Ethiopia's biggest trading partners, trade between the two nations has increased. However, a number of obstacles still stand in the way of further economic integration, such as Ethiopia's significant trade deficit, legal restrictions, security threats, and logistical inefficiencies.

Ethiopia imports far more than it exports, which is a major trend in Ethiopia-Türkiye trade relations. To address this, Ethiopia needs to develop its export industries, particularly in value-added manufacturing and agro-processing. Additionally, negotiating preferential trade agreements with Türkiye could improve Ethiopia's market access, while expanding joint investment projects would help create a more balanced trade structure.

Looking ahead, Ethiopia and Türkiye must focus on policy improvements, infrastructure development, and trade facilitation to strengthen their economic ties. In order to bring in more Turkish investment, it will be essential to improve trade logistics, guarantee political stability,

and streamline investment regulations. Ethiopia should keep working to reduce its reliance on imports and boost its export competitiveness at the same time.

To improve Ethiopia-Turkiye economic relations, the following strategies should be prioritized:

- Expanding Ethiopia's industrial base to produce more competitive exports for the Turkish market.
- Improving investment policies to create a business-friendly environment for Turkish investors.
- Negotiating better trade agreements to reduce tariffs and market access barriers.
- Enhancing transport and logistics infrastructure to lower trade costs and improve efficiency.
- Strengthening diplomatic and security cooperation to provide stability for long-term investments.

By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted economic policies, Ethiopia and Turkiye can further strengthen their partnership, unlocking new opportunities for mutual economic growth and long-term cooperation.

The liberal notion that states are bound together by shared rules and repeated positive-sum interactions is reflected in the network of economic institutions that Ethiopia and Turkiye have established since 2018. These include joint economic commissions, special economic zones, investment-protection treaties, and regular ministerial forums. By lowering tariffs, streamlining business licensing and convening government-to-business platforms, both capitals have reduced transaction costs and created predictable channels for trade and investment.

Under this arrangement, Ethiopian exporters of coffee, sesame, and leather benefit from better market access while Turkish companies provide capital, technology, and management expertise in manufacturing and agro-processing. These observable benefits strengthen shared interests: every profitable export shipment or joint venture builds support in both nations to maintain stability and openness. In the future, additional liberalization such as a preferential trade agreement and improved one-stop investment facilitation would strengthen this positive co-

development cycle and guarantee that economic interdependence continues to be the main tenet of Ethiopia-Turkiye cooperation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The post-2018 era has witnessed a marked deepening of Ethiopia–Turkiye relations, transforming a once largely transactional engagement into a strategic partnership with both political and economic dimensions. On the political front, a regular rhythm of communication and trust has been established through frequent high-level visits and a series of focused agreements ranging from water resources to judicial cooperation and aviation services. The fact that Turkiye mediates disputes in the Horn of Africa and provides Ethiopia with defense equipment and training as it faces internal security issues is evidence of a strategic convergence that goes beyond rhetoric. Together, these developments show how Ethiopia's foreign policy priorities under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Ankara's broader Africa policy under President Erdoğan have been improved. This has led to a framework for cooperation based on shared narratives of reform and development as well as mutual benefit.

On the economic front, liberalized trade and investment regimes have enabled Turkish firms to establish manufacturing, agro-processing, and infrastructure ventures across Ethiopia, while Ethiopian exporters have gained improved access to Turkish and wider Middle Eastern markets. However, the growing trade gap, bureaucratic roadblocks, and logistical bottlenecks serve as a warning that economic integration does not happen automatically or without risks. Sustainable growth will depend on Ethiopia's ability to diversify its export base, add value through local processing, and streamline regulatory processes so that the benefits of partnership are both deepened and more evenly distributed. The establishment of Joint Economic Commissions, the conversion of industrial parks into Special Economic Zones, and the negotiation of investment-protection treaties have reduced transaction costs, prompted latent repeated game, and provided the institutional foundation for a process of positive interdependence.

