

T.C.
ISTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**THE MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SOMALIA UNDER
THE AK PARTY**

Master thesis by

Bureka Hassan Elmi

2300004935

Department: International Relations

Program: International Relations

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bora Bayraktar

JUNE 2025

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This work is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, cooperation, and the enduring importance of diplomacy.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) liderliğinde Türkiye ile Somali arasındaki askeri iş birliğinin evrimini Dış Politika Analizi (Foreign Policy Analysis - FPA) teorik çerçevesiyle incelemektedir. Araştırma, başlangıçta insani yardım temelli olan Türkiye'nin Afrika Açılımı Politikasının zamanla daha geniş kapsamlı bir stratejik angajmana dönüşerek Somali'yi Afrika Boynuzu'ndaki en önemli ortak konumuna nasıl taşıdığını irdelemektedir. Tez, bu dönüşümün ardındaki temel etkenleri analiz etmektedir: Türkiye'nin bölgesel nüfuz kazanma arzusu, Somali'nin stratejik deniz yolu üzerindeki konumu ve AK Parti'nin ideolojik temelli dış politika vizyonu bunlar arasında öne çıkmaktadır. Çalışma, nitel bir vaka çalışması yöntemi benimseyerek TURKSOM Askeri Kampı'nın kurulması, iki ülke arasında gerçekleştirilen askeri eğitim programları ve 2024 Ankara Bildirisi gibi diplomatik girişimler üzerinde durmaktadır. Analiz kısmında, Türkiye'nin yaklaşımının, askeri (sert güç) unsurları insani yardım, kalkınma iş birliği ve dini-kültürel diplomasi (yumuşak güç) ile harmanlayan hibrit bir dış politika modeli sunduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Diğer yandan Somali, bu asimetrik ortaklığı kendi ulusal ordusunu yeniden yapılandırmak, yönetim kapasitesini artırmak ve özellikle Körfez ülkelerinden gelen rekabetçi dış etkilere karşı denge kurmak amacıyla kullanmaktadır. Çalışma, yükselen güçlerin kırılğan devletlerle nasıl çok boyutlu diplomasi aracılığıyla ilişki kurduğunu göstererek uluslararası ilişkiler literatürüne katkı sunmaktadır. Ayrıca bu tür ortaklıkların, bölgesel istikrarsızlık ve siyasi geçiş süreçleri bağlamında taşıdığı kalıcılık ve risklere de dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Somali, Dış Politika Analizi, askeri iş birliği, AK Parti, Camp TURKSOM, Afrika Boynuzu, stratejik iş birliği

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of military cooperation between Türkiye and Somalia under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), applying the theoretical lens of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). It investigates how Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy, initially rooted in humanitarian outreach, transitioned into a broader strategic engagement positioning Somalia as its most prominent partner in the Horn of Africa. The thesis explores key drivers behind this transformation, including Türkiye's aspiration for regional influence, Somalia's strategic maritime location, and the AK Party's ideology-driven foreign policy vision. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on significant developments such as the establishment of Camp TURKSOM, bilateral military training programs, and diplomatic initiatives like the 2024 Ankara Declaration. The analysis argues that Türkiye's approach reflects a hybrid foreign policy model blending military (hard) power with humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and religious-cultural diplomacy (soft power). Meanwhile, Somalia utilizes this asymmetric partnership to rebuild its national army, enhance governance capacity, and balance competing external influences, especially from Gulf States. The study contributes to broader international relations discourse by illustrating how rising powers engage with fragile states through multidimensional diplomacy. It also highlights the durability and risks of such partnerships in the context of regional instability and political transitions.

Key Words: Türkiye, Somalia, Foreign Policy Analysis, military cooperation, AK Party, Camp TURKSOM, Horn of Africa, strategic cooperation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AK Party – Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

AU – African Union

CAMP TURKSOM – Turkish Military Training Base in Mogadishu, Somalia

EU – European Union

FGS – Federal Government of Somalia

FPA – Foreign Policy Analysis

GKA – Gelişmekte Olan Ülkelerle İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü (Directorate General for Relations with Developing Countries – Türkiye)

ICG – International Crisis Group

IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority on Development

MOFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OIC – Organization of Islamic Cooperation

SNA – Somali National Army

THY – Türk Hava Yolları (Turkish Airlines)

TIKA – Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency)

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

US / USA – United States of America

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS IN TÜRKİYE–SOMALIA RELATIONS (1884–2024)

This chronology outlines the major historical, political, and strategic milestones that have shaped the relationship between Türkiye and Somalia from the late 19th century to the present day.

Pre-Modern and Early Diplomatic Roots

1884–1885: The Berlin Conference formalizes European colonial control over Africa, impacting Somali territories, later colonized by Britain and Italy.

Late 1800s–Early 1900s: The Ottoman Empire maintains symbolic ties with Muslim sultanates along the Somali coast, reflecting early Turkish-Muslim solidarity.

Modern Turkish Republic and Disengagement

1923: The Republic of Türkiye is established. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Ankara adopts a foreign policy focused on internal development and disengages from Africa for much of the 20th century.

Somali Collapse and Turkish Re-engagement

1991: Somalia’s central government collapses, plunging the country into civil war. Al-Shabaab rises during the power vacuum. Diplomatic ties with Türkiye are effectively dormant.

2002: The AK Party comes to power in Türkiye, ushering in a new activist foreign policy with emphasis on Africa and the Muslim world.

(Altunişik, 2020)

In 2011, famine devastated Somalia, prompting a historic visit by then–Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Mogadishu—the first visit by a non-African leader in decades. This visit launched large-scale humanitarian aid operations and significantly enhanced Türkiye’s public legitimacy in Somalia (Akpınar, 2013; Donelli, 2021).

In 2012, Türkiye opened its embassy in Mogadishu and expanded its aid efforts. Turkish Airlines resumed flights to Mogadishu, and major development projects in health,

education, and infrastructure were initiated through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) (Akpınar, 2013; TİKA Somalia Report, 2012).

Security Engagement and Defense Diplomacy

2015: Türkiye and Somalia sign military training agreements as defense diplomacy begins to take shape.

2017: Türkiye inaugurates Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu, its largest overseas military base, to train Somali Special Forces.

2020: Turkish-Somalia military collaboration deepens through continued joint training, logistics support, and infrastructure investment in security institutions.

(Anadolu Agency; Daily Sabah)

Strategic Consolidation and Mediation Role

In 2023, Türkiye expanded its political and military footprint in Somalia, with Turkish-trained Gorgor brigades playing an increasing role in anti-terror operations. In 2024, the signing of the Ankara Declaration formalized Türkiye's role as a mediator in Somali political affairs and further enhanced the long-term strategic partnership (Horn Institute, 2024; Atlantic Council, 2024).

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Türkiye's growing role in Africa has drawn increasing academic and policy interest, particularly its deepening engagement with Somalia. What began as humanitarian outreach has evolved into a broader strategic partnership shaped by foreign policy goals, military cooperation, and geopolitical ambitions. This chapter introduces the rationale, focus, and structure of the study by outlining the research background, main questions, objectives, significance, and methodology. It sets the stage for analyzing the Türkiye–Somalia military partnership through a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) lens. Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory to explore how shared perceptions of insecurity, rather than mere power, brought Türkiye and Somalia into strategic alignment.

1.1 Research Background

In the past decade, Türkiye has transformed its foreign policy toward Africa, particularly under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party). Nowhere is this transformation more visible than in its strategic partnership with Somalia. What began as a humanitarian intervention during the 2011 famine has evolved into a deep cooperation marked by military training, development projects, diplomatic presence, and cultural engagement.

Somalia, a fragile state long burdened by insecurity and institutional collapse, became a focal point of Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy. Decades of civil war, the absence of a centralized government from 1991 to 2012, and the rise of militant groups like Al-Shabaab left Somalia without functioning national institutions, a professional army, or control over large portions of its own territory. Basic governance structures had disintegrated, and foreign interventions often lacked coordination or legitimacy. These conditions made Somalia not only a humanitarian priority, but also a geopolitical vacuum one in which Türkiye saw an opportunity to offer long-term support, rebuild critical state functions, and establish itself as a trusted and embedded partner at a time when few other actors were willing or able to commit with similar depth.

Türkiye's presence expanded into defense training and strategic infrastructure, including the establishment of Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu, its largest overseas military base, inaugurated in 2017. Located on the southern edge of Somalia's capital near the Indian Ocean coast, the base spans approximately 400 hectares and includes training grounds, dormitories, and command facilities. Beyond military support, Türkiye has invested heavily in civil infrastructure across Mogadishu renovating roads such as the airport–Kilometre Four road, restoring the historic Digfer Hospital (now Erdoğan Hospital), and constructing its largest embassy compound in Africa, situated near Aden Adde International Airport.

These efforts reflect broader ambitions to position Türkiye as a regional power countering rivals such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, who have also increased their footprint in Somalia, particularly in regions like Puntland and Somaliland, where port access and security contracts are at play (Altunişik, 2020; Donelli, 2021). Against this backdrop, Türkiye's integrated approach combining humanitarianism, defense, and diplomacy has allowed it to cultivate trust and influence in a context where many actors have struggled to maintain sustained engagement.

From Somalia's perspective, Türkiye represents a reliable, non-colonial partner providing humanitarian support and strategic cooperation in confronting insurgent threats and political fragmentation. Despite the growing visibility of this partnership, academic literature remains limited—particularly in addressing the military and foreign policy dimensions of the cooperation. Thus, an analytical framework grounded in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is essential to understand the decision-making processes and strategic calculations behind this emerging cooperation.

1.2 Problem Statement

Building on this background, the problem this study addresses is the unique character of Türkiye's engagement with Somalia. While many states have avoided deep involvement with fragile states due to risks and instability, Türkiye has opted for direct and sustained cooperation. Existing literature primarily emphasizes humanitarian aid or economic investment but neglects the strategic and military dimensions of Türkiye's policy. Furthermore, Somalia's active agency in seeking and sustaining the partnership is underexplored. Consequently, there is a critical need to examine this cooperation comprehensively through the lens of FPA to better understand the political, strategic, and diplomatic rationales. While many studies focus on the material scope of Türkiye's

involvement in Somalia—such as aid, military cooperation, and infrastructure—fewer have examined how Türkiye has managed to operate so visibly in Somalia without provoking colonial resistance. Given Somalia’s historical trauma of colonialism and its continuing wariness of foreign actors, this raises an important question: why is Türkiye not perceived as a neo-colonial power despite its expansive presence? This thesis addresses that gap by exploring not only the political and strategic dynamics of the relationship, but also the symbolic and perceptual dimensions—particularly how Somali agency, historical memory, and cultural affinity shape the legitimacy of Türkiye’s role. This theme will be revisited in depth in Chapter 5.

1.3 Research Questions

To structure the investigation, this section presents the primary research question along with subsidiary questions. These inquiries guide the thesis toward understanding the motivations, mechanisms, and challenges shaping the Türkiye–Somalia partnership. Arising from the problem statement, the central research question driving this study is:

- What are the foreign policy motivations and strategic interests behind the military cooperation between Türkiye and Somalia, and how has this partnership developed under the AK Party?

From this main inquiry, five sub-questions further structure the investigation:

- RQ1: What internal and external factors led Türkiye to pursue a military partnership with Somalia?
- RQ2: How has Somalia’s geopolitical location influenced Türkiye’s security strategy in the Horn of Africa?
- RQ3: How does Foreign Policy Analysis explain the decision-making processes of both Türkiye and Somalia?
- RQ4: What are the institutional and practical mechanisms through which the cooperation is maintained?
- RQ5: What challenges and criticisms have emerged against this military cooperation, both domestically and internationally?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- The specific objectives that the thesis seeks to achieve. It connects the research questions to broader goals of analyzing foreign policy behavior, partnership building, and strategic cooperation in fragile state contexts. Corresponding to the research questions, the objectives of this study are carefully designed to guide the overall analysis. First, it aims to analyze the foreign policy motivations behind Türkiye's military cooperation with Somalia using the FPA framework. Understanding these motivations is crucial for situating Türkiye's engagement within broader international relations theories. Second, the study explores Somalia's strategic importance and rationale for embracing Türkiye as a key partner, emphasizing the geopolitical value of Somalia in the Horn of Africa. Third, it examines the development and function of Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu, its largest overseas military base, inaugurated in 2017. Located on the southern edge of Somalia's capital near the Indian Ocean coast, the base spans approximately 400 hectares and includes training grounds, dormitories, and command facilities as a symbolic and practical instrument of military cooperation, highlighting its role in shaping bilateral ties. Fourth, the research identifies challenges and criticisms of this cooperation, providing a balanced view of both achievements and limitations. Finally, it contributes to broader academic discussions on strategic partnerships between emerging powers and fragile states, offering insights relevant to scholars and policymakers alike.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of studying Türkiye–Somalia relations. It discusses how the research contributes to international relations scholarship and offers insights into strategic partnerships involving emerging powers and fragile states. building upon the stated objectives, the significance of this study lies in its ability to address an underexplored aspect of Türkiye's Africa opening policy. While much of the existing literature focuses on economic diplomacy or soft power, this research underscores the strategic and military dimensions of Türkiye's engagement. It reveals how fragile states like Somalia can leverage strategic partnerships for survival, while simultaneously demonstrating how emerging powers such as Türkiye utilize military cooperation to expand their regional influence and promote stability. Consequently, the study enriches the fields of foreign policy analysis, security studies, and development diplomacy.

1.6 Hypotheses

We will introduce the core hypotheses that structure of the thesis. Each hypothesis is derived from the research problem and aims to offer testable propositions about the motivations and strategic dynamics underlying Türkiye–Somalia military cooperation.

Unlike traditional partnership that primarily focuses on military security or economic agreements, the Türkiye-Somalia relationship is characterized by a hybrid approach that integrates: **Military Cooperation:** Türkiye trains Somali forces, enhances counterterrorism capabilities, and operates a military base to support long-term stability. **Economic Investment:** Türkiye has invested in Somalia’s infrastructure, including roads, hospitals, and port facilities, helping to rebuild the country’s economic foundation.

Humanitarian Aid and Soft Power: Through organizations such as the Türkiye Red Crescent and the Türkiye Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Türkiye has provided extensive humanitarian assistance, strengthening its influence and reputation in Somalia (Özkan, 2020, p. 98).

This comprehensive model distinguishes the Türkiye-Somalia partnership from other global cooperation, making it a unique case study in international relations. The flexibility of this partnership allows Türkiye to adapt its approach based on evolving regional and domestic considerations, whereas more rigid cooperation such as NATO or the U.S.-South Korea agreement operate within defined military and legal frameworks.

The Türkiye-Somalia partnership represents a distinct form of international cooperation that integrates security, economic, and humanitarian dimensions. While it shares similarities with other partnership, such as China-Pakistan’s economic-military cooperation and NATO’s security-oriented approach, it remains unique due to its hybrid nature. This model positions Türkiye as an influential actor in Africa, extending its geopolitical reach while fostering long-term development in Somalia. As global alliances continue to evolve, the Türkiye-Somalia relationship may serve as a model for other nations seeking to balance strategic interests with humanitarian and economic development (Shinn, 2022, p. 211).

the study proposes three hypotheses to structure the investigation:

- H1: Türkiye’s military cooperation with Somalia is driven by humanitarian intent, strategic depth, and geopolitical competition.

- H2: Somalia views Türkiye as a trusted partner supporting sovereignty and cultural identity.
- H3: The bilateral cooperation reflects a new South-South engagement model for mutual strategic benefit.

