

Trends in Kenya-Turkey Diplomatic Relations under Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta, 2003-2022

Kioko Lynn Kalekye., Otieno Isaiah Oduor

Department of History, Archeology and Political Studies, Kenyatta University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500669>

Received: 14 May 2026; Accepted: 19 May 2026; Published: 10 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This study explored Trends in Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations under Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta between 2003 and 2022. This study was anchored on two theories; realism and neo-liberalism. This study employed a historical research design that was purely qualitative. The target population for the study included officials and persons with information about Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations, such as officials in the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Turkish Embassy staff in Nairobi, and experts in international relations and diplomacy. This study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The study employed purposive and snow balling sampling methods to sample 100 informants for field interviews. The research instruments used were Key Informant Interviews (KII). Data collected was interpreted and analyzed qualitatively. Thematic analysis were used as a systematic way in analyzing qualitative data. The method entailed the verbatim recording of the recorded interviews that were transcribed to produce a comprehensive textual data that was further divided into themes that reflected the generalities of the study. The study observed that between 2003 and 2022, Kenya-Turkey relations evolved through continuity and strategic adaptation under Presidents Kibaki and Kenyatta. Under Kibaki, ties grew via trade, infrastructure, education, culture, and health, enhancing human capital and maternal-child health. Under Kenyatta, the partnership deepened across politics, economy, culture, health, and security, supported by investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and SEZs. Trade remained asymmetric, while educational, medical, and security initiatives strengthened development and regional stability. The study recommends enhancing diplomatic, trade, security, and technical cooperation.

Key Word: Diplomacy; Diplomatic Immunity; Bilateral Relations; Multilateral Relations; New Global Order

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The contemporary international system functions through state networks which establish political and diplomatic and economic and cultural relationships that states use to achieve their national goals while supporting their development and protecting their security. The scholars state that diplomacy together with inter-state partnerships functions as the fundamental approach to international relations which enables countries to reach outcomes that benefit both parties involved. Gilpin 2016 states that mutual agreements between countries together with their common interests and strategic interests create a basis for their cooperative relationship. The states of the world have adopted diplomacy as their main instrument for conducting foreign policy because it enables countries to work together with other nations.

The post-Cold War period has brought major changes to how countries establish diplomatic relations. The early 1990s saw the end of the bipolar world order which led to the establishment of new international alliances as countries started to build multiple diplomatic relationships that would provide them with greater economic benefits. Nye 2020 states that international trade and globalization have increased the need for bilateral relationships which emerging economies need to develop with developing nations. The new approach enables developed and developing nations to establish diplomatic relations which focus on multiple areas such as trade and infrastructure and education and health and military training and security partnerships.

African nations have expanded their diplomatic relationships by establishing connections with European and Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Africa has become a major international diplomatic hub because of its

expanding marketplaces and its abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical position. The researchers Alden and Large (2019) explain that African nations execute multiple diplomatic approaches to achieve their goals of economic growth and regional unification. The diplomatic connections of Africa have changed since emerging economies such as China and India and Brazil and Turkey established stronger relations with African nations.

Kenya has established extensive diplomatic connections throughout the world because it stands as the foremost nation in East Africa. Since its 1963 independence Kenya has developed a foreign policy that focuses on international partnership and economic development and maintaining regional peace. The Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs states that Kenya uses its foreign policy to achieve economic growth and security and regional integration and international partnerships which enables the country to build relationships throughout Europe and Asia and the Americas and Africa.

Historical ties between Kenya and the United Kingdom originate from colonial times and persist through the period after Kenya gained independence. Adebola (2016) emphasizes that both nations maintain extensive diplomatic and economic and military relationships. The UK operates as a main trade partner while providing significant tourist revenue that supports Kenya's economic growth. The British Army Training Unit Kenya demonstrates military partnerships between both countries (Munene 2013). The two nations experienced temporary diplomatic strains because of political events such as the post-election violence in 2007-2008 and the related International Criminal Court cases (Luttah 2012).

Kenya and the United States bilateral relations revolve around security matters and economic progress and humanitarian support. Blanchard (2013) states that Kenya plays a crucial role in U.S. strategic operations because it helps the United States to achieve its East African counterterrorism and regional security objectives. The U.S. maintains one of its largest diplomatic operations in Africa from its base in Kenya which also serves as a regional center for several United Nations offices. The two countries maintain their partnership on security matters and economic issues and international affairs despite the temporary diplomatic conflict that followed the 2008 post-election violence. The United States-Kenya Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership of 2022 shows that both nations renewed their commitment to strengthen economic relations (Office of the United States Trade Representative 2023).

Kenya has multiple continental relations which engage different African countries. The Kenya-Somalia relationship has historically been tense due to border disputes and political differences, including the Somali claim over Kenya's Northern Frontier District and recent maritime boundary disputes, leading to cases at the International Court of Justice (Clarke, 2018; Lindley, 2011). Through its African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) participation, Kenya helps to stabilize Somalia. The Kenya-Burundi relationship and the Kenya-Ethiopia relationship show positive results, as both countries work together to advance their trade and educational and security interests (Geneva Forum, 2012; Kabukuru, 2015).

Kenya's Tanzania and Uganda multilateral relations have shaped East African regional integration efforts. The relationship between Kenya and Tanzania has experienced both cooperative times and conflict times, which include trade disagreements and different political beliefs that existed after both countries gained independence, with Tanzania stopping its participation in the East African Currency Board in 1965, which brought about the East African Community's 1977 dissolution (Ngujiri, 2018; Alilshula, 2017). The geographic proximity between Kenya and Uganda, which connects their economic ties, has created a strong relationship that faced several conflicts during the 1980s because of allegations about Uganda supporting insurgent groups (Ouma, 2016; Rule, 1987). The two nations maintain their partnership through joint activities in regional organizations like the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) system.

