

Turkish First Lady Activities Towards Africa

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1 Introduction

1.1 Choice of Topic

Anadolu Agency in 2022 published an analysis titled “*Afrika Kültür Evi: Bir 'First Lady Diplomasisi' örneği*” (African Culture House: An example of First Lady Diplomacy) both in Turkish and English.¹ The work was written by Tuba Nur Sönmez, former advisor of the President on foreign policy and public diplomacy matters.² Sönmez argues that Emine Erdoğan initiating the creation of the *Afrika El Sanatları ve Kültür Evi* (African Culture House and Handicrafts Market, Africa House) not only displays the manifestation of First Lady diplomacy but aligns with the Turkish policy towards Africa. The analysis sparked the interest of the author to have a deeper look into the First Lady diplomatic activities towards Africa.

The contemporary Turkish-African relation generally lies on the foundation of the *Afrika Ortaklık Politikası* (Africa Partnership Policy) disclosed in 2013. The relationship is based on equal partnership and mutual benefit realized by public and private actors, non-governmental and humanitarian organisations. High-level visits are of particular importance, hence gradually becoming more frequent in the previous years. The First Lady apart from her activities regarding the Africa House, regularly accompanies the President during the visits.³

However, the precise delimitation of First Lady tasks is burdensome, although the term is widely used, especially regarding diplomatic roles.⁴ The term, First Lady itself is a phrase used and developed in the United States of America. One of the first appearances of the word dates to 1838 when Martha Washington was addressed this way, later it spread among the international community.⁵

Thus, the lack of universal clarification requires to take a more in-depth view of the recent Turkish context. Moreover, since the extent to which the first ladyship can reach out is

¹ *Afrika Kültür Evi: Bir "First Lady Diplomasisi" örneği*. (2022, May 28). Anadolu Ajansı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/afrika-kultur-evi-bir-first-lady-diplomasisi-ornegi/2599027>, ANALYSIS - African Culture House: An example of First Lady Diplomacy. (2022, May 29). Anadolu Agency. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-african-culture-house-an-example-of-first-lady-diplomacy/2598882>

² T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı - Turkish Embassy In Kuwait - Büyükelçinin Özgeçmişi. (2023). <https://kuwait-emb.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/Biography>

³ *Türkiye-afrika ilişkileri*. (2023, November 8). T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-afrika-iliskileri.tr.mfa>

⁴ Huang, Y. (2023). The Role of the First Lady in Public Diplomacy since the Founding of the Republic of China. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 4(1), 675–680. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/4/2022291>

⁵ Wang, N. (2018). “First Lady Diplomacy” and the construction of national image. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 14(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-018-0097-7>

determined by the general status of women in a given geographical context and time period, it further addresses the need to examine the Turkish reality.⁶ Another influential factor is the nature of the role of the president, particularly whether the position apart from ceremonial function is supplemented with political power.⁷ Since in most cases in the absence of a precise delimitation of the duties of the First Lady, the president is the one who determines them.⁸

1.2 Research question and hypotheses

Based on the context gendered roles of First Lady diplomacy and the significant Turkish presence in Africa, the research seeks to answer the following question: **How do engagements of Emine Erdoğan in Africa embody the traditional gendered roles associated with First Lady Diplomacy?**

Complementary to the above-mentioned question, two hypotheses are set up:

H1.: The First Lady diplomatic activities of Emine Erdoğan towards Africa is not limited to escort, surrogate, goodwill, and aesthete activities.

In order to understand the essence of the first hypothesis the research ought to introduce the work of Erickson and Thomson at this early stage, however, a detailed description of each First Lady role will be displayed in the ‘Methodology’ section. In brief, all the above-mentioned roles are either closely related to the presence of the president, or no agenda are promoted during the diplomatic activity. Generally, from a foreign policy formation point of view, they are rather passive and constitute traditional female roles.⁹

H2.: Although the lack of official Turkish Feminist Foreign Policy, the First Lady Diplomacy of Emine Erdoğan towards Africa mirrors Feminist Foreign Policy.

⁶ Duerst-Lahti, G., & Kelly, R. M. (1995). “The Study of Gender Power and Its Link to Governance and Leadership.” In *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance*. eds. Duerst-Lahti, G., & Kelly, R. M. Kelly University of Michigan Press.

⁷ Mayo, E. P. (2001). Teaching the First Ladies Using Material Culture. *OAH Magazine of History*, 15(3), 22–25.

⁸ Huang, Y. (2023). The Role of the First Lady in Public Diplomacy since the Founding of the Republic of China. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 4(1), 675–680. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/4/2022291>

⁹ Erickson, K. V., & Thomson, S. J. (2012). First Lady International diplomacy: Performing gendered roles on the world stage. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 77(3), 239–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794x.2011.647502>

The basic premise of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is to include the importance of gender equality in all areas of foreign policy, among others defence, trade, development, and diplomacy.¹⁰ Another crucial element is the tendency to promote the importance of improving the situation of women worldwide.¹¹ From the base of the research, namely the activities of Emine Erdoğan in relations to the Africa House, the second hypothesis demonstrates sign of being accurate. The First Lady established the institution after experiencing the hardships of African women hence to help them the Africa house sends the revenue of the sold products to the most in need. Furthermore, the Africa House regularly serves as a place for diplomatic meetings.¹²

2 Theoretical foundations

2.1 Feminist Foreign Policy

In the realm of feminist foreign policy, vast majority of the scholarship introduces the topic by employing the illustrative case of Sweden (2014) as a seminal exemplar. As it was the first feminist foreign policy that was adopted officially. Since then the following countries adopted an initiative under the same name: “Canada (2017), France (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Luxembourg (2021), Germany (2022), Chile (2022), Colombia (2022) and Liberia (2022)”¹³.

Although there is not a single, widely accepted and commonly implemented version of feminist foreign policy, the main point is the following: it affects the interactions of the state actors and non-state actors at all areas, but it especially prioritizes achieving gender equality, peace, environmental issues, and human rights.¹⁴ A very simplified version of term would only focus

¹⁰ Thompson, L., & Clement, R. (2019). Is the future of foreign policy feminist? *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 20(2), 76–94.

¹¹ Zhukova, E., Rosén Sundström, M., & Elgström, O. (2022). Feminist foreign policies (FFPs) as strategic narratives: Norm translation in Sweden, Canada, France, and Mexico. *Review of International Studies*, 48(1), 195-216. doi:10.1017/S0260210521000413

¹² Hakkimizda. (2023, November 8). Afrika Evi. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://afrikaevi.com/tr/hakkimizda/>

¹³ UN Women. (2022, September). *Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en.pdf>, Thompson, L., Ahmed, S. and Khokhar, T. (2021). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/FFP-2021Update_v4.pdf

¹⁴ Thomson, J. (2020). What's Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden's and Canada's Foreign Policy Agendas. *International Studies Perspectives*, 21(4), 424–437. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekz032>

on the increased need for a greater participation of women in international affairs.¹⁵ However, as it was underlined in the Methodology section, the cross-cutting feature is a crucial element.

2.2 Critical Feminist Theory

Feminist theory developed complementary to the social movement, precisely, the processes initiated by the movement called from the academia to develop a revisited methodological and theoretical framework.¹⁶ The main claim is that the various intersections such as different groups, individuals, organisations, and family creates an environment where oppression against women can take place. The oppression is rooted in gendered relationships.¹⁷

Critical Feminism further emphasizes gendered identity and gendered power. Feminist constructivism especially focuses on how the roles are constructed. Thus, it claims that gender determines the activities of women in international affairs.¹⁸ The importance of this aspect for the present research is shown by the fact that the First Lady position itself is limited to women. In the addition, the existence of the position depends on the existence of the presidential post. Hence, the First Lady Diplomacy from essence ought to be a position affected by gendered roles.

3 Methodology

The framework developed by Erickson and Thomson appeared to be the most adequate for the present research due to two main reasons.¹⁹ Firstly, it is created in a way that examines specifically the international diplomatic activities of First Ladies. As it can be seen the more nuanced frameworks, such as the ones of Winfield and Watson included roles connected to diplomacy, but either had elements related to domestic politics or the diplomatic role was viewed as a separate characteristic.²⁰ Secondly, the framework is not limited only to the context

¹⁵ Zilla, C. (2022, August 18). Feminist Foreign Policy: Concepts, core components and controversies. *Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik*. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2022C48>

¹⁶ Hesse-Biber, S. (2002). "Feminism and interdisciplinarity". In *Women in higher education*. eds. J. DiGeorgio-Lutz Westport, CT: Praeger. pp. 57-66.

¹⁷ Lay, K. R., & Daley, J. G. (2007). A critique of feminist theory. *Advances in Social Work*, 8(1), 49–61. <https://doi.org/10.18060/131>

¹⁸ Sokullu, E. C., & Ekşioğlu, G. K. (2023). Women in Diplomacy in Türkiye: Prospects for a gender turn. *DergiPark (Istanbul University)*.

¹⁹ Erickson, K. V., & Thomson, S. J. (2012). First Lady International diplomacy: Performing gendered roles on the world stage. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 77(3), 239–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794x.2011.647502>

²⁰ Winfield, B. H. (1997). The making of an image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American journalists. *Political Communication*, 14(2), 241–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846097199470>, Winfield, B. H. (1997). "Who

of the United States and can be successfully applied to other realities, as seen in Van Wyk's work, where it was used to examine the African First Lady diplomacies.²¹

The framework consists of nine distinct roles being the following:

1) Managing Presidential Credibility:

First Ladies do not step out on the political sphere; they remain supportive spouses.

2) Escort role:

The main activity is accompanying the president on various international trips. It generally aims to complement the president by improving the credibility, power, and strength, or on the contrary softens the muscular image and in certain cases signals feminist beliefs. Being a supportive partner is a key element, however without the ability or the willingness to articulate own ideas and policy considerations. The role in most cases lacks the empowerment of the First Lady and thus, embodies the most classical role.

3) Aesthete role:

Activities either include immersive speeches held in front of a larger audience or having delightful private conversations. The First Ladies who fell into this category gain attention and influence with their feminine gestures and appearance, in other words being aesthetically pleasing to the audiences. Aesthete role exceeds the escort role by emotion-based speeches.

4) Surrogate role:

First Ladies who gained enough credibility are able to travel abroad without the President and fulfil mainly ceremonial and protocol duties. However, the foreign trip does not mean that they are in a position to forge new relationships, but they can turn into fact-finding missions. The first-hand observations of the First Lady can be taken into account.

5) Managing International Relations:

This role also includes foreign travels, but with a different aim, namely, to enhance cultural relations and to promote certain values, typically human rights. On the one hand,

elected her anyhow? The first lady as a campaign issue". In Pippa Norris, *Women, the media and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 166– 179., Watson, R. P. (2000). *The presidents' wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

²¹ Van Wyk, J. (2017). The first ladies of Southern Africa: trophies or trailblazers? *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 44(1), 157–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2017.1279804>

the activities enhance relations between states, on the other hand, First Ladies can support the groups most in need.

6) Goodwill role:

Assigning the goodwill role to the First Ladies can be understood as the President embodying hard power, while the female counterpart deals with issues related to soft power. This role enables the First Lady to express her personal concerns²² regarding the topic while Managing International Relations is limited to preassigned tasks. Typical examples are dedicated meetings of First Ladies and the so-called friendship performances.

7) Cultural role:

This role not only enables First Ladies to acknowledge the importance of a certain cultural element of the partner country but also gives the opportunity to promote the culture of her origin. These cultural performances include taking part in rituals and using clever rhetorical elements. What distinguishes the cultural role from the managing international relations role is the ability to effectively promote her country's culture.

8) Managing Social Issues:

When First Ladies take up this role, they tend to establish definite humanitarian goals that aim to promote the development of educational matters, economic issues and human rights. Compared to the goodwill role, First Ladies, in this case, achieve pre-set goals and successfully pursue an agenda, since their activities are not perceived as a threat to other nations.

9) Social Activist Role:

Social advocacy performances often target ‘third-world’ populations, especially disadvantaged groups, and women. The aims of developing the lives of certain groups are achieved by relatively serious financial contributions. Typically, Presidents cannot take a similar role, thus this last First Lady role is the most advanced one.²³

The present research aims to find the most fitting category for First Lady Emine Erdoğan. In order to do this her First Lady activities will be analysed focusing on the ones that are made in relation to Africa. Generally, her activities tend to focus mostly on the African continent which

²² However, persona concerns are aligned with the state interest.