These hypotheses provide a theoretical foundation for interpreting the findings and testing the assumptions underlying Türkiye–Somalia cooperation.

1.7 Study Limitations

Recognizing the inherent challenges in researching foreign military cooperation, this section discusses the study’s limitations. It addresses data access constraints, political sensitivities, and evolving regional dynamics that may impact the analysis. Despite its robust design, the study faces certain limitations. The availability of primary data is constrained due to the sensitive nature of military cooperation, and linguistic barriers occasionally limit access to Turkish and Somali-language sources. Moreover, the dynamic nature of regional politics, especially in the Horn of Africa, means that developments occurring after the research period may affect the findings. Nonetheless, the study mitigates these challenges through rigorous triangulation, critical document analysis, and contextual interpretation.

1.8 Methodology and Research Design

The methodological framework guiding the research. It explains the choice of a qualitative case study approach and the application of Foreign Policy Analysis tools to understand the Türkiye–Somalia relationship. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research draws from Foreign Policy Analysis theories and thematic analysis of documentary sources. Somalia serves as the primary case, offering a rich field for understanding asymmetrical but mutually beneficial international cooperation.

Research Design and Strategy

Following Yin’s (2018) case study model, the study captures the complex realities of Türkiye–Somalia cooperation without exerting researcher control over events. Somalia is selected as the core case due to its pivotal role in Türkiye’s Africa Opening Policy.

Data Collection Methods

The research integrates data from peer-reviewed academic literature, policy reports, governmental statements, and reputable media outlets. This multi-source approach ensures a comprehensive and balanced narrative.

Theoretical Framework

Two principal theories guide the analysis:

- Walt's Balance of Threat Theory: elucidating how states align based on perceived threats rather than power alone.
- Hudson's Foreign Policy Analysis: examining internal political dynamics and leadership influences shaping foreign policy decisions.

Ethical Considerations

Maintaining high ethical standards, the research ensures fair representation of Somali agency, mitigates potential bias, and avoids reductionist portrayals. The overall thesis structure logically flows from theoretical foundations to empirical analysis. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework and literature review, laying the conceptual groundwork. Chapter Three analyzes Türkiye's Africa strategy, contextualizing the broader foreign policy environment. Chapter Four investigates the specific mechanisms underpinning Türkiye Somalia cooperation. Chapter Five presents detailed case studies that exemplify key strategic milestones. Chapter Six evaluates the challenges and criticisms confronting the cooperation. Finally, Chapter Seven synthesizes findings and offers conclusions and policy recommendations for both academic and policy audience.

CHAPTER 2:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign policy is rarely the product of chance; it is shaped by deep forces that reflect a nation's identity, ambitions, and strategic concerns. To fully grasp the complexity of Türkiye's evolving partnership with Somalia, it is essential to look beyond surface events and uncover the intellectual frameworks that guide decision-making. This chapter lays the foundation for such an analysis, drawing on key theories of international relations to explain how motivations, threat perceptions, leadership visions, and regional rivalries converge to produce lasting cooperation. Through the lenses of Foreign Policy Analysis, Balance of Threat Theory, and Strategic Depth Doctrine, we explore not only why Türkiye and Somalia aligned, but also how their shared aspirations and external challenges continue to shape their journey together on the global stage.

2.1 Why Nations Build partnership? A Theoretical Discussion

Understanding why states form partnerships requires a critical engagement with major theories of international relations, particularly Realism, Neorealism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. This section explores the strategic, economic, and ideological motivations behind strategic partnership formation, focusing on how security imperatives, mutual interests, and perceptions of threat shape bilateral cooperation. By examining these theoretical foundations, the study establishes a basis for analyzing the Türkiye–Somalia partnership within broader patterns of cooperation. Partnership formation. Cooperation is a fundamental component of international relations, forming the backbone of global security, economic stability, and geopolitical influence. The decision of nations to enter cooperation is often driven by complex strategic calculations, which scholars have examined through various theoretical frameworks. Among the most influential perspectives is Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory (1987), which suggests that states do not simply balance against power, but rather against perceived threats. This distinction is crucial in understanding why nations, such as Türkiye. and Somalia, choose to align with one another.

In classical Realist Theory, states are primarily concerned with their survival in an anarchic international system. This perspective, advocated by Kenneth Waltz (1979), suggests that partnership serve as a mechanism to counterbalance the dominance of any

single state or coalition. However, Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism expand this view by incorporating the role of state perceptions, leadership decisions, and historical experiences. For instance, in Somalia's case, persistent instability, threats from non-state actors such as Al-Shabaab, and regional competition with neighboring states shape its alliance-building strategies.

In contrast, Liberal Institutionalism (Keohane & Nye, 1989) posits that partnerships are not solely built on security concerns but also on economic interdependence, shared values, and diplomatic institutions that facilitate long-term cooperation. The Türkiye -Somali partnership embodies this multidimensional approach, as it extends beyond military cooperation to include economic investments, humanitarian aid, and cultural diplomacy. Unlike transactional cooperation based purely on short-term security interests, this partnership demonstrates elements of constructivist theory, where historical ties and shared Islamic identity reinforce diplomatic engagements.

Further, Paul Poast's (2019) work on alliance negotiations highlights how states negotiate military pacts based on shared interests and external pressures. His insights are relevant to the Türkiye-Somalia case, as Somalia has historically relied on external partnerships for security, while Türkiye has leveraged alliances and partnerships to expand its geopolitical footprint in Africa.

In essence, nations build partnership based on a mix of security imperatives, economic opportunities, historical ties, and diplomatic strategies. It will explore these dimensions in greater depth, focusing on how Somalia perceives its cooperation with Türkiye strategic interests, and the broader geopolitical context of the Horn of Africa.

2.2 Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

Understanding Türkiye's engagement with Somalia requires more than tracing events; it demands a deeper look into the ideas, strategies, and decision-making frameworks that shaped this policy. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) offers the most suitable lens to interpret Türkiye's evolving role in Somalia by highlighting the domestic, strategic, and leadership factors behind its actions.

Türkiye's reorientation toward Africa under the AK Party reflected a broader ambition to expand its global influence beyond traditional Western alignments. Through the Africa Opening Policy, Türkiye positioned itself as a dynamic political, economic, and

security actor in Sub-Saharan Africa. Somalia, with its strategic location and fragile governance, quickly emerged as the centrepiece of this new outreach. Türkiye's involvement, therefore, is not only humanitarian but is rooted in calculated strategic thinking shaped by leadership vision, national interest, and regional opportunity. Understanding Türkiye's engagement with Somalia requires more than tracing events; it demands a deeper look into the ideas, strategies, and decision-making frameworks that shaped this policy. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) offers the most suitable lens to interpret Türkiye's evolving role in Somalia by highlighting the domestic, strategic, and leadership factors behind its actions. Türkiye's reorientation toward Africa under the AK Party reflected a broader ambition to expand its global influence beyond traditional Western alignments. Through the Africa Opening Policy, Türkiye positioned itself as a dynamic political, economic, and security actor in Sub-Saharan Africa. Somalia, with its strategic location and fragile governance, quickly emerged as the centrepiece of this new outreach. Türkiye's involvement, therefore, is not only humanitarian but is rooted in calculated strategic thinking shaped by leadership vision, national interest, and regional opportunity. Türkiye's foreign policy entered a transformative phase in the early 2000s, particularly with the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rise to power in 2002. A significant shift was the Africa Opening Strategy formally launched in 2005, which marked a departure from Türkiye's historically Eurocentric and NATO-dependent outlook. This policy emphasized Türkiye's aim to emerge as a multi-regional power, expanding its political, economic, and military reach into under engaged regions—chief among them, Sub-Saharan Africa (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2022, p. 74). The Horn of Africa, especially Somalia, quickly rose to prominence within this framework due to its geographic location at a maritime nexus and its long-standing security vacuum, which offered both challenges and opportunities for influence projection.

This Africa-focused realignment was not simply about expanding trade routes or gaining access to untapped markets; it represented a broader ambition to recalibrate Türkiye's global image as a responsible, development-oriented actor in the Global South. Somalia, due to its post-conflict fragility, lack of comprehensive state capacity, and geostrategic position adjacent to the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, provided an ideal case study for Türkiye to test and demonstrate its new model of engagement. Rather than relying on conventional military basing or extractive economic deals approaches more typical of Western and Gulf powers Türkiye's narrative emphasized "mutual development," Islamic solidarity, and non-coercive diplomacy (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 83; Erdem, 2023, p. 112).

The symbolic beginning of this deeper engagement occurred during the 2011 famine in Somalia, when then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a high-profile visit to Mogadishu the first by a non-African leader in two decades. His appearance signaled more than humanitarian concern; it was a political message underscoring Türkiye's unique willingness to act swiftly and visibly in the face of crisis. This moment laid the foundation for long-term political, economic, and military cooperation, with Somalia becoming Türkiye's flagship partner in Sub-Saharan Africa (Köse, 2021, p. 49).

2.3 Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory

To provide a theoretical explanation for the Türkiye–Somalia partnership, it applies Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory. It analyzes the four pillars of the theory aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions to explain why and how Türkiye and Somalia perceive common threats and opportunities. This framework offers a structured lens to understand the rationale behind their strategic alignment. Stephen Walt's *The Origins of Cooperation* (1987) provides a critical framework for understanding the Türkiye-Somalia partnership. Unlike the traditional Balance of Power theory, which suggests that states form partnership based on the distribution of power, Walt argues that partnership primarily emerge in response to perceived threats. According to this theory, states assess threats based on four key factors:

2.3.1 Aggregate Power – The Overall Military, Economic, and Demographic Strength of a State.

This includes a nation's ability to sustain long-term security commitments, maintain economic stability, and exert influence over regional and global affairs. A country with significant aggregate power can shape the geopolitical landscape and influence smaller states to align with it for security and economic benefits. Türkiye, as a regional power with a growing defense industry and strong economic capabilities, offers Somalia a reliable partner for both security and development (Aras & Akpınar, 2022). Somalia, despite its internal instability, holds strategic importance due to its location along critical maritime trade routes and its natural resource potential, making it a valuable partner for Türkiye's broader geopolitical ambitions.

2.3.2 Geographic Proximity the Closer a Perceived Threat, the Greater the Likelihood of an Alliance. Geography Plays a Crucial Role in Shaping Security Priorities.

States that share borders or exist in the same region often form alliances to counter common threats. While Türkiye and Somalia are not immediate neighbours, the Horn of Africa's geopolitical significance places Somalia within Türkiye's strategic outreach. Somalia's location near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait a chokepoint for global trade and energy transport makes it an area of interest for regional and global powers. Türkiye's presence in Somalia allows it to monitor regional security threats, counteract piracy and terrorism, and secure trade routes vital to its economy.

2.3.3 Offensive Capabilities the Ability of an Adversary to Launch Aggressive Actions.

The stronger an adversary's military and offensive capabilities, the greater the incentive for states to seek partnership to balance against potential threats. Al-Shabaab's ability to conduct large-scale attacks, control territory, and disrupt governance in Somalia poses a significant challenge to regional stability. Somalia lacks the military infrastructure to counter such threats independently, making Türkiye's military support crucial. Through initiatives like Camp TURKSOM, Türkiye enhances Somalia's defensive and counterterrorism capabilities, ensuring that the Somali government can maintain control over its territory and deter further extremist expansion. Additionally, Türkiye's military presence in Somalia serves as a deterrent to external actors attempting to exploit the region's instability.

2.3.4 Aggressive Intentions the Perceived Hostility of a State.

A state's foreign policy posture whether aggressive or cooperative determines whether partnerships are formed in response to threats. Countries with expansionist ambitions or a history of regional interference are often perceived as threats. The UAE and Saudi Arabia's increasing economic and military influence in the Horn of Africa, including their engagement with Somaliland and Eritrea, has raised concerns for Türkiye. In response, Türkiye has strengthened its ties with Somalia to ensure that its interests in the region remain protected and that no single actor gains disproportionate influence over the Horn of Africa (Menkhaus, 2020).

Applying this framework, Türkiye and Somalia have aligned due to shared security concerns. Somalia views Türkiye as a crucial partner in countering Al-Shabaab, an extremist group that has destabilized the country for over a decade. Al-Shabaab's continuous attacks on

Somali government institutions, civilians, and foreign entities have weakened Somalia's internal security, necessitating external military support. Meanwhile, Türkiye sees Somalia as strategically significant in countering regional competitors, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, who have been expanding their influence in the Horn of Africa through military bases and economic investments (Menkhaus, 2020).

Beyond security, Walt's theory also helps explain Türkiye's economic and diplomatic investments in Somalia. By supporting Somalia's infrastructure development, Türkiye aims to strengthen a key ally while securing its long-term interests in Africa. This is evident in projects such as the renovation of Mogadishu's port, major road construction projects, and Türkiye's Airlines being the first international airline to resume direct flights to Somalia. These economic ventures ensure that Somalia remains aligned with Türkiye's geopolitical interests, reducing the potential for rival states to establish a stronger foothold in the region.

Additionally, the Mogadishu military base serves as a strategic location for Türkiye's broader security objectives. It provides a training ground for the Somali National Army, but it also serves as a regional hub that extends Türkiye's influence across East Africa. The presence of Türkiye's military advisors ensures that Somalia remains a stable partner and acts as a counterbalance to external interventions by other global and regional powers (Aras & Akpınar, 2022).

While Walt's theory explains the alliance from a realist perspective, it is essential to consider other factors that have shaped this relationship. Soft power elements, historical connections, and ideological similarities between the two nations play a significant role in reinforcing their partnership. Türkiye's emphasis on Islamic solidarity and humanitarian diplomacy, combined with Somalia's historical affinity for Ottoman-era relations, has created a deep-rooted connection that transcends mere strategic interests.

Thus, while the Balance of Threat Theory provides a foundational understanding of the Türkiye-Somalia partnership, it must be complemented by broader perspectives that account for the cultural, historical, and economic dimensions that make this partnership unique. By analyzing these additional factors, one can better appreciate why Türkiye has remained a committed ally to Somalia despite ongoing challenges, and why Somalia continues to view Türkiye as an indispensable partner in its path toward stability and growth.

2.4 Common Threats and Opportunities in Partnership Formation

Terrorism and Extremism One of the most significant threats shaping the Türkiye-Somalia cooperation is the ongoing battle against terrorism. Somalia has long struggled with the presence of Al-Shabaab, an extremist organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda, which has conducted insurgencies, targeted attacks, and territorial control efforts, thereby destabilizing the country for over a decade (Hansen, 2013, p. 87). The persistent activities of Al-Shabaab pose severe threats to regional security, economic development, and governance. Türkiye has played a pivotal role in supporting Somalia's counterterrorism operations by providing extensive military training, equipping Somali forces, and sharing intelligence to disrupt terrorist networks (Ali, 2020, p. 145). Through its defense cooperation agreement, Türkiye has contributed significantly to the professionalization of the Somali National Army (SNA), enhancing its capabilities to combat terrorist threats effectively. In addition to direct military support, Türkiye has invested in stabilizing Somali institutions, recognizing that a well-governed state is crucial in preventing terrorist recruitment and infiltration (Bryden, 2014, p. 212).