Kenya has developed its international relationships by establishing diplomatic ties with Turkey which is recognized as an emerging power. Turkey initiated its "Opening to Africa" program in 2005 to establish diplomatic relations with African countries and develop economic partnerships and cultural connections (Özkan & Akgün, 2018). The two countries established formal diplomatic relations in 1968 but their relationship developed deeper during the 2000s through high-level diplomatic visits which included President Moi's 1996

trip to Turkey and President Erdoğan's 2016 visit to Kenya (Trade Mark East Africa, 2018). Turkey engages in Africa to accomplish its business objectives and humanitarian efforts and political interests (Donelli, 2021).

Scholarly research about Kenya-Turkey relations remains limited despite increasing interaction since most studies about Turkey-Africa relations explore general relations between Turkey and all African countries. There is need for research on how Kenya-Turkey diplomatic ties have developed throughout history. This study addressed this gap by examining the trends and underlying factors influencing Kenya-Turkey relations between 2003 and 2022.

Statement of the Problem

Diplomatic relations create international partnerships and drive economic growth and maintain regional peace. Kenya has historically maintained diverse diplomatic ties with Western powers and regional neighbors and emerging economies which include Turkey. Previous research focused on Kenya's diplomatic relationships with the United Kingdom and the United States, which showed how economic and security and political factors shaped those relationships (Adebola, 2016; Blanchard, 2013; Munene, 2013). Turkish research on African relations shows how Turkey increases its presence through trade expansion and infrastructure development and educational initiatives and humanitarian diplomatic efforts (Özkan & Akgün, 2018; Donelli, 2021).

Existing literature discusses Turkey-Africa relations at the continental level while lacking studies that explore the historical development of diplomatic ties between Kenya and Turkey. The majority of research work studies economic partnerships and regional power dynamics but fails to analyze how Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relationships developed through various governmental periods. The KANU and Moi political period followed by the Kibaki administration brought about major changes that affected Kenya's international relations. The post-Cold War "Wind of Change" together with democratic movements and Kenya's political and economic system reforms created new international relations for the country which remain unstudied in current research about Kenya-Turkey diplomatic ties.

There is limited literature on the trends, drivers, and challenges shaping Kenya-Turkey relations over time, more so in the context of post-Cold War political and economic dispensation. Scanty studies provide a systematic exploration of how changes in Kenya's political leadership and policy frameworks have influenced its bilateral engagement with Turkey. This study addressed this gap by exploring the historical evolution and underlying factors of Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations from 2003 to 2022.

Objective of the Study

To explore trends in Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations under Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta between 2003 and 2022.

Significance of the Study

The academic significance of this study draws from the existence of insufficient research on trends in Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations over different political administrations. Existing literature tends to analyze Turkey-Africa relations in general (Özkan & Akgün, 2018; Donelli, 2021) and Kenya's relationships with Western nations (Adebola, 2016; Blanchard, 2013) but fails to examine how Kenya's bilateral relationships changed from the KANU and Moi period to the Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta administrations. The understanding of these dynamic relationships is vital in evaluating political and economic and cultural factors that influence Kenya-Turkey relations while also helping to make foreign policy choices and advancing knowledge about post-Cold War international diplomatic practices (Gilpin, 2016; Nye, 2020).

From a policy perspective, the study offers valuable insights to policymakers and the government of Kenya on how to improve and strengthen the country's foreign policy and diplomatic relations with other nations, including Turkey. Understanding the historical trends and continuities of the relationship with Turkey will help policymakers understand what works and what does not, so as to improve and strengthen the relationship with Turkey and other nations in areas such as trade, education, security, and infrastructure development, among other

areas. This study is important to academicians, diplomats, and policymakers since it not only contributes to the history of Kenya-Turkey relations but also seeks to offer valuable insights into how strategic relations can be strengthened, especially in an increasingly interconnected world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impact of Change in Political Leadership and Bilateral Initiatives on Kenya–Turkey Relations in the Mwai Kibaki Era (2003–2012)

Bilateral relations between Kenya and Turkey developed through political and economic and diplomatic transformations which occurred in both global and regional contexts. The international relations between the two countries changed because post-Cold War international changes and new market developments and Turkey's Africa Initiative created new market developments. Turkey redirected its foreign policy in the early 21st century by using soft power and establishing trade agreements and diplomatic relations with African countries while Western nations remained its main focus. President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya established a framework which enabled non-traditional partners to work with Kenya by pursuing economic development and regional ties and attracting foreign capital from countries like Turkey.

The early 2000s witnessed expanding African partnerships from Turkey and India and China which developed as emerging economic powers. Turkey's development approach established investment partnerships through cultural exchanges while providing development assistance which contrasted with the Western aid model that used direct support to funding. The program enabled Kenya to build multiple partnerships which attracted funding while developing infrastructure that met the country's goals of promoting industrial development and tourism.

Kenya and Turkey developed their bilateral relations through the geopolitical situation of the Horn of Africa and the operational activities of the East African Community. Turkey supported Kenya's security needs through its operations in Somalia and Djibouti which helped Kenya achieve its economic and diplomatic goals. The Kibaki administration established a pro-Western foreign policy which enabled Turkey to support regional peace initiatives through building infrastructure projects which included telecommunications and energy systems and ports.

