

# ISTANBUL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMICS AND SOCIETY (ISTCES) 2025

*Pathways to Inclusive Growth: Overcoming Challenges in  
Emerging and Developing African Countries.*

24-26 SEPTEMBER 2025

*Book of Proceedings*

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# The Relations Between Trade Volume and Political Relations: Example of Türkiye and Ethiopia

Ahmet Fatih Kaya<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The relationship between political relations and mutual trade is one of the most critical topics for policymakers. It would not be surprising to see that developing relations between countries enables the development of international trade. This paper posits that developing political relations enables an increase in trade volume. By signing agreements involving military cooperation, having reciprocal visits entails national companies to trade with new partners, as well as attracting the interest of investors. In this context, Türkiye's international relations with Ethiopia are examined, and its effects on the trade volume will be investigated. While conducting this analysis, available data will clarify our premises. The findings reveal that developing political relations has an impact on increasing trade volume between countries.

**Keywords:** International Relations, International Trade, Military Cooperation, Mediation Role, Trade Volume

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## Introduction

The article consists of two main parts and a conclusion. Part A investigates the political relations of Türkiye with Ethiopia from 2005 to 2024, and Part B investigates the trade volume between Ethiopia from 2002 to 2024.

A. Political relations will be evaluated in 3 criteria. Their presence is a sign of good relations, according to our assumption.

- Military Agreement and Military Trade
- Other Agreements, Formal Visits, and Institutions
- Mediation Role

B. Trade volume will be evaluated in the interval 2002-2023.

After the political relations are evaluated by the criteria, it will be decided how the political relations have been going. Then, the trend in the trade volume will be evaluated, and it will be decided how the international trade has been going. If both dimensions have resulted positively or both have resulted negatively, it could be deduced that there has been a linear relationship between international relations and international trade of Türkiye and Ethiopia. However, if there is a contradiction between the results, then it could be said that there are no relations between these two findings.

## Türkiye's Political Relations with Ethiopia

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Türkiye has tried to enhance its relations with African countries, dependent on mutual benefit. Because Africa carries a huge population, hydrocarbon mines, and geopolitical importance (for example, the Horn of Africa which is one of the most important trade routes), Türkiye's interest in Africa, especially in the Sub-Saharan region, has significantly increased. The number of Turkish Assembly members increased from 12 in 2002 to 44 in 2024 (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, n.d.). Even though Türkiye's African Initiative was established in 1998, the relations were enhanced when Türkiye was accepted as a "strategic partner" and observer member of the African Union in 2008. In 2005, the Turkish government designated the year as "Year of Africa" (Ozkan, 2008).

The Türkiye-Ethiopia relationship should be evaluated in the context of the preceding paragraph: Türkiye tries to establish strategic partnership relations with African countries, especially with the sub-Saharan region, which carries huge strategic importance (Telci & Yimer, 2024). Turkish interest in Ethiopia stems from its strategic location, which is very close to the Horn of Africa, and its economic growth (Ethiopia had nearly half of the foreign direct investment of the whole of

Africa in 2017), (Abdullahi & Abdirahman, 2023) and its huge population that promises huge economic potential. To provide a further glance at the political relations between Türkiye and Ethiopia, the bilateral relations will be evaluated by the criteria mentioned.

#### • **Military Agreement and Military Trades**

Military cooperation is a very significant indicator of strategic partnership, especially if the cooperation includes high-technology weapons (Czechowska, 2013). The country that has the capacity to produce high-technology arms sells the arms just to their reliable partners, that is not expected to be involved in a military conflict with them. Thus, it can be said that the trade of high-technology arms is an indicator of partnership and alliance.

The drones of Türkiye produced by Baykar Technology company are a brand-new, high-technology military vehicle that has had a groundbreaking effect on the battlefield. For instance, it has been very effective in the wars of Karabagh and the Russian war. The selling of these technologies is dependent on the criteria of trust for Türkiye. Even though there is no formal explanation about whether there have been any sales of these weapons, according to the media and news, Türkiye sold Baykar drones to Ethiopia (Coskun, Spicer, ve Toksabay 2021). Also, one of the formal institutions (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı*) of Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentioned the usage of TB-2 drones in Ethiopia (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı*, 2022). In another announcement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sale of military equipment and vehicles is confirmed (*Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, 2024).