Maritime Insecurity and Piracy Somalia's vast coastline along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean is one of the world's most critical maritime trade routes, making maritime security a pressing concern for both nations. Piracy in the region peaked between 2008 and 2011, leading to significant economic losses for global trade (Murphy, 2018, p. 95). Additionally, illegal fishing by foreign entities has further exacerbated tensions, depriving Somali coastal communities of vital economic resources. Türkiye has taken an active role in addressing these maritime challenges by supporting the Somali coast guard through naval training, logistical assistance, and maritime security patrols (Bahadur, 2011, p. 156). The deployment of Türkiye naval forces in the region has helped deter pirate attacks, protect international trade routes, and restore Somalia's sovereignty over its waters. Moreover, Türkiye's investment in modernizing Somalia's port infrastructure, particularly in Mogadishu, has enhanced trade efficiency and maritime governance (Hirsch, 2022, p. 77).

Regional Competitors the engagement of Türkiye in Somalia is also influenced by regional power dynamics and competition among Gulf states, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both of which have sought to expand their influence in the Horn of Africa (Lefebvre, 2019, p. 334). The UAE's investments in military bases in Somaliland and Eritrea, along with its support for various local factions, have been interpreted as strategic moves to counterbalance Türkiye's expanding presence in the region. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has

pursued economic and diplomatic engagements to assert its influence. These geopolitical rivalries have heightened the significance of the Türkiye-Somalia partnership, prompting Türkiye to strengthen its military, economic, and diplomatic ties with Somalia. By maintaining a strong partnership with Somalia, Türkiye ensures its long-term presence in the region, counters external interference, and safeguards its strategic interests in Africa (Shinn, 2022, p. 188).

2.4.1 Common Opportunities

Economic Investment and Infrastructure Development Beyond security concerns, the cooperation presents significant economic and development opportunities for both nations. Somalia possesses vast untapped natural resources, including offshore oil and gas reserves, which present lucrative investment prospects for foreign partners (Ross, 2012, p. 276). Türkiye has capitalized on these opportunities by investing in Somalia's infrastructure, including road networks, airports, and healthcare facilities. These investments not only contribute to Somalia's post-conflict reconstruction but also solidify Türkiye's economic foothold in Africa. The renovation of key Somali ports has enhanced trade capacity, facilitating greater economic integration with international markets. Additionally, Turkish businesses have established operations in Somalia, fostering local employment and entrepreneurship (Menkhaus, 2017, p. 319).

2.4.2 Türkiye's Geopolitical Influence in Africa

Türkiye strategic engagement in Somalia extends beyond economic gains, serving as a cornerstone of its broader Africa policy. By strengthening diplomatic and economic ties with African nations, Türkiye positions itself as a key player in shaping the continent's political landscape. The cooperation with Somalia enhances Türkiye's ability to participate in African Union initiatives, United Nations peacekeeping missions, and regional mediation efforts. Somalia, in turn, benefits from increased diplomatic recognition and enhanced bargaining power in international forums (Özkan, 2020, p. 98). Türkiye's success in Somalia serves as a model for its broader African outreach, fostering deeper partnerships with other nations across the continent.

Somalia's Perspective: Security, Stability, and Economic competition From Somalia's standpoint, the partnership with Türkiye is crucial for three main reasons:

2.4.3 Security Assistance

The Somali National Army (SNA) faces significant challenges in combating Al-Shabaab and maintaining national security. The group has consistently targeted Somalia's fragile government institutions, infrastructure, and civilians, leading to prolonged instability. Türkiye's military aid, training programs, and logistical support are essential for strengthening the SNA's operational capacity. The establishment of Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu, Türkiye's largest overseas military training base, has enabled Somali forces to improve their counterinsurgency capabilities and enhance national defense strategies (Hansen, 2013, p. 114).

2.4.4 Economic Reconstruction

Decades of civil war and weak governance have left Somalia's economy in a state of devastation. Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and public services, has been severely damaged, hindering economic recovery. Türkiye has played a major role in rebuilding Somalia's key infrastructure, investing in projects such as the rehabilitation of Mogadishu's Aden Adde International Airport and the reconstruction of essential road networks (Bryden, 2014, p. 187). Additionally, Turkish companies have facilitated trade and commercial expansion, offering new economic opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs.

2.4.5 Diplomatic Leverage

Somalia's alignment with Türkiye provides significant diplomatic advantages. Türkiye's active role in international institutions, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), enables Somalia to gain broader international support in addressing political and humanitarian challenges. Through this partnership, Somalia strengthens its position in diplomatic negotiations, secures more foreign aid, and enhances its global image (Özkan, 2020, p. 135). For Somalia, this partnership is not merely about military cooperation but represents a long-term strategy for sustainable development, governance, and economic stability.

2.5 Türkiye's Perspective: Regional Influence and Strategic Depth

Türkiye's broader foreign policy objectives, situating its engagement with Somalia within the Strategic Depth Doctrine and its Africa Opening Policy. It explores how Türkiye leverages its partnership with Somalia to counter regional competitors, secure maritime trade routes, and project soft power, thus advancing its ambition to become a leading actor in

African and global affairs. Several factors drive Türkiye's deepening relationship with Somalia:

2.5.1 Countering Gulf Competitors

Türkiye's growing influence in Somalia is partly driven by strategic competition with Gulf states such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which have expanded their presence in the Horn of Africa. The UAE, for example, has established military bases in Somaliland and Eritrea, raising concerns in Ankara about potential regional power shifts (Lefebvre, 2019, p. 312). To counterbalance these moves, Türkiye has strengthened its cooperation with Somalia by providing sustained economic and military support.

2.5.2 Maritime Trade Routes

Somalia's strategic location along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean makes it a key player in maritime trade. Türkiye's investments in Somali ports, particularly in Mogadishu, allow it to secure access to crucial trade corridors linking Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Türkiye's presence in Somalia thus aligns with its broader economic interests, including securing supply chains and protecting maritime trade routes from piracy and regional conflicts (Murphy, 2018, p. 210).

2.5.3 Soft Power Projection

Türkiye has leveraged humanitarian aid, cultural diplomacy, and religious ties to strengthen its influence in Somalia. Turkish development agencies, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), have funded healthcare, education, and infrastructure projects that have significantly improved living conditions in Somalia. This approach has allowed Türkiye to position itself as a benevolent power in Africa, fostering long-term goodwill and deepening bilateral relations (Shinn, 2022, p. 145).

Türkiye's engagement in Somalia extends beyond immediate strategic interests, forming part of a broader vision to establish lasting political and economic influence across Africa.

2.6 The Strategic Cooperation Between Türkiye and Somalia

The strategic cooperation between Türkiye and Somalia, focusing on military, economic, and diplomatic collaboration, and connects theory to practice. The relationship between Türkiye and Somalia is shaped by mutual interests, including security cooperation, economic investment, and geopolitical influence. Türkiye's presence in Somalia has

expanded over the past two decades, evolving from humanitarian aid efforts to active military and economic partnerships. This cooperation is driven by Türkiye's broader Africa Opening Policy, which focuses on strengthening diplomatic ties, fostering economic opportunities, and enhancing security collaborations (Özkan, 2020, p. 135).

Türkiye has played a key role in Somalia's security sector, offering military training and establishing the Camp TURKSOM is a military training facility established by Türkiye in Mogadishu, Somalia. It was officially opened in September 2017. The scope of the facility is to train and equip the Somali National Army (SNA) by providing professional military education, leadership courses, and counterterrorism training. It is Türkiye's largest overseas military base and plays a key role in building Somalia's security forces and enhancing regional stability. The Somali army's capabilities. This partnership has been crucial in combating extremist threats, particularly Al-Shabaab, and stabilizing the region. Additionally, Türkiye has provided logistical support and military resources, positioning itself as a leading security partner for Somalia (Hansen, 2013, p. 102).

Beyond security, economic cooperation has been a major component of the cooperation. Türkiye has invested in infrastructure projects, including roads, airports, and hospitals, facilitating Somalia's economic recovery. The establishment of Türkiye businesses, trade agreements, and financial aid has strengthened economic ties between the two nations. These investments also serve Türkiye's interests by expanding its influence in the Horn of Africa and securing strategic maritime routes (Lefebvre, 2019, p. 334).

Another aspect of the partnership is Türkiye's diplomatic role in Somalia, which extends beyond bilateral relations. Türkiye has helped mediate regional disputes and provided support in international forums, reinforcing Somalia's position globally. Educational programs, scholarships, and business initiatives have also contributed to long-term engagement, making Türkiye a key player in Somalia's development (Bryden, 2014, p. 192).

This partnership stands out as a model of non-Western cooperation in Africa, blending security, economic, and diplomatic efforts. As Türkiye continues to deepen its engagement in Somalia, its role in shaping the region's political and economic landscape will remain significant.

2.7 The Türkiye-Somalia Military Cooperation

The military dimension Türkiye–Somalia relationship, identifying the strategic motivations behind Türkiye’s security investments in Somalia. It assesses how military training, infrastructure support, and defense cooperation have strengthened bilateral ties and explores the implications for regional security dynamics. Additionally, it considers how evolving security needs and geopolitical rivalries will shape the future trajectory of this partnership between Türkiye and Somalia is a unique case in international relations, characterized by military cooperation, economic investment, and diplomatic engagement. Unlike conventional cooperation based solely on military defense pacts or economic agreements, the Türkiye-Somalia partnership is a hybrid model that integrates security assistance, economic reconstruction, and soft power diplomacy. This strategic relationship is influenced by historical ties, contemporary geopolitical competition, and Türkiye’s broader Africa opening policy.

Since the early 2010s, Türkiye has deepened its involvement in Somalia through humanitarian aid, military training, and infrastructure development. Its military base in Mogadishu, the largest Turkish overseas facility, exemplifies its security commitment, while its investments in roads, hospitals, and trade signify a long-term economic engagement (Aras & Akpınar, 2022). While Somalia benefits from Türkiye’s development programs and military support, Türkiye secures a foothold in the geopolitically significant Horn of Africa, strengthening its presence in the Red Sea region and countering regional competitors such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. This theory explores the origins of this alliance through Stephen Walt’s Balance of Threat theory, assesses the shared threats and opportunities, and examines the perspectives of both Türkiye and Somalia. Additionally, it compares these partnerships to other global partnerships, analyzes challenges, and evaluates its future trajectory.

CHAPTER 3:

HISTORY OF TÜRKİYE AND SOMALIA RELATIONS

To understand the depth of the Türkiye–Somalia partnership, one must first trace the long arc of history that binds the two nations across centuries of shifting empires, colonial disruptions, and strategic rediscoveries. This chapter revisits the foundations of their relationship—from the quiet presence of the Ottomans along Somali shores to the rupture of European colonization, and later, to Türkiye’s re-emergence in Africa under the AK Party. As Türkiye expanded its foreign policy vision beyond its traditional spheres, Somalia became more than a site of humanitarian concern; it evolved into a focal point for geopolitical influence, military cooperation, and ideological alignment. This chapter examines how history, geography, and political ambition have intersected to shape a relationship that now plays a pivotal role in the Horn of Africa and in Türkiye’s global posture.

3.1 Colonial Impact and Reduction of Ottoman Presence (Late 19th Century – Early 20th Century)

To contextualize modern Türkiye–Somalia relations, it is essential to understand the impact of European colonialism on Somali territories and the concurrent decline of Ottoman influence. This period, roughly from 1884 to the early 1900s, marked a turning point in East African political history. The Berlin Conference (1884–1885) was a significant event that established the division of Africa among European powers, drastically altering the political and social structure of the continent.

During this time, Somali regions were divided between British Somaliland (1884), Italian Somaliland (1889), and French Somaliland (modern Djibouti, 1896). These colonial boundaries were drawn with little regard for existing clan structures, Islamic governance, or cultural unity. As a result, the colonial partitions introduced enduring political fragmentation, undermining indigenous systems based on Islamic law and clan authority.

European powers, particularly Italy and Britain, prioritized extractive economic models. The Italian administration, for instance, focused on cultivating export crops like bananas and exploiting coastal resources, disrupting local economies and traditional

livelihoods. These exploitative systems sowed seeds of inequality and instability that would later contribute to the state collapse in the 1990s.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire, which had maintained influence over Somali coastal regions especially in areas like Zeila and parts of southern Somalia until the mid-19th century was entering a period of steep decline. Faced with internal rebellions, nationalist uprisings, and increasing European pressure, the Ottomans could no longer project power into East Africa. By the early 1900s, Ottoman connections to Somali lands had faded into memory, remembered primarily for religious and cultural ties. However, this memory persisted in Somali oral tradition and was often contrasted with the divisive legacy of European colonialism (Hudson, 2013, p. 14).

The fragmentation caused by the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) and the colonial era sharply contrasts with the relative unity during the Ottoman period. Whereas the Ottomans contributed to the development of educational and religious institutions, colonial regimes introduced arbitrary borders, centralized bureaucracies, and exclusionary governance.

In the 21st century, Türkiye's Africa policy, particularly toward Somalia, invokes this Ottoman past to legitimize its role as a cooperative partner. Under the AK Party (in power since 2002), Türkiye has framed its involvement in Somalia as a revival of historical, cultural, and Islamic solidarity. This narrative positions the Africa Opening Policy as a restoration of relationships severed by colonialism, helping Türkiye position itself ideologically as a benevolent post-colonial partner (Nye, 2004, p. 46).

3.2 Background of Türkiye–Somalia Relations (20th Century – Present)

The specific historical development of Türkiye Somalia relations, from limited diplomatic interactions in the early 20th century to the deepening of ties following the AK Party's rise to power. It highlights key turning points such as the 2011 famine response, illustrating how humanitarian engagement evolved into comprehensive political and military cooperation.

Türkiye's relationship with Somalia goes back to the Ottoman era (16th–19th centuries), although notable diplomatic and military ties started in the early 2000s. Prior to the AK Party's emergence in 2002, Türkiye's involvement with Somalia and Africa was restricted, mainly through international organizations. After the collapse of Somalia's

government in 1991, Türkiye initially chose not to involve itself in Somalia's internal disputes.

In the 2000s, Türkiye modified its foreign policy to acknowledge Africa's increasing geopolitical significance. A significant point in the relations between Türkiye and Somalia happened in 2011, when Türkiye initiated a large aid campaign amid a famine in Somalia. The visit of Prime Minister Erdoğan to Mogadishu in August 2011 signified a crucial moment in the relationship between the two nations. Türkiye's dedication extended past short-term assistance, incorporating sustainable development initiatives in infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

By the middle of the 2010s, Türkiye's engagement intensified, especially through military collaboration. The establishment of a military base in Mogadishu in 2017 marked Türkiye's increasing presence in Africa, aligning with its security priorities. Türkiye's approach combines humanitarian assistance with military partnership, strengthening its influence in the area.

3.3 Geopolitical Rivalries in the Horn of Africa

Türkiye's engagement within the broader context of geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa. It explores how rivalries with Gulf States, China, and Western powers have shaped Türkiye's military and political strategies in Somalia, and how these dynamics affect regional stability and maritime security. The Horn of Africa, an area of significant strategic importance, must be considered in the broader geopolitical context of Türkiye's growing engagement in Somalia. The Horn is an important intersection of the Indian and Mediterranean seas because of its closeness to important marine chokepoints like the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. This area is at the center of international power dynamics and competitiveness since it is essential for international trade routes and the transit of energy supplies. Historically, maintaining commercial superiority and influencing geopolitics have depended heavily on control over these marine routes. Many regional and international countries have taken notice of the Horn of Africa's strategic significance and are competing to increase their own spheres of influence. The Gulf States, China, India, and the United States have all made significant investments in the political and security climate of the region. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have adopted an assertive regional strategy in recent years, building military installations in Somaliland and Eritrea and forming partnerships with a range of Somali political figures. A new level of competitiveness has

been brought about by the Gulf States' growing influence, especially in light of the tense ties between Türkiye and the UAE-Saudi bloc (Walker, 2013, p. 48).