The diplomatic activities of his administration showed an active international relations policy while he served as president of Kenya. The Kenya-Turkey Business Council and cultural exchange programs established formal agreements which covered trade, tourism, education, and technical cooperation (Omondi, 2014; Ndegwa, 2016). Kenya adopted economic liberalization policies which matched Turkey's export-oriented economic policies thus enabling both countries to work together (Oloo, 2017). The Turkish officials established diplomatic operations in Kenya because political leaders created an environment which supported their work (Aydın & Bayraktar, 2019; Kamau, 2020).

Kenya and Turkey established joint programs which included technical assistance, educational scholarships, and support for trade activities. Turkey delivered agricultural, infrastructure, and public health technical support between 2005 and 2010 while providing scholarships which developed human capital to match Kibaki's national development goals (Karimi, 2021; Turan, 2016). Some researchers maintain that the programs produced no actual economic results because they only functioned as partnership agreements (Obonyo, 2019).

The Kibaki administration established the foundation which distinctively defined Kenya's relations with other countries after his term ended. The established frameworks during this time period created systems which enabled trade expansion while maintaining official diplomatic relations and enabling regional partnerships through Turkey's development assistance and private sector projects (Demir & Ateş, 2022; Wanjiru, 2021). However, the cited studies concentrate on high-level meetings and bilateral agreements and trade data while ignoring how leadership changes affect the success of projects and the acceptance by local communities and their impacts on different fields. The studies only compare with a few emerging countries which highlights the need to conduct more research into Kenya's strategic positioning in African diplomacy.

Continuities and Changes in Kenya–Turkey Diplomatic Relations in the Uhuru Kenyatta Era (2013–2022)

The period of Kenyatta's leadership marked the beginning of global economic expansion which brought new international partnerships to Africa. The diplomatic connections between Kenya and Turkey during this time were influenced by Turkey's approach to international relations which featured economic diplomacy and cultural outreach and humanitarian work and its political ties with African nations (Aydin, 2019; Demir & Ateş, 2022; Özkan, 2020). The international system allowed Kenya and Turkey to build stronger connections through their economic ties and shared political and strategic objectives.

Turkey used African Union initiatives and regional economic organizations to create formal links with African nations such as Kenya (Tekin, 2020; Erdemir, 2021). Turkey used educational partnerships together with infrastructure development initiatives to create sustainable economic relationships with other countries. The East African economic center of Kenya used these chances to develop its industrial base and boost its international trade capabilities and its regional power. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) created a platform for textile and construction and ICT sector collaboration which received support from Turkish professionals.

The security situation together with regional developments created an effect on bilateral relations. The existence of Al-Shabaab terrorist activities and the situation of refugees and the operations of EAC trade activities caused Kenya to increase its defense partnerships with Turkey as its primary security source (Kebede, 2022). The two countries developed stronger economic relations through their infrastructure projects which included the Mombasa port modernization and transport corridor development and their renewable energy projects (Mumo, 2021).

Kenyatta's government presented both identical elements and different aspects at the national level. The Kenyatta period maintained its diplomatic activities and trade development efforts and cultural exchange programs according to Ndegwa 2022. The two countries established new relations which included business links to three industries: renewable energy and aviation and ICT and industrial manufacturing (Oloo 2022). The government established strategic partnership forums which enabled Turkish private businesses to take part in international relations that extended beyond traditional government partnerships (Karimi 2022).

Uhuru Kenyatta established his active foreign policy framework to bring foreign investments into the country while driving economic growth which resulted in Turkey gaining stronger economic ties with other countries (Kamau 2022). The volume of trade and investment rose between the two countries especially in the areas of infrastructure development and manufacturing and financial services (Demir & Ateş 2022). The gap between export and import volumes between the two countries remained because Kenyan products exported to Turkey stayed below the total value of Turkish products brought into the country which created need for policy intervention according to (Turan 2021).

During this period, bilateral ties maintained their connection to soft power which served as a core element. The programs which offered scholarships and vocational training together with cultural initiatives continued to support human capital development efforts which matched the objectives of Kenya Vision 2030 according to (Turan 2021). The new research programs which combined joint research with industrial training and technology transfer activities represented a transition towards diplomatic practices which focused on sustainable capacity building activities.

In spite of progress in research on Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relation, notable gaps exist. The majority of research studies on Kenya-Turkey relations during Kenyatta's presidency investigate only diplomatic activities and trade statistics and government statements while they miss examination of how people view the bilateral relations between Kenya and Turkey. The scarcity of comparative studies between emerging partners like China and India and the GCC prevents researchers from understanding how Kenya implements its foreign policy in a multipolar international system (Wanjiru, 2022).

The Kenya-Turkey relationship under Kenyatta shows both stability through ongoing diplomatic and economic and cultural ties and evolution through new partnerships and technology-based investments and greater private

sector participation. The assessment of these trends shows how bilateral relations develop while establishing the need for additional research on implementation and sectoral effects and foreign policy comparison.

Theoretical Framework

Realism Theory

Realism traces its origins to Thucydides, who emphasized power-seeking behavior and survival over morality (Thucydides, 431 BCE), and Machiavelli, who highlighted national interests and practical power (1469–1527). Hans Morgenthau developed modern realism through his 1948 work, which states that human behavior, power dynamics, and conflict drive international relations. Realism believes that international relations exist in an anarchic system, where states use power to achieve their security needs and sovereignty rights and personal goals. Neo-realism, also known as structural realism, explains how states behave because of an anarchic system, which causes states to make alliances and calculate their military strategies, while offensive realism states that all states aim to gain power, but defensive realism believes that states need to control their power levels because excessive force will lead to counterbalancing.

