

Demirtaş, Tunç. Politikadan Pratiğe Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri. SETA Yayınları, 2026.

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BOOK REVIEW INFO

Received Date: 05 December 2025

Accepted Date: 25 December 2025

Citation: Mazi, A. H. (2025). Tunç Demirtaş, Politikadan Pratiğe Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri,
SETA Yayınları, 2026. Almanac Diplomatique, 2(2). 110-112.

Book
Review

Introduction

Türkiye's relations with Africa have become one of the most rapidly transforming and institutionalized domains of Turkish foreign policy over the past two decades. This process began with the 1998 Africa Action Plan and was placed within an institutional framework with the declaration of a strategic partnership in 2008. Today, these relations have evolved into a multidimensional foreign policy practice that must be assessed not only through diplomatic rhetoric but also through tangible outcomes on the ground. The edited volume *From Policy to Practice: Türkiye–Africa Relations*, prepared under the editorship of Tunç Demirtaş, responds precisely to this need. The book stands out as a comprehensive edited collection that analyzes Türkiye–Africa relations across a broad spectrum—from security and energy to economics and cultural diplomacy—moving beyond purely normative claims.

Rather than portraying Türkiye's presence in Africa as temporary or solely based on humanitarian assistance, the book conceptualizes it as a multi-layered and increasingly institutionalized partnership model. This perspective not only distinguishes the volume within the literature on Türkiye–Africa relations but also adds significant analytical depth to ongoing academic debates.

The Content and Structure of the Book

The volume is composed of two main sections. The first section, entitled “Türkiye–Africa Relations from Security to Culture,” addresses the thematic and sectoral dimensions of these relations. The second section, “Türkiye's Partnership Map in Africa,” offers in-depth case studies based on selected country

examples. This structure provides methodological coherence by presenting a macro-level conceptual framework while simultaneously offering micro-level, field-based empirical findings.

The first section examines key issues such as defense industry cooperation, energy security, counterterrorism, migration, and cultural diplomacy. Analyses of defense industry cooperation, in particular, discuss Türkiye's role in Africa not merely in terms of arms provision, but within a broader framework of a security partner shaped by military training and capacity-building initiatives. By focusing on fragile regions such as the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, the volume illustrates how Türkiye has positioned itself as an alternative security partner at a time when the influence of traditional actors such as France has been declining.

Under the heading of energy security, the book explores the convergence between Türkiye's strategy of diversifying its energy supply and African countries' pursuit of expanded access to energy. Investments by Turkish companies across the continent—especially projects such as floating power plants—are analyzed as practical manifestations of a mutually beneficial, win-win cooperation model.

In the field of cultural diplomacy, alongside institutional actors such as TİKA, the Yunus Emre Institute, and the Türkiye Maarif Foundation, the volume addresses the concept of “First Lady Diplomacy,” which has received relatively limited attention in the literature. At the same time, initiatives such as the Africa Culture House are examined to assess both the institutional and symbolic dimensions of Türkiye's soft power.

The country studies presented in the second section demonstrate that Türkiye–Africa relations do not follow a uniform or homogeneous pattern but are shaped by the distinct historical and political dynamics of each country. Somalia emerges as one of Türkiye's most institutionalized and deep partnerships, particularly in the context of security sector reform

and state capacity-building. By contrast, the analysis of the Libyan case highlights the structural risks inherent in security cooperation, alongside the opportunities it offers. Case studies on countries such as Senegal, Sudan, Kenya, and Angola further reveal the regional diversity of Türkiye's engagement across the African continent.

Methodology and Contribution to the Literature

One of the most striking methodological features of the volume is its hybrid approach, which integrates theoretical frameworks with policy practice. The contributors move beyond diplomatic rhetoric by grounding their analyses in field research, trade data, defense industry agreements, and official documents. Moreover, the inclusion of contributions by African scholars and individuals with direct field experience prevents the study from being confined to an Ankara-centric perspective. This approach ensures that local perceptions and dynamics are meaningfully incorporated into the analysis.

One of the book's most significant contributions to the literature lies in its analytical and rational assessment of Türkiye-Africa relations, rather than reproducing romanticized narratives. The impact of defense industry exports on conflict dynamics, patterns of cooperation in the fields of energy and trade, and the tangible outcomes of cultural diplomacy are all examined and substantiated with up-to-date empirical data. From this perspective, the volume stands out as one of the rare studies that discuss Türkiye's Africa policy not through normative judgments, but through measurable practices and concrete policy outcomes.

Critique

Despite its strong scope and analytical depth, the volume also has certain limitations. Given the heterogeneous nature of the African continent, which consists of 54 countries, it is understandable that the analysis concentrates on cases where Türkiye has been relatively more active, such as Somalia, Libya, and Senegal. However, this focus inevitably leaves the potential and risks associated with regions where Türkiye's influence has been more limited—such as South Africa, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea—comparatively underexplored. In addition, the predominance of energy- and security-oriented analyses tends to relegate sociological dynamics, including the role of civil society and local societal responses, to a secondary position.

Conclusion

Overall, *From Policy to Practice: Türkiye-Africa Relations* stands out as a high-quality study that examines the transformation of Türkiye's Africa policy over the past two decades within a framework that is consistent with its practical outcomes on the ground. The volume demonstrates that Türkiye's presence in Africa should not be understood as a temporary orientation, but rather as an institutionalized partnership model built upon security, energy, economic engagement, and cultural diplomacy.

In this respect, the book makes a lasting contribution to the literature on Türkiye-Africa relations and provides a solid analytical foundation for future critical and theoretical research.