These changing geopolitical tensions must be interpreted as the reason behind Türkiye's 2017 plan to build its largest overseas military post in Mogadishu. Türkiye's strengthens its position as a major player in regional security dynamics and gains a crucial point of influence over important maritime routes by establishing a strategic foothold in Somalia. The four-square-kilometer Mogadishu facility has two functions: it provides training and assistance to the Somali National Army (SNA) and acts as a check on the military actions of hostile nations in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The tenets of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), which emphasize the need of protecting national interests and boosting geopolitical leverage to offset the impact of competing states, are well aligned with this strategy. Türkiye's views the construction of a military base in Somalia as a strategic decision to project power, protect strategic commerce lines, and demonstrate regional influence rather than merely a military expansion exercise. Türkiye secures its geopolitical goals in the Horn of Africa and improves its diplomatic relations with the Somali government by integrating itself within Somalia's military apparatus (Hudson, 2013, p. 22).

Furthermore, Türkiye's strategy in Somalia might be interpreted as a component of its larger goal to extend its influence beyond of its conventional region in the Mediterranean and Middle East. The AK Party's foreign policy framework places a strong emphasis on extending Türkiye's geopolitical reach through strategic partnership and an aggressive military posture, as Hudson (2013) points out. This translates into a twin strategy of military collaboration and developmental aid in Somalia, allowing Türkiye's to solidify its position in an area that is quickly turning into a battlefield for regional and international forces.

Türkiye's involvement in Somalia is a calculated reaction to the changing geopolitical conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Due to the region's strategic location and the aspirations of numerous regional and international players, competition has increased. In an intentional attempt to safeguard its national interests, thwart the influence of adversaries, and strengthen its position as a major actor in regional security, Türkiye's established a military installation in Mogadishu. The AK Party's foreign policy goal of using strategic depth to increase Türkiye's influence internationally is firmly anchored in this strategy.

3.4 The Rise of Türkiye's Modern Engagement with Somalia

The founding of the Republic of Türkiye's in 1923 under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk marked a deliberate reorientation of the nation's diplomatic and strategic priorities. Atatürk's leadership was defined by an ideological commitment to secular modernization and Western integration, reflected in policies that sought to extricate Türkiye's from its Ottoman legacy and align the new republic with European and American powers. This vision relegated regions such as Africa to the periphery of Türkiye's foreign policy concerns. By emphasizing a secular and nationalist identity, Atatürk's reforms fundamentally shifted Türkiye's diplomatic focus towards securing recognition from Western nations and consolidating its sovereignty, as exemplified in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).

Throughout the Cold War, Türkiye's strategic imperatives were firmly anchored within the framework of the Western bloc. Following its accession to NATO in 1952, Türkiye's became an essential bulwark against Soviet expansion, prioritizing European security and Middle Eastern stability. The prevailing geopolitical logic positioned Türkiye's as a frontline state within NATO's containment strategy, thus relegating Africa to a secondary role in Türkiye's foreign policy. Diplomatic engagements on the continent were largely limited to symbolic gestures of solidarity or minor contributions to multilateral initiatives, underscoring Türkiye's commitment to Western alliances and regional priorities (Hudson, 2013, p. 12).

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s introduced a new set of global dynamics, prompting a re-evaluation of Türkiye's foreign policy. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new regional powers in Africa necessitated a reassessment of Türkiye's strategic orientation. It was within this context that the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in 2002 under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan catalyzed a fundamental shift in Türkiye's approach to international relations. Guided by Ahmet Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth Doctrine, the AK Party's foreign policy framework emphasized Türkiye's historical depth and geographical centrality, advocating for a more diversified and proactive engagement with regions historically connected to the Ottoman Empire (Davutoğlu, 2010, p. 28).

Central to this reorientation was the launch of the "Opening to Africa" initiative in 2005, which sought to expand Türkiye's influence in Africa through economic partnerships, humanitarian diplomacy, and soft power outreach. This shift was driven by recognition of

Africa's growing geopolitical and economic importance, as well as the AK Party's desire to foster Islamic solidarity and establish Türkiye's as a pivotal actor in the Islamic world. The 2011 humanitarian crisis in Somalia proved to be a critical juncture in Türkiye's modern engagement with the continent. In response to the famine, Türkiye's distinguished itself through a robust humanitarian intervention, exemplified by Prime Minister Erdoğan's historic visit to Mogadishu a visit that symbolized Türkiye's commitment to providing not only immediate relief but also long-term developmental support (Walker, 2013, p. 50).

Türkiye's engagement with Somalia extended beyond humanitarian aid to encompass comprehensive development initiatives, infrastructure projects, and military cooperation. This approach is emblematic of Türkiye's broader strategic ambitions in the Horn of Africa, a region of critical importance due to its proximity to key maritime chokepoints like the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and its role in global trade networks. By invoking historical ties and presenting itself as a benevolent and stabilizing force, Türkiye's has sought to differentiate its engagement in Somalia from the interventions of other regional and global powers. This aligns with the AK Party's vision of consolidating Türkiye's role as a central actor in the region through a strategy that integrates humanitarian diplomacy, strategic investments, and cultural outreach.

Türkiye's modern engagement with Somalia underscores a deliberate effort to diversify its foreign policy beyond a Eurocentric focus and assert its influence across the Horn of Africa. The AK Party's proactive approach, shaped by the principles of Strategic Depth, reflects an ambition to project Türkiye's soft and hard power capabilities in a region of growing geopolitical significance. Through this evolving partnership, Türkiye's has signalled its intent to be a key player in shaping regional stability and fostering cooperative ties based on shared historical, religious, and strategic interests.

3.5 Establishing a Military and Diplomatic Presence: Mogadishu Facility

Türkiye's establishment of its largest overseas military base in Mogadishu. It examines the strategic motivations behind the facility's creation, its role in training Somali security forces, and its significance in Türkiye's broader efforts to assert regional influence and secure maritime trade routes. Türkiye's involvement in Somalia began with humanitarian assistance but gradually transformed into a strategic military collaboration. WHEN Türkiye's built its largest military base abroad in Mogadishu in 2017, it signified a significant change in its strategy towards Somalia. This facility, encompassing approximately 4 square kilometers,

was created to function as an all-inclusive training center for the Somali National Army (SNA). It offers essential military training, logistical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives to improve the operational abilities of Somali forces. Türkiye's is collaborating with Somalia militarily to help fight Al-Shabaab and bring stability to the nation (Walker, 2013, p. 48).

Türkiye's wider goals of asserting its influence in the Horn of Africa coincide with the strategic significance of the Mogadishu base. Türkiye's holds a strategic advantage over important maritime routes, like the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, due to the base's location, which is essential for worldwide trade and oil transportation networks. Türkiye's is enhancing its military presence and emerging as an important participant in regional security dynamics, while also strengthening its bilateral relations with Somalia. Military bases are crucial for demonstrating strength, spreading influence, and protecting national priorities in geopolitically disputed regions (Kaplan, 2012, p52 A prime instance of this tactical approach is Türkiye's involvement in Mogadishu, allowing it to safeguard its regional interests while also supporting Somalia's security framework.

The military partnership involving Somalia and Türkiye's showcases dedication to a dual focus on security and development. The main goals of the base are to support the Somali National Army in fighting extremist dangers, especially Al-Shabaab, and to develop an effective military able to ensure national security. Moreover, this initiative highlights Türkiye's aim to serve as a stabilizing influence in the region by differentiating its military operations from those of other foreign nations.

Türkiye's larger goals of asserting its influence in the Horn of Africa correspond with the strategic significance of the Mogadishu base. Türkiye's possesses a strategic advantage over essential maritime routes, including the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, due to the base's location, which is vital for international trade and oil supply chains. Türkiye's is establishing a strong military presence and emerging as an important force in regional security matters, while also strengthening its bilateral relationships with Somalia. Military bases are crucial for demonstrating strength, spreading influence, and protecting national interests in geopolitically disputed regions (Kaplan, 2012, p. 52). A prime illustration of this strategic thought is Türkiye's involvement in Mogadishu, allowing it to safeguard its regional interests and support Somalia's security framework.

The defense partnership between Somalia and Türkiye's illustrates dedication two-fold agenda of safety and progress. The base's main goals are to aid the Somali National Army in fighting extremist dangers, especially Al-Shabaab, and to develop a competent military that can uphold internal security. Additionally, this initiative highlights Türkiye's aim to serve as a stabilizing influence in the area by setting its military operations apart from those of other foreign nations.

Through the establishment of the Mogadishu facility, Türkiye's aims to showcase its continuous backing of Somalia's security and state formation initiatives while pursuing its geopolitical goals. This tactical action enhances Türkiye's diplomatic ties with Somalia and reinforces its presence in the region, establishing it as a key participant in an area characterized by fierce competition and evolving partnership.

3.6 The Role of Islamic Solidarity in Türkiye's- Somalia Relations

Beyond strategic and economic interests, this section explores the role of Islamic solidarity as a driver of Türkiye's engagement with Somalia. It analyzes how shared religious and cultural values have been leveraged by the AK Party to strengthen diplomatic ties and distinguish Türkiye from other external actors operating in the Horn of Africa. its geopolitical and strategic objectives, Türkiye's foreign policy toward Somalia is heavily influenced by the Islamic solidarity principle. The Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) strategy has been based on this ideology, which reflects the goals set forth by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu. In order to build stronger ties with countries that have a majority of Muslims, the AK Party has highlighted the unifying power of Islamic brotherhood under its leadership. This idea of solidarity is not just symbolic; rather, it is a purposeful and strategic component of Türkiye's foreign policy framework that helps to foster partnership, increase trust, and strengthen Türkiye's soft power credentials in the Islamic world (Hudson, 2013, p. 20).

The Ottoman-Somali relationship's historical background serves as a vital basis for Türkiye's contemporary expression of Islamic unity. In East Africa, the Ottoman Empire forged important cultural and theological connections that supported Islamic education and made religious governance easier. In addition to establishing Sharia-based judicial systems and integrating important coastal cities into a larger network of Islamic trade and intellectual interchange, Ottoman officials constructed mosques and religious schools. Despite being lessened by colonial actions, this legacy had a lasting impact on the ecclesiastical and cultural

environment of the area. In order to reinforce the idea of Türkiye's as a long-standing and culturally compatible partner, modern Türkiye's authorities deliberately draw on this Ottoman heritage to present Türkiye's involvement as an extension of their shared religious and cultural links.

Türkiye's humanitarian and development efforts in Somalia are a concrete manifestation of the AK Party's emphasis on Islamic unity. Türkiye's has made significant expenditures in constructing schools, hospitals, and places of worship thanks to the work of organizations like the Türkiye's Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). The objective of this strategy is to integrate Türkiye's into Somali society's social and cultural fabric while simultaneously enhancing local infrastructure. In addition to meeting immediate developmental requirements, these investments demonstrate Türkiye's dedication to the welfare and spiritual well-being of Muslim communities (Hudson, 2013, p. 22).

Another important aspect of Türkiye's soft power strategy is its emphasis on Islamic solidarity. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is the capacity of a state to influence the preferences of other people by attraction and appeal as opposed to force or money (Nye, 2004, p. 46). This entails presenting Türkiye's as a kind and culturally compatible actor in the framework of Türkiye's -Somalia ties. Türkiye's maintains its reputation as a defender of Islamic principles and a trustworthy ally in the Muslim world by aggressively advancing Islamic education, building mosques, and aiding religious authorities. By placing this emphasis, Türkiye's is able to set itself apart from Western nations, who are frequently thought of as having self-serving and secular goals in the area.

From a diplomatic standpoint, Türkiye's is fostering long-term strategic partnerships in Somalia by utilizing Islamic unity. Türkiye's obtains a distinct foothold in Somalia's political and social scene by presenting its operations within a religious framework. Türkiye's adherence to Islamic principles strengthens its legitimacy and promotes closer relations with both state and non-state actors in a nation where religious legitimacy is essential to social cohesion and government. The frequently conditional and secular aid strategies used by many Western countries stand in sharp contrast to this strategy, which may incite mistrust and resistance among the local populace (Walker, 2013, p. 50).

Türkiye's uses Islamic brotherhood as a diplomatic ploy to strengthen its position as a leader in global institutions such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Türkiye's aims to become a leader in the larger Islamic world by promoting greater collaboration

among nations with a majority of Muslims and establishing itself as a protector of Muslim interests. In the context of Somalia, where Türkiye's support for Islamic education and community-building efforts has been widely embraced by Somali leaders and communities, this strategic positioning is particularly pertinent.

the AK Party's foreign policy places a strong focus on Islamic solidarity in Türkiye's Somalia relations, which reflects a calculated approach to using religious and cultural links to further diplomatic and developmental objectives. Türkiye's has positioned itself as a trustworthy partner dedicated to the well-being of Muslim communities by referencing the shared history of Ottoman-Somali relations and emphasizing shared Islamic principles. In addition to strengthening Türkiye's soft power, this strategy supports its larger goals of establishing its dominance in the Islamic world. Through these initiatives, Türkiye's involvement in Somalia serves as a striking example of how Islamic solidarity may be skilfully used to create long-lasting relationships and further foreign policy goals.

3.7 The AK Party's Africa Engagement Strategy

The broader Africa strategy formulated by the AK Party, positioning Somalia as a centrepiece of Türkiye's continental engagement. It analyzes how Türkiye's expansion of diplomatic missions, trade relations, and humanitarian outreach across Africa reflects a deliberate attempt to project influence beyond its traditional spheres of interest. The emergence of the AK Party in 2002, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and influenced by the intellectual ideas of Ahmet Davutoğlu, signified a crucial change in Türkiye's foreign policy. Shifting from its typical Eurocentric orientation, the AK Party adopted a more varied and multifaceted foreign policy, placing considerable emphasis on Africa. This shift concluded with the "Africa Opening Policy" of 2005, a ground breaking effort that transformed Türkiye's involvement with the continent.

The Africa Opening Policy was motivated by an acknowledgment of Africa's increasing geopolitical and economic significance. The initiative aimed to broaden Türkiye's diplomatic influence, enhance economic relationships, and reinforce cultural and humanitarian links throughout the continent. From 2005 to 2023, Türkiye expanded its embassies in Africa from 12 to 43, demonstrating its dedication to enhancing bilateral connections. This diplomatic growth supported Türkiye's increasing trade with Africa, which rose from \$5 billion in 2003 to more than \$30 billion by 2021, with Türkiye's firms

contributing significantly to infrastructure projects, such as building roads, ports, and airports.

Humanitarian diplomacy served as the foundation of this policy. Organizations like the Türkiye's Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and Diyanet led significant efforts in areas such as healthcare, education, and disaster assistance. Somalia, specifically, became a central aspect of Türkiye's humanitarian efforts. The 2011 famine in Somalia represented a pivotal time, as Türkiye's set itself apart with a strong and prominent intervention, highlighted by Prime Minister Erdoğan's landmark visit to Mogadishu. This visit, along with ongoing developmental initiatives, reinforced Türkiye's image as a trustworthy and generous ally in Africa (Hudson, 2013, p. 12). The Africa Opening Policy also possessed a strategic aspect, in line with Türkiye's wider goal to establish itself as a key player in the Global South. Through establishing partnerships based on mutual respect and common development objectives, Türkiye's aimed to counteract the influence of both regional and global powers, such as the UAE, China, and Western countries. This strategy combined soft power via humanitarian assistance and cultural diplomacy with hard power, such as military collaboration, to position Türkiye's as a stabilizing influence in Africa (Davutoğlu, 2010, p. 28).