Realism provides an explanation for Kenya-Turkey bilateral relations through its focus on strategic national interests. Kenya cooperates with Turkey to fight Al-Shabaab because both countries want to protect their nation and secure their borders (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979). Turkish investments in infrastructure, energy, and ports serve economic and strategic objectives, expanding influence in East Africa (Demir & Ateş, 2022). The level of engagement between countries matches their needs for security and development, which shows how their interests determine their actions. However, realism fails to consider several important factors, such as international cooperation between countries and their economic exchanges and their cultural diplomatic efforts and the role of non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. The integration of neo-liberalism enables researchers to study how countries depend on each other through trade and work together through institutions, which helps them understand Kenya-Turkey relations that protect security while providing mutual benefits through partnerships.

Neo-Liberalism Theory

Neo-liberalism in international relations identifies international institutions and international cooperation and international interdependence as essential factors that support worldwide stability and prosperity. The theory developed as a response to classical liberalism and realism to explain how states can operate in an anarchic world without complete conflict (Keohane, 1984; Nye, 1971). Neo-liberalism developed from the ideas of Kant and Locke and Adam Smith through the research of scholars like Keohane and Nye who proposed that states could obtain sustainable advantages through institutionalized and norm-based cooperation.

The core ideas of the theory state that cooperation remains rational through anarchic systems while institutions create understanding and guarantee adherence to agreements and international economic ties and globalization and technological development create international system restraints (Keohane, 1984; Martin & Milner, 1995). Democratic nations with transparent governance systems form better international partnerships than other states because their domestic political systems influence their decision-making process. Nye's concept of "complex interdependence" defines multi-channel connections between economic and environmental and social dimensions which restrict direct decision-making power.

The neo-liberal framework explains Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations through their search for shared advantages which extends beyond their pursuit of power. The Kenya-Turkey Joint Economic Commission together with trade facilitation activities and Turkish investments in infrastructure and energy and manufacturing represents established cooperation between the two countries (Demir & Ateş, 2022). Security cooperation against Al-Shabaab together with non-state actor participation demonstrates the existence of complex interdependence. The combination of neo-liberalism with realist views produces an approach that values institutional connections and collaborative activities which provides enduring advantages for all parties involved.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a historical research design that was purely qualitative. This design involved systematically examining past events and documents to understand patterns, causes and effects over time. The historical research design focused on the interpretation of historical data to construct events and analyse their importance in contemporary society. Primary data was gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KII) while secondary data was obtained through documentary reviews.

The target population for this study comprised key stakeholders who have been instrumental in the Kenya-Turkey relations, considering their knowledge, expertise, and information regarding the issue at hand. This included officials from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, who offered information regarding the policies, treaties, and historical events between the two nations. Employees from the Turkish Embassy in Kenya offered information regarding the foreign policy agenda of Turkey, investment plans, and cooperation between the two nations. Trade officers and representatives from economic agencies and experts in the field of international relations and foreign policy offered information regarding the trade between the two nations and experts.

The study employed purposive and snow balling sampling methods to sample 100 informants for field interviews. The research instruments used were Key Informant Interviews (KII). Data collected was interpreted and analyzed qualitatively. The study ensured validity and reliability of research instruments to enhance data accuracy and consistency. Validity was achieved through expert review and a pilot study of 10 informants, refining unclear questions. Reliability was ensured by designing well-structured questions that maintained internal consistency, allowing the instruments to consistently measure the intended aspects of diplomacy and international relations relevant to the study. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic content analysis, which involved transcription, coding, and categorization of the interview data. The method entailed the verbatim recording of the recorded interviews that were transcribed to produce a comprehensive textual data that was further divided into themes that reflected the generalities of the study.

Trends in Kenya-Turkey Diplomatic Relations; 2003-2022

Kenya–Turkey Bilateral Relations under President Mwai Kibaki, 2003–2013

The period from 2003 to 2013 witnessed a major shift in Kenya–Turkey relations under President Mwai Kibaki who used practical diplomatic methods and deliberate diplomatic work to achieve this change. The administration established non-traditional partnerships with Turkey through its three main goals which included economic liberalization and institutional partnership building and international relationship development through non-military methods. The two countries increased their trade relationship through Kenyan agricultural exports and Turkish manufacturing imports, while Turkish businesses supported infrastructure improvement and city development projects. The combination of educational programs and scholarship opportunities and vocational training and humanitarian work generated better human capital development and relationship building. The two countries developed their partnership through geopolitical and multilateral ties because Kenya used Turkey as its regional gateway while Turkey established itself as a major force in East Africa. The period established strong diplomatic ties and economic connections and cultural relations which enabled Kenya to build ties with multiple international partners.

The Kibaki era brought major improvements to economic ties between Kenya and Turkey which developed because of matching domestic advancements in both countries. The investment environment improved in Kenya because the country achieved political stability after 2002 and implemented economic reforms which included trade liberalization and infrastructure development and private sector growth according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report from 2012. Turkey entered a period of rapid economic expansion during the AKP government which led the country to search for new markets in East Africa after already establishing markets in Europe (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Turkish investors found Kenya attractive because of its strategic location and economic standing.

The volume of bilateral trade between Kenya and its principal trading partners remained low throughout this time period. The geographic distance between both countries together with Kenya's dependency on primary goods and the underdeveloped state of Kenya-Turkey economic relations limited their trading activities. The combination of Kenya's economic diplomatic efforts and Turkey's Africa-centered foreign policy created a foundation for ongoing economic development between the two countries. Both governments established three key areas for international relationship development which included South-South partnerships and shared economic development opportunities according to their strategic development and diplomatic relationship approach (Akgün & Özkan, 2014).