²³ Erickson, K. V., & Thomson, S. J. (2012). First Lady International diplomacy: Performing gendered roles on the world stage. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 77(3), 239–262.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794x.2011.647502>

also aligns with the Turkish foreign policy directions.²⁴ Not to mention the bibliography of the First Lady dedicated to her experiences during her ceremonial visits. Keeping in mind that, as she has stepped out of the supportive spouse role with attending protocol events, underlined by her book, the Turkish First Lady will not take a managing presidential credibility role. Apart from the framework the research relies on the official presidential webpage, *T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı* and secondary literature.

Although Emine Erdoğan's book (*Afrika seyahatlerim: hatırat (2014-2020)*) covers the period from 2014 until 2020, the research would not focus on this time phase.²⁵ The reason behind this is the length of the period and the primary focus on diplomatic travels. Instead, a more balanced and crystallized diplomatic period will be analysed, namely from 1st of September 2021 to 31st of September 2023. The starting date of the examined period is determined by the period following the covid-19 pandemic, after the September date, the First Lady repeatedly pursued a foreign policy requiring an active and offline presence. And the closing date coincides with the date of writing this study.

To do the analysis, first, a database is set up of all the First Lady activities related to Africa. Second, each element of the database is analysed by the set of questions displayed in Table 1., thus, this way for every activity a role is assigned. Lastly, as the ratio of each role is synthesized the final categorization is done. Apart from the categorization, additional remarks are made regarding the findings.

²⁴ *Türkiye-Africa Relations*. (2023, November 8). Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-africa-relations.en.mfa>

²⁵ Emine, E. (2021). *Afrika Seyahatlerim*. Turkuvaaz Kitap

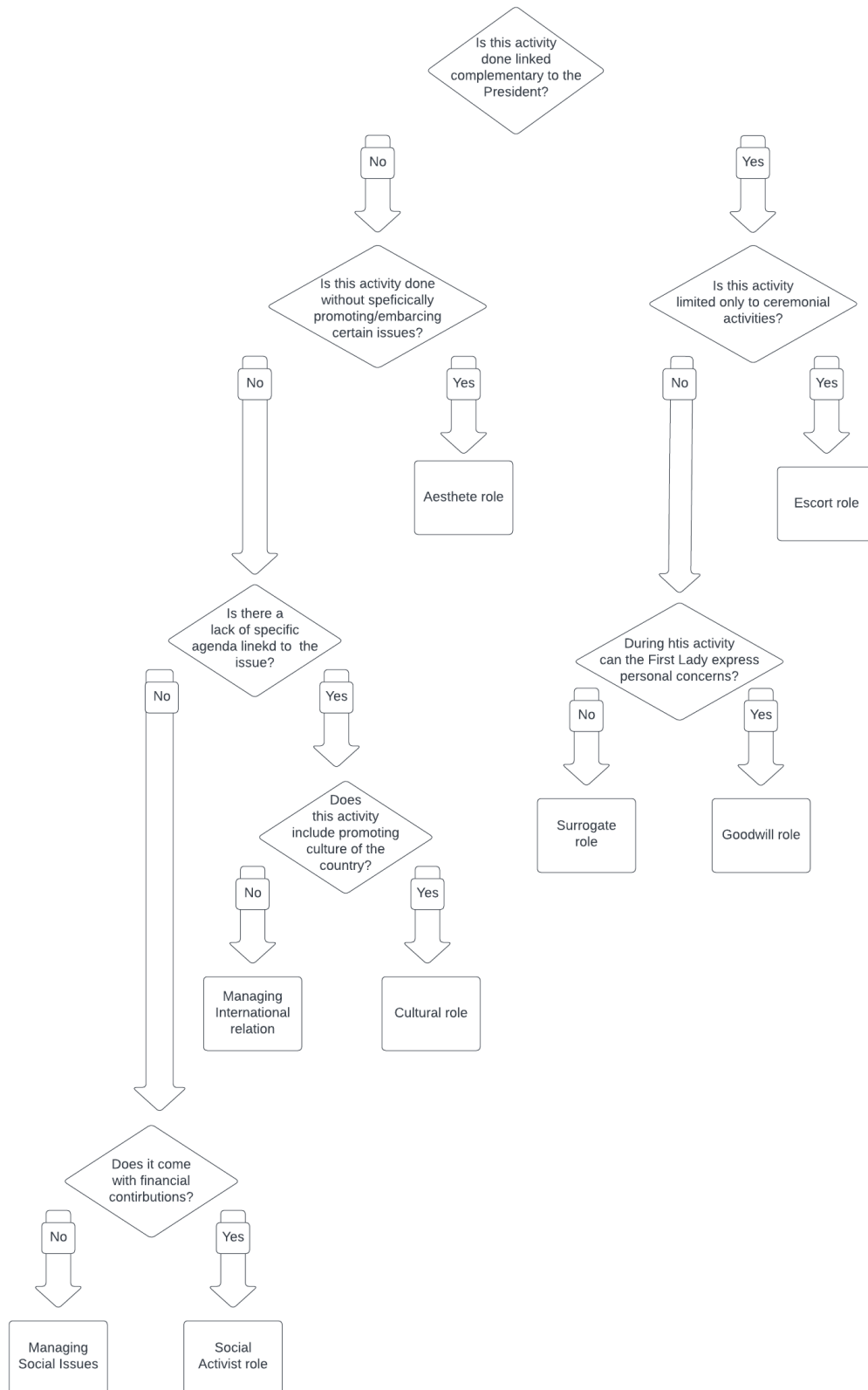


Table 1.: Question to analyse the database. (Source: done by the author)

4 Literature review

4.1 Methodological framework

The scholarship developed less and more complex schemes, however, it has to be highlighted at this point that the vast majority of scholarly works do not rely on any existing or newly constructed methodological framework. Thus, it can be examined that the dominant approach is to write a descriptive bibliographical and historical work.²⁶ The following section displays a few examples of categorization starting from the more general approaches until reaching the framework that is suitable for the present analysis.

The vast majority of the existing frameworks are not specifically developed to examine merely diplomatic aspects, but they implement elements applied in domestic politics. Nevertheless, it is far-reaching to have an overview of the available options. Three spheres of the First Lady activities are examined in various works of Edith P. Mayo: 1) the influence of social status on the presidential administration and the portrayal of the evolving status of the nation 2) the campaigner role 3) the ceremonial partner to the president and social hostess for the state.²⁷ The above-mentioned characterization aligns with one used earlier in time by O'Connor, Nye, and van Assendelft.²⁸ Similarly, Borelli pays less attention to the campaigner role (campaign surrogate) and the role of being a partner, but also adds the ability to advocate policy, and the so-called spokesperson aspect.²⁹

Winfield identified five roles: 1) escort role that extends until accompanying the president, protocol duties that include ceremonial and social events 3) charitable role 4) ability to make policy and to develop influential issues 5) political role that enables the First Lady to gain influence and a following.³⁰

Watson set up a rather nuanced theoretical framework, however with a focus on the realities of the United States. Eleven roles were identified, among others including the presidential spokesperson, a symbol of the American women, a wife and mother, a social hostess, and a

²⁶ Borrelli, M. A. (2002). The First Lady as formal advisor to the president. *Women & Politics*, 24(1), 25–45. https://doi.org/10.1300/j014v24n01_02

²⁷ Mayo, E. P. (2001). Teaching the First Ladies Using Material Culture. *OAH Magazine of History*, 15(3), 22–25.

²⁸ O'Connor, K., & Nye, B., & van Assendelft, L. (1996). Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26(3): 835–853.

²⁹ Borrelli, M. A. (2002). The First Lady as formal advisor to the president. *Women & Politics*, 24(1), 25–45. https://doi.org/10.1300/j014v24n01_02

³⁰ Winfield, B. H. (1997). The making of an image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American journalists. *Political Communication*, 14(2), 241–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846097199470>, Winfield, B. H. (1997). "Who elected her anyhow? The first lady as a campaign issue". In Pippa Norris, *Women, the media and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 166–17.

political and presidential partner. It's worth mentioning that the role of being a diplomat is mentioned as a separate category, although it collides with some of the other ten assigned roles.³¹

The only article available in Hungarian regarding generally about First Ladies is the work of Nikoletta Hosso. Although the analysis focuses on protocol matters, a short description of the American First Lady institution is displayed. The author, partly based on the information provided by the National Museum of American History, set up the following categories: campaigner, hostess, political advocate, and the face of the society.³²

4.2 First Lady Diplomacy

Research on First Ladies gained more popularity in the United States in the 1970s, however until recently non-American literature was nearly non-existent.³³ The vast majority of the works, however, use a descriptive method to describe the activities of the First Lady.

Rosalyn Carter as a First Lady meant a turning point, since the First Ladies before her tended to take a rather passive role and their activities were limited to ceremonial duties.³⁴ First Lady Carter took on a campaigner role and pursued a political agenda.³⁵ Notwithstanding, Jacqueline Kennedy and Eleanor Roosevelt serve as exceptions, as the former took a rather significant role in cultural diplomacy by hosting cultural events³⁶, and the latter being elected as Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights Commission broke the passive role.³⁷ The research of Hastedt and Eksterowicz about Hillary Clinton sought to answer the question of whether the First Lady followed an issue-oriented foreign policy or a policy advocate approach.³⁸

³¹ Watson, R. P. (2000). *The presidents' wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

³² "First lady intézmény" -politika, protokoll és divat. (n.d.). *Európai Protokoll- És Asszisztens Képző Központ*.

³³ Stooksbury, K. E., & Edgemon, L. M. (2003). The First Lady scholarship reconsidered. *Women & Politics*, 25(3), 97–111. https://doi.org/10.1300/j014v25n03_05

³⁴ Erickson, K. V., & Thomson, S. J. (2012). First Lady International diplomacy: Performing gendered roles on the world stage. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 77(3), 239–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794x.2011.647502>

³⁵ Smith, K. B. (1997). The First Lady Represents America: Rosalynn Carter in South America. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 27(3), 540–548.

³⁶ Demetriades, S (2012). The Public Diplomacy Impact of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy: 1961 – 1963. *University of Southern California*

³⁷ Luscombe, A., & Fazzi, D. (2017). Eleanor Roosevelt and diplomacy in the public interest. *European Journal of American Studies*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11890>

³⁸ Hastedt, G. P., & Eksterowicz, A. J. (2006). First Lady Diplomacy: The Foreign Policy Activism of First Lady Clinton. *Journal of International Affairs*, 2006 fall, 57-67.

In the African context, the determination of the possible pool of First Lady activities and the role it plays in the diplomatic sphere is the most distinct compared to the American experiences. Due to polygamous marriages, it is possible that at the same time, more than one First Ladies are in position.³⁹ Nevertheless, First Ladies from Benin, Burundi, Gambia, Lesotho and Nigeria play an important role in promoting gender equality, the fight against HIV infections, and youth empowerment. In 1955 they created a formal network for pursuing their joint efforts, that is today called Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD).⁴⁰

First Lady of Rwanda, Jeanette Kagame apart from her role in OAFLAD, initiates her own project that aims to help economic empowerment of disadvantaged communities in the country.⁴¹ As it can be seen African First Ladies take on a rather active role, thus the number of scholarly analyses covering their work gradually increases. The research of Van Wyk and Prokopenko serves as an example.⁴²

In Asia the Chinese scholarship mostly focuses on First Lady Peng Liyuan, Wang in her research draws the conclusion that Peng Liyuan implemented Western ideals into her activity.⁴³ Ling and Berkowitz add that before Xi Jinping, other First Ladies were rather invisible to the public.⁴⁴ Another example is the case of Imelda Marcos, First Lady from the Philippines who not only performed traditional ceremonial activities but promoted a wide range of government-sponsored projects.⁴⁵ Research about European First Ladies includes the First Lady of Poland, Agata Kornhauser-Duda.⁴⁶

³⁹ Van Wyk, J. (2017). The first ladies of Southern Africa: trophies or trailblazers? *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 44(1), 157–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2017.1279804>

⁴⁰ Original name was Organisation of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA). *OAFLA to broaden its scope of work*. (2019, February 14). UNAIDS. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.unaids.org/en/keywords/oafila>, Awodola, B. (2016). Peacebuilding in Africa: A Review of the African First Ladies Peace Mission. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 2016(17), 17–31., UNFPA. (2020). Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS OAFLA.

⁴¹ *African Women in Diplomacy*. (2020). High Commission of South Africa in Canada.