The Africa Opening Policy reflects the AK Party's dedication to reshaping Türkiye's international position, transcending conventional Western partnerships to connect with rising areas of strategic importance. Through its historical relationships, cultural bonds, and humanitarian outreach, Türkiye's has enhanced its presence in Africa while showcasing its ability to serve as a link between continents, promoting stability and progress throughout the Horn of Africa and further afield.

3.8 The Military Cooperation Between Türkiye And Somalia Under the AK Party?

The transformation of Türkiye's involvement in Somalia from humanitarian assistance to robust military cooperation. It analyzes how Türkiye's strategic objectives, framed by the AK Party's foreign policy doctrines, have led to the establishment of long-term military partnerships such as Camp TURKSOM, embedding Türkiye deeply in Somalia's security architecture. Türkiye's military partnership with Somalia has transformed into an important strategic partnership, mirroring Türkiye's wider geopolitical objectives under the AK Party. Originally centered on humanitarian aid during the 2011 Somali famine, Türkiye's involvement grew into a multifaceted partnership that balanced military engagement with

ongoing humanitarian initiatives. This change corresponds with the Strategic Depth doctrine, which aims to utilize Türkiye's geographic location to enhance its influence, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Somalia's key position in the Horn of Africa, situated at the intersection of significant maritime routes, has drawn the attention of global forces such as the U.S., China, and the UAE. Türkiye's engagement demonstrates how geography can affect foreign partnerships, as Somalia's location allows Türkiye's to strengthen its presence in crucial areas for trade and regional stability.

The military dimension of Türkiye-Somalia relations expanded considerably following the 2010s, reaching a peak with the creation of Türkiye's biggest foreign military base in Mogadishu in 2017. This facility trains the Somali National Army and enhances Somalia's capability to address security threats such as Al-Shabaab. Moreover, Türkiye has aided in the reconstruction of infrastructure, such as hospitals. Türkiye's involvement in Somalia, through collaborative exercises and capacity-building initiatives, mirrors wider strategic goals in Africa, blending military practicality with humanitarian efforts.

military collaboration between Türkiye's and Somalia, it's between Türkiye's foreign policy, national interests, and humanitarian goals.

3.9 Humanitarian and Developmental Implications of Türkiye's Presence in Somalia

The humanitarian and developmental aspects of Türkiye's engagement with Somalia. It discusses how investments in healthcare, education, and infrastructure not only address immediate needs but also serve Türkiye's broader strategic interests by building good will, fostering stability, and reinforcing long-term partnerships. In addition to its strategic and security goals, Türkiye's engagement with Somalia places a strong emphasis on humanitarian and development efforts. This aspect of Türkiye's participation focuses on enhancing living conditions, repairing infrastructure, and promoting sustainable development. Over the last decade, Türkiye's investments in healthcare, education, and infrastructure have transformed local communities and made significant contributions to Somalia's state-building efforts. The creation of hospitals, schools, and roads not only met immediate humanitarian needs, but also provided the groundwork for long-term economic and social development. The incorporation of developmental projects into Türkiye's overall policy is also consistent with the concepts of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), which emphasise the significance of tackling both urgent security problems and long-term structural challenges. By focusing on development, Türkiye's not only increases bilateral ties with Somalia, but also supports regional stability

and economic resilience. This approach strengthens Türkiye's image as a beneficent regional actor dedicated to promoting peace and development in its partner countries.

Finally, Türkiye's emphasis on humanitarian and developmental measures in Somalia represents a purposeful effort to align soft power diplomacy with its larger foreign policy goals. Türkiye's has improved living conditions in Somalia by investing in healthcare, education, and infrastructure, as well as contributing to state-building efforts. This approach, based on the AK Party's goal of combining soft and strong power, demonstrates Türkiye's commitment to promoting peace, development, and long-term cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

Türkiye's engagement with Somalia under the AK Party is a carefully constructed and comprehensive policy that blends historical ties, ideological objectives, geopolitical goals, and humanitarian assistance. Türkiye's has sought to re-establish and strengthen its influence in Somalia by presenting itself as a beneficent partner committed to mutual prosperity and stability. Ahmet Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth Doctrine aims to utilize Türkiye's geographical and historical linkages to enhance its influence in places beyond its traditional orbit, including the Horn of Africa.

The 2011 famine in Somalia was a watershed moment for Türkiye's, as it distanced itself from other international actors by acting quickly and decisively on humanitarian issues. This aggressive engagement paved the way for broader military cooperation and long-term development projects. Türkiye's creation of its largest foreign military post in Mogadishu in 2017 demonstrates its commitment to security cooperation and reflects its ambition to project influence and oppose competing countries in the area, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Türkiye's approach has included more than just military action; it has also placed a strong emphasis on humanitarian and development measures. Türkiye's hopes to promote long-term stability in Somalia by investing in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This holistic approach is consistent with Türkiye's overarching objective of combining soft and hard power to form long-term relationships based on shared religious and cultural values.

Türkiye's emphasis on Islamic solidarity serves as both an ideological statement and a strategic weapon for fostering confidence and deepening ties. Türkiye has positioned itself as a protector of Muslim communities and promoter of shared values by defining its participation in the context of religious and cultural unity. This tactic has boosted Türkiye's diplomatic legitimacy and enabled it to form long-term cooperation with Somalia.

Overall, Türkiye's engagement with Somalia reflects its larger aims to enhance its regional influence and establish itself as a vital role in Horn of Africa. The combination of historical narratives, military cooperation, developmental projects, and cultural diplomacy demonstrates a complex and nuanced strategy for advancing Türkiye's foreign policy goals while boosting regional stability and prosperity. The other chapters of this thesis will delve deeper into these issues, focusing on specific areas of military cooperation, geopolitical competition, and the ramifications for regional stability and global trade.

One of the most significant contributions has been in the field of healthcare. Türkiye's has constructed and restored hospitals and clinics, bringing vital medical services to regions that previously had access to dependable healthcare. The Erdogan Hospital in Mogadishu, for example, demonstrates Türkiye's dedication to developing health infrastructure. This center provides modern medical treatments as well as training for Somali healthcare personnel, thereby contributing to the development of local capacity and a sustainable healthcare system. Similarly, improvements in educational infrastructure have increased access to high-quality education, with schools and vocational training facilities helping to shape the next generation of Somali leaders (Hudson, 2013, p. 25).

Beyond healthcare and education, Türkiye's infrastructure initiatives, such as the development of highways, airports, and government buildings, have helped Somalia's overall state-building efforts. These activities are more than just acts of charity; they are consistent with Türkiye's soft power strategy of portraying itself as a benign and supporting partner. Türkiye's investment in infrastructure promotes economic growth, strengthens government institutions, and improves internal connection. This holistic strategy demonstrates Türkiye's desire to establish long-term partnerships based on mutual progress and prosperity (Nye, 2004, p. 47).

Foreign policy-wise, Türkiye's emphasis on humanitarian relief and development is consistent with the AK Party's concept of using soft and hard power to achieve larger goals. The AK Party's foreign policy, based on the notion of strategic depth, seeks to establish Türkiye's as a dominant regional force by combining military and developmental help. This dual approach enables Türkiye's to handle immediate security concerns while also addressing fundamental issues like poverty, illiteracy, and poor governance. This strategic blend of soft and physical power is critical for Türkiye's long-term influence because it allows it to win both diplomatic legitimacy and grassroots support in partner nations (Nye, 2004, p. 47).

Türkiye's efforts in Somalia have been positively accepted by local populations and the Somali administration, who see these activities as genuine acts of solidarity rather than political posturing. This excellent reception can be due to Türkiye's cultural and religious affinity approach, which is very popular in Somali society. Türkiye's strengthens its credibility and promotes confidence and goodwill among Somalis by framing its help in terms of Islamic solidarity and shared heritage. This technique sets Türkiye's apart from other external actors, whose engagements are frequently regarded as transactional or opportunistic.

Integrating developmental projects into Türkiye's overall policy is also consistent with Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) concepts, which emphasize the need of tackling both urgent security concerns and long-term structural challenges. By focusing on development, Türkiye's not only increases bilateral ties with Somalia, but also supports regional stability and economic resilience. This approach strengthens Türkiye's image as a beneficent regional actor dedicated to promoting peace and development in its partner countries.

Türkiye's emphasis on humanitarian and developmental measures in Somalia represents a purposeful effort to align soft power diplomacy with its larger foreign policy goals. Türkiye's has improved living conditions in Somalia by investing in healthcare, education, and infrastructure, as well as contributing to state-building efforts. This approach, based on the AK Party's goal of combining soft and strong power, demonstrates Türkiye's commitment to promoting peace, development, and long-term cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

Türkiye's engagement with Somalia under the AK Party is a carefully constructed and comprehensive policy that blends historical ties, ideological objectives, geopolitical goals, and humanitarian assistance. Türkiye's has sought to re-establish and strengthen its influence in Somalia by presenting itself as a beneficent partner committed to mutual prosperity and stability. Ahmet Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth Doctrine aims to utilize Türkiye's geographical and historical linkages to enhance its influence in places beyond its traditional orbit, including the Horn of Africa. The combination of historical narratives, military cooperation, developmental projects, and cultural diplomacy demonstrates a complex and nuanced strategy for advancing Türkiye's foreign policy goals while boosting regional stability and prosperity. The other chapters of this thesis will delve deeper into these issues, focusing on specific areas of military cooperation, geopolitical rivalries, and the ramifications for regional stability and global trade.

The 2011 famine in Somalia marked a turning point for Türkiye's because it set itself apart from other international players by responding to humanitarian crises swiftly and forcefully. Long-term economic initiatives and wider military collaboration were made possible by this assertive involvement. The establishment of Türkiye's largest foreign military installation in Mogadishu in 2017 shows the country's dedication to security cooperation as well as its desire to project power and challenge other nations in the region, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Türkiye's strategy has focused heavily on development and humanitarian initiatives in addition to military action. Türkiye's intends to invest in infrastructure, healthcare, and education in Somalia in order to foster long-term stability. This all-encompassing strategy aligns with Türkiye's larger goal of leveraging both hard and soft power to build enduring partnerships founded on shared cultural and religious values.

Additionally, Türkiye's focus on Islamic unity is a strategic tool for building trust and strengthening ties as well as an ideological declaration. By framing its involvement in the framework of religious and cultural unity, Türkiye's has positioned itself as a defender of Muslim communities and an advocate of common values. This strategy has increased Türkiye's diplomatic credibility and made it possible for it to establish enduring partnerships with Somalia. All things considered, Türkiye's involvement with Somalia is indicative of its broader objectives to increase its regional clout and solidify its position as a significant player in the Horn of Africa.

The AK Party's involvement in Somalia is a well-thought-out and complex plan that blends historical ties, ideological motives, strategic goals, and humanitarian outreach. By portraying itself as a helpful partner dedicated to stability and mutual progress, Türkiye's has attempted to re-establish and expand its influence in Somalia, building on its historical ties to the Ottoman Empire. As a guiding framework, Ahmet Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth Doctrine highlights Türkiye's desire to use its historical and geographic ties to increase its influence outside of its traditional zone, especially in the Horn of Africa.

A turning point was the 2011 famine in Somalia, when Türkiye's stood out from other international players by acting quickly and significantly to alleviate the situation. Long-term development initiatives and closer military collaboration were made possible by this proactive involvement. Türkiye's commitment to security cooperation is seen in the construction of its largest foreign military installation in Mogadishu in 2017, which also

shows its aim to project influence and challenge regional rival countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In addition to military action, Türkiye's has placed a strong focus on humanitarian and development projects as part of its strategy. Türkiye's hopes to promote long-term peace and deal with the underlying causes of instability in Somalia by making investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. This all-encompassing strategy is in line with Türkiye's overarching goal of leveraging both hard and soft power to create enduring partnerships founded on common cultural and religious values.

Türkiye's focus on Islamic solidarity serves as a strategic instrument to promote trust and forge closer ties in addition to being an expression of its ideological stance. Türkiye's has positioned itself as a protector of Muslim communities and an advocate of common values by presenting its involvement within a narrative of religious and cultural unity. This strategic move has fostered Türkiye's diplomatic position and established long-lasting cooperation in Somalia.

All things considered, Türkiye's involvement with Somalia reflects its larger goals to increase its regional clout and become a major force in the Horn of Africa. Combining historical accounts, military collaboration, development projects, and cultural diplomacy demonstrates a sophisticated and multifaceted approach meant to further Türkiye's foreign policy goals while fostering regional security and progress.

CHAPTER 4:

TÜRKİYE'S COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT IN SOMALIA (2009–Present)

As Türkiye's global aspirations have matured under the AK Party, its engagement with Africa has evolved from symbolic outreach into a deliberate, multidimensional foreign policy strategy. This is how Somalia became the focal point of that vision a testing ground for Türkiye's integrated approach to diplomacy, defense, development, and cultural influence. Moving beyond episodic aid or traditional alliance-building, Türkiye has constructed a layered model of state engagement rooted in strategic depth, regional competition, and long-term institutional investment. By unpacking Türkiye's actions through the lens of Foreign Policy Analysis, this chapter reveals how Ankara has transformed its presence in Somalia into a blueprint for reshaping power relations in the Horn of Africa.

4.1 Türkiye's Strategic Competition and Timeline of Engagement in Somalia (2009–Present)

Türkiye's entry into Somalia's political and security landscape must be understood within the context of intensifying geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa. As a region positioned at the crossroads of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Horn has attracted attention from global and regional powers—including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, China, and the United States—each seeking influence through infrastructure projects, military access, and economic ties. Türkiye's approach diverged from traditional models by combining humanitarian aid, development diplomacy, and military training into a long-term, state-focused engagement strategy. This section outlines the evolution of Türkiye's involvement in Somalia since 2009, tracking how a crisis-driven humanitarian response developed into a multidimensional partnership, and how Türkiye positioned itself amid rival powers competing for leverage in Somalia and the broader Horn region. Türkiye's presence in Somalia must be understood within the broader framework of regional competition in the Horn of Africa, a strategically significant corridor linking the Red Sea, Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian Ocean. Türkiye's entry into Somalia's political and security landscape occurred at a time when other regional and global actors most notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, the United States, and China were actively vying for influence. However, Türkiye's approach, combining humanitarianism, developmentalism,

and military training, offered an alternative model that challenged more transactional or militarized engagements in the region (Erdem, 2023, p. 122).

The timeline of Türkiye's involvement begins with a 2009 military cooperation agreement, which laid the groundwork for formal security engagement between Ankara and Mogadishu. This early agreement was largely overshadowed by the 2011 famine, which catalyzed Türkiye's pivot toward Somalia and expanded the relationship beyond humanitarian assistance. Türkiye's response, including high-level political visits, infrastructure investments, and long-term aid, set the tone for a more institutionalized bilateral partnership. The UAE, by contrast, began establishing economic and military ties in Somaliland and Puntland by 2014, supporting infrastructure projects such as the Berbera Port, while also training local security forces without federal oversight moves that Türkiye and Mogadishu interpreted as undermining Somali national unity (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 97).