The Kibaki administration established an economic diplomatic framework which targeted foreign capital while establishing new international alliances and building modern infrastructure facilities in Kenya which matched Turkey's comprehensive approach to Africa through commercial and diplomatic efforts and educational programs (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). The economic relationship between Kenya and Turkey extended beyond tourism and cultural activities to demonstrate the interconnected nature of their bilateral cooperation.

During the Kibaki administration educational programs and cultural exchange activities served as essential instruments for developing Kenya-Turkey diplomatic relations. Both nations used educational programs and cultural activities to strengthen their soft power while developing mutual understanding and their human capital base. Turkey used a comprehensive diplomatic approach which included economic and cultural strategies to develop its relations with African countries. Kenya used economic diplomacy to connect with the world while developing professional skills and building institutional capacities.

The Turkey Scholarships program started in 2012 and it created a milestone by providing international students with complete funding support which included their tuition costs, housing expenses, health insurance, and Turkish language instruction (Aras & Fidan 2009). The faculty exchange programs established institutional ties which enabled researchers to work together, while simultaneously developing academic networks that supported knowledge exchange.

Cultural diplomacy held equal importance. Turkish foundations and institutions in Kenya established cultural exchange programs which allowed community members to participate, while TİKA-supported programs helped preserve heritage sites and develop educational facilities (Özkan 2014). The Yunus Emre Institute started its first cultural outreach programs through early cultural programs which included conferences and art exhibitions and festivals that promoted mutual understanding.

The educational and cultural projects combined with tourism activities to create opportunities for people from different cultures to interact with each other. Turkish historical and cultural heritage attracted Kenyan tourists, while Kenya promoted its wildlife and natural attractions to Turkish visitors (Aras & Fidan, 2009). Turkish television programs which gained popularity through media exchanges between the two countries, enabled Kenyan viewers to learn about Turkish culture through traditional practices and daily life activities, which strengthened cultural understanding and soft power effectiveness (Kardaş et al. 2012).

The academic exchanges created long-term benefits for Kenyan graduates who returned to their country served as unofficial cultural ambassadors who developed international business and innovation partnerships with their communities (Kale, 2015; Yılmaz, 2017). The practice of cultural diplomacy built trust between people from different backgrounds which resulted in better relationships between nations and their economic ties and diplomatic ties (Nye, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007). The educational and cultural strategy alignment between Kenya and Turkey enabled the two countries to develop complete diplomatic relations during the Kibaki period.

The Kibaki administration made the health sector its main focus area because it wanted to achieve better healthcare results that would help advance national development objectives. The country of Kenya encountered several obstacles which included inadequate financial support and insufficient medical facilities. World Bank (2010) reported that rural parts of the country suffered from limited access to healthcare services. The government developed policy changes while building new infrastructure and starting programs that would implement both Vision 2030 and the Millennium Development Goals (MOH, 2007).

The 2008 Free Primary Healthcare Policy served as the main program of the organization because it provided free primary healthcare to designated hospitals while making it easier for needy people to access medical services. The program led to more people visiting outpatient services because some counties experienced their first year growth reaching 30 percent (Akin et al., 2011) despite ongoing problems that included staff shortages and unpredictable medication delivery and the organization working improperly. The administration strengthened disease prevention and control programs that focused on HIV/AIDS and malaria and tuberculosis. Global Fund and PEPFAR international support reduced HIV prevalence from 7.2% to 6.0% between 2002 and 2010 while malaria programs that used bed nets and indoor residual spraying decreased illness rates (NASCO 2011). Health diplomacy developed into a national development instrument that used international partnerships to enhance public service delivery.

Turkey established its African outreach program in 2005 to support Kenya through health infrastructure development and medical assistance and staff education according to soft power diplomacy principles (Ozkan and Mehmet, 2010 Kardaş et al., 2012 Nye 2004). The official visit of President Abdullah Gul to Kenya in 2009 together with subsequent high-level visits enabled the two countries to sign agreements that covered health and trade and education and technology (T.C. Salik Bakanl Resmi Internet Sayfas, 2016).

The National Reproductive Health Strategy (2007–2012) helped improve maternal and child health outcomes because it reduced infant mortality rates from 77 to 52 per 1,000 live births and decreased maternal mortality rates from 414 to 362 per 100,000 live births, which resulted in persistent regional disparities (KDHS, 2008–09). The government spending for health financing increased from 6.2% to 8.5% by 2010 (MOH, 2010), while public-private partnerships developed specialized care services. Kibaki established his policies to achieve three goals: he wanted to expand services, control diseases, and create equal access to services. These policies served as the basis for future reforms after the country experienced its 2013 devolution.

Kenya- Turkey Bilateral Relation, Under President Uhuru Kenyatta, 2013-2022

The period 2013–2022 marked a significant phase in Kenya–Turkey relations, which occurred during President Kenyatta's administration and the period when Turkey developed its African diplomatic presence. The partnership between the two countries developed from initial ties during the Kibaki presidency into a stronger relationship that encompassed all five domains of political, economic, educational, cultural, and security cooperation. Turkish companies established new infrastructure facilities and manufacturing plants and construction operations throughout the country while scholarship programs and vocational training programs improved Kenya's human capital resources. The implementation of Kenya's "Look East" strategy together with different policy changes created new economic partnerships which affected trade and security cooperation between the two countries. The diplomatic relations between the two countries expanded through high-level visits and joint projects and the establishment of direct flight services between their capitals. Trade relations between Kenya and Turkey developed asymmetrically because Kenya exported goods worth \$22.6 million to Turkey in 2022.