⁴² Van Wyk, J., Nyere, C., & Muresan, A. (2018). African First Ladies, politics and the state. *Politeia*, 37(2). <https://doi.org/10.25159/0256-8845/4520>, Prokopenko, L. (2021). Development of the institution of the First Ladyship in Africa. *Journal of Globalization Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.30884/jogs/2021.01.03>

⁴³ Wang, N. (2018). “First Lady Diplomacy” and the construction of national image. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 14(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-018-0097-7>

⁴⁴ Qi, L., & Berkowitz, D. (2017). Constructing a ‘first’ First Lady through memory: The case of China’s Peng Liyuan. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917701766>

⁴⁵ Kotlowski, D. J. (2015). The Possibilities and Limitations of First-Lady Diplomacy: Imelda Marcos and the Nixon Administration. *Diplomatic History*, 40(2), 327–356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhu073>

⁴⁶ Marczuk, K. P. (2022). The dynamics of ‘First Lady public diplomacy.’ *Intersections*, 8(1), 128–148. <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i1.819>

5 Turkish-African relations

5.1 Historical overview

The following section lays down the foundations for the analysis of the First Lady activities. Since the scope of First Lady Diplomacy is determined by the general foreign policy of the given country. According to Özkan, the Turco-African relationship can be divided into four main periods, namely 1) the Ottoman area, 2) the western-oriented foreign policy, with low engagement in Africa, 3) the period between 1998 and 2005, the beginning of intensified relation, 4) contemporary intensified relationships.⁴⁷ Due to the analysed time phase, the present research extensively focuses on the fourth period, but the exceeding categories should not be left out based on their present implications.

As it was established before, Turkish-African relations started in the Ottoman period when the North African region and certain parts of the Horn of Africa got under Ottoman rule.⁴⁸ In North Africa, the Ottoman Empire made efforts to sustain the status of the area and comforted the Portuguese intervention.⁴⁹ In the Horn of Africa, on today's northern Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti during the 16th and 19th centuries became one of the administrative units of the Empire, the so-called *eyalet*.⁵⁰ It is important to highlight at this point, that contemporary Turkish non-colonial and win-win-based standpoint is based on the legacies of this period.⁵¹

Although that at certain areas of the continent the Ottoman Empire had connections, the sub-Saharan African region was intact, thus that is the reason why the current engagement might seem unreasonable.⁵²

⁴⁷ Özkan, M., & Akgün B. (2010). Turkey's Opening to Africa". *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 4 (48): 525–546.

⁴⁸ Tepeciklioglu, E. E. (2017). Economic relations between turkey and Africa: challenges and prospects. *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, 8(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v8i1.2>

⁴⁹ Al-Suwaidani, H.M.T & Ahmed, H.H (2019). Turkish policy towards Africa in the era of the justice and development party. *Journal of College of Education for Women*, 30(4), 153–165. <https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v30i4.1310>

⁵⁰ Süssler, B., & Alden, C. (2022). Turkey and African agency: the role of Islam and commercialism in Turkey's Africa policy. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 60(4), 597–617. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022278x22000349>

⁵¹ *Bilateral Relations*. (2023, November 8). DEİK. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <http://tabef.org/bilateral-relations.html>

⁵² Egeresi, Z. (2022). Törökország afrikai nyitása. *KKI-elemzések*. <https://doi.org/10.47683/kkielemzesek.ke-2022.03>

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the relations started to deteriorate due to the Western-oriented policy of Türkiye.⁵³ During the decolonization, Türkiye recognized the new states. The first foreign office was opened in 1956, in Lagos.⁵⁴ In Sub-Saharan Africa diplomatic relations started in the 1960s and 1970s, as Türkiye provided aid (Zimbabwe, Namibia), signed trade agreements (Somalia, Sierra Leone) and paid official visits (Ethiopia).⁵⁵

The contemporary Turkish-African relations started to gain more attention from the Turkish government from the 1990s. Precisely with the launch of the *Afrika'ya Açılım Eylem Planı* (Africa Opening Action Plan), which gave new impetus. The lobbying activity of the Turkish private sector is remarkable in the formulation and definition of the objectives, as among officials, diplomats and representatives of the private sector had a voice in the process.⁵⁶ Thus, it aimed to enhance cooperation with the continent.

In 2003 the *Afrika ile Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkilerin Geliştirilmesi Stratejisi* (Strategy for the Development of Commercial and Economic Relations with African Countries) was launched with an aim to promote direct investment, transfer technology, share knowledge and to provide technical assistance.⁵⁷ The Strategy further underlined the Turkish emphasises towards the continent.

The year 2005 meant a turning point, not only because 2005 was declared as *Afrika Yılı* (Year of Africa), but also this year Türkiye became an observer member of the African Union (AU).⁵⁸ Before earning observer status, Ankara participated as a guest country since 2002. The Turkish Embassy in Addis Ababa is accredited to the African Union.⁵⁹ The new foreign policy approach developed since the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, AKP) gained

⁵³ Bamigboye, O. M. (2022). Opportunity Found: Exploring the success and prospect of the Turkey-Africa cooperation. *European Journal of Law and Political Science*, 1(5), 64–72.

<https://doi.org/10.24018/ejpolitics.2022.1.5.49>

⁵⁴ T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı- Turkish Embassy in Abuja- Büyükelçilik Tarihi ve Önceki Büyükelçilerimiz (2023).

<https://abuja-emb.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/MissionChiefHistory>

⁵⁵ Ipek, V. & Biltekin, G. (2013). Turkey's foreign policy implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A post-internationalist approach. *New Perspectives on Turkey*. 49: 126-127. Oran, B. (1977). *Az gelişmiş Ülke Milliyetçiliği (Kara Afrika Modeli)*. Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi. 677.

⁵⁶ Kirişçi, K. (2009). The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading S. *New Perspectives on Turkey*. 40: 29-57.

⁵⁷ *Bilateral Relations*. (2023, November 8). DEİK. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <http://tabef.org/bilateral-relations.html>

⁵⁸ *Türkiye-Africa Relations*. (2023, November 8). Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-africa-relations.en.mfa>

⁵⁹ *Türkiye and the African Union*. (2023, November 8). Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-and-the-african-union.en.mfa>

power in Türkiye.⁶⁰ It inspired from the main ideas of Ahmet Davutoğlu, who published his book *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth). The new strategic thinking emphasized the importance of global relationships.⁶¹

5.2 Contemporary Turkish-African relations

Summit diplomacy is not a unique feature of the Turkish-African relations, on the contrary, several other influential powers in the region such as China, Russia, India and the USA and other actors like the UN and the EU organises such diplomatic events. Nevertheless, it serves as a method to establish institutional structures, and serves as a platform that is suitable to set a mechanism for strategic guidance.⁶²

In 2008 Türkiye was declared as a strategic partner to the Continent by the African Union, the momentum enhanced the summits between the partners. The First Türkiye-Africa Cooperation Summit was held in the same year in Istanbul. However, it was a result of two preliminary preparatory meetings. The outcome apart from establishing the Africa-Turkey Partnership consisted of the agreement to include all areas of expertise in the relationship of the partners. The basic principles were laid down in the Istanbul Declaration on Türkiye-Africa Partnership: Solidarity and Partnership for a Common Future and the Framework of Cooperation for Türkiye-Africa Partnership.⁶³ On the economic sphere the Turkey–Africa Business Forum was organised in order to give a platform for African and Turkish companies to have dialogue.⁶⁴

Later, in the framework of the Partnership, to other summits were organised, one in the capital of Equatorial Guinea, in Malabo. The results of the II. Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit in 2014 included several Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) regarding agriculture; economy,

⁶⁰ Vasiliev, A., Degterev, D., & Shaw, T. M. (2023). *Africa and the formation of the new System of International Relations - Vol. II: Beyond Summit Diplomacy: Cooperation with Africa in the Post-Pandemic World*. Springer.

⁶¹ Ozkan, M. (2010). What drives Turkey's involvement in Africa? *Review of African Political Economy*, 37(126), 533–540., Davutoğlu, A. (2014). *Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* Ciltli. Küre Yayinlari

⁶² Özkan, M., & Orakçı, S. (2022). Deciphering Turkey—Africa Summits: Scope, Content and Results. *Africa Review*, 14(1), 48-67. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-20220126> , Özkan, M & Orakçı, S. (2023). Summitry Diplomacy in Turkey–Africa Relations: Statements, (Non-)Accomplishments and Effectiveness, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2023.2236516>

⁶³ *Africa - Turkey*. (2023). African Union Commission. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from https://au.int/en/partnerships/africa_turkey

⁶⁴ United Nations. (2010). Economic Development in Africa Report 2010. *United Nations*.

commercial and technical matters, education and visa liberalization.⁶⁵ The third summit will be analysed in details during the 7th section, as it took place in the examined period.

The second Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forum was held in Istanbul during November 2016 with over 3000 participants from 42 African countries and Türkiye. Apart from discussing the main agenda, namely analysing the trade and economic relations between the partners, evaluating the Turkish investment in the continent, engaging dialogue between the African Union and the Turkish investors and highlighting the expectations regarding the Agenda 2063, Business to Government and Business to Business talk took place. Ankara signed numerous MoUs with her counterparts.⁶⁶ Likewise, the third Economic and Business forum will be analysed in the 7th section.

As Kaplinsky and Farooki pointed out, in the three spheres of economic strategic interests, source of resources, support on global issues and market access, Türkiye focuses on the latter.⁶⁷ This can be underlined with the extensive increase in the bilateral trade, from 5,4 billion USD (2003) to 40,7 billion USD (2022) in 19 years. In addition, Turkish contract value of the construction projects reached 85 billion USD and investments 6 billion USD.⁶⁸ Table 1. below show the 10 most important economic partners in the continent. Historic partners, as Tunesia, Somalia, and Djibouti count as important partners. Due to the large economy of South Africa, Nigeria and Sudan it is no surprise that they appear on the table.

	Country	Volume (Billion USD) in 2019	Volume (Billion USD) in 2022	Main export products
1.	South Africa	572,0	3300,4	Energy, Machines, automotive
2.	Tunesia	1370,2	1946,7	Iron and Steel, Energy, Cotton

⁶⁵ Relations between Türkiye and Equatorial Guinea. (2023, November 8). Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-equatorial-guinea.en.mfa>

⁶⁶ File Briefing of Turkey Africa Economic and Business Forum (2018). African Union. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32819-file-briefing_report_of_turkey-africa_economic_and_business_forum.pdf

⁶⁷ Kaplinsky, R. & Farooki M. (2009). Africa's cooperation with new and emerging development partners: options for Africa's development. Report prepared for the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, *United Nations*. New York.

⁶⁸ *Bilateral Relations*. (2023, November 8). DEİK. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <http://tabef.org/bilateral-relations.html>

3.	Nigeria	648,0	869,3	Electrical devices, Articles of iron and steel, Machines
4.	Cote D'Ivoire	329,9	734,0	Cement, Stone and Soil Products, Iron and Steel, Machines
5.	Senegal	290,3	654,9	Iron and Steel, Aircrafts, Flour and Pastry Products
6.	Sudan	390,4	680,2	Edible Vegetable, Machines, Miscellaneous edible preparations
7.	Ghana	384,9	527,3	Flour and Pastry Products, Electrical Devices, Cement, Stone and Soil Products
8.	Djibouti	262,7	513,4	Animal and Vegetable Oils, Energy, Iron and Steel
9.	Mauritania	177,1	492,8	Gold and Jewelry, Carpets, Meats
10.	Somalia	273,8	389,0	Flour and Pastry Products, Milling Products, Iron and Steel

Table 1. Ten most important economic partners in the continent (Source: own edit, based on the information of the Ministry of Trade of Republic of Türkiye)

Türkiye became part of the African Development Bank in 2013, and since then cooperated on various projects such as the Business Opportunities Seminar (BOS) in 2016, that was organized by the Bank, the Under Secretariat of the Turkish Treasury and Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye. In 2018 joint work continued with the information-sharing event together with Eximbank. Moreover, the African Development Bank is authorized to issue bonds denominated in Turkish Lira since 2009.⁶⁹ The *Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu* (Foreign Economic Relations Board, DEİK) also plays an active role in the African sphere, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, since between 2008 and 2018 it established 34 new business councils.⁷⁰

In recent decades, Turkey has made efforts to achieve increasingly decisive successes in the field of soft power. The development of different capabilities takes place continuously, which covers strategic cooperation, ideological soundness and the development of different institutional structures.⁷¹ A prime example for this development might be the *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı* (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, TİKA) with an original aim to help the Central Asian and Balkan region, however since 2003 it implemented a broader vision and extended their scope of activities.⁷² In Africa it opened their first office on the continent in the Year of Africa, since then between 2017 and 2022 it has carried out 1884 projects. The 22 offices and 54 operations carry out projects related to agriculture (animal husbandry, fishery, forestry, food security, and health (maternal and infant health, clean water, medical trainings), while keeping in mind the environment and African culture.⁷³

Another important actor is the network of *Yunus Emre Enstitüsü* (Yunus Emre Institute) which is under the public foundation, the *Yunus Emre Vakfı* (Yunus Emre Foundation). The aim of the institute is to promote Turkish culture, language, history, and art.⁷⁴ Thus, it is an example of

⁶⁹ Turkey. (2023, November 8). African Development Bank Group. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/non-regional-member-countries/turkey>

⁷⁰ Tepeciklioğlu, E. E., & Tepeciklioğlu, A. O. (2021). *Turkey in Africa: A New Emerging Power?* Routledge.