The period between 2015 and 2023 witnessed the most visible escalation of Türkiye's comprehensive strategy in Somalia. This included the 2017 inauguration of Camp TURKSOM, Türkiye's largest overseas military facility, which has since become the central hub for training Somali National Army (SNA) forces. The Gorgor Brigades, an elite unit formed with Turkish support, were pivotal in numerous counterinsurgency operations against Al-Shabaab and have come to symbolize Türkiye's deep security investment in Somalia's stabilization (SETA, 2021, pp. 9–13).

Simultaneously, Türkiye leveraged economic diplomacy to complement its military influence. Turkish firms like Albayrak Group and Favori LLC took over management of key economic assets such as Mogadishu Port and Aden Adde International Airport. These deals not only provided revenue streams for the Somali federal government but also established long-term commercial ties binding Somalia's economic trajectory to Türkiye's interests (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 228).

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia attempted to assert influence through financial diplomacy, often promising aid or religious ties but lacking the tangible infrastructure or security commitments seen in Türkiye's model. By 2021, the geopolitical landscape had crystallized into a tripartite competition between Türkiye, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia each supporting different local actors and economic visions for Somalia's future (Erdem, 2023, p. 130).

Türkiye's strategy between 2009 and the present reflects a cumulative and adaptive approach: starting with humanitarianism, scaling up through development and economic initiatives, and culminating in long-term security commitments. Unlike the episodic interventions of Gulf and Western powers, Türkiye's engagement is marked by continuity, physical presence, and multilevel cooperation, giving it a sustainable and visible advantage in Somali state-building.

4.2 Türkiye's Defense Strategy in Somalia: Projection of Security through Partnership

One of the defining pillars of Türkiye's engagement in Somalia is its growing emphasis on defense diplomacy. This aspect of the relationship transcends mere military aid and instead represents a deliberate projection of Türkiye's defense doctrine one that is grounded in partnership, sovereignty respect, and long-term institutional capacity-building. Unlike traditional military interventions which emphasize boots on the ground or proxy militias, Türkiye's security presence in Somalia is largely focused on formalizing and professionalizing the Somali National Army (SNA) through structured training, logistics, and advisory support.

The crown jewel of this strategy is Camp TURKSOM, established in 2017, which serves as the largest Turkish military base abroad. According to the SETA Foundation (2021), over 5,000 Somali soldiers had been trained at the facility by 2020, including the elite Gorgor Brigade. These soldiers are not merely tactical foot soldiers; they represent a new generation of Somali military personnel equipped with doctrines, tactics, and loyalty aligned with the federal government—a crucial shift in a country long plagued by factionalism and militia politics (SETA, 2021, p. 11).

What makes Türkiye's military model in Somalia distinct is its institutional framing. Rather than building paramilitary actors or engaging through private security firms as some Gulf countries have done Türkiye embeds its military assistance within formal state-building frameworks. Training programs are aligned with national military curricula, equipment is delivered through government channels, and operations are coordinated with Somalia's Ministry of Defense. This institutional coherence gives Türkiye's security support a level of legitimacy and effectiveness that is often lacking in other external partnerships (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 223).

Türkiye's military strategy is not isolated from its geopolitical ambitions. The Horn of Africa is a contested region where military basing translates into broader regional leverage.

Türkiye's presence in Somalia allows it to counterbalance the UAE's installations in Somaliland (e.g., Berbera Port) and project maritime awareness in a zone that borders one of the world's busiest shipping corridors. This is not simply about altruism or shared Islamic values; it is a calculated geopolitical investment in a region that bridges the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 89).

Furthermore, Türkiye's military diplomacy in Somalia also serves a domestic purpose. It allows Türkiye to showcase the exportability of its defense industry and military doctrine, providing a testing ground for future engagements in other African or post-conflict states. Turkish-made equipment, vehicles, and tactical strategies are increasingly integrated into Somali operations, creating interdependence and solidifying Türkiye's role as not just a donor but a strategic defense partner (Erdem, 2023, p. 118).

Türkiye's security presence in Somalia reflects a mature and multilayered strategy. It seeks to build the capacity of a sovereign government, secure a strategic maritime region, balance regional competitors, and simultaneously expand the reach of its defense sector. This sophisticated model of military diplomacy underpins Türkiye's broader vision for Africa one that blends ideology, interest, and institution-building in equal measure.

4.3 Türkiye's Economic and Cultural Power Projection in Somalia

Parallel to its security cooperation, Türkiye's economic and cultural investments in Somalia are central to its strategy of long-term engagement and influence projection. These efforts go beyond traditional development aid to form a holistic model of economic diplomacy and soft power. Türkiye's approach seeks not only to rehabilitate Somalia's war-torn infrastructure but also to establish interdependent commercial, cultural, and institutional networks that embed Turkish presence into the Somali state and society.

From as early as 2011, Turkish companies began bidding for and managing strategic assets in Somalia. Notably, the Albayrak Group, a Turkish conglomerate, was awarded a 20-year contract to manage Mogadishu Port, one of Somalia's most critical revenue-generating assets. The Favori LLC, another Turkish company, took over management of Aden Adde International Airport (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 95). These contracts, brokered through government-to-government channels, not only brought much-needed infrastructure modernization but also allowed Türkiye to embed itself directly into Somalia's economic lifelines.

The financial implications of these agreements are significant. According to Erdem (2023), port revenues increased by over 30% within three years of Albayrak's management, allowing the Somali federal government to expand its budget and improve service delivery. The model used by Türkiye is also structured to share revenue between the foreign operator and the host government, unlike some Gulf-based contracts which disproportionately benefit the external actor (Erdem, 2023, p. 122). This revenue-sharing mechanism builds public legitimacy and strengthens bilateral trust.

In addition to direct investment, Türkiye has offered significant concessional loans, technical assistance, and capacity-building programs aimed at civil infrastructure. Turkish-funded projects include roads connecting Mogadishu to other regions, health clinics, vocational training centers, and schools. These initiatives are executed through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), which has become a fixture in Somali development programming. TİKA's presence is particularly notable because it not only delivers aid but also emphasizes training and local ownership—thereby avoiding dependency and fostering sustainability (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 228).

Culturally, Türkiye has engaged in what can be described as religious soft power. Through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), Türkiye has supported the construction and renovation of mosques, offered religious education scholarships to Somali students, and sent religious leaders to collaborate with Somali clerics. This form of engagement draws on shared Sunni Islamic identity and offers an alternative to the more Salafi-oriented religious outreach by Saudi Arabia (Köse, 2021, p. 54).

One of the most telling indicators of Türkiye's soft power success in Somalia is the popularity of Turkish language, culture, and educational exchanges. Hundreds of Somali students have received scholarships to study in Turkish universities, and Turkish has begun to be taught in select Somali secondary schools. These academic exchanges are not merely symbolic—they produce a generation of Somali elites with professional, linguistic, and ideological ties to Türkiye, reinforcing Ankara's influence over the long term (SETA, 2021, p. 15).

Importantly, these economic and cultural engagements have also allowed Türkiye to maintain a civilian footprint even during periods of heightened insecurity. When other international actors reduce their presence following terrorist attacks or political instability,

Türkiye's embassies, businesses, and aid agencies have remained operational, solidifying its image as a committed and consistent partner.

Türkiye's economic and cultural strategy in Somalia is a blueprint for durable influence. By investing in long-term infrastructure, supporting religious and educational networks, and embedding its economic institutions within Somali systems, Türkiye is not merely offering aid it is building a foundation for strategic interdependence.

4.4 Türkiye's Competitive Edge and Strategic Outlook in Somalia

Türkiye's presence in Somalia has not only endured, but it has expanded in ways that offer a model for long-term, multidimensional foreign engagement. While numerous external actors including the United States, China, the European Union, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have maintained interests in Somalia, Türkiye stands apart for the sustainability, integration, and balance of its approach. Its influence is not predicated on coercion or one-sided transactionalism, but rather on a nuanced blend of military assistance, economic cooperation, and cultural affinity.

In contrast to the UAE's militarized footprint and Saudi Arabia's religious diplomacy, Türkiye has carefully cultivated its influence by building institutions, training human capital, and investing in state capacity. For instance, UAE's support for autonomous regions like Somaliland has been interpreted by both Ankara and Mogadishu as fragmentary and opportunistic. Türkiye, on the other hand, has remained steadfast in its support for Somalia's territorial integrity, aligning itself with the federal government and thereby gaining a strategic trust premium (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 101).

Meanwhile, Western actors such as the United States and the European Union have maintained military or humanitarian missions in Somalia, but these are often episodic and narrowly focused on counterterrorism or refugee relief. Their lack of continuous civilian engagement or investment in grassroots institutions limits their impact relative to Türkiye's all-sector model of diplomacy. Moreover, Türkiye's ability to act outside of NATO constraints allows it greater flexibility and speed in responding to regional dynamics, a capability frequently lauded by Somali officials (Erdem, 2023, p. 130).

China, often cited as Türkiye's economic competitor across Africa, has also increased its footprint in Somalia. Yet, while China's model emphasizes infrastructure-for-resources trade-offs under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Türkiye's emphasis on soft power,

religious diplomacy, and political recognition gives it an edge in places where trust and cultural continuity are valued as much as capital (Köse, 2021, p. 59). Ankara's ability to integrate its private sector, religious institutions, development agencies, and military forces under one coherent foreign policy umbrella gives it a versatility that few other actors can match.

Looking forward, Türkiye's strategy is not without its challenges. Rising regional tensions, financial constraints at home, and evolving Somali political dynamics could limit the scope of Ankara's ambitions. Nonetheless, Türkiye's deeply embedded presence manifest in Camp TURKSOM, the Mogadishu embassy, and its wide array of social and economic programs provides a foundation upon which it can continue to shape Somalia's trajectory.

Ultimately, Türkiye's engagement in Somalia offers a new model for post-colonial partnerships: one that prioritizes co-development over control, shared security over dominance, and strategic empathy over opportunism. In the coming years, Somalia's political and economic future will likely remain intertwined with Türkiye's, making this relationship one of the most significant case studies in contemporary international relations.

4.5 Türkiye's Role in Geopolitical Competition in the Horn of Africa (2010–2024)

Over the past decade, the Horn of Africa has become a hotspot for geopolitical competition, drawing the attention of both regional and global actors. Türkiye has emerged as a significant player in this arena, particularly through its expanding influence in Somalia via military cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and development initiatives. This growing presence has positioned Türkiye in direct strategic competition with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and China—each pursuing distinct yet occasionally intersecting interests in the region. Analyzing the timeline from 2010 to 2024 reveals the persistence and depth of this geopolitical competition.

Türkiye's contest with the UAE notably escalated after the Arab Spring, when divergent political ideologies led to contrasting foreign policy strategies. By 2014, the UAE intensified its involvement in Somalia, particularly by investing in infrastructure and military installations in semi-autonomous regions like Somaliland. This approach, centered on fragmented local cooperation and port acquisitions, diverged sharply from Türkiye's support for Somalia's central government and its focus on comprehensive state-building. Türkiye's model emphasized inclusive development and diplomatic cooperation, seeking long-term stabilization rather than short-term strategic gains (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 94).

Saudi Arabia has also been active in the region, albeit in a more discreet manner. Since the mid-2010s, Riyadh has used religious and financial tools to expand its presence in East Africa. While Saudi outreach largely focused on Islamic institutions and theological influence, Türkiye's approach favored religious moderation combined with development aid, promoted through institutions like the Diyanet. This ideological and strategic divergence was further accentuated after 2017, when Türkiye's alignment with Qatar during the Gulf crisis placed it at odds with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Erdem, 2023, p. 117).

China's role as a competitor is rooted primarily in economics. Since launching the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, Beijing has become the region's largest infrastructure investor, particularly in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. While Türkiye lacks the same financial capacity, it compensates through socially embedded development projects—constructing schools, health centers, and religious institutions. Türkiye's advantage lies in cultivating close ties with communities and fostering institutional trust, a contrast to China's more transactional and large-scale development model (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2022, p. 82).

The establishment of Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu in 2017 significantly enhanced Türkiye's defense presence in the region. By training thousands of Somali National Army troops—including specialized units like the Gorgor Brigade—Türkiye has contributed directly to Somalia's internal security. This investment has reinforced Somalia's ability to combat groups such as Al-Shabaab and reduce reliance on external military forces. Türkiye's participation in regional security operations, including anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, further bolsters its credibility as a responsible actor contributing to stability and international maritime safety (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 225; SETA, 2021, pp. 12–14).

However, Türkiye's strategy is not without obstacles. The UAE's financial leverage in Somaliland, China's dominance in regional infrastructure, and Saudi Arabia's religious networks all present ongoing challenges to Ankara's efforts. Moreover, the internal political fragmentation within Somalia—especially the tensions between federal authorities and regional administrations—complicates the implementation of a cohesive foreign policy framework. Nevertheless, Türkiye's sustained, multifaceted engagement has helped it maintain resilience and adaptability amid competitive pressures.

Türkiye's evolving role in the Horn of Africa from 2010 to 2024 illustrates its transition from a humanitarian donor to a full-spectrum geopolitical actor. By integrating defense training, infrastructure development, and cultural diplomacy, Türkiye has built a

distinct model of engagement that both complements and competes with the strategies of other influential powers. This strategy, rooted in the Africa Opening Policy, underscores Ankara's long-term ambition to redefine its global influence through principled, multifaceted, and regionally responsive partnerships.

4.6 Türkiye's Cultural Diplomacy in Somalia building bonds beyond politics

An often under explored dimension of Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy is its use of cultural diplomacy to strengthen ties with Somalia. Beyond military cooperation and economic investments, Türkiye has focused on fostering deep-rooted cultural and religious connections with Somali society. This approach enhances bilateral relations and solidifies Türkiye's image as a partner invested in Somalia's long-term development and social cohesion.

A cornerstone of Türkiye's cultural diplomacy in Somalia is its investment in education. The Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF), established in 2016, has provided Somali students with access to quality education both within Somalia and in Türkiye. TMF operates numerous schools across Somalia, offering curricula that combine academic excellence with cultural enrichment. Additionally, scholarships provided by the Turkish government have enabled hundreds of Somali students to pursue higher education in Turkish universities, creating a new generation of Somali leaders familiar with Turkish values and systems. This educational outreach strengthens people-to-people connections and fosters a lasting legacy of goodwill (Turkish Maarif Foundation, n.d.).

Religious and cultural ties also play a central role in Türkiye's engagement with Somalia. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has been instrumental in restoring mosques and promoting Islamic education, reinforcing shared religious values and fostering a sense of Islamic solidarity. The construction of mosques, such as the iconic Turkish Mosque in Mogadishu, serves as both a place of worship and a symbol of the historical and spiritual connection between the two nations. By emphasizing shared Islamic heritage, Türkiye distinguishes its approach from that of other global powers, which often focus on purely secular or economic aspects of engagement (Middle East Forum, 2023).

Türkiye's cultural diplomacy extends to humanitarian initiatives that resonate deeply with Somali society. Organizations like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the Turkish Red Crescent implement programs addressing immediate humanitarian needs while fostering cultural exchange. For instance, healthcare initiatives

funded by Türkiye have improved access to medical services and facilitated the training of Somali healthcare professionals in Türkiye, creating a bridge for cultural and professional exchange (Daily Sabah, 2019).