The bilateral relations between Kenya and Turkey experienced both consistent elements and new developments throughout its history. Turkey exported machinery and industrial goods and textiles and construction materials to Kenya while Kenyan exports included tea and coffee and horticultural products and minerals (OEC, 2023; KNCCI, 2023). The gradual increase in Kenyan exports did not help Turkey resolve its trade surplus because both countries had different industrial capabilities and production capacities.

The Kenya-Turkey Joint Business Council (JBC) established economic partnerships which enabled Turkish exporters to connect with Kenyan companies while they worked together on business projects and technological development and staff training programs (KNCCI, 2022b; 2023). The main industries that Turkish companies operated in included energy and healthcare and agriculture and manufacturing and finance and tourism. Turkish investments supported Kenya's Big Four agenda—food security, universal health coverage, affordable housing, and manufacturing.

The special economic zone development project included a \$760 million investment which created six factories and a technical school and resulted in 2,860 direct job openings which helped about 45,000 people find work

while generating \$550 million in yearly revenue (Nation Africa, 2023). Turkish companies, such as Kingspan and Canteck, supplied construction materials and appliances, using tariff advantages and current Kenyan SEZ infrastructure to operate their businesses (Kenya Ministry of Industrialization, 2023). The volume of Kenyan agricultural exports to Turkey increased through the export of edible fruits and nuts and melons which generated \$10.82 million and tea and coffee and spices which generated \$5.45 million, resulting in the export of new products (Trading Economics, 2023a; Trading Economics, 2023b; OEC, 2023).

Trade patterns, however, reflected asymmetry. Turkey's exports to Kenya grew from \$202 million in 2017 to \$320 million in 2022, while Kenyan exports declined from \$29.8 million to \$22.6 million, which showed the divergent industrial capacities between both countries and their fertilizer import requirements for agricultural purposes (OEC, 2020; OEC, 2021). Trade missions and government support enabled Kenyan businesses to understand market operations and adopt best practices (KNCCI, 2023; Standard Media, 2016).

The two countries established stronger political ties and cultural connections and security partnerships which extended beyond their trade relationship. The formal dialogue process between Turkey and Africa reached institutional status through high-level visits and bilateral meetings and Turkey-Africa summit participation which created shared strategic goals. The combination of educational scholarships and vocational training and TİKA humanitarian programs from Turkey enabled Kenya to enhance its social services and infrastructure development and workforce training facilities which supported economic activities (Akgün & Özkan, 2014).

The two countries established security partnerships through two memoranda which covered police training and counter-terrorism efforts and regional stability work. The two countries worked together to stabilize Somalia while addressing security matters in East Africa because both nations wanted to maintain peace and security. Through cultural diplomacy activities that involved people-to-people exchanges and arts programs and educational partnerships, the two countries developed better mutual understanding and stronger social relationships.

The health partnership between Kenya and Turkey maintained its previous level of development while expanding its activities. Turkish organizations, particularly TİKA, provided humanitarian assistance and medical supplies and healthcare training programs while building health facilities and medical services. The TİKA Nairobi Program Coordination Office established in 2012 executed healthcare and education and water and social assistance initiatives which served people living in vulnerable conditions (TİKA, 2024). The distribution of medical equipment which included incubators and phototherapy machines and oxygen concentrators helped reduce maternal and infant death rates in Hola District Hospital's high-risk regions (Wasike & Mukami, 2017; Street, 2018).

The medical outreach programs in Tana River Kilifi and Turkana delivered pediatric services together with gynecological services and surgical services. The Turkish medical support at Kakuma camp provided assistance to refugee populations. The partnerships between Kenyan hospitals and Kiambu Level-4 Hospital enabled hospitals to enhance their neonatal services by receiving KSh 3.5 million worth of equipment donations.

Turkey provided support for infectious disease control through its assistance which helped counties fight against tuberculosis and malaria and HIV/AIDS. The health programs implemented by the government of Kenya supported both Universal Health Coverage and Vision 2030 objectives by delivering fair and environmentally sustainable healthcare services. The Türkiye Scholarships program provided scholarships which together with vocational training and technical training programs developed Kenya's workforce skills in healthcare and agriculture and engineering and public administration.

Kenya experienced substantial growth in both its manufacturing industry and mining industry. The manufacturing sector which includes agro-processing and textiles and chemicals and cement as well as metal fabrication generated approximately 10 percent of GDP while creating work opportunities in urban areas. The discovery of rare earth minerals and titanium and soda ash and gold and limestone in Taita Taveta and Kwale and Kerio Valley regions turned mining into an essential economic activity.

The Big Four Agenda (2017–2022) targeted manufacturing value growth while the 2016 Mining Act established artisanal mining as a legal practice which supported development in local areas (Government of Kenya, 2018; Kariuki, 2021). The company improved its competitiveness through the implementation of automated production lines and renewable energy systems. The AfCFTA agreement enabled regional integration while global mineral demand creation opened new export markets (UNECA, 2020; Munyua, 2021).

The organization faces multiple challenges because of: high energy expenses and dependence on foreign raw materials and ineffective regulations and environmental issues and insufficient funding for small-scale miners and interruptions caused by COVID-19. The World Bank (2019) and Munyua (2021) research shows that human capital development and value chain improvement and energy security investment function as key elements for achieving economic diversification.