⁷¹ Kalın, İ. (2011). Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey. *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs*, 16 (3), 5-23.

⁷² Özkan, M., & Мехмет, O. (2018). Turkey in South-south Cooperation: New Foreign Policy Approach in Africa. *Вестник Российского Университета Дружбы Народов*, 18(3), 565–578. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2018-18-3-565-578>

⁷³ TİKA carried out 1884 projects in Africa. (2018). TİKA. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika_carried_out_1884_projects_in_the_last_5_years_in_africa-70106

⁷⁴ Yunus Emre Institute President Ateş: Africa is Important for Us. (2023, January 25). Yunus Emre Institute. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/news/yunus-emre-institute-president-ates-africa-important-us>

Turkish Culutral Diplomacy.⁷⁵ In the African context the first representative office was opened in Egypt (2010), since then another Institutes were opened in According to the director of the Institute, President Prof. Şeref Ateş, the various activities of the representative offices enable Türkiye and the African countries to build further trust, hence to create strong ties.⁷⁶

A rather sensitive topic for the Turkish government, especially after the failed coup in 2016 is the situation of the schools supported by the *Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü* (FETÖ/Gülenists). The situation can be understood through the example of South Africa. On the one hand, it is the most important African economic partner to Türkiye, as it can be seen in Table 1. On the other hand, due to it's political, economic and geostrategic importance, at the same time it is the most important African country for the Gülenists as well.

Hence, Türkiye found itself in a conflict of interest, in which Ankara aims to decrease the influence of the FETÖ by increasing the economic and diplomatic engagement in the country, until a point where the schools in questions are replaced by the one that the Turkish government supports.⁷⁷ In this regard the educational activities of *Türkiye Maarif Vakfı* (Türkiye Maarif Foundation) are crucial. Especially by establishing Turkish schools and carrying out educational activities.⁷⁸ Another element that helps to establish everyday connection and enhance scientific cooperation is the network of interstate student exchange programs.⁷⁹ Picture 1 shows the process mentioned above, i.e. in how many schools and in which countries the Maarif Foundation replaced the schools connected to FETÖ.

⁷⁵ Yağci, S. (2022). Önemli bir dış yardım politikası aracı olarak kültürel diplomasi: Yunus Emre örneği. *Aksaray Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14(4), 431–440.

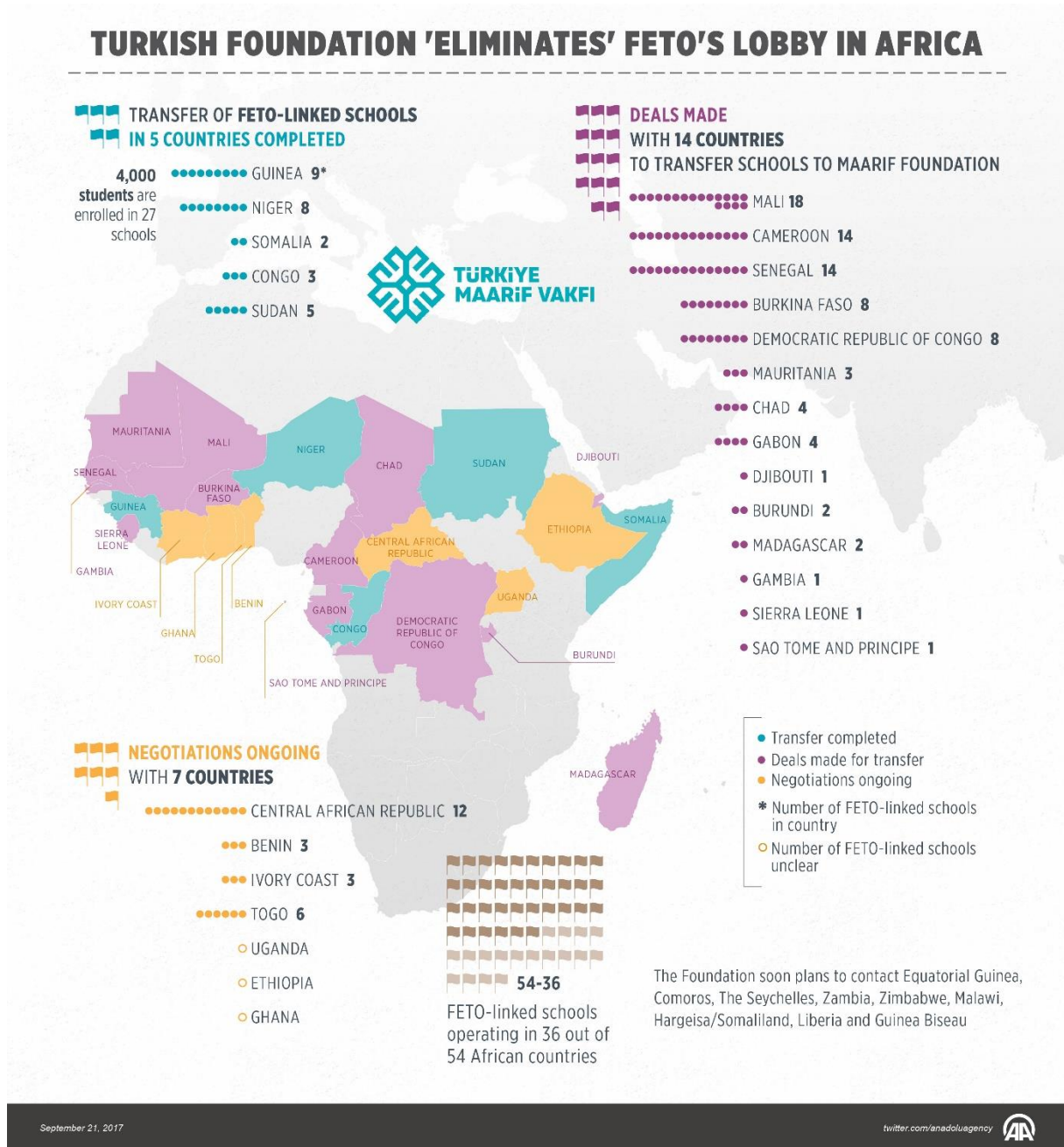
<https://doi.org/10.52791/aksarayiibd.1021431>

⁷⁶ Yunus Emre Institute President Ateş: Africa is Important for Us. (2023, January 25). Yunus Emre Institute. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/news/yunus-emre-institute-president-ates-africa-important-us>

⁷⁷ Sıradağ, A. (2017). Türkiye-South Africa relations: Changing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy. *Eurasian Studies Journal (Avrasya Etudleri)*, 51(1), 7-28.

⁷⁸ Türkiye Maarif Vakfı (2023). *Türkiye Maarif Vakfı*. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://turkiyemaarif.org/>

⁷⁹ Dudlák, T. (2018). A török déli nyitás politikája – soft power eszközök Afrikában. *Afrika Tanulmányok / Hungarian Journal of African Studies*, 12(1-3.), 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.15170/AT.2018.12.1-3.2>



Picture 1: FETÖ affiliated schools taken by Maarif schools (source: Anadolu Agency)

In the religious sphere the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı* (Türkiye Diyanet Foundation) carries out various activities on the continent. The projects range from building mosques, distributing Quran, contributing to religious education to humanitarian activities. The basic principles of the humanitarian help lay on religious foundations and contribute to wellbeing of Muslim communities across the continent.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı (2023). *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı*. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://tdv.org/tr-TR/>

However, the increased Turkish role-taking in Africa also extends to the area of hard power, including the military, but also mainly the defence sector. As the Table 1. shows, the products related to the mentioned area appear among the Turkish export products. One specific example is the military cooperation between Somalia and Türkiye. The two countries signed a military cooperation pact, among others the Somali security officials were trained in Türkiye, efforts were made to fight against piracy, lastly, a military training base was established for the Somali National Army.⁸¹

The case of Libya is another conflict where Türkiye involved with military assistance. The reasons behind the involvement are multi-layered, ranging from the Ottoman heritage and the *köroğlu* Turks, to the disputes over the Mediterranean Sea.⁸² However, the present analysis does not discuss the issue in detail as it would stretch out the limits of the research.

As of 2010 Türkiye developed a drone technology decisive on the international scene, the Bayraktar TB2 drones become one of the key elements in contemporary military cooperation.⁸³ Apart from North African countries such as Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, Türkiye sold Bayraktar drones to Nigeria and Rwanda.⁸⁴ The presence of Turkish military can also be linked to efforts to develop the Turkish defence sector and it contributes to the force projection capabilities of the country.

6 First Lady Diplomacy of Emine Erdoğan

6.1 General overview of the Turkish context

In the Turkish context the term First Lady is rarely used, rather the circumscribed version of the position, *Cumhurbaşkanı'nın eşi* (the wife of the president) is more common.⁸⁵ In the Turkish scholarship First Ladies do not receive much attention except Emine Erdoğan and Latife Uşaki,

⁸¹ Antonopoulos, P., Villar, O., Cottle, D., & Ahmed, A. (2017). Somalia : Turkey's pivot to Africa in the context of growing inter-imperialist rivalries. *Journal Of Comparative Politics*, 10(2), 4-18.

⁸² Lund, A. (2022) „The Turkish Intervention in Libya”, FOI-R--5207—SE

⁸³ Carvalho, G. & Swanepoel, D. (2023). Beyond colonialism: Türkiye's unique approach to Africa. *Inclusive Society Institute*, Occasional Paper 5/2023

⁸⁴ *Türkiye's drone Sales to North and Sub-Saharan African countries worsen security in the region*. MENA Research Center - Center for Studies in Strategic Studies, Violent and Radical, Women and Childhood, Social, and Islamic Enlightenment in the Middle East and North Africa. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.mena-researchcenter.org/turkiyes-drone-sales-to-north-and-sub-saharan-african-countries-worsen-security-in-the-region/>

⁸⁵ Example, see: *Biyografi*. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/emineerdogan/biyografi/>

the first First Lady of the Republic. İpek Çalışlar wrote a bibliographical book on Latife Hanım called, *Madam Atatürk: The First Lady of Modern Turkey*. The book displays the role of the First Turkish First Lady, among others how she stressed the importance of emancipation of women. Latife also took on diplomatic activities and assisted Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with interpreting, promotion, and other diplomatic aides.⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Ayla Özcan wrote about Emine Erdoğan in *İktidara Taşıyan Kadın* (Emine Erdoğan, The Woman Who Leads to Power) and displays the early activities of the First Lady.⁸⁷

6.2 General overview of the activities of Emine Erdoğan

Her initial political carrier started in the *İdealist Kadınlar Derneği* (Idealist Women's Association), where she was among the founding members. After meeting with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan she followed closely her husband's activities and engaged in activities related to women empowerment and social related issues.⁸⁸

As a First Lady she carried out and still carries out various projects together with the responsible Ministries. Whether it is a domestic or an international issue, her day-to-day activities are centred around the topic that are covered by the projects. In the following section each project is displayed, with the help of this the areas of interests of the First Lady are established. Thus, it also serves as a basis before the findings are introduced in chapter 7, since it shows whether a First Lady activity is supported by financial means.

1) *İnsani Yardımlar* (Humanitarian Aid)

As it was mentioned before Türkiye through several government foundations play an active role in delivering humanitarian aid. Emine Erdoğan apart from these projects initiates her own for instance in Myanmar, Gaza, Pakistan and in various African countries. As a result of her work, she received awards, the World Congress of Philanthropists in 2018 at the Global Donors Forum in London acknowledged her work by giving the Humanitarian Service Appreciation Award, the Global Hope Coalition awarded her the Humanitarian Aid Leadership Special Award and the UN-supported World Humanity Forum gave her the title Changemaker.