Media and communication also play a role in Türkiye's cultural diplomacy. Turkish television dramas, known for their cultural and moral narratives, have gained immense popularity in Somalia, influencing public perceptions of Türkiye. This soft power tool complements Türkiye's broader diplomatic efforts, embedding Turkish cultural values in Somali society and creating a favorable environment for bilateral cooperation.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Critics argue that Türkiye's cultural diplomacy risks being perceived as a form of soft imperialism, with some viewing its religious and cultural outreach as an attempt to assert dominance. Additionally, the reliance on Turkish-led initiatives, rather than empowering local institutions, raises questions about the sustainability of these efforts. Addressing these concerns requires a careful balance between promoting Turkish culture and respecting Somalia's autonomy and traditions (MDPI Religions, 2021).

Türkiye's cultural diplomacy in Somalia represents a vital component of its Africa Opening Policy. By investing in education, religious heritage, humanitarian initiatives, and media, Türkiye has created a multidimensional relationship that transcends politics and economics. This cultural connection strengthens bilateral ties and positions Türkiye as a trusted and enduring partner in Somalia's development journey.

4.7 Türkiye's Strategic Investments and Economic Diplomacy in Somalia

Over the past decade, Türkiye has transformed its engagement in Somalia from a largely humanitarian mission into a multifaceted economic partnership rooted in strategic ambition, mutual interest, and regional diplomacy. This shift reflects a broader evolution in Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy one that emphasizes infrastructure, trade, and institutional collaboration as key pillars of long-term cooperation. In a country recovering from decades of state collapse, civil war, and humanitarian crises, economic diplomacy is not merely about capital flows or development aid; it becomes a tool for stabilization, legitimacy-building, and geopolitical signaling. Within this context, Türkiye's activities in Somalia stand out for their scale, visibility, and integration.

It explores how Türkiye has deployed economic instruments to strengthen its bilateral ties with Somalia and to project soft power in an increasingly competitive regional environment. It focuses on how infrastructure investments, commercial exchanges, and institutional partnerships have reshaped not only the Somali economy but also perceptions of Türkiye as a non-Western, development-focused actor. At the same time, it acknowledges the complexities and limitations of these efforts highlighting the structural, political, and security-related challenges that continue to shape outcomes on the ground. By tracing the contours of Türkiye's economic engagement, the section sheds light on the strategic rationale behind its growing footprint in the Horn of Africa and sets the stage for evaluating its long-term implications for both nations.

4.7.1 Infrastructure Development as a Strategic Lever

Infrastructure development has been one of the most visible and strategically significant elements of Türkiye's engagement in Somalia under its Africa Opening Policy. Rather than adopting a traditional donor-recipient model, Türkiye has sought to establish a long-term development partnership by investing in physical infrastructure that directly supports Somalia's reconstruction and economic recovery.

Two flagship examples of this approach are the Aden Adde International Airport and the Mogadishu Port, both located in the capital. The airport has been operated by Favori LLC, a Turkish company, since 2013, and has undergone substantial upgrades in terms of security systems, passenger handling capacity, and flight operations. These improvements have helped reestablish Somalia's aerial connectivity with regional and international destinations (Erdem, 2023, pp. 119–120). Similarly, the management of Mogadishu Port by the Albayrak Group has modernized its cargo-handling processes, customs procedures, and infrastructure, leading to increased state revenue and commercial activity (Erdem, 2023, pp. 120–122).

Türkiye has also supported road rehabilitation in key economic corridors. Notable among these is the Mogadishu–Afgoye road, which serves as a vital route for trade and civilian transportation. Other regional efforts include rehabilitation works that aim to connect agricultural areas such as Jowhar to Mogadishu, promoting food security and access to markets (Abdulle, 2022, p. 73). These projects have helped improve mobility, trade efficiency, and internal integration in a context still fragile from decades of conflict.

Transport infrastructure, Türkiye has focused on improving access to basic services through water-related projects. For instance, TİKA has installed solar-powered wells in towns like Baidoa and Beledweyne, bringing clean drinking water to communities in regions often neglected by centralized governance (TİKA, 2021, p. 27). These initiatives are essential not only for public health but also for reducing the burden on displaced populations and pastoralist communities vulnerable to drought and insecurity.

Despite these achievements, Türkiye's infrastructure efforts in Somalia face ongoing challenges. Political fragmentation, corruption, and weak institutional capacity frequently slow project implementation and reduce transparency. Insecurity, particularly from Al-Shabaab insurgents, also threatens the sustainability and safety of these projects. For example, a deadly bombing near the Aden Adde Airport in 2019 targeted a security checkpoint, highlighting the risks Turkish personnel and local workers face (Reuters, 2019).

Türkiye's approach to infrastructure has contributed significantly to rebuilding Somalia's state capacity, trade systems, and public services. These projects serve as both practical assets and symbols of Türkiye's deeper political and strategic commitment to Somalia's future.

4.7.2 Trade Partnerships and Bilateral Engagements

In recent years, Türkiye has solidified its position as a principal trading partner of Somalia, advancing a model of cooperation rooted in mutual economic interest and strategic diplomacy. Rather than adopting a donor-recipient paradigm, Türkiye's approach has emphasized trade-based collaboration, private sector partnerships, and institutional engagement, reflecting its broader Africa Opening Policy.

Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Somalia has grown steadily since 2011. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), trade volumes between the two nations exceeded \$250 million in 2019, a significant increase compared to pre-2011 levels (TurkStat, 2020). Türkiye's exports primarily include construction materials, food products, household goods, and machinery, which are essential to Somalia's reconstruction and consumer markets. In return, Somalia exports livestock, hides, and agricultural products such as sesame seeds, which are in high demand in Türkiye's food and cosmetic industries.

This trade relationship has been institutionalized through a series of bilateral agreements and economic forums. One example is the Türkiye–Somalia Business Forum, which facilitates collaboration between Somali and Turkish firms. These platforms have encouraged joint ventures, technical cooperation, and entrepreneurial exchange, fostering a business environment conducive to sustainable development. Turkish investors, including medium-sized enterprises from Anatolia, have entered Somalia’s construction, retail, and services sectors, creating local employment and stimulating economic activity. Türkiye has provided institutional support to Somalia’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Somali Chamber of Commerce through capacity-building programs. These efforts aim to enhance regulatory frameworks, improve customs efficiency, and promote transparent trade practices. For example, Turkish technical experts have assisted in drafting commercial regulations and organizing training workshops for Somali business leaders and administrators (Yalçınkaya, 2020, pp. 226–227).

Unlike some international actors that prioritize short-term aid flows, Türkiye’s engagement favors commercial continuity and long-term partnerships. This approach has been especially valuable in a context like Somalia, where sustainable development requires not only infrastructure but also functioning markets and private-sector dynamism. Through this model, Türkiye supports Somalia’s integration into regional and global trade systems while also advancing its own strategic and commercial interests in the Horn of Africa. Despite its success, the relationship is not without limitations. Somalia’s weak financial infrastructure, limited banking access, and regulatory uncertainty present challenges for both Somali and Turkish traders. However, Türkiye’s continued technical assistance and institutional cooperation aim to mitigate these barriers over time. If successful, these engagements could lay the groundwork for more diversified trade relations and deeper economic interdependence.

Ultimately, Türkiye’s trade partnership with Somalia stands as a strategic pillar of its broader engagement with the region. It reflects a deliberate shift from aid-based relations toward reciprocal economic cooperation, rooted in shared opportunity, mutual respect, and a vision for sustainable development.

4.7.3 Criticisms and Structural Challenges

While Türkiye's economic engagement in Somalia has contributed to post-conflict development, it has also drawn a range of criticisms rooted in structural, political, and geopolitical concerns. One of the most persistent challenges is the fragile governance environment in Somalia. Weak institutional capacity, overlapping federal-regional jurisdictions, and endemic corruption often hinder the transparent and effective implementation of infrastructure and trade initiatives. In several reported instances, contracts awarded to Turkish firms have bypassed competitive bidding processes, raising concerns among Somali civil society organizations about transparency and accountability (Heritage Institute, 2022, p. 19).

A second layer of critique focuses on the perceived imbalance between Türkiye's and Somali economic actors. Somali business associations have expressed concern that local companies are frequently sidelined in favor of large Turkish firms, especially in high-value sectors like port management, logistics, and construction. This marginalization not only undermines local entrepreneurship but also contributes to dependency on Türkiye-led models of development (World Bank, 2021, p. 88).

Türkiye's economic footprint in Somalia also exists within a contested geopolitical landscape. Its growing influence in Mogadishu has placed it in strategic competition with other regional actors particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE's major investment in the Port of Berbera in Somaliland has created a parallel economic sphere that challenges Türkiye's dominance in southern Somalia. These overlapping interests have contributed to political friction, especially as external investments increasingly shape the internal dynamics of Somali federalism (Williams, 2020, p. 27).

Some critics argue that Türkiye's model of development, though more culturally sensitive than that of other actors, still risks replicating patterns of top-down engagement. Projects led by Turkish agencies or companies may lack adequate community consultation, particularly in rural or peripheral regions, leading to uneven benefit distribution and reinforcing existing clan or regional disparities (Hassan & Arman, 2023, p. 51).

The success of Türkiye's economic engagement in Somalia depends not only on its financial commitment or strategic ambition but also on its ability to navigate Somalia's

complex political terrain, promote inclusive development, and coordinate with local stakeholders in a transparent and equitable manner.

4.7.4 Strategic Implications and Future Trajectories

Türkiye's economic diplomacy in Somalia functions not merely as a vehicle of foreign aid, but as a calculated tool of influences one that blends humanitarianism with long-term strategic vision. By embedding its economic engagement within Somalia's core state-building and institutional development efforts, Türkiye seeks to establish itself as a reliable and value-aligned partner, distinct from traditional donors. This approach presents an alternative to China's infrastructure-for-resource strategy and the UAE's transactional investments in contested regions like Somaliland, thus repositioning Türkiye as a multidimensional stakeholder in the Horn of Africa (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 228; Erdem, 2023, p. 121).

This model is particularly strategic because it integrates soft power instruments such as education, capacity-building, and cultural familiarity with hard economic tools like infrastructure development and trade facilitation. As a result, Türkiye's role in Somalia is not solely economic or humanitarian but also profoundly political, reinforcing its image as a post-Western actor capable of navigating fragile environments through adaptive, community-conscious engagement (Williams, 2020, p. 29).

Looking ahead, the sustainability of Türkiye's influence will depend on several interlinked factors: the ability to tailor its policies to Somalia's evolving governance structures, the willingness to expand local partnerships beyond elite networks, and the flexibility to withstand rising geopolitical competition in the region. This includes addressing criticisms around transparency, local inclusion, and the perception of economic overreach especially in the face of rival models promoted by Gulf or Asian powers (Heritage Institute, 2022, p. 20; Hassan & Arman, 2023, p. 53).

Ultimately, Türkiye's economic diplomacy in Somalia should be viewed not as an isolated development intervention, but as a strategic platform from which broader regional influence is exercised. If managed with greater inclusivity and strategic clarity, this model has the potential to serve as a durable template for Türkiye's expanding Africa policy.

4.8 Türkiye's Role in Regional Security and Counterterrorism in Somalia

As part of its Africa Opening Policy, Türkiye has significantly expanded its role in regional security, particularly through its long-term counterterrorism engagement in Somalia. The country's strategic approach goes beyond short-term military cooperation, integrating defense assistance with institutional development and regional stability initiatives. Central to this engagement is Türkiye's mission to counter violent extremism, particularly from Al-Shabaab, and to support the establishment of sustainable Somali-led security frameworks.

4.8.1 Building Military Capacity: Training the Somali National Army

One of the most defining and sustained pillars of Türkiye's engagement in Somalia has been its contribution to military training and institutional capacity-building through the establishment of Camp TURKSOM. Officially opened in 2017, Camp TURKSOM is Türkiye's largest overseas military installation, located in the Jazeera district of Mogadishu. The base functions as a comprehensive training academy and military facility, housing classrooms, barracks, and logistics units. It has played a critical role in the training and professionalization of the Somali National Army (SNA), particularly in the formation and mentoring of elite units like the Gorgor Commandos and Haramad Special Police Forces (SETA, 2021, pp. 12–14).

The base, which spans over 400 hectares, is equipped to train more than 1,500 soldiers at a time, offering a rigorous curriculum that includes physical conditioning, tactical training, leadership development, and instruction in international humanitarian law. Türkiye's military advisors also provide practical mentorship to Somali officers, promoting values such as professionalism, discipline, and accountability in military conduct (Yalçinkaya, 2020, p. 225).

To supplement this on-the-ground training in Somalia, Türkiye has extended its support to include specialized instruction at facilities inside Türkiye. Selected Somali officers and NCOs are sent to the Counterterrorism Training and Exercise Center in Isparta and the Army War College in Ankara. These programs focus on counterinsurgency, intelligence operations, and crisis response—skills critical for Somalia's ongoing battle against Al-Shabaab insurgents (Daily Sabah, 2023).

The success of this training program is most evident in the operational performance of the Gorgor Brigade. This elite unit, composed of soldiers trained under the supervision of

Turkish officers, has taken the lead in major offensives against Al-Shabaab strongholds in southern and central Somalia. The Gorgor commandos are often deployed in coordination with the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), demonstrating the integration of Türkiye's training efforts into broader national security strategies (Türkiye Today, 2024).

In contrast to the more fragmented and externally driven approaches of other international actors, Türkiye's training program is characterized by its focus on national ownership, sustainability, and coherence with Somalia's long-term security architecture. Türkiye does not merely provide troops or weapons but instead invests in the creation of a locally accountable and operationally effective military force. This approach aligns with Türkiye's broader foreign policy of fostering state institutions from within, rather than through top-down security impositions (Yavuz & Özcan, 2014, pp. 11–13).

Camp TURKSOM also symbolizes Türkiye's strategic intent to embed itself in Somalia's defense ecosystem. The facility serves not only as a training ground but also as a logistical hub for humanitarian response coordination and civil-military cooperation. Joint drills, emergency medical support, and civic education seminars are part of its broader outreach activities, reinforcing the link between security and development. Türkiye's investment in military training through Camp TURKSOM reflects its belief that security is the bedrock of any meaningful state-building process. By equipping Somalia with a professional and nationally respected army, Türkiye strengthens the country's sovereignty and internal cohesion—two factors essential to breaking the cycle of fragility that has long plagued Somalia's political landscape.

4.8.2 Deployment of Advanced Military Technology

Türkiye's security assistance to Somalia extends beyond personnel training into the realm of cutting-edge military technology. In early 2025, Türkiye deployed Bayraktar Akıncı unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to Somalia, marking a significant enhancement in the country's counterterrorism capabilities. Manufactured by Baykar, these drones are among the most advanced in Türkiye's arsenal, capable of executing long-range surveillance and precision strikes with minimal collateral damage. The use of Akıncı drones has proven critical in identifying and neutralizing high-value targets within Al-Shabaab's command structure, particularly in remote areas of Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba, where ground operations

remain risky and logistically difficult. This technological edge has allowed Somali forces to adopt a more proactive posture, significantly reducing militant mobility and command coordination.

This transfer of advanced military hardware represents a new phase in Türkiye's strategic partnership with Somalia. It signals not only the depth of military cooperation but also Türkiye's confidence in Somalia's evolving capacity to manage such technologies responsibly. Turkish advisors have concurrently provided training in drone operations and maintenance, ensuring that the Somali forces are not merely end-users but also developing localized expertise in UAV systems (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 228).