Theoretically, this bilateral relationship shows the interaction among liberal, constructivist, and realist dynamics. Regular positive-sum interactions and liberal institutions have created a strong web of diplomatic and commercial ties. Constructivist analysis shows how common reform-oriented narratives and conceptions of contextual affinity shape expectations, build trust, and enable both capitals see each other as peers rather than customers. Realist calculations, shown in

defense cooperation and strategic mediation, remind us that power and security issues remain central drivers of state behavior even inside cooperative frameworks. These points of view taken together offer a complex picture of why Ethiopia and Türkiye have been able to go from past periods of remote interaction to a present shaped by high-stakes cooperation.

Looking forward, the potential of each side to solve structural asymmetries and increase the geographic and sectorial extent of their cooperation will determine the endurance of this rapprochement. Ethiopia has to keep improving its institutional structures building one-stop investment centers, clarifying land and foreign-exchange policies, and using Turkish transportation infrastructure to draw more capital and guarantee that areas outside of Addis Ababa and Oromia also benefit. By helping preferential trade agreements, engaging in value-chain development, and keeping balanced security alliances supporting Ethiopia's sovereignty, Türkiye, for its part can deepen its commitment.

Ultimately, the Ethiopia-Türkiye partnership since 2018 shows how governments can create complex, win-win partnerships in a world that is becoming more complicated. Both nations have established a strong basis for mutual prosperity and regional stability by combining economic interdependence with formalized communication and carefully calibrated security cooperation. Other emerging economies attempting to negotiate the opportunities and challenges of twenty-first-century diplomacy can benefit greatly from the lessons learned from their experience regarding the significance of integrating liberal institutions with consideration for identity and power.

Recommendations

To build on the progress achieved, Ethiopia and Türkiye should work toward a formal preferential trade arrangement that would lower duties on Ethiopian value-added exports and help narrow the trade deficit. Efforts to streamline regulatory and licensing procedures through expanded one-stop investment centers, clearer land-allocation rules, and more reliable foreign-exchange mechanisms would further encourage Turkish enterprises to explore new sectors and regions beyond the current concentration in Addis Ababa and Oromia. Deepening agro-processing capacity and light manufacturing through technology transfers and joint ventures can raise export earnings and move Ethiopia up the value chain. In parallel, transporting and logistics

infrastructure must be modernized drawing on Turkish expertise in port management and rail development to reduce costs and improve market access via alternative corridors such as Berbera and Lamu.

Strategic cooperation in security should continue, albeit with transparency safeguards and parallel relationships that prevent over-dependence on any single partner. At the same time, regular intergovernmental councils and parliamentary exchanges augmented by private-sector and civil-society involvement will help ensure that bilateral initiatives reflect a broad base of support and adapt to evolving regional dynamics. By weaving these measures into their bilateral agenda, Ethiopia and Türkiye can address existing asymmetries, spread benefits more equitably, and transform their post-2018 rapprochement into a durable, diversified partnership that underwrites shared prosperity and regional stability.

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Appendixes

Appendix I: Interview Questions Prepared for Key Informants

Interview Questions for Officials in the Turkish Embassy

1. Ethiopia and Turkiye historical relations in brief?
2. What significance do you attach for your relations with Ethiopia?
3. What factors have contributed to the increased political and economic engagement of Turkiye in Ethiopia since 2018?
4. How would you describe the government-to-government relations between Ethiopia and Turkiye since 2018?
5. In what ways do state visits between Ethiopia and Turkiye contribute to the enhancement of their political relations?
6. How would you characterize the economic relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye since 2018?
7. What specific areas are Ethiopia and Turkiye focusing on for collaboration and cooperation?
8. What are some key political milestones or agreements that have strengthened bilateral ties between the two countries in recent years?
9. What initiatives has the Turkish government taken to promote educational exchanges and cooperation with Ethiopian institutions?
10. What are the future prospects for expanding cooperation beyond the current areas of focus?
11. What are the shared goals or common interests that Turkiye and Ethiopia pursue in regional and international forums?
12. What are the key challenges and opportunities in the relationship between Ethiopia and Turkiye?