Military agreements are also very significant indicators of partnership. Most military agreements include sales of weapons, technical support agreements, and deployment of military bases. In August 2021, Türkiye and Ethiopia signed an agreement of military cooperation (*Middle East Monitor*, 2021). That is also a very significant indicator of developing relations.

#### • **Formal Visits and Institutions**

Formal visits, especially if they are at the upper level, such as visits of presidents, ministers, and prime ministers, can be an indicator of good relations between states. In formal visits, the operations of national institutions are indicators of positive relations. If the national institutions, charities, and companies of one state operate in another state, that state signs the diplomatic relations of these two states at a level that prevails inter-organizations. Lastly, agreements such as trade agreements, agreements of alliance, or free trade agreements, obviously, are a sign of good relations.

After the year 2005, Türkiye adopted a policy of close relations with Africa. Türkiye-Ethiopia relations developed with the opening of the Turkish Embassy in 2006 in Addis Ababa. In the following years, Türkiye was accepted as a strategic partner by the government of Ethiopia. After the opening of the embassy, there have been mutual visits from both sides at the upper levels. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Ethiopia twice while he was in office, and after Erdogan became President, he made his first sub-Saharan visit to Ethiopia in 2015. Ethiopian President Wirtu visited Türkiye twice in two years, and there have been several visits by ministers (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, t.y.)

Turkish public institutions have been very active since 2005. Turk Development and Cooperation Agency (TİKA), which is a public organization attached to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, started to operate in Addis Ababa in 2005. Maarif Charity, an education charity attached to the Turkish presidency, started its duty in 2018, and it provides education to 3,400 students in Ethiopia in its 18 schools (Türkiye Maarif Vakfı, 2022).

#### • **Mediation Role**

The role of mediation is considered a very powerful indicator of positive relations, especially if there is no direct harm to the mediator state. For the mediator state, it is a sign of trust and fairness from other states, and for mediated states, it is a sign of good intentions. Mostly, states that are in conflict with another state do not accept mediation of a state with which it does not have very good relations, which protects its interests. Thus, if a state mediates a conflict between two other states, there are presumed to have trustworthy relations.

Ethiopia had a conflict with Somalia about Ethiopia's recognition of Somalia's secessionist region, Somaliland, in January 2024. With that attempt, Ethiopia aimed to break its landlocked status that prevents it from reaching the open sea, and force Ethiopia to make its trade through Somalia's ports. Naturally, Ethiopia's attempt to assert its sovereignty was considered an attack on its territorial integrity by Somalia. The situation evolved into a crisis, as both sides insisted on their demands.

The crisis between Ethiopia and Somalia was solved by an agreement called the "Ankara Declaration" with Türkiye's mediation efforts. The leaders of two countries and Turkish President Erdogan met in Ankara to reach an agreement and end the crisis. With preceding endeavors of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, FM Hakan Fidan visited both countries several times in 2024 about the crisis, and the countries agreed to reach an agreement with Türkiye's mediator role (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2024).

As seen by military agreements, formal visits, operations of institutions, and lastly the mediation of Türkiye in the Ethiopia-Somalia crisis, Türkiye's political relations with Ethiopia gained momentum in the 2000s, especially after the establishment of Turkish embassies.

### The Trade Volume Between Türkiye and Ethiopia

In this part, trade volume between Ethiopia and Türkiye will be evaluated from data of Türkiye's exports, imports, and aggregate of exports and imports for the years. For that analysis, we selected years from 2002 to 2023 to measure the effects of political relations on trade volume. Because there have been rapidly developing political relations between Ethiopia and Türkiye since 2002, before these terms could be considered stagnant for political relations. The period between 2008 and 2020 could be considered as a continuous development of relations, because 2020 was the year the volume of the world economy decreased. Also, in 2021, Ethiopia faced a serious internal crisis in its secessionist region, Tigray. Thus, the period after 2020 is blurred and requires deeper research.