Additionally, the integration of these drones into Somalia's broader security architecture has allowed for more accurate intelligence gathering, faster response times, and greater operational synergy between Turkish-trained units such as the Gorgor Brigade and Somali intelligence agencies. This synergy is particularly valuable in asymmetric warfare scenarios where Al-Shabaab relies on speed, terrain familiarity, and fragmented communication networks.

Türkiye's deployment of advanced military technology to Somalia underscores its unique role as a post-Western actor offering alternatives to traditional Western or Gulf security assistance models. Rather than exporting dependency, Türkiye aims to build technological autonomy and self-sufficiency in fragile states. The drone program, when viewed alongside Camp TURKSOM and other initiatives, encapsulates Türkiye's long-term strategic vision: to create not just allies, but capable, sovereign partners in regional security.

The challenge ahead will be ensuring that these technologies remain under accountable governance structures and are not misused in internal political disputes. To that end, Türkiye continues to emphasize legal norms, operational discipline, and multilateral coordination in its security cooperation frameworks, setting a precedent for responsible defense diplomacy in fragile contexts.

4.8.3 Strategic and Regional Implications

Türkiye's security engagement in Somalia holds important strategic significance both for bilateral cooperation and for broader regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa. By building long-term defense partnerships especially through Camp TURKSOM and drone

deployments Türkiye has positioned itself not just as a military trainer, but as a regional security actor with a clear presence near one of the world's most critical maritime routes.

Somalia's coastline faces the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, bordering vital trade corridors like the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Instability in Somalia, particularly due to Al-Shabaab's presence, directly affects maritime security and regional economic flows. Türkiye's involvement helps mitigate these threats by improving Somali defense capacity, indirectly supporting the security of global sea lines (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 229).

Türkiye's presence has also shifted the balance of influence. Its cooperation with Somalia stands in contrast to the United Arab Emirates' support for breakaway regions such as Somaliland, especially through its investments in the Port of Berbera. By aligning with Somalia's federal government, Türkiye promotes state sovereignty and political stability, while increasing its diplomatic leverage with regional actors like Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya (Williams, 2020, p. 27).

This engagement gives Türkiye a unique diplomatic advantage: it is viewed not merely as a donor or intervening power, but as a state partner helping to build institutions from within. Türkiye's preference for training local forces, offering logistical support, and avoiding direct combat involvement reflects a different model of security cooperation—one focused on long-term state-building, not short-term military solutions (SETA, 2023, pp. 14–15).

At the international level, Türkiye's security role in Somalia allows it to engage with African Union and UN frameworks as a partner with on-the-ground credibility. It shows that Türkiye is willing to take responsibility and invest resources in fragile contexts where traditional powers have struggled to deliver consistent results.

Türkiye's military engagement in Somalia is not just about fighting terrorism. It is part of a broader strategy to establish itself as a reliable, principled, and long-term actor in African security. Through cooperation rooted in mutual interest and political legitimacy, Türkiye is reshaping how outside powers can contribute to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

4.8.4 Challenges and Limitations

Despite its strategic depth and visible accomplishments, Türkiye's security cooperation with Somalia faces several persistent challenges that could affect the sustainability and credibility of its long-term engagement. One of the most pressing issues is **the continued threat posed by Al-Shabaab**, which remains active in both urban centers and rural regions. The group has demonstrated resilience, carrying out high-impact attacks against Somali government forces, civilians, and international partners. Even heavily guarded areas like Mogadishu have witnessed deadly bombings including near Aden Adde International Airport and military checkpoints highlighting the constant security risks for Turkish personnel and Somali trainees alike (Reuters, 2019).

A second challenge lies in **Somalia's fragmented political structure**. Tensions between the federal government and federal member states—such as Puntland and Jubaland—often hinder coordinated security planning and the implementation of nationwide counterterrorism strategies. Türkiye's military support is primarily directed through the federal government, which sometimes sparks resistance or suspicion among regional actors who feel excluded or politically marginalized (Heritage Institute, 2022, p. 19).

Institutional weaknesses further complicate Türkiye's efforts. Somalia's limited administrative capacity, corruption, and overlapping authorities reduce transparency and effectiveness in managing defense resources and training programs. Some critics have questioned whether Somalia has the financial and institutional ability to sustain the infrastructure, troops, and technology that Türkiye helps build (World Bank, 2021, p. 89).

Türkiye operates in a **crowded geopolitical field**, with actors like the UAE, Qatar, and China pursuing their own influence agendas in the Horn of Africa. In some cases, this has led to competing investments and conflicting loyalties within Somalia's political elite. For example, the UAE's support for Somaliland's Port of Berbera stands in contrast to Türkiye's alliance with the central government in Mogadishu, creating political tension and limiting national cohesion (Williams, 2020, p. 27).

ensuring local ownership of the security sector remains a key limitation. While Türkiye's training programs promote Somali capacity, critics argue that reliance on foreign actors can delay the development of fully autonomous security institutions. For long-term success,

Türkiye must continue to invest in Somali-led frameworks, ensure inclusivity across clans and regions, and avoid over-centralizing security coordination through narrow political channels.

Türkiye's security role in Somalia has contributed significantly to capacity-building and counterterrorism, its future effectiveness will depend on how well it adapts to Somalia's internal political dynamics, supports inclusive governance, and balances external rivalries with a principled and locally responsive approach.

4.9 Türkiye's Diplomatic Balancing Act in Somalia

Türkiye's diplomatic engagement in Somalia stands today as a central pillar of its Africa Opening Policy a multidimensional foreign policy doctrine aimed at enhancing Türkiye's visibility, partnerships, and geopolitical influence across the African continent (Yalçinkaya, 2020, p. 223). In the context of Somalia, this policy has taken on a particularly strategic character. The Horn of Africa is one of the most geopolitically competitive arenas in the world, where regional and global actors such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China, Ethiopia, and the United States seek to assert competing visions of power, influence, and development (SWP-Berlin, 2022, p. 11; Williams, 2020, p. 25). Within this volatile landscape, Türkiye has carved out a niche as a consistent, sovereign-respecting, and diplomatically agile actor.

Türkiye's approach lies in its ability to maintain relationships across Somalia's fragmented political landscape. While other actors often align themselves with specific clans, regions, or factions, Türkiye has deliberately emphasized neutrality and non-interference. This is evident in its firm support for Somalia's territorial integrity, including its refusal to recognize Somaliland's unilateral claims of independence—a position that bolsters Ankara's credibility with the federal government in Mogadishu (Erdem, 2023, pp. 119–121). Türkiye's strong embassy presence, direct engagement with Somali leaders, and strategic diplomatic gestures such as hosting the Ethiopia–Somalia dialogue in Ankara in December 2024—further reinforce its image as a trustworthy partner (Horn Institute, 2024).

Additionally, Türkiye's diplomatic balancing act extends beyond Somalia's borders. Turkish embassies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Sudan are integrated into a regional coordination mechanism that aligns development, humanitarian, and strategic efforts across

the Horn of Africa. This networked diplomacy enables Ankara to mediate disputes, share intelligence, and present itself as a stable alternative to the often-zero-sum competition pursued by Gulf States or global powers (Yavuz & Özcan, 2014, pp. 12–13).

The UAE's port-focused transactional engagements or China's debt-driven infrastructure diplomacy, Türkiye's approach blends soft power instruments—like education, religious outreach via the Diyanet, and cultural exchange—with high-level diplomacy. This multi-track approach allows Türkiye to address both elite-level political relations and grassroots societal engagement (Aras, 2013, pp. 4–6).

Importantly, Türkiye's diplomatic posture is reinforced through active participation in multilateral forums. It aligns its policies with the African Union's peace and security frameworks, supports UN-led state-building initiatives, and contributes to regional development conversations within the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Atlantic Council, 2024). Türkiye's involvement in these platforms not only amplifies its legitimacy but also enables it to navigate complex donor dynamics while preserving its independent policy stance.

Türkiye's diplomatic balancing act in Somalia is characterized by long-term vision, regional coordination, and adaptive engagement. It offers a sustainable alternative to militarized or donor-centric models by focusing on political dialogue, multilateral legitimacy, and mutual respect. As Somalia navigates a difficult path toward recovery and sovereignty, Türkiye's stable and calibrated diplomacy provides both countries with an opportunity to co-develop a shared model of strategic cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

4.9.1 Mediation and Regional Engagement

Türkiye's diplomatic approach in Somalia is anchored in its long-standing commitment to political stability, inclusive dialogue, and institutional development. As part of its Africa Opening Policy, Türkiye has emphasized a soft-power strategy that moves beyond aid and military training by playing an active, supportive role in Somalia's internal reconciliation processes and regional diplomacy. Rather than positioning itself as a competing actor in a crowded geopolitical space, Türkiye has maintained a deliberate focus on fostering Somali-led solutions through patient and principled engagement.

Türkiye's diplomatic posture was its role in facilitating dialogue between Somali and Ethiopian leaders in December 2024, following rising tensions over issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The result was the Ankara Declaration, signed on December 12, 2024, which reaffirmed Somalia's territorial unity and opened space for renewed engagement between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa (Horn Institute, 2024). This initiative, brokered by Türkiye, reflected Ankara's ability to bring stakeholders to the table not as an external arbitrator, but as a respected partner with deep political, developmental, and cultural ties to Somalia.

Türkiye's diplomacy is equally visible in its relations with Somalia's federal member states. Through direct communication, quiet diplomacy, and development coordination, Turkish officials have consistently worked to maintain a balanced and constructive relationship with Puntland, Jubaland, Galmudug, and others without undermining the federal government in Mogadishu. This approach has positioned Türkiye as a trusted interlocutor capable of engaging across political divides without appearing to favor any single actor.

The Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu plays a pivotal role in this process. It serves not only as a diplomatic outpost but as a hub for coordinating development, education, health, and humanitarian programs with Somali institutions. This on-the-ground presence, combined with high-level visits from Turkish officials, signals Türkiye's long-term commitment to Somalia's political cohesion and institutional growth.

Rather than imposing external models, Türkiye emphasizes Somali ownership of political solutions. Its efforts support dialogue over coercion, unity over fragmentation, and national capacity over dependency. In this way, Türkiye's engagement in mediation complements its broader strategic objective of building resilient partnerships based on mutual respect and shared goals.

This model of engagement has earned Türkiye recognition across Somali society not only among political elites, but also among civil society actors, youth, and business leaders who view Türkiye's presence as stable and constructive. While challenges remain, including ongoing tensions among Somali regions and governance gaps, Türkiye's consistent and low-profile diplomatic support has helped reduce the risk of political escalation and maintain momentum for peaceful dialogue.

4.9.2 Multilateral Cooperation with Global Institutions

In Somalia, Türkiye's diplomatic strategy includes not only direct bilateral engagement but also meaningful collaboration with international institutions that play central roles in post-conflict reconstruction. This multilateral coordination helps Türkiye align its initiatives with broader global efforts aimed at state-building, humanitarian support, and sustainable development. Rather than acting in isolation, Türkiye deliberately integrates its policies with those of trusted partners like the African Union and United Nations to ensure coherence, legitimacy, and long-term impact.

One of the most important examples of this approach is Türkiye's engagement with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). While Türkiye is not a troop-contributing member of ATMIS, it maintains regular dialogue with AU representatives to ensure that its military training programs at Camp TURKSOM support, rather than conflict with, AU-led stabilization efforts (SETA, 2021, p. 14). This coordination helps Somalia build a unified national security sector without parallel or overlapping structures.

Türkiye also works closely with United Nations agencies in Somalia. Organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, and OCHA often collaborate formally or informally with Turkish efforts through TİKA and Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent). For example, Türkiye's projects in health and education in Mogadishu are often designed with awareness of UN service maps to avoid duplication. When Türkiye rehabilitated key hospitals and delivered emergency aid in drought-affected areas, these were communicated in coordination meetings with international humanitarian actors to ensure effective delivery (TİKA, 2021, p. 27).

Türkiye is also an active participant in donor coordination forums organized by the UN, World Bank, and Somali Ministry of Planning. These platforms help guide reconstruction funding and monitor national development goals. Türkiye contributes to discussions on priority areas such as vocational education, local governance, and investment infrastructure fields where it already has bilateral programs. Its participation in the Somalia Partnership Forum allows Türkiye to shape policy directions and build trust among international peers (World Bank, 2023, p. 88).

Rather than seeing multilateralism as a limitation, Türkiye uses it to strengthen its own agenda. This diplomatic strategy, based on complementarity, allows Türkiye to maintain

independence while aligning with international norms and supporting Somalia's sovereignty. By engaging with global institutions, Türkiye demonstrates that its presence in Somalia is not only strategic, but also responsible, coordinated, and in service of long-term peace and development.

4.9.3 Diplomatic Challenges and Constraints

Despite its achievements, Türkiye's diplomatic strategy faces significant challenges. The entrenched influence of Gulf rivals in Puntland and Somaliland complicates Türkiye's commitment to Somali federalism. Additionally, internal Somali political fragmentation—marked by tension between the central government and federal member states—impairs cohesive diplomatic efforts. Türkiye must also navigate competing interests from Ethiopia and Kenya, both of which maintain divergent agendas in Somali politics (Horn Institute, 2024).

Türkiye's expansive diplomatic vision requires substantial political, financial, and logistical investments. While its soft power strategy has earned widespread support, concerns remain about overreach and sustainability. Maintaining its credibility as a mediator demands continuous adaptation, genuine local engagement, and avoidance of overt geopolitical alignment.

Türkiye's diplomatic role in Somalia illustrates the sophisticated nature of its foreign policy in the Horn of Africa. By balancing bilateral commitments, multilateral partnerships, and regional mediation, Türkiye has successfully positioned itself as a constructive actor in Somalia's complex political environment. Its diplomatic approach—rooted in mutual respect, soft power, and inclusive dialogue—stands in contrast to the transactional or militarized models of other foreign actors. As Türkiye deepens its engagement in the Horn, sustaining this diplomatic balance will be crucial to its long-term credibility and effectiveness.

4.10 Challenges to Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy in Somalia.

While Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy has been instrumental in reshaping its foreign relations and establishing its presence in Somalia, it faces multifaceted challenges that test the effectiveness and sustainability of this strategy. These challenges stem from Somalia's internal instability, regional rivalries, and broader geopolitical competition, all of which require Türkiye to navigate a highly complex environment.

Somalia's fragile security situation remains one of the most significant hurdles for Türkiye's policy. Decades of civil war have left the country fragmented, with weakened state institutions and a persistent insurgency led by Al-Shabaab. Despite Türkiye's investments in rebuilding Somalia's National Army through its Mogadishu military base, extremist violence continues to disrupt progress. Al-Shabaab's capacity to conduct sophisticated attacks, including targeting Turkish personnel and infrastructure, reflects the ongoing risks associated with operating in such a volatile environment. Notably, the 2020 attack on Turkish engineers near Mogadishu highlighted how Turkish interests have become targets for anti-government forces, underscoring the high stakes of engagement in Somalia (Breuning, 2007, p. 58).

Somalia's federal structure presents another layer of difficulty. The federal government in Mogadishu struggles to exercise control over semi-autonomous regions like Somaliland and Puntland. These regions operate with varying degrees of independence, often prioritizing their own agendas over national unity. For Türkiye, this fragmented political landscape complicates efforts to implement cohesive, large-scale development projects. Moreover, Türkiye must tread carefully to avoid being seen as favoring one faction over another, which could jeopardize its reputation as a neutral and stabilizing force. For example, Türkiye's decision to work primarily with Mogadishu has strