Poor, Needy, But Happy,
The Portrayal of Africa in Turkish Textbooks

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Abstract: This study examines the portrayal of Africa in the Turkish collective memory by analyzing its depiction in Turkish textbooks. 79 social sciences and humanities textbooks were analyzed in K-12 textbooks in the 2019-2020 academic year. The textbooks depict Africa as a region plagued by poverty, hunger, malnutrition, thirst, wars, and conflicts. Turkish textbooks attribute all these problems to the ambitions and actions of Western states. The textbooks also emphasize the development of science, technology, and philosophy during the Islamic rule in Africa, depicting Turks and Muslims as helping the development of Africa and winning the hearts of Africans while portraying Westerners as exploiting Africa and mistreating Africans.

Keywords: Africa; textbooks; Turkey; Ottoman; discourse analysis

Özet: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de Afrika'nın toplumsal bellekteki temsiline odaklanmakta ve bu temsili Türk ders kitapları üzerinden incelemektedir. 2019-2020 eğitim-öğretim yılında okutulan 79 sosyal bilimler ve beşeri bilimler ders kitabı analiz edilmiştir. Ders kitaplarında Afrika; yoksulluk, açlık, yetersiz beslenme, susuzluk, savaşlar ve çatışmalarla boğuşan bir bölge olarak betimlenmektedir. Tüm bu sorunların kaynağı olarak Batılı devletlerin hırsları ve eylemleri gösterilmektedir. Kitaplarda ayrıca İslam hâkimiyeti döneminde Afrika'da bilim, teknoloji ve felsefenin gelişimine vurgu yapılmakta; Türkler ve Müslümanlar, Afrika'nın gelişimine katkı sağlayan ve Afrikalıların gönlünü kazanan aktörler olarak sunulurken, Batılılar Afrika'yı sömüren ve Afrikalılara kötü davranan figürler olarak tasvir edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika; ders kitapları; Türkiye; Osmanlı; söylem analizi

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Introduction

Turkey has recently strengthened its relations with Africa significantly, making it a top priority in its foreign policy. Turkey adopted the Africa Action Plan, declared 2005 the Year of Africa, and organized Africa Summits in 2008, 2014, and 2021 to achieve this goal. Turkey has established embassies in forty-four African countries, and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) supports education and development activities in twenty-two countries. Turkish Airlines (THY) operates direct flights to thirty-nine countries; the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) has centres in eleven countries for teaching the Turkish language and promoting social and cultural cooperation, while the Turkish Maarif Foundation runs schools in twenty-six countries (Kavak 2023). In addition to economic and commercial relations, significant social and cultural activities have evolved during this process. As a result, the number of African students coming to Turkey for higher education has dramatically increased. Before 2010, Turkey had fewer than two thousand African students enrolled in higher education. However, in the 2022-2023 academic year, approximately sixty thousand students from nearly every African country came to study in Turkey. Moreover, around eleven thousand African youths graduated from universities in Turkey between 2012 and 2022 (Atabaş & Köse 2023).

Studies on Turkey's relations with Africa emphasize economic, political, and security-oriented bilateral relations (Özkan & Orakçı 2015). Recently, there has been a notable increase in research on Turkey's multilateral relations with Africa, covering economic, political, military, and commercial aspects. Despite the growth in Turkey's relations with Africa and the increasing African diaspora in Turkey, there is a limited body of literature on the perception of Africa in Turkey (Gidetra 2017). Textbooks can provide valuable insights into shaping a society's perception of a specific subject. Therefore, examining textbooks is essential in understanding how Africa is perceived in Turkey and the concepts, discourses, and perspectives through which Africa is portrayed. This study aims to shed light on how the perception of Africa is shaped and presented in Turkish textbooks.