Years	Türkiye Export to Ethiopia	Türkiye's Import From Ethiopia	Aggregate	Change in 5 years term (%)	Change (%)	Mean
2002	32,30	5,70	38,00	242,05	905,7894737	80,36
2003	50,70	10,90	61,60			
2004	77,70	15,70	93,40			
2005	109,00	7,82	116,82			
2006	91,90	0,08	91,98			
2007	146,00	23,90	169,90	186,11		227,36
2008	164,00	24,00	188,00			
2009	229,00	27,10	256,10			
2010	175,00	31,60	206,60			
2011	275,00	41,20	316,20			
2012	395,00	50,00	445,00	101,12		437,84
2013	371,20	72,70	443,90			
2014	336,10	79,10	415,20			
2015	393,30	41,80	435,10			
2016	411,50	38,50	450,00			
2017	347,20	38,80	386,00	98,11		367,46
2019	380,90	51,80	432,70			
2020	231,30	40,50	271,80			
2021	354,30	24,40	378,70			
2022	320,20	20,30	340,50			
2023	306,90	37,30	344,20	101,0866373		342,35

In this graph, the values for Export, Import and Aggregate are values\*million dollars .

**Table SEQ Tablo\\*ARABIC 1.** The trade volume between Ethiopia and Türkiye from 2002 to 2023. (The table is formed according to TUIK and Trading Economics Data.)

In Table 1, the values for trade between the two countries are listed. There are data Turkish exports to Ethiopia, Turkish imports from Ethiopia, the Aggregate of Export and Import, the percentage of change of aggregate in a 5-year term, the percentage of change of 22 every year, and the mean over 5 years. Since annual change could be very radical, evaluating the changes in 5 years would provide a more realistic understanding. five years is called a “term”.

When the first 5-year term is evaluated, it is seen that trade volume is much less than that of others (80.36 million). In these years, the relations were much more stagnant compared to the following terms. If you consider that the Turkish Embassy was opened in 2006, it could be expected that the volume will increase in the follow.

Evaluation of the second term shows a radical increase in the mean of the trade volume from 80,36 million in the first term to 227,36 million in the second term. After the establishment of the Turkish Embassy, there have been a lot of high-ranking visits in that term. Also, with the endeavor of governments, Türkiye Ethiopia Business forum was established in that term, in 2009. (see Table 1)

The third and fourth term was the duration during which the political relations were highly developed. In this term, national airways started flights between countries, and cooperation that enables investors to initiate was enhanced. The number of Turkish companies operating in Ethiopia has increased significantly; while the number was 1 in 2003, it reached 200 in 2019 (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, t.y.). Even though the trade volume was highly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the fourth term was concluded with a small shrinkage in mutual trade (There is a 0,0189 shrinkage in 2021 compared to 2017). (see Table 2)

2017	347,20	38,80	386,00
2021	354,30	24,40	378,70

**Table 2.** The beginning and the end of the 4th term.

In the fifth term, we can see a slight growth in the trade volume (1,08%). The reason for the smallness of the growth of the fifth term compared to the second and third term can stem from that: before 2006, the political relations were fully stagnant, political attempts from both sides were triggering big effects, such as opening embassies and mutual visits, which had enabled trade to grow. (see Table 3: the speed of the change) However, the following terms require more attention for the continuation of trade.

Table 3: Comparison of the first and seconterms

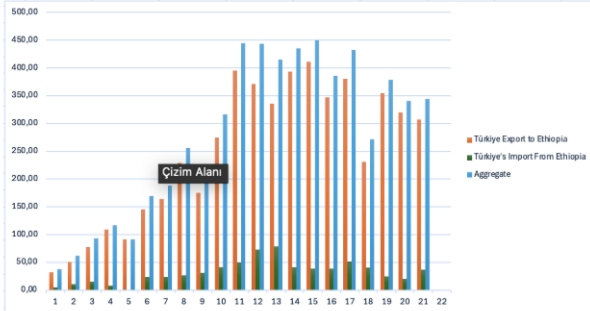


Figure SEQ Figure 1\* ARABIC 1: The trade volume of the two countries in a bar chart. (the value\*million dollar)

Years	Mean
2002	80,36
2003	
2004	
2005	
2006	
2007	227,36
2008	
2009	
2010	
2011	

Table 3. Comparison of the first and seconterms.

## **Conclusion**

To evaluate the whole term, we see 9.05 times increase in trade volume from 2002 to 2023. That is an enormous growth for such a short duration (see Figure 1). From our findings the term, shows political relations between the two countries to be highly developed with the opening of embassies, agreements of defense and trade, mutual visits, and mediation of Türkiye in the crisis of Ethiopia-Somalia. When we take both trade volume and political relations, we deduce that there is a linear relation between trade volume and political relations.

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