Interview Questions for Officials in the FDRE Ministry of Foreign affairs

1. Historical relations in brief?
2. Why Turkiye is important to Ethiopia?

3. What are the major areas of their relations?
4. What are the reasons behind the enhanced political and economic activities of Turkiye in Ethiopia since 2018?
5. How do you generally describe their political relations after 2018?
6. How do you generally describe their economic relations after 2018?
7. Are there any issues of disagreement or misunderstanding in bilateral or multilateral interactions? If any, how did you deal with them?
8. What are the strategic economic benefits for Ethiopia in its relationship with Turkiye post-2018?
9. How does Ethiopia view Turkiye's role in regional issues affecting Africa, particularly in areas such as peace and security?
10. What are the shared goals or common interests that Ethiopia and Turkiye pursue in regional and international forums?
11. In what ways do state visits between Ethiopia and Turkiye contribute to the enhancement of their political relations?
12. How does Ethiopia plan to leverage its bilateral relations with Turkiye to achieve its developmental goals and enhance its global standing?
13. What are the possible challenges and opportunities in their relations?
14. What would you propose to reduce challenges and tap on the prospects?

Interview Questions for Officials in the Ethiopian Investment commission

1. How important are Turkiye's investments to Ethiopia?
2. How many Turkish companies are licensed and operating in Ethiopia since 2018?
3. In which sectors are these Turkish companies engaged? Are these sectors chosen intentionally or by default?
4. What challenges do foreign investors, particularly Turkish investors, face in Ethiopia?
5. What factors have contributed to the improvement of investment relations between Turkiye and Ethiopia since 2018?
6. What reasons attract Turkish firms to invest in Ethiopia?
7. What benefits and challenges has Ethiopia experienced from its relationship with Turkiye?
8. What investment incentives has Ethiopia offered to attract foreign direct investment,

particularly from Turkiye?

9. Considering the current situation in Ethiopia, what is the contribution of Turkish investors to Ethiopia's socio-economic development and political stability?

10. What are the main sectors where Turkiye has invested in Ethiopia's economy since 2018, and What has been the impact of these investments?

Interview questions for Officials in the FDRE Ministry of trade and Regional Integration

1. Which countries are the leading trade partners of Ethiopia?

2. How would you describe Ethiopia – Turkiye trade relations since 2018?

3. What are the factors that help for the improvement of trade exchanges between the two countries since 2018?

4. What are the items of trade between the two countries? What does Ethiopia import from and export to Turkiye?

5. How do you explain the trade volume between the two countries since 2018?

6. What are the areas of focus that Ethiopia and Turkiye work together since 2018?

7. What are the challenges and opportunities in the economic partnership between Ethiopia and Turkiye, and what strategies can be implemented to enhance this partnership?

Appendix II: List of People Interviewed/ Key Informants

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Position	Institution
Dr. Amare Kenaw	Oct 21, 2024	Director General and Lead Researcher of Middle East Affairs Research	Institute of Foreign Affairs
Anonymous	Oct 28, 2024	Senior researcher on middle east affairs	Institute of Foreign Affairs
Dr. Mohammed Seid	Oct 28, 2024	senior researcher on middle east affairs	Institute of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Endale Hailye	Sept 24, 2024	senior expert of bilateral and regional trade relations	Ministry of trade and regional integration
Sisay Ayalew	Sept 25, 2024	Bilateral and regional trade relations senior expert	Ministry of trade and regional integration
Tenaye Mengitu	Oct 2, 2024	Investment Projects Facilitation and Aftercare Directorate	Ethiopian investment commission
Mesay W/semayat	Oct 2, 2024	Investment treaties team lead	Ethiopian investment commission