Textbooks are pivotal in shaping social and political consciousness, dictating what is acceptable and excluded within a society. They function as a political instrument, disseminating and perpetuating dominant interests by selecting, organizing, and presenting official knowledge in educational institutions (Apple 2003). As a mirror of social perception and prevailing ideologies, textbooks impart knowledge and convey political discourses (Schissler 2009). The content of textbooks is meticulously crafted to mirror and promote the national narrative endorsed by the state, thereby becoming a potent tool for influencing societal norms and boundaries (Lozic & Hintermann 2011). Moreover, textbooks wield significant influence in shaping collective memory and reinforcing institutional arrangements within a society. Researchers can gain valuable insights by examining how educational knowledge is

created and shared (Crawford 2000). The study of textbooks provides substantial data for comprehending how certain perceptions are constructed, presented, and distributed within a society, underscoring the enduring impact of textbooks on social perceptions (Apple 1990; Laurie 2010; Lidher et al. 2020; Lozic and Hintermann 2011; Üllen & Markom 2016). In sum, textbooks are not merely educational tools but powerful agents in shaping social and political parameters, reflecting and perpetuating a society's values and beliefs, and influencing the perception of various social groups.

Perception of Africa in the world and Turkey

Many countries lack comprehensive public and educational understanding of Africa's geography, language diversity, ethnic structure, societal organization, population statistics, governance, and climate. It is a common misconception that Africa is a country rather than a continent, particularly in the United States of America (USA). Africa is often negatively portrayed in various forms of media, with frequent references to issues such as famine, hunger, and war (Keim and Somerville 2022). Studies have shown that the USA students tend to associate Africa with derogatory terms and concepts, perpetuating negative stereotypes. Despite some positive developments, Africa is often portrayed using misleading metaphors that do not capture its history and geography (Keim 2009; Keim & Somerville 2022; Myers 2001). According to a study involving students in Hamburg, their perception of Africa closely aligns with that of the USA. They view Africans as inherently lazy, untamed, and dependent, capable only in sports or music but not in science or philosophy (Marmer et al. 2011). Although some positive perceptions of Africans exist in Turkey as well, such as being well-intentioned, helpful, and warm, there is also a prevalent belief that Africa is underdeveloped, primitive, and inhabited by impoverished, starving people dependent on humanitarian aid, lacking access to necessities like water, food, and housing. Additionally, Africa is stereotypically associated with diseases, conflicts, and tribalism, with the misconception that it is either a single country or comprised of undifferentiated states (Gidetra 2017).

Numerous studies have revealed incomplete, erroneous, and biased perceptions of Africa in geography and history textbooks across different countries. For instance, a study analyzing geography textbooks for eleven- to fifteen-year-olds in Belgium, England/Wales, West Germany, France, and the Netherlands found that these textbooks predominantly focused on economic structures, racial problems, colonial history, and development issues of African countries, neglecting the physical geography of the continent. Furthermore, these textbooks included factual errors, outdated information, and stereotypical images of African ethnic groups (Hillers 1984). More recent studies have shown positive changes in the portrayal of Africa in German and Dutch textbooks. However, the incomplete, inaccurate, and biased representation of Africa persists, with a continued emphasis on poverty, violence, and underdevelopment. Additionally, colonial activities and the struggle for African independence

are not adequately covered (Helfer 2021; Marmer et al. 2011; Weiner 2016). Similar issues were identified in Ireland (Usher 2021), Nigeria (Odebiyi & Sunal, 2020), Hong Kong (Lee & Li 2020), and the USA (Myers 2001). African countries are presented in stereotypical, oversimplified, and prejudiced ways. Textbooks in these regions primarily focus on negative aspects of Africa, such as disasters, poverty, and humanitarian crises, while neglecting the continent's positive aspects and diverse developments.

A comparative study of geography textbooks in Brazil and Germany revealed that German textbooks lack focus on the colonial past and present Africa in a superficial and unsystematic manner. In contrast, Brazilian textbooks provide a more detailed portrayal of the continent. Notably, history textbooks in Turkey offer more comprehensive coverage of African history, including colonization, postcolonial developments, independence struggles, conflicts, democratic processes, and urbanization (Jesus et al. 2023). However, an analysis of textbook perception in Turkey noted that while Africa is systematically covered, the overall image is not comprehensive or accurate (Kılıç 2021). In short, analyses of textbooks from many different countries show that although there has been a particular improvement in the presentation of the perception of Africa in recent years, the perception of Africa is presented in an incomplete and distorted way, and textbooks present Africa as the dominant image of poverty, violence, and underdevelopment.