⁸⁶ İpek, Ç. (2019). *Madam Atatürk: The First Lady of Modern Turkey*, Saqi Books

⁸⁷ Özcan, A. (2007). *Emine Erdoğan / İktidara Taşıyan Kadın*, Birharf Yayınları

⁸⁸ *Biyografi*. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/emineerdogan/biyografi/>

2) *Sıfır Atık (Zero Waste)*

The project is materialized under the leadership of *Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Environment and Urbanization) with an aim to promote a more efficient use of resources, to reduce the generated waste and to establish an effective waste collection system.⁸⁹

3) *Mirasımız Yerel Tohum Projesi (Our Heritage Local Seed Project)*

Mainly the *Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) is responsible for the implementation, but the foundations were laid down by the auspices of First Lady. After the three preparator meetings in the scope of the project studies were conducted about the Turkish products and production with an aim to disseminate them among the population. Moreover, identification, reproduction and registration procure of seeds were carried out.⁹⁰

4) *Okulumda Sağlıklı Besleniyorum (I Eat Healthy at My School)*

The programme was launched by the *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* (Ministry of National Education) under the auspices of Emine Erdoğan. The quality of the food served to Turkish children from pre-school until secondary school is increased by the project. Moreover, children are taught about the importance of nutrition, they are encouraged to stay active, and it raised awareness about food waste. So far in more than 1300 schools and 253 000 students benefited.⁹¹

5) *Afrika El Sanatları Pazarı ve Kültür Evi (African Handicrafts Market and Culture House)*

The activities of the culture house were displayed during the introduction, see page one and four. Although it is important to stress here that in this project the Ministry plays a coordinating role, thus a less significant than in case of other projects.⁹²

⁸⁹ *Sayın Emine Erdoğan'ın Himaye Ettiği Projeler*. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/hanimefendi/projeler/>

⁹⁰ *Proje Hakkında*. (2023). T.C. Tarım Ve Orman Bakanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://mirasimizyereltohum.tarimorman.gov.tr/Sayfa/Detay/1345>

⁹¹ *Okulumda Sağlıklı Besleniyorum Programı*. (2023). Sağlıklı Besleniyorum. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://sagliklibesleniyorum.meb.gov.tr/program-tanitimi/>

⁹² *Hakkımızda*. (2023, November 8). Afrika Evi. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://afrikaevi.com/tr/hakkimizda/>

6) *Gönül Elçileri* (Voluntary Envoys)

The project itself is called as *Toplum Kalkınmasında Gönül Elçileri Projesi* (The Voluntary Envoys in Social Development Project) and as it is a social responsibility project, the *Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Family and Social Policies) is the responsible body. Apart from promoting volunteering, it deals with implementing vocational trainings of women and improving family service.⁹³ Since 2013 the First Lady annually organises dinner for orphans⁹⁴.

7) Geleneksel ve Tamamlayıcı Tıp Kongresi (Traditional and Complementary Medicine Congress)

With an aim to popularize and integrate into modern medicine the Anatolian Medicine, the *Sağlık Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Health) organised the Congress two times. The First Lady was invited as an honorary chairman and delivered keynote speech during the events.⁹⁵

8) *Haydi Kızlar Okula* (Come On Girls, Let's Go To School)

One the most grandiose project of Emine Erdoğan calls for the complete integration of primary school girls (6-14 years old) into the education system. The Ministry of National Education and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) especially addresses girls who drop out of the educations, hence improving gender equality in the schools across Türkiye.

9) *Ana Kız Okuldayız* (Mothers and Daughters at School)

This project is the continuation of the Come On Girls, Let's Go To School project in a sense that it aims girls and women in poverty, who are over the compulsory education.

10) *7 Çok Geç* (7 Is Too Late)

⁹³ *Sayın Emine Erdoğan'ın Himaye Ettiği Projeler*. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/hanimefendi/projeler/>

⁹⁴ *Emine Erdoğan: "İnsanlığın Vicdanının Harekete Geçmesini Bekliyoruz."* (2017, April 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/74637/emine-erdogan-insanligin-vicdaninin-harekete-gecmesini-bekliyoruz>

⁹⁵ 1st International Traditional and Complementary Medicine Congress. (2018). *AYBU BİDB*. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://aybu.edu.tr/getat/en/haber/10239/1st-International-Traditional-and-Complementary-Medicine-Congress>

As it can be seen only the age group from 0 to 6 do not benefit from the previous two projects, this one raise awareness and supports pre-school education.

11) *Bereket Ormanları* (Prolific Forests)

By planting more than 100 thousand trees across the country the *Orman ve Su İşleri Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs) and the Voluntary Envoys aimed to increase the green areas in Türkiye in 2015.

12) *Geleceğimi Koruyorum* (I Protect My Future)

As a joint project the Gıda, Tarım ve Hayvancılık Bakanlığı (Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock) and the Ministry of National Education teaches children to get closer to the environment, thus, to become more environmentally aware.⁹⁶

Name of the Ministry ⁹⁷	Name of the project
Ministry of Family and Social Services	Voluntary Envoys
Ministry of Labor and Social Security	
Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change	Zero Waste
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	African Handicrafts Market and Culture House
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources	
Ministry of Youth and Sports	
Ministry of Treasury and Finance	
Ministry of Interior	
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	
Ministry of Education	I Eat Healthy at My School, Come On Girls, Let's Go To School, Mothers and Daughters at School, 7 Is Too Late
Ministry of National Defence	

⁹⁶ Sayın Emine Erdoğan'ın Himaye Ettiği Projeler. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/hanimefendi/projeler/>

⁹⁷ The names of the Ministries are displayed according to the official names as of 28th October 2023. The names might differ to the initiated ones. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kabinesi. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/kabine/>

Ministry of Health	Traditional and Complementary Medicine Congress
Ministry of Industry and Technology	
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Our Heritage Local Seed Project, I Protect My Future, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs
Ministry of Commerce	
Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure	

Table 2: Project of the First Lady and the affiliated Ministry (source: own edit)

From the previous part the following consequences can be drawn. The activities of the First Lady focus on the domestic sphere, since from 12 projects only two, the humanitarian activities and the Africa House and is related to the foreign sphere. However, it is important to note that both have an Africa focus. This further underlines the importance and the relevance of the present research. Especially regarding the extensive focus of the African continent.

In addition, the First Lady implements projects connected to soft power realms, for instance environment protection, education, and social responsibility. Hence, as it can be seen in Table 2, Emine Erdoğan does not engage with Ministries covering hard power sphere such as defence, technology, economy, transport, and energy.

Although H2 (Although the lack of official Turkish Feminist Foreign Policy, the First Lady Diplomacy of Emine Erdoğan towards Africa mirror Feminist Foreign Policy.) inclusively analyses the African context, in general H2 seems to be false. Albeit, women empowerment takes a central place, the lack of all areas included in the First Lady portfolio makes it clear that Feminist Foreign Policy does not materialize.

6.3 Domestic activities during the researched period

The public diplomacy activities can be grouped into four main groups, depending on their aim, frequency, and occasion.

1) Activities related to the First Lady projects

As the vast majority of First Lady projects focus on education, it is in keeping with the expected tendency that especially in the domestic field educational events will dominate. They range from launching a project about increasing the number of kindergartens in

Istanbul⁹⁸, opening numerous libraries, including baby libraries⁹⁹, to distribute education materials to children¹⁰⁰. The activities were carried out under the auspices of the First Lady, thus the President was not present at most of the events. Hence, it serves as an example for active First Lady Diplomacy.

2) Cultural events

Cultural events serve a compelling example of domestic First Lady activities considering the ones done regarding Africa. In the latter case, Emine Erdoğan only promotes the Turkish culture to foreigners. However, in the former case, cultural role appears to be a defining element of Emine's portfolio. Activities in this regard include various gastro diplomacy events, museum, and exhibition openings.¹⁰¹ Although cultural role is a more traditional role than pursuing own projects, the First Lady is rarely accompanied by the President.

3) Organising and attending iftars

⁹⁸ Emine Erdoğan, "İstanbul'a 100 Anaokulu" projesinin tanıtım toplantısına katıldı. (2021, October 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130837/emine-erdogan-istanbul-a-100-anaokulu-projesinin-tanitim-toplantısına-katildi>

⁹⁹ Emine Erdoğan, Siirt'te Yağmurtepe İlkokulu'na kazandırılan kütüphanenin açılışını yaptı. (2021, December 4). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/133756/emine-erdogan-siirt-te-yagmurtepe-ilkokulu-na-kazandirilan-kutuphanenin-acilisini-yapti> Emine Erdoğan, Altındağ Bebek Kütüphanesi'nin açılışını yaptı. (2022, February 2). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/135586/emine-erdogan-altindag-bebek-kutuphanesi-nin-acilisini-yapti> Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Rami Kütüphanesi Açılış Töreni'ne katıldı. (2023, January 13). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142509/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-rami-kutuphanesi-acilis-toreni-ne-katildi>

¹⁰⁰ Emine Erdoğan, özel öğrencilere eğitim materyali taşıyan tırları uğurladı. (2021, December 20). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/134043/emine-erdogan-ozel-ogrencilere-egitim-materyali-tasiyan-tirlari-ugurladi>

¹⁰¹ Emine Erdoğan, "Asırlık Tariflerle Türk Mutfağı" kitabının tanıtım programına katıldı. (2021, September 4). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130343/emine-erdogan-asirlik-tariflerle-turk-mutfagi-kitabinin-tanitim-programina-katildi> Emine Erdoğan, Matbaanın Ön Sözü "Basmacı İbrahim Efendi" Müteferrika Sergisi'nin açılışını yaptı. (2021, September 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130390/emine-erdogan-matbaanın-on-sozu-basmaci-ibrahim-efendi-muteferrika-sergisi-nin-acilisini-yapti> Emine Erdoğan, "Tekâmül Sürdürülebilir Sanat Sergisi'nin açılışını yaptı. (2022, January 14). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/134314/emine-erdogan-tek-mul-surdurulebilir-sanat-sergisi-nin-acilisini-yapti> Emine Erdoğan, "Konya GastroFest'in açılışına katıldı. (2022, September 1). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139352/emine-erdogan-konya-gastrofest-in-acilisina-katildi>

Iftars have a special importance in Muslim communities, since it is the name of the meal with a person break fasting during Ramadan.¹⁰² Due to the strong communal links, during every Ramadan the President and the First Lady welcomes different groups to have an iftar with. The majority of these occasions are spent together by the President and the First Lady as it has a symbolic significance. Invited groups were artists, healthcare professionals, children, and earthquake survivors.¹⁰³ Instances when the First Lady welcomed members of certain communities alone include students, war-torn Ukrainian children, women entrepreneurs, and families who care for elderly and disabled at home.¹⁰⁴ The iftars fall into more symbolic First Lady role.

4) Election rallies

The First Lady accompanying the President on nearly all rally event serves as a symbolic role and also fulfils an escort role. The rallies included Van, Erzurum, Kayseri, Mersin, Istanbul, Kırklareli, Edirne, Tekirdağ, Aydın, Adana, Batman, and Hatay.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Serdián, M. Gy. (2021). İftár. In *İslâm kislexikon*. Budapest, Editio Plurilingua.

¹⁰³ *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan ve eşi Emine Erdoğan, sanatçılarla iftar yemeğinde bir araya geldi.* (2022, April 16). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136506/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ve-esi-emine-erdogan-sanatcilarla-iftar-yemeginde-bir-araya-geldi> , *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, sağlık çalışanlarıyla iftar yemeğinde bir araya geldi.* (2022, April 21). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136565/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-saglik-calisanlariyla-iftar-yemeginde-bir-araya-geldi> *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan ve eşi Emine Erdoğan, çocuklarla iftar yaptı.* (2022, April 23). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136598/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ve-esi-emine-erdogan-cocuklarla-iftar-yapti> “*Amacımız afetzedelerimizin sıkıntılarını bir an önce gidermektir.*” (2023, April 13). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/145671/-amacimiz-afetzedelerimizin-sikintilarini-bir-an-once-gidermektir->

¹⁰⁴ *Emine Erdoğan, KYK Hacı Ömer Sabancı Kız Öğrenci Yurdu ’nda öğrencilerle birlikte iftar yaptı.* (2022, April 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136398/emine-erdogan-kyk-haci-omer-sabanci-kiz-ogrenci-yurdu-nda-ogrencilerle-birlikte-iftar-yapti> , *Emine Erdoğan, savaş mağduru Ukraynalı çocuklarla iftarda bir araya geldi.* (2022, April 18). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136523/emine-erdogan-savas-magduru-ukraynali-cocuklarla-iftarda-bir-araya-geldi> , *Emine Erdoğan, kadın girişimcilerle iftarda buluştu.* (2022, April 20). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136553/emine-erdogan-kadin-girisimcilerle-iftarda-bulustu> , *Emine Erdoğan, evde yaşlı ve engelli birey bakımı yapan ailelerle iftarda buluştu.* (2022, April). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136672/emine-erdogan-evde-yasli-ve-engelli-birey-bakimi-yapan-ailelerle-iftarda-bulustu>

¹⁰⁵ “*Ülkemizi 81 vilayetiyle geleceğe hazırlamanın peşindeyiz.*” (2023, May 5). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147014/-ulkemizi-81-vilayetiyle-gelecege-hazirlamanin-pesindeyiz-> , “*Tüm Türkiye’yi yatırımlarımıza ilmek ilmek işlerken, Erzurum’u da ihmal etmiyoruz.*” (2023, May 5). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147018/-tum-turkiye-yi-yatirimlarimiza-ilmek-ilmek-islerken-erzurum-u-da-ihmal-etmiyoruz-> “*Türkiye’yi dünyanın en büyük 10 ekonomisinden biri yapana kadar durmadan çalışacağız.*” (2023, May 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from

6.4 Diplomatic activities during the researched period

Similarly to the previous section, the foreign activities of Emine Erdoğan in the analysed period can be grouped in four different clusters.