Kenya can access Turkish manufacturing and extractive industries because they provide steel and construction and oil and mining resources. Turkish companies TPAO among others can assist with exploration activities and pipeline development and refining operations by utilizing their knowledge from Azerbaijan and Russia and Iraq (Temizel & Canbaz, 2019; Stott, 2015). The approach supports technology transfer which creates job opportunities and industrial development although it includes operational hazards demonstrated by Turkey's 2014 Soma disaster.

The period between 2013 and 2022 saw Kenya and Turkey enhance their diplomatic relationship through political ties and economic partnerships and cultural exchanges and security agreements which built upon the diplomatic foundations established during the Kibaki administration while responding to new international and national developments. The two countries established diplomatic relations through leaders' visits and their participation in regional development projects and their mutual visits which built trust between them and resulted in trade agreements and finance deals and energy contracts and security pacts. Turkish companies established economic connections through their investments in infrastructure development and manufacturing operations and Special Economic Zones which resulted in employment creation and skills development and industrial capacity improvement. The trade relationship between the two countries remained unbalanced because Turkey imported manufactured products from Kenya while Kenya exported raw materials to Turkey.

The two countries established educational and cultural programs which provided scholarships and vocational education and technical support to develop human resources. The health sector partnership expanded through medical outreach efforts and equipment donations and capacity-building programs which supported Kenya's Universal Health Coverage system and sustainable development objectives. The United States government and Turkey designated Kenya as their strategic partner through their humanitarian assistance programs and economic diplomatic efforts and capacity development initiatives and strategic operational relations.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Kenya and Turkey experienced both ongoing ties and strategic changes during two different presidential terms from 2003 to 2022. President Kibaki between 2003 and 2013 established stronger relations through diplomatic and economic and cultural partnerships. Turkey established a trade relationship with Kenya which involved the export of Kenyan agricultural products and the import of Turkish manufactured items while Turkish companies developed infrastructure and urban areas. The human resources development and goodwill building process advanced through educational programs and scholarships and faculty exchanges and cultural programs. The health partnership achieved better maternal and child health results through international partnerships and service expansions and organizational changes.

President Kenyatta led from 2013 to 2022 to expand the partnership between the two nations through political and economic and cultural and health and security systems. The two nations established agreements through high-level visits and joint initiatives and direct flights which connected their trade and energy and security sectors. Turkish infrastructure investments and manufacturing projects and Special Economic Zones created jobs and transferred skills to Kenya while supporting the country's Big Four development agenda. Kenya exported

mainly raw materials to Turkey while the two nations maintained an unbalanced trade relationship. The program included educational and cultural exchanges and medical outreach activities and health programs which supported Universal Health Coverage while security cooperation concentrated on counter-terrorism and regional stability operations. The strategic partnership during this period created a partnership that included three different elements economic diplomacy capacity development and development partnerships.

REFERENCES

1. Adebola, R. (2016). Kenya-United Kingdom relations: Historical and contemporary perspectives. Nairobi: African Diplomacy Studies.
2. Alden, C., & Large, D. (2019). New directions in Africa's international relations. London: Routledge.
3. Akgün, M., & Özkan, B. (2014). Turkey's Africa policy and economic diplomacy. Istanbul: SETA Publications.
4. Aras, B., & Fidan, H. (2009). Turkey's soft power strategies in Africa. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 11(2), 123–142.
5. Aydın, M. (2015). Turkey's foreign policy in Africa: Strategic and developmental perspectives. Ankara: Bilkent University Press.
6. Aydın, M. (2019). Turkey's foreign policy in Africa under Erdoğan. Istanbul: Turkish Foreign Policy Institute.
7. Aydın, M., & Bayraktar, T. (2019). Turkey-Kenya relations: Emerging trends and bilateral cooperation. *Journal of African Diplomacy*, 6(2), 45–63.
8. Blanchard, L. (2013). Kenya: Current issues and U.S. relations. Congressional Research Service.
9. Clarke, W. (2018). Kenya-Somalia maritime disputes and regional implications. *African Journal of International Affairs*, 25(2), 45–63.
10. Demir, M., & Ateş, S. (2022). Turkey's strategic engagement in East Africa: The Kenya case. *African Studies Quarterly*, 22(1), 12–35.
11. Donelli, F. (2021). Turkey in Africa: Strategic engagement and soft power diplomacy. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 39(4), 501–519.
12. Erdemir, A. (2019). Developmental cooperation in Turkey-Africa relations: A comparative analysis. *African Journal of International Relations*, 11(3), 56–74.
13. Expo-group. (2023). Kiambu Level-4 Hospital equipment donation report. Nairobi: Expo-group Publications.
14. Geneva Forum. (2012). Kenya's relations with neighboring African states: Challenges and opportunities. Geneva: Geneva Forum Publications.
15. Gilpin, R. (2016). *Global political economy: Understanding the international economic order* (2nd ed.). Princeton University Press.
16. Gündüz, S. (2018). Turkey's new foreign policy in Africa: Soft power and trade diplomacy. *Turkish Journal of International Affairs*, 5(1), 89–110.
17. Kablan, O. (2019). Turkish medical outreach programs in East Africa: Focus on refugee populations. Istanbul: TİKA Research Division.
18. Kabukuru, W. (2015). Kenya-Ethiopia relations: Trade, security, and cooperation. Nairobi: East African Studies Institute.
19. Kale, S. (2015). Academic diplomacy and cultural exchange: Kenya-Turkey educational cooperation. *African International Studies Review*, 7(1), 45–61.
20. Kamau, P. (2020). Political leadership and foreign policy: The role of Kenya's Kibaki and Kenyatta administrations. Nairobi: East African Policy Institute.
21. Kamau, P. (2022). Economic diplomacy under Uhuru Kenyatta: Bilateral relations with emerging powers. *African International Studies Journal*, 10(1), 33–58.
22. Karimi, E. (2021). Technical cooperation and educational diplomacy in Kenya-Turkey relations. *African Development Studies Review*, 14(2), 101–118.
23. Karimi, E. (2022). Private sector engagement in Kenya-Turkey relations: A study of the Kenyatta era. *Journal of International Business and Development*, 8(3), 45–67.
24. Kardaş, T., Tansel, C., & Tomanbay, S. (2012). Soft power in Turkish foreign policy: Cultural diplomacy and media influence. Istanbul: Bilgi University Press.

25. Kariuki, F. (2021). Artisanal mining and regional development in Kenya: Opportunities and challenges. *Kenya Mining Journal*, 14(2), 33–52.
26. Keohane, R. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
27. Kebede, B. (2021). Horn of Africa geopolitics and external engagement: Turkey's influence in Kenya and Somalia. *African Security Review*, 30(1), 23–44.
28. Kebede, B. (2022). Regional security and bilateral partnerships: Kenya-Turkey counterterrorism collaboration. *Journal of East African Affairs*, 16(2), 77–95.
29. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2012). *Economic survey 2012*. Nairobi: KNBS.
30. Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace* (3rd ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
31. Mumo, J. (2015). Infrastructure development and Kenya-Turkey cooperation in the Kibaki era. *East African Policy Review*, 9(2), 55–72.
32. Mumo, J. (2021). Infrastructure modernization and foreign partnerships: Kenya under Kenyatta. *Development Policy Journal*, 12(1), 30–50.
33. Munene, A. (2013). *Military cooperation between Kenya and the United Kingdom*. Nairobi: Defence Policy Research Institute.
34. NASCOP. (2011). *Kenya HIV/AIDS epidemic update 2010–2011*. Nairobi: National AIDS & STI Control Program.
35. Ndegwa, L. (2016). Cultural diplomacy and Kenya-Turkey relations: Kibaki era perspectives. *African Diplomatic Studies*, 4(2), 65–82.
36. Ndegwa, L. (2022). Continuities and innovations in Kenya-Turkey relations under Kenyatta. *Journal of African Foreign Policy*, 7(1), 44–66.
37. Nye, J. (2020). *Globalization and diplomacy in the 21st century*. Cambridge University Press.
38. Obonyo, D. (2019). Symbolic diplomacy or real gains? An assessment of Kenya-Turkey bilateral initiatives. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 37(5), 689–705.
39. Oloo, A. (2017). Economic liberalization and bilateral cooperation: Kenya-Turkey relations. *East African Development Review*, 5(1), 23–42.
40. Oloo, A. (2022). Industrial manufacturing and foreign investment under Kenyatta. *Journal of African Economic Studies*, 11(2), 88–110.
41. Omolo, J. (2012). Kenya's foreign policy under Kibaki: Non-traditional partnerships and diplomacy. *African International Relations Journal*, 6(3), 44–63.
42. Omondi, P. (2014). Bilateral initiatives and the Kenya-Turkey Business Council. *East African Policy Studies*, 8(1), 15–35.
43. Office of the United States Trade Representative. (2023). *United States-Kenya Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership*.
44. Özkan, B. (2020). *Turkey in Africa: Diplomatic engagement and economic expansion*. London: Routledge.
45. Özkan, B., & Akgün, M. (2018). Turkey's opening to Africa: Diplomacy, trade, and soft power. *Journal of African Studies*, 44(2), 121–142.
46. Ozkan, B., & Mehmet, S. (2010). *Turkey's foreign policy and African engagement*. Istanbul: SETA Publications.
47. Posen, B. (1993). The security dilemma and ethnic conflict. *Survival*, 35(1), 27–47.
48. Stott, S. (2015). *Turkey's global industrial strategy and energy investments*. London: Routledge.
49. Street, J. (2018). Maternal and child health interventions in East Africa: International cooperation perspectives. *African Health Review*, 12(1), 77–94.
50. Temizel, F., & Canbaz, G. (2019). *Turkey's energy and mining sector investments abroad*. Ankara: Turkish Energy Policy Institute.
51. TİKA. (2024). *Kenya program coordination office annual report*. Ankara: Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency.
52. Turan, E. (2016). Scholarships, technical training, and bilateral cooperation: Kenya-Turkey relations under Kibaki. *African Educational Review*, 8(3), 55–77.
53. Turan, E. (2021). Human capital development and soft power diplomacy: Kenyatta era perspectives. *Journal of African Policy Studies*, 12(2), 99–120.

54. Walt, S. (1987). *The origins of alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
55. Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
56. Wanjiru, F. (2021). Post-Kibaki Kenya-Turkey relations: Trade, development, and diplomacy. *African Foreign Policy Journal*, 9(1), 77–98.
57. Wanjiru, F. (2022). Comparative analysis of Kenya's emerging partnerships: Turkey, China, and India. *Journal of International Relations*, 10(3), 112–135.
58. Wasike, M., & Mukami, A. (2017). Equipment donations and neonatal care improvements in Kenya. *Journal of Health Development*, 15(3), 101–119.
59. Yalçın, S. (2022). *Turkish scholarships and cultural diplomacy in Africa*. Ankara: Turkish Ministry of Education.
60. Yılmaz, H. (2017). *Educational diplomacy: Kenyan students in Turkey and bilateral networks*. Istanbul: Bilgi University Press.