Methodology

With the increasing multilateral relations between Turkey and Africa, there has been a growing focus on studying economic, political, military, and commercial connections. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning how Africa is perceived in Turkey. Considering textbooks are vital in reflecting societal perceptions, analyzing them will provide valuable insights into how Turkey perceives Africa. Therefore, this study aims to uncover how Africa's perception is depicted in Turkish textbooks.

The study examined 79 textbooks encompassing history, geography, social studies, life sciences, Turkish literature, philosophy, sociology, psychology, economics, entrepreneurship, international relations, culture, science, and civilization history. Approved by the Ministry of National Education for grades one to twelve in the 2019-2020 academic year, these textbooks were used in public and private schools. This study employed the discourse analysis method, a unique approach investigating the evolving and contested dimensions of meaning, the development and change of meaning over time, and discourse's contextual and power relations (Hardy et al. 2004). This method, which views discourse as a social practice emerging from a specific selection process and influenced by political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, is particularly suited to our study (Wodak 2007). It allows us to reveal the meaning of discourse within the historical, cultural, economic, and social context

in which it occurs (Hardy et al. 2004). By applying this method, we aim to analyze the presentation of Africa in Turkish textbooks, including the neglected and emphasized aspects of African geography and history and how Africa is depicted in terms of concepts, imagery, and relations within different contexts. The analysis will shed light on the social, political, and power relations surrounding the depiction of Africa and how it is portrayed within a specific discourse framework. To achieve this, we analyzed the primary and supplementary reading texts, the preparatory questions, end-of-lesson inquiries, lesson activities, and the relationships between visuals.

Findings and Discussion

Turkish textbooks tend to view Africa through the lens of Ottoman/Turkish history, emphasizing North Africa within the context of Islamic/Ottoman history. This approach does not construct a comprehensive narrative of Africa as a whole. Instead, it focuses on the interactions between Turkey, Africa, and Western powers, particularly regarding conquest and exploitation. Unfortunately, this perspective often leads to the propagation of biased and negative views of Africa, reminiscent of the narratives found in textbooks from the USA and European countries.

Africa: The Cradle of Civilization

Turkish textbooks emphasize the significant role of the African continent in the history of civilization. Ancient Egyptian civilization and the development of Islamic civilization in North Africa during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries are particularly highlighted within this context.

Turkish textbooks mention Mesopotamian, Mediterranean, Inca, Aztec, Maya, Indian, and Chinese civilizations when mentioning about ancient cultures. However, particular emphasis is placed on Ancient Egyptian Civilization (Baranaydın et al. 2019a, 164-167; 2019b, 191-198). The textbooks emphasize the central role of Egyptian civilization in the history of science, culture, and philosophy (Koluaçık et al. 2019, 12; Yüksel et al. 2019a, 22), noting its contributions to geography (Soyatlar et al. 2019, 164), the invention of money and the banking system (Başar 2019, 134), the development of early calendars and writing system, and its great respect for science (Yüksel et al. 2019a, 22). The establishment of the Library of Alexandria, one of antiquity's most significant science centers, is also highlighted (Çakmak et al., 2019, 67). Ancient Egyptian civilization's significance, superiority, and development are frequently referenced throughout the textbooks.