1) Foreign visits

Foreign visits make out the majority of general First Lady diplomatic activities during the analysed period. The role what Emine Erdoğan takes on during the visits differ from country to country. An escort role includes her visit to Turkmenistan, Katar, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine.¹⁰⁶ The First Lady takes a more active role during visits to the Balkan, since apart from the official meetings she would visit museums, Maarif schools, Maternity Centres or attend ceremonies (school opening, launch event of translated of her translated).¹⁰⁷

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147030/-turkiye-yi-dunyanin-en-buyuk-10-ekonomisinden-biri-yapana-kadar-durmadan-calisacagiz->

“Türkiye Yüzyılı’nı Mersin’le birlikte inşa etmek istiyoruz.” (2023, May 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147034/-turkiye-yuzyili-ni-mersin-le-birlikte-insa-etmek-istiyoruz->

“Ülkemizi büyüttük, güçlendirdik, milletimizi güvenli, huzurlu bir hayata kavuşturduk.” (2023, May 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147039/-ulkemizi-buyuttuk-guclendirdik-milletimizi-guvenli-huzurlu-bir-hayata-kavusturduk->

, “Büyük ve güçlü Türkiye’nin kapılarını beraber aralayacağız.” (2023, May 8). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147064/-buyuk-ve-guclu-turkiye-nin-kapilarini-beraber-aralayacagiz->

¹⁰⁶ *Türkmenistan*. (2021, November 27). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/yurt-disi-ziyaretler/355/133679/turkmenistan> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Erdoğan Katar’da.

(2021, December 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/133783/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-katar-da> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Erdoğan Suudi Arabistan’da.

(2022, April 28). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136706/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-suudi-arabistan-da> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Erdoğan Ukrayna’da.

(2022, February 3). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/135591/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ukrayna-da> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Erdoğan, Ukrayna Devlet Başkanı Zelenskiy ile bir araya geldi.

(2022, February 3). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/135594/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ukrayna-devlet-baskani-zelenskiy-ile-bir-araya-geldi>

¹⁰⁷ *Emine Erdoğan, Bosna Savaşı’nın sembollerinden Umut Tüneli’ni ziyaret etti*. (2022, September 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139437/emine-erdogan-bosna-savasi-nin-sembollerinden-umut-tuneli-ni-ziyaret-etti>, *Emine Erdoğan, Saraybosna’da Maarif Vakfı Okulu’nu ziyaret etti*. (2022, September 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139438/emine-erdogan-saraybosna-da-maarif-vakfi-okulu-nu-ziyaret-etti> *Emine Erdoğan, “Asırlık Tariflerle Türk Mutfağı” kitabının Sırpça tercümesi tanıtım etkinliğine katıldı*. (2022, September 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139483/emine-erdogan-asirlik-tariflerle-turk-mutfagi-kitabinin-sirpca-tercumesi-tanitim-etkinligine-katildi> *Emine Erdoğan, Zveçanska Annelik Merkezi’ni ziyaret etti*. (2022,

2) Attending international summits

The First Lady accompanies the President on the regularly held international summits, conferences, and meetings. The UN General Assemblies to a certain extent serve as the highlight of the Turkish First Lady Diplomacy. As it will be seen during the Findings the Turkish House in New York not only serves for the main platform for Africa related events, but also for any other event organised during the General Assembly.

While the President takes part in the meetings, the First Lady organises numerous programmes (climate change and gastronomy) at the venue.¹⁰⁸ Apart from that, she attends programmes for spouses of the leaders, or initiates bilateral meetings (Sheikha Moza, mother of Qatar Emir, UN Habitat leader and Colombian First Lady).¹⁰⁹ Similar regular summits include G20 meetings, NATO summits, and COP conferences.¹¹⁰

September 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139485/emine-erdogan-zvecanska-annelik-merkezi-ni-ziyaret-etti> *Emine Erdoğan, Zagreb 'de spor projesi yürütülen ilkokulu ziyaret etti.* (2022, September 8). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139514/emine-erdogan-zagreb-de-spor-projesi-yurutulen-ilkokulu-ziyaret-etti>

, *Emine Erdoğan, "Mehmet Tabanca Anaokulu" açılış törenine katıldı.* (2022, September 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139545/emine-erdogan-mehmet-tabanca-anaokulu-acilis-torenine-katildi>

¹⁰⁸ *Emine Erdoğan, "Ortak Evimiz Dünya İçin Sıfır Atık" programına katıldı.* (2023, January 17). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142553/emine-erdogan-ortak-evimiz-dunya-icin-sifir-atik-programina-katildi> *Emine Erdoğan: "Mutfak, kültürel mirasın en önemli unsurlarından biridir."* (2022, September 21). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139770/emine-erdogan-mutfak-kulturel-mirasin-en-onemli-unsurlarindan-biridir->

¹⁰⁹ *Emine Erdoğan, New York 'ta BM Habitat İcra Direktörü Sharif 'le görüştü.* (2022, September 22). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139810/emine-erdogan-new-york-ta-bm-habitat-icra-direktoru-sharif-le-gorustu> *Emine Erdoğan, Katar Emiri Şeyh Al Sani 'nin annesi Şeyha Moza 'yla görüştü.* (2023, September 17). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149457/emine-erdogan-katar-emiri-seyh-al-sani-nin-annesi-seyha-moza-yla-gorustu> *Emine Erdoğan, New York 'ta Kolombiya Cumhurbaşkanı'nın eşi Garcia ile bir araya geldi.* (2023, September 19). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149509/emine-erdogan-new-york-ta-kolombiya-cumhurbaskani-nin-esi-garcia-ile-bir-araya-geldi> *Emine Erdoğan, ABD Başkanı'nın eşi Jill Biden'in ev sahipliğinde lider eşleri ile bir araya geldi.* (2023, September 21). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149565/emine-erdogan-abd-baskani-nin-esi-jill-biden-in-ev-sahipliginde-lider-esleri-ile-bir-araya-geldi>

¹¹⁰ *Emine Erdoğan, Litvanya 'da lider eşleriyle bir araya geldi.* (2023, July 11). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147692/emine-erdogan-litvanya-da-lider-esleriyle-bir-araya-geldi> *Emine Erdoğan, İklim Değişikliği 26. Taraflar Konferansı Başkanı Sharma ile görüştü.* (2021, September 22). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130650/emine-erdogan-iklim-degisikligi-26-taraflar-konferansi-baskani-sharma-ile-gorustu> *Emine Erdoğan, G20 Liderler Zirvesi için bulunduğu Hindistan 'da lider eşleriyle bir araya geldi.* (2023, September 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149363/emine-erdogan-g20-liderler-zirvesi-icin-bulundugu-hindistan-da-lider-esleriyle-bir-araya-geldi>

3) Zero Waste and climate change related meetings

In general, it can be stated that the First Lady regarding international issues managed to establish an active engagement by engaging to contribute to environmental issues. In this framework two events stand out from the others. One, the meeting with former EU Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans.¹¹¹ Two, when Emine Erdoğan spoke as the first Turkish First Lady at the Zero Waste Special Session at the UN General Assembly.¹¹² Neither of the meetings was attended by the President, and both of them fall under First Lady's own initiatives, thus they can be regarded as a managing social issues role.

4) Diplomatic activities within the country

Welcoming foreign guests or organising events for ambassadors fall under this category. The former usually include visiting the National Library together with the other First Lady that came to Türkiye. While the Presidents have talks in the Presidential complex the First Ladies take part in cultural activities. For instance, when Emine Erdoğan accompanied the Venezuelan First during her visit.¹¹³ An example for the latter can be the 13th Ambassadors Conference.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *Emine Erdoğan, AB Komisyonu Kıdemli Başkan Yardımcısı Timmermans ile bir araya geldi.* (2022, April 21). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136562/emine-erdogan-ab-komisyonu-kidemli-baskan-yardimcisi-timmermans-ile-bir-araya-geldi>

¹¹² *Emine Erdoğan: "Çevre sorunlarında çözümün bir parçası olma kararlılığımızı sürdürüyoruz."* (2023, March 30). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/145495/emine-erdogan-cevre-sorunlarinda-cozumun-bir-parcasi-olma-kararligimizi-surduruyoruz->

¹¹³ *Emine Erdoğan, Venezuela Cumhurbaşkanı Maduro'nun eşi Flores de Maduro ile Millet Kütüphanesi'ni gezdi.* (2022, June 8). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/138297/emine-erdogan-venezuela-cumhurbaskani-maduro-nun-esi-flores-de-maduro-ile-millet-kutuphanesi-ni-gezdi>

¹¹⁴ *Emine Erdoğan, kadın büyükelçi ve büyükelçi eşleriyle buluştu.* (2022, August 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/138977/emine-erdogan-kadin-buyukelci-ve-buyukelci-esleriyle-bulustu>

7 Case study

7.1 First Lady Diplomatic roles of Emine Erdoğan

From the 642 official Presidential and First Lady appearances and speeches only 22 fall into the researched category as it can be seen in Table 3.¹¹⁵ The 22 First Lady activities are analysed as described in the Methodology section. Diplomatic activities are considered to be towards Africa if Africa or issues affecting directly Africa are mentioned, representatives from the continent are among the guests and if the event is organised in the Africa House in Ankara. Evidently, bilateral and multilateral meetings with African leaders, ambassadors, politicians or public figures fall under this category.

During this chapter the diplomatic events are not described in details. In addition, the thought process, namely the application of the set of questions displayed in Table 1. is not presented. Thus, all the above-mentioned details are summarized in Table 3. On the contrary, this section presents each role the Turkish First Lady took on between 1st of September 2021 to 31st of September 2023 and gives examples too.

1) Cultural role

Two instances were identified, first, when the Turkish First Lady presented Anatolian textiles to a few other First Ladies who came to New York in connection to the 78th UN General Assembly meetings. The Kenyan First Lady was among the most important participants at the cultural event. In this case Emine Erdoğan contributed to cultural diplomacy, although it is not directly linked to Africa.¹¹⁶ Promoting Anatolian textiles seems to be the only cultural role the First Lady takes, as the second example is the presentation of the Fabrics Atlas of Türkiye Project.¹¹⁷

2) Escort role

¹¹⁵ T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. (2023). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/Search?s=Emine&p0=Emine&p1=-410--365--356--353--1709--1695--355--354-&sT=1&p2=01.09.2021&p3=15.10.2023&presidentId=12&page=1>

¹¹⁶ Emine Erdoğan, *Türkevi'ndeki sergide Anadolu tekstilini devlet başkanlarının eşlerine tanıttı*. (2023, September 20). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149535/emine-erdogan-turkevi-ndeki-sergide-anadolu-tekstilini-devlet-baskanlarinin-eslerine-tanitti>

¹¹⁷ Emine Erdoğan, *Türkiye Dokuma Atlası ilk sahne gösterimini izledi*. (2022, January 12). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/134286/emine-erdogan-turkiye-dokuma-atlasi-ilk-sahne-gosterimini-izledi>

Escort role is a rather passive role, where the First Lady met with wives of Sierra Leonean and Congolese Presidents. During these events the meetings were complementary to the meetings of the Presidents. Thus, no specific agenda was discussed.¹¹⁸ In other words, the meeting would not have taken place if the Presidents initially have not met.

3) Managing social issues

Unlike the escort role, managing social issues contain a certain agenda that is discussed during the meetings or public speeches. In general, the instances further underline and support the pre-existing aims of the First Lady or Türkiye in general, but new ideas or elements were not added to the topic. It is important to highlight that the Africa House is not regarded as an agenda, rather a form of indirect financial contribution towards African issues.

The speech of Emine Erdoğan emphasized that African countries are most affected by climate change, but no further step was taken in framework of the conference to help to mitigate the negative effects.¹¹⁹

4) Managing international relations: This role primarily aims to deepen the relations between states or in this case between Türkiye and the African continent, while certain topics are addressed. The speech of Emine Erdoğan at the World Day for the Prevention of Violence event organised by First Lady of Sierra Leone in the scope of the 78th UN General Assembly is a prime example. The Turkish First Lady enhanced the bilateral relations by participating at the conference, furthermore, addressed the topic of child abuse.¹²⁰

Other examples include the Ambassador conference where the stance of African women was underlined and the gala dinner with special guest from Tanzania and Libya where

¹¹⁸ *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Sierra Leone Cumhurbaşkanı Bio ile görüştü.* (2023, March 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/144132/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-sierra-leone-cumhurbaskani-bio-ile-gorustu>

¹¹⁹ *Emine Erdoğan, Uluslararası Çocuk Forumu Kapanış Programı'na katıldı.* (2022, November 22). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/141765/emine-erdogan-uluslararasi-cocuk-forumu-kapanis-programi-na-katildi>

¹²⁰ *Emine Erdoğan, New York'ta "Şiddetin Önlenmesi ve İyileşme Günü"nü anma programına katıldı.* (2023, September 20). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149531/emine-erdogan-new-york-ta-siddetin-onlenmesi-ve-iyilesme-gunu-nu-anma-programina-katildi>

likewise, women issues was in the spotlight.¹²¹ In addition, the he Ambassadors conference where the First Lady highlighted the importance of African women,¹²² and the Strengthening Solidarity and Promoting Peace Through Soft Power discussion can be listed here.¹²³

A rather special case is the award ceremony by the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations, from which the First Lady received Muslim Women Achievements Award. While the award itself was not given by an African institution, Emine Erdoğan in her speech underlined the Turkish humanitarian aid provided to Sudan and Somalia. Thus, by mentioning these details showed the Turkish engagement towards the continents but also underlined the issue of humanitarian aid.¹²⁴

In the scope of the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit and the Third Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forum the First Lady organised three events falling under this category. On the one hand, both events deepened the relationship of the countries, on the other hand topic like climate change were discussed.¹²⁵

- 5) Social activist role: This role is the most advanced one, in terms of First Lady activities, since it directly comes with financial contributions towards certain issues. As it was described in Chapter 6.2. (General Activities of the First Lady) Emine Erdoğan, together with in the given case most adequate ministry carries out certain projects. The case of the Africa House is the most visible and clear materialization of this role. As it was mentioned before after every sold item at the venue directly support African women.

¹²¹ Emine Erdoğan, *Kadın ve Adalet Zirvesi 'nin gala yemeğine katıldı*. (2022, November 5). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/141513/emine-erdogan-kadin-ve-adalet-zirvesi-nin-gala-yemegine-katildi>

¹²² Emine Erdoğan, *“Yüzyılın Anıları Geçmişten Günümüze Kültürel Diplomasi Programı”na katıldı*. (2023, August 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149037/emine-erdogan-yuzyilin-anilari-gecmisten-gunumuze-kulturel-diplomasi-programi-na-katildi>

¹²³ Emine Erdoğan, *“Yumuşak Güç Yoluyla Dayanışmayı Güçlendirmek ve Barışı Teşvik Etmek” başlıklı panele katıldı*. (2022, March 12). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/135982/emine-erdogan-yumusak-guc-yoluyla-dayanismayi-guclendirmek-ve-barisi-tesvik-etmek-baslikli-panele-katildi>

¹²⁴ Emine Erdoğan, *ABD’de “Uluslararası Müslüman Kadınlar Başarı ve Topluma Katkı Ödülü”nü aldı*. (2022, September 19). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139683/emine-erdogan-abd-de-uluslararasi-musluman-kadinlar-basari-ve-topluma-katki-odulu-nu-aldi>

¹²⁵ Emine Erdoğan, *“Gezegelimiz için El Ele: İklim Tartışmasında Afrikalı Seslerin Duyurulması” paneline katıldı*. (2021, December 18). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/133989/emine-erdogan-gezegelimiz-icin-el-ele-iklim-tartismasinda-afrikali-seslerin-duyurulmasi-paneline-katildi> Emine Erdoğan *“Türkiye-Afrika Kadın Liderlik Diyalogu Paneli”ne katıldı*. (2021, October 22). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/131060/emine-erdogan-turkiye-afrika-kadin-liderlik-diyalogu-paneli-ne-katildi>

Thus, by promoting the Africa House, further efforts are made to help them. Another example is the most grandiose one, the Zero Waste project, as it has domestic and international effects.

For the promotion of the Africa House several examples¹²⁶ can be listed: the most prominent one is during the 3-stop Africa visit in 2021. On every occasion the First lady not only promoted the venue, but also her, then, newly published book. From every sold book, the revenue is transferred to the Africa House.

Similarly, events organised in the Africa House fell under this category. For instance, the event on the International Volunteer Day, where she emphasized the development work of TİKA, AFAD, Red Crescent, and Maarif Foundation.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the meeting with Congolese First Lady emphasized the importance of the environment and the activities of the Africa House in Africa.¹²⁸ Lastly, the meeting with the newly appointed board of the venue.¹²⁹ This event especially shows that financial contribution is made towards not only to the African women, but also to maintain the Africa House. In relations to the Zero Waste project, the Signing ceremony led by the First Lady can be mentioned. Although, the Global Zero Waste goodwill declaration do not come with direct financial results, since it is under the Zero Waste project it falls under the social activist role. It becomes a First Lady diplomatic activity due to the fact that the First Ladies from Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone were special invitees and signatories.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ *Emine Erdoğan, “Ortak Evimiz Dünya İçin Sıfır Atık” programına katıldı.* (2023, January 17). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142553/emine-erdogan-ortak-evimiz-dunya-icin-sifir-atik-programina-katildi>

¹²⁷ *Emine Erdoğan, Dünya Gönüllülük Günü kapsamında düzenlenen “Afrika Evi” programına katıldı.* (2022, December 6). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142001/emine-erdogan-dunya-gonulluluk-gunu-kapsaminda-duzenlenen-afrika-evi-programina-katildi>

¹²⁸ *Emine Erdoğan, Kongo Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı’nın eşi N’Guessou ile görüştü.* (2023, September 7). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149317/emine-erdogan-kongo-cumhuriyeti-cumhurbaskani-nin-esi-n-guessou-ile-gorustu>

¹²⁹ *Emine Erdoğan, Afrika Kültür Evi Yönetim Kurulu üyelerini kabul etti.* (2022, October 21). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/140282/emine-erdogan-afrika-kultur-evi-yonetim-kurulu-uyelerini-kabul-etti>

¹³⁰ *Emine Erdoğan, New York’ta “Küresel Sıfır Atık Hareketine Doğru” programına katıldı.* (2023, September 19). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149504/emine-erdogan-new-york-ta-kuresel-sifir-atik-hareketine-dogru-programina-katildi> Turkish President Erdogan signs Global Zero Waste goodwill declaration in New York. (2023, September 19). *Anadolu Ajansı*. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/environment/turkish-president-erdogan-signs-global-zero-waste-goodwill-declaration-in-new-york/2995096>

Name of the event	Short description	Date of the event	Linked complementary to the President	Linked to ceremonial activities	First Lady can express personal concerns	Activity done without specifically promoting certain issues	Lack of specific agenda linked to the issue	Activity include promoting the culture of the country	Financial contributions included	Name of the role
Presenting Anatolian textiles in the New York Turkish House	Presented the textiles in the scope of the 78th UN General Assembly meetings to other First Ladies. Kenyan First Lady was present.	20.09.2023.	No			No	Yes	Yes		Cultural role
Gave a speech the World Day for the Prevention of Violence event	Organised by the First Lady of Sierra Leone in the scope of the 78th UN General Assembly. Topic was child abuse.	20.09.2023	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
"Path To Global Zero Waste Movement" speech and signing a declaration	Signing ceremony led by the First Lady (the President signed the document), during her speech she addressed the African situation specifically. First Ladies from Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone.	19.09.2023	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Meeting with Congolese First Lady Antoinette Sassou N'Guesso.	Topics addressed were zero waste and environmental issues, activities of the Africa House in Ankara, Emine Erdoğan received an invitation to a conference.	07.09.2023	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Organised Ambassador Conference for female ambassadors and ambassador wives	Highlighted the importance of African women.	09.08.2023	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
The President and the First Lady welcomed Sierra Leonean President Bio and his wife	After the closed-door meeting no information was released about the talk.	07.03.2023	Yes	Yes						Escort role

Name of the event	Short description	Date of the event	Linked complementary to the President	Linked to ceremonial activities	First Lady can express personal concerns	Activity done without specifically promoting certain issues	Lack of specific agenda linked to the issue	Activity include promoting the culture of the country	Financial contributions included	Name of the role
Organised an event about zero waste for the ambassadors to Türkiye	Apart from the participation of African ambassadors, the Africa House in Ankara was mentioned as a good example.	17.01.2023	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Attended the event organised on the International Volunteer Day in Ankara Africa House	Met with Ambassadors of African countries, emphasized the development work of TIKA, AFAD, Red Crescent, Maarif, former visits of her and the President, her books, visited the exhibition.	06.12.2022	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Delivering speech at the closing event of the International Children's Forum	Mentioned that African countries are the most effected by climate change.	22.11.2022	No			No	No		No	Managing social issues
Attended the gala dinner of the Women and Justice Summit	Ministers from Tanzania and Libya were among the attendees.	05.11.2022	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
Meeting with the newly appointed board of the Africa House	Talked about the continued friendship of Türkiye and the continent.	21.10.2022	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Received the Muslim Women Achievements Award by the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations	During her speech highlighted the Turkish humanitarian work done towards African countries such as Somalia and Sudan.	19.09.2022	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations

Name of the event	Short description	Date of the event	Linked complementary to the President	Linked to ceremonial activities	First Lady can express personal concerns	Activity done without specifically promoting certain issues	Lack of specific agenda linked to the issue	Activity include promoting the culture of the country	Financial contributions included	Name of the role
Taking part in the Strengthening Solidarity and Promoting Peace Through Soft Power at Antalya Diplomacy Forum	Special guests were the First Ladies of Niger and Sierra Leone. Bineta Diop, the African Union Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security made remarks as well.	12.03.2022	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
Presenting Fabrics Atlas of Türkiye Project	Among important Turkish figures, ambassadors and their spouses were invited to the event.	12.01.2022	No			No	Yes	Yes		Cultural role
Meeting with spouses of African heads of states	Organised in the scope of the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit. The talks included promoting the Africa-Türkiye relationships and previous Turkish efforts made regards Africa.	19.12.2021	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
Attending Hand in Hand for Our Planet: Fostering African Voices in the Climate of Conversation	Organised in the scope of the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit. Spoke about the effects of climate change on Africa. Promoted the 2053 Zero Net Emission target.	18.12.2021	No			No	No	No		Managing international relations
Attending Türkiye-Africa Women's Leadership Dialogue Panel	Organised in the scope of Third Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forum.	22.10.2021	No			No	Yes	No		Managing international relations
Opening of Abuja Yunus Emre cultural centre in Nigeria	Promoted her book and the Ankara Afrika House. Meanwhile the President and other ministers held talks about peace, stability and economic development.	20.10.2021	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Opening of the Maarif Foundation Education Campus in Togo	Promoted her book and the Ankara Afrika House. Meanwhile the President and other ministers held talks about political, economic, commercial and military matters	19.10.2021	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role

Name of the event	Short description	Date of the event	Linked complementary to the President	Linked to ceremonial activities	First Lady can express personal concerns	Activity done without specifically promoting certain issues	Lack of specific agenda linked to the issue	Activity include promoting the culture of the country	Financial contributions included	Name of the role
Inauguration of the Rangel Women's Vocational Education Center in Angola	The centre is a project of TİKA. Promoted her book and Ankara Africa House. Meanwhile the President and other ministers held talks about energy.	18.10.2021	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Promotion of her book My Travels to Africa in New York Turkish House.	Emphasized the development projects of Türkiye in Africa. The money gained from the books is donated to the Africa House in Ankara.	21.09.2021	No			No	No		Yes	Social activist role
Meeting with Congolese First Lady Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi Tshilombo	Meeting took place while the two presidents held a joint press conference.	07.09.2021	Yes	Yes						Escort role

Table 3. First Lady activities in Africa (sources: made by the author)

After every role analysed that the First Lady took on during the researched period, the first hypothesis can be evaluated, namely H1.: The First Lady diplomatic activities of Emine Erdoğan towards Africa is not limited to escort, surrogate, goodwill, and aesthete activities. The listed activities are rather passive roles, more importantly regarded as traditional First Lady roles. Hence, they mirror traditional female roles to certain extent.

Escort role	2
Aesthete role	-
Surrogate role	-
Managing International Relations	8
Goodwill role	-
Cultural role	2
Managing Social Issues	1
Social Activist Roles	9

Table 4. Number of the roles (Source: Made by the author)

As Table 4 shows the Turkish First Lady rarely took on either escort, surrogate, goodwill or aesthete roles. Thus, the first hypothesis appears to be true. It also indicates that Emine Erdoğan, at least regarding Africa, tends to follow an active and initiative role. However, it is important to note that in general, this is not always the case. As it was described in Chapter 6.4., on several occasions, especially during foreign visits the First Lady do not take the initiative.

For instance, during the Gulf tour, by visiting the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar and visiting the General Union of Women in the UAE she fulfilled a surrogate role. Since these activities complemented the President with soft power elements (culture and women issue), but at the same time enabled the First Lady to gather first-hand experience about the countries.¹³¹ Similarly, the foreign visit in India (met with other First Ladies)¹³², in Turkmenistan (visited

¹³¹ *Emine Erdoğan, Katar'da İslam Eserleri Müzesi'ni ziyaret etti.* (2023, July 18). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147810/emine-erdogan-katar-da-islam-eserleri-muzesi-ni-ziyaret-etti> *Emine Erdoğan, BAE'de Kadınlar Genel Birliği'ni ziyaret etti.* (2023, July 19). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147821/emine-erdogan-bae-de-kadinlar-genel-birligi-ni-ziyaret-etti>

¹³² *Emine Erdoğan, G20 Liderler Zirvesi için bulunduğu Hindistan'da lider eşleriyle bir araya geldi.* (2023, September 9). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149363/emine-erdogan-g20-liderler-zirvesi-icin-bulundugu-hindistan-da-lider-esleriyle-bir-araya-geldi>

the Turkmen Handicrafts Exhibition)¹³³, and in Uzbekistan (visited Konigil Paper Factory in Samarkand and toured the area of Samarkand known as the "Eternal City")¹³⁴.

Visibly, the Africa House in Ankara and the Zero Waste project both enable the First Lady to pursue a more active First Lady Diplomacy in the African context. Especially, the former, as it can be seen in Chapter 7.1. This connection is further supported by the fact that Emine Erdoğan do not have such project aimed at other countries or towards a whole continent. However, it has to be underlined that initiatives connected to the Zero Waste project directly or indirectly do not explicitly aim Africa. Thus, especially regarding the United Nations, it serves as a base for the First Lady activities. The prime example for this is the speech of Emine Erdoğan at the Special Session of Zero Waste at the UN General Assembly, which made her the first Turkish First Lady to speak at the General Assembly¹³⁵

7.2 Issues addressed by the First Lady

By elaborating on this section of the research, the second hypothesis will be evaluated, namely H2.: Although the lack of official Turkish Feminist Foreign Policy, the First Lady Diplomacy of Emine Erdoğan towards Africa mirror Feminist Foreign Policy. As it was established before, the primary feature of FPP is that foreign policy is pursued at all areas. Another key element is the tendency to promote the importance of improving the situation of women worldwide, and to actively seek to include women in foreign affairs.

In order to see whether FFP is pursued without an articulated presence in Türkiye first, the issues addressed by the First Lady in Africa ought to be analysed. Table 5. shows them during the researched period in regards Africa. Firstly, it aligns with the previously established

¹³³ *Emine Erdoğan, Türkmenistan'da Türkmen El Sanatları Sergisi'ni gezdi.* (2022, December 14). retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142121/emine-erdogan-turkmenistan-da-turkmen-el-sanatlari-sergisi-ni-gezdi>

¹³⁴ *Emine Erdoğan, Semerkant'ta Konigil Kâğıt Fabrikasını ziyaret etti.* (2022, September 15). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139617/emine-erdogan-semerkant-ta-konigil-kagit-fabrikasini-ziyaret-etti> *Emine Erdoğan, Semerkant'ın "Ebedi Şehir" olarak anılan bölgesini gezdi.* (2022, September 16). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/139656/emine-erdogan-semerkant-in-ebedi-sehir-olarak-anilan-bolgesini-gezdi>

¹³⁵ *Emine Erdoğan spoke at the UN General Assembly Zero Waste Special Session.* (2023, April 13). Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://ab.csb.gov.tr/en/emine-erdogan-spoke-at-the-un-general-assembly-zero-waste-special-session-news-282743>

statement, that the Africa House in Ankara is the most prominent First Lady activity. Furthermore, the Africa House is directly linked with the books of Emine Erdoğan, as the revenues from the main book, *My Travels to Africa* goes directly to the Africa House.

Secondly, the First Lady almost exclusively focuses on soft power spheres, hence, the topics also align with the general Turkish soft power approaches towards Africa. As it was displayed in Chapter 5.2.3. (Soft Power sphere) humanitarian aid is a key element. Several state organisations providing humanitarian aid are named and their efforts are highlighted by the First Lady.

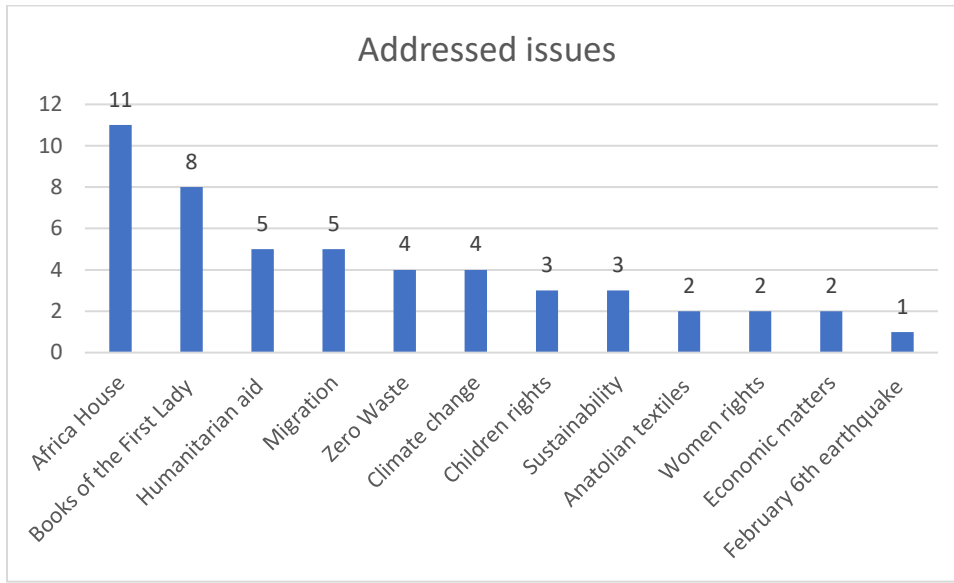


Table 5. Issues addressed by the First Lady regarding Africa (source: made by the author)

However, second point seems to disprove the second hypothesis, as the main feature, namely that all areas are covered is not fulfilled. For instance, issues regarding military power, defence, security, or trade are completely untouched by the First Lady.

On the contrary the President almost only engages in events that covers these areas. When the President held talks with Chad about military, defence and security matters the First Lady was neither present at the meeting, nor organised an event on a different topic.¹³⁶ Similarly, the First Lady was not present at the joint press conference held about trade.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ “Çad ile askerî, savunma ve güvenlik alanlarındaki iş birliğimizi geliştirmeye hazırız.” (2021, October 27). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/131162/-cad-ile-asker-savunma-ve-guvenlik-alanlarindaki-is-birligimizi-gelistirmeye-haziriz->

¹³⁷ “Cezayir ile ticaret hacmimizi salgın şartlarına rağmen 4,2 milyar dolar düzeyine ulaştırdık.” (2022, May 16). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from

In addition, during the 3-day Africa visit to Angola, Togo and Nigeria, while the First Lady promoted her book and the Africa House, the President held talks about energy, military, commercial, political and economic topics.¹³⁸ The only exception during the research period when the President engaged in a topic regarding Africa that falls under the auspices of the First Lady was when he exchanged views with African youth in Türkiye.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that how the President and the First Lady refers to the continent tends to differ. While the President usually connect negative connotation to the countries, such as disadvantaged, poor, underdeveloped, oppressed, victimized and suffering, until the First Lady uses more nuanced and less negative words. For instance, development, love and interest towards the continent, and empowering.

Although the second hypothesis appeared to be disproved the other two main principles of FPP (improving the situation of women worldwide, including women in foreign relations) ought to be evaluated. Firstly, as improving the situation of women constitutes a great part in the general First Lady Diplomacy of Erdoğan, it also appeals to the specific African context. In particular, by giving a speech at the Word Day for the prevention of Violence, by attending the gala dinner of the Women and Justice Summit, by fostering humanitarian aid towards African women, and by opening the Women's Vocational Centre in Angola.

Secondly, the First Lady further stressed the role of women in foreign affairs. To provide an instance, the Ambassador Conference for female ambassadors, the Türkiye-Africa Women's Leadership Dialogue Panel and the numerous meetings with other First Ladies can be mentioned.

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/136908/-cezayir-ile-ticaret-hacmimizi-salgin-sartlarina-ragmen-4-2-milyar-dolar-duzeyine-ulastirdik->

¹³⁸ "Togo ile siyasi, ekonomik, ticari ve askerî alanlarda iş birliğimizi ilerletme arzusundayız." (2021, October 19). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 9, 2023, from

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/131006/-togo-ile-siyasi-ekonomik-ticari-ve-asker-alanlarda-is-birligimizi-ilerletme-arzusundayiz-> "Türkiye ve Angola enerji konusunda ciddi iş birliği imkânlarına sahiptir." (2021, October 10). T.C. Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130978/-turkiye-ve-angola-enerji-konusunda-ciddi-is-birligi-imk-nlarina-sahiptir->

¹³⁹ Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Afrikalı gençlerle bir araya geldi. (2021, December 19). *Anadolu Ajansı*. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-afrikali-genclerle-bir-araya-geldi/2451765>

7.3 Gendered roles of the First Lady

This last section reflects on the research question, to be precise: How do engagements of Emine Erdoğan in Africa embody the traditional gendered roles associated with First Lady Diplomacy? During the research certain First Lady roles were displayed and the activities of Emine Erdoğan evaluated based on each role. Firstly, any kind of First Lady role is gendered in a definite way, due to the nature of the position.

Irrespective of the number of projects a First Lady might take, since she is not an elected diplomat the First Lady is not able to fulfil every role. Thus, the First Lady is doomed to deal with certain topics, mostly related to soft power. This statement is further underlined by the instance of Emine Erdoğan. Traditionally, soft power sphere is considered more feminine.

Secondly, the events that cover the meeting of two First Ladies, as follows from the previous point is considered gendered. On the one hand, due to the limitations arising from the role, and on the other hand, if the presidents and first ladies meet separately during the meeting, the division chooses the meetings separately on the basis of gender. It is worth noting here that if the President is a woman and, her partner does not appear in the role of First Lady, so the analogy just outlined does not apply to him either.

8 Conclusion

The analysis presented Emine Erdoğan's First Lady's Diplomacy towards Africa based on the analytical framework of Erickson and Thomson. The purpose of the study was to show what types of activities the First Lady would implement between the fall of 2021 and the fall of 2023. In accordance with preliminary expectations, a crystallized, active rather than passive portfolio that fits into the Turkish African policy can be seen.

Emine Erdoğan organized conferences, discussions, or meetings related to his own projects during activities without the direct support or presence of the President. These cases all exceeded the traditional roles. This is especially true if it is compared with activities carried out in the direction of non-Africa. These rely to a greater extent on accompanying cultural functions.

However, from Feminist Foreign Policy's point of view, the Turkish First Lady does not fulfil all of its important criteria. Namely, that it has absolutely no point of connection with certain topics. Such are the military, defence, or trade. However, the FFP requires that the range of activities cover all areas.

On the other hand, it can be said that the scope of activities of the Turkish First Lady is wide-ranging and the activities according to her own projects greatly promote and supplement Turkey's Africa policy. However, it is important to emphasize that the role of First Lady in itself is also limited by gender roles, which limits the initiatives of Emine Erdoğan.

Providing a framework for the research on the one hand and reflecting on the introductory quote on the other hand, the Afrika House in Ankara is indeed an outstanding example of Turkish First Lady Diplomacy. After all, it is not only this location that hosts various meetings, at ambassadorial level, but it also proved to be a popular promotional element during public appearances. As already emphasized, the promotional activity is complemented by the fact that the income from the products purchased there directly helps African women.

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