The portrayal of Africa in textbooks can also be observed in the mentions of Muslim North Africa in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. It is highlighted that North Africa had a sophisticated scientific, medical, and technological civilization during the twelfth to fourte-

enth centuries after adopting Islam. History, social studies, philosophy, and religious culture and ethics (RCE) textbooks assert that following the spread of Islam in the region, North Africa emerged as a hub of civilization in science, technology, medicine, and philosophy. For instance, *the History 9* textbook notes that during the Umayyad and Andalusian Umayyad periods, North Africa saw the construction of highly developed architectural works and the formation of Islamic culture and civilization through advancements in science, technology, medicine, and philosophy (Yüksel et al. 2019a, 164). Textbooks state that North Africa was an important scientific center during the Umayyad and Andalusian Umayyad periods, with widespread translation movements and significant advancements in medicine and hospital facilities (Koluaçık et al. 2019, 66; Sever et al. 2019, 96-97). Many renowned figures in the history of science, religion, and philosophy, such as Muhyiddin Arabi, Idrisi, Ibn Battuta, and Ibn Khaldun, were born in North Africa and conducted their studies in these cities (Sever et al. 2019, 117; Soyatlar et al. 2019, 27). Furthermore, North Africa transmitted this knowledge of science, philosophy, and technology to Europe, making substantial contributions to developing these fields in Europe (Çakmak et al. 2019, 72). In addition to locations like the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, and Iran, the textbooks make references to cities in African countries such as Marrakesh, Tunisia, Morocco, Qayrawan, Tlemcen, and Timbuktu, highlighting outstanding works representing Islamic civilization in these cities (Çakmak et al. 2019, 114).

The portrayal of Egyptian and North African civilizations in textbooks does not recognize Africa as a significant continent in the history of civilization. Although geographically located in Africa, Egyptian and North African cultures are often depicted separately from the rest of the continent. While textbooks acknowledge civilizations such as Indian, Chinese, Aztec, and Mayan, they tend to neglect other African civilizations. African civilization, as portrayed in textbooks, mainly refers to Egyptian and Islamic cultures rather than representing the continent as a whole. Turkish textbooks also tend to distinguish North Africa from the rest of Africa and include it more within the Middle Eastern or Islamic cultural region (Türkez et al. 2019, 170). Furthermore, the north of Africa is typically defined as the Islamic cultural region, while the rest is considered the African cultural region (Alemdar & Keleş, 2019, 27). It is also worth noting that Egypt and North African countries are often categorized as Middle Eastern or Islamic countries rather than being recognized as integral parts of Africa. Additionally, African history is often depicted within the context of Islamic/Ottoman/Turkish history in textbooks.

Poor and Deprived but Happy Africa

In many Turkish textbooks, Africa is often portrayed through the lens of hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and thirst, often accompanied by images of children dressed in old, tattered clothing. For instance, the International Relations eleven textbook discusses the issue of

hunger and malnutrition in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of international problems: "The Central African Republic is highlighted as the country with the highest incidence of hunger, with "very serious" situations in Chad, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Yemen, and Zambia." (Şahin et al. 2019, 93).

Moreover, an additional reading in the International Relations textbook mentions that conflicts and turmoil have led to decreased agricultural production in some parts of Africa, resulting in emergent hunger issues. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization warns of an increasing emergency in food security, with famines declared in South Sudan in 2017 and alarming levels of food security in the north of Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen (Şahin et al. 2019, 207). In textbooks, Africa's poverty and deprivation are also reinforced in the visuals presented comparatively. For example, in the sociology textbook, while describing different societies through visuals, Africa is shown as having poverty and hunger, and the West as having prosperity and wealth (Ekici 2019, 51).

The textbooks highlight the contrast between Africa's poverty and the happiness of its children. This portrayal is reinforced with images depicting African children's hardships and happiness. Despite the prevalence of hunger, thirst, and poverty in some pictures, others show cheerful children who are resilient and smiling in the face of adversity. An example of this can be found in a passage from the *Turkish 4th Grade* textbook:

> Africa immediately conjures images of 'poverty' and 'hunger' in most minds. Many live in meagre dwellings, and only a few children can access education. However, contrary to common belief, Africans are not unhappy. This resilient community, composed of patient and hardworking individuals who find contentment in simplicity, focuses on practical accomplishments, such as repairing their homes, instead of pursuing unattainable dreams. As a result, they live happily, free from disillusionment. (Ataşçi 2019, 209)

The prevailing images of Africans in textbooks and social perceptions in the USA and European countries tend to emphasize poverty, deprivation, hunger, malnutrition, and poor living conditions (Helfer 2021; Hillers 1984; Keim 2009; Keim and Sommerville, 2022; Marmer et at. 2011; Myers 2001; Weiner 2016). Gidetra's study (2017) in Turkey similarly found that there is a widespread perception of Africans as hungry, malnourished, poor, and deprived. Turkish textbooks reinforce this perception, presenting African children as poor but happy, thereby perpetuating a fatalistic and essentialist view that poverty and deprivation are inherent in the lives of Africans. Depicting the happy African child implies that contentment with current conditions is due to laziness, fatalism, and backwardness rather than highlighting the resilience of the African people.

Needy Africa

The textbooks portray Africa as a continent in need, emphasizing hunger, poverty, and deprivation while highlighting its self-sufficiency and dependence on foreign aid. They mention Turkey's humanitarian aid to countries like Somalia and Kenya through the Turkish Red Crescent (Alemdar & Keleş, 2019, 239). For example, the *Human Rights, Citizenship, and Democracy* textbook describes an activity titled 'Mobilised for Somalia', highlighting the delivery of 60 tonnes of baby food to Somalia in response to a severe drought (Altay et al., 2019, 31). The visuals further reinforce the narrative of drought and desperation in Africa. The portrayal of Africa in textbooks often depicts Africans as dependent on aid, perpetuating the misconception of Africa's lack of self-sufficiency (Gidetra, 2017; Keim, 2009; Keim & Sommerville, 2022; Marmer et at., 2011).

Africa: The Region of Conflicts and Problems

Africa is frequently associated with conflicts, wars, and a myriad of challenges in educational materials. For instance, *the International Relations* textbook highlights that the majority of global conflicts take place in Africa, with 201 different factions engaged in prolonged wars resulting in issues such as refugee crises and forced migration. The textbook also identifies the countries with the highest number of refugee outflows over the past five years: Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Northeast Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Burundi. It attributes conflicts in Africa to religious, ethnic, and micro-nationalistic factors. Furthermore, the textbook notes the continent's health issues, including the prevalence of AIDS, water and environmental pollution, lack of economic infrastructure, limited access to education, and inefficient use of agricultural land (Şahin et al. 2019, 108-109). Despite Africa's abundant surface and underground resources, it is portrayed as one of the world's most problematic regions due to oppressive governments and the 'colonialist policies of Western states. Consequently, Africa is often referred to as a 'tired continent' in the collective consciousness and educational materials of the USA, European countries, and Turkey (Şahin et al. 2019, 108).

When analysing conflicts, textbooks blame global powers, often explicitly mentioning the British's historical role, the USA's current influence, and European countries while seldom referencing China. For instance, the conflict in Sudan and its split into north and south is attributed to the British, with subsequent backing from Western powers (Erdebil et al. 2019c, 187). Furthermore, an additional reading titled 'Sudan: The Pangs of Partition' further elucidates how the British implemented divide-and-rule policies, creating social division between North and South Sudan and perpetuating societal differences that fueled conflicts. The text also highlights the devastating impact of the civil war in Sudan during the colonial period, resulting in millions of deaths and refugees. Additionally, it warns of impending

conflicts fueled by countries such as China and the USA covering the region's natural resources (Erdebil et al. 2019c 191). Textbooks in Turkey underline that Africa's issues are primarily attributed to Western countries, particularly the USA and the United Kingdom.

Africa: Geography of the Heart

Turkish textbooks refer to the concepts of the Turkish cultural basin and the geography of the heart. When explaining the Turkish cultural basin, it is mentioned that the roots of Turkish culture lie in Central Asia and have extended from there to Africa, the Balkans, and various parts of Asia through migrations at different times. It is emphasized that the influence of Turkish culture can be observed in various fields, such as art, music, and architecture, across these regions.

> The geographical extent of Turkish culture, spanning from Gül Baba Tekke in Hungary at 20° east longitude in the West to the agricultural basin at 100° east longitude in the east, as well as from Somalia-Ethiopia-Sudan in the south to Siberia in the north, showcases the enduring presence of Turkish culture. Throughout its 5000-year history, the Turkish nation has been pioneering in promoting peace and justice in the regions it has governed politically across Asia, Europe, and Africa. It has also established cultural and political ties with the civilizations that have held sway in these regions. (Erdebil et al. 2019c, 164)

It is widely acknowledged that Turkish culture has significantly impacted parts of Africa and many other regions worldwide. This influence expanded to North Africa, particularly following the Turkish adoption of Islam, establishing deep-rooted cultural connections between Turkey and the states in these regions throughout history. Textbooks underscore the crucial interdependence between Turkey and the African states for their respective existences, emphasizing the mutual significance of their continued presence (Erdebil et al. 2019c, 165).

Additionally, apart from the concepts of the Turkish cultural basin, Turkish world, and Turkish cultural region, textbooks reference the "geography of the heart," a broader geographical perspective encompassing areas untouched by Turkish or Ottoman rule but historically influenced by Islam. This concept covers the Islamization process of North Africa, the region's significant scientific and cultural centers, noteworthy contributions of the Ottoman Empire, and essential figures and achievements in countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, in addition to Egypt.

> Africa has the highest concentration of Muslim population. Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Somalia, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Chad, Ethiopia, and Ghana are among the countries on the continent. The profound influence of Islamic culture and civilization is particularly prominent in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco, previously referred to as the Maghreb and North Africa (Doğan 2019, 132).

The textbooks underscore the effectiveness of TIKA in maintaining Turkey's relations with these regions (Erdebil et al. 2019c, 166). The concepts of the Turkish cultural basin and the geography of the heart highlight that Turks are a society and a state that conquered hearts, leaving signific ant cultural, architectural, and infrastructural legacies in the regions they influenced throughout history rather than exploiting resources and oppressing people (Çelik 2022).

The textbooks also state that various Turkish states, such as the Ayyubids, Mamluks, and Ottomans, from the second half of the nineth century until the First World War predominantly ruled Egypt (Tüysüz 2019, 159-160). Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Egypt and the Red Sea was not driven by imperial ambitions; it occurred as a response to the difficult situation faced by Muslims in North and East Africa and the Hejaz region due to the actions of the Spaniards and the Portuguese. Additionally, the conquest was prompted by the Portuguese navy's dominance in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, compelling the overwhelmed inhabitants to seek help from the Ottomans (Tüysüz 2019, 152-160).

The textbooks depict the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa, excluding Egypt, as not simply a result of conquest and war. Following the conquest of Egypt and the transfer of the Caliphate to the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans assumed rule over these regions at the behest of their local administrations as protectors of the Islamic world and to shield the peoples of North Africa from Spanish oppression. The Ottoman administration in these areas did not come about through military conquest but rather through the invitation of the ruling authorities in the region (Yüksel et al. 2019b, 2019c). The textbooks underscore that the Turkish states and the Ottoman Empire did not exploit Africa but contributed to its development, civilization, and the advancement of science and technology. They also highlight that Ottoman control of North Africa bolstered the empire, mainly after Algeria came under Ottoman rule, further augmenting Ottoman naval power.

European Cruelty in Africa

The textbooks discuss the colonization of Africa by European states, the exploitation of Africa's resources, the enslavement of Africans, and their subsequent independence after the colonial period. Both *the History 11* and *the International Relations 11* textbooks also note the European invasion of the American continent through geographical discoveries and the enslavement of millions of Africans to fulfil the labor demands of the newly established colonies (Şahin et al. 2019, 70; Yüksel et al. 2019c, 200). They also highlight the colonial rivalries among European powers. The inhumane actions of Europeans are described as follows: 'The demand for labor in the capitalist system led to the slave trade, transforming the free people of Africa into commodities traded by Europeans in intercontinental slave markets.' (Yüksel et al. 2019c, 200).

The textbooks cover the colonial period, the postcolonial era, and the fight for independence. *The Contemporary Turkish and World History* textbook provides detailed information about the struggle for independence of colonies worldwide. It emphasizes the independence process of Algeria and the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. The textbook also references Yugoslavian leader Tito and Egyptian leader Nasser, who supported independence movements in Congo, Algeria, and Angola at the Belgrade Conference while condemning apartheid in South Africa (Alemdar and Keleş 2019, 103). It describes how the South African regime, based on racial discrimination, imposed severe punishments on black citizens and came to an end through the efforts of Nelson Mandela, who became the first black president of South Africa through democratic elections (Alemdar and Keleş 2019, 106-107). The textbook also notes that many African countries gained independence between 1945 and 1965, and the struggles continued in the 1970s and 1980s. It further mentions the symbolic end of the colonial era when Britain handed over Hong Kong to China in 1999 (Alemdar and Keleş 2019, 106-107). Additionally, the book includes a world map showing the countries fighting for independence.

The textbooks highlight the Turkish War of Independence and Atatürk's leadership as a significant reference point for the end of the colonial era and the fight for independence:

> The teachings of Atatürk and the National Struggle inspired Gandhi in India, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, Algerian nationalists, and other African and Asian oppressed nations. In their war against Algeria, the French consistently found Mustafa Kemal's photograph with a heart, symbolizing his influence as a guiding force for oppressed nations seeking independence and leading revolutionary movements. (Alemdar and Keleş, 2019, 111)

In the textbooks, there is a notable emphasis on Turkey's role in empowering colonized societies seeking independence, in contrast to the depiction of Western exploitation and plundering of Africa's resources. Additionally, on a world map, Atatürk and Turkey are placed at the center, underscoring their significance in the struggle for independence (Alemdar & Keleş, 2019, 112).

Conclusion

Textbooks play a crucial role in reflecting the legitimate knowledge of a society and shaping its collective memory. They offer valuable insights into how Africa is perceived in Turkey and how the image of Africa is constructed. While the perception of Africa in Turkish textbooks shares similarities with that in European and USA textbooks in some respects, it also diverges by attributing the root of Africa's issues to the West. Negative and problem-focused views of Africa prevalent in European and USA textbooks are also evident in Turkish textbooks. Consequently, African countries are often portrayed as impoverished, disadvantaged, and dependent on aid from developed nations. This portrayal is reinforced through

text, imagery, and analysis. Furthermore, Africa is depicted as a region plagued by problems, conflicts, and wars. Turkish textbooks explicitly highlight the Western states as the primary source of Africa's challenges, including conflicts, violence, and underdevelopment.

The issues and challenges in Africa are often attributed to the ambitions and actions of Western nations. Turkish textbooks also clearly contrast the West and the Ottoman Empire in portraying Africa. The colonial rule of the West in Africa is depicted as a period of enslavement, resource exploitation, and the creation of conditions that continue to fuel conflicts and wars on the continent today. In contrast, the Islamic/Ottoman narrative emphasizes Africa's historical advancements in science, technology, medicine, and philosophy and its architectural, infrastructural, and cultural prosperity. It highlights the role of Islamic/Ottoman Africa in shaping the development of science, philosophy, and medicine in the Western world. While the West is portrayed as oppressive and exploitative, the depiction of Islam/Ottoman Africa is of liberation, prosperity, and the establishment of a center of wealth and civilization. The West is represented as seizing Africa's physical and human resources, while the Turks/Ottomans are portrayed as winning the hearts of the African people. Additionally, while the West sought to subjugate Africans and suppress their quest for independence through violent conflicts, Turkey is portrayed as a source of enlightenment and support for Africa's struggle for independence.

Turkish textbooks portray a developed and civilized Africa, highlighting the significance of ancient Egypt and North Africa in civilization during the 12th and 14th centuries. However, despite their geographic location in Africa, these textbooks do not depict Egypt and North Africa as part of African civilization and culture. Instead, they are categorized as the Middle East or Islamic civilization. Additionally, the textbooks overlook the civilizations of other African regions throughout different periods, except South Africa. The narrative in Turkish textbooks predominantly focuses on North Africa within the context of Turkish/Islamic history, leading to an incomplete, inaccurate, and biased portrayal of African geography in collective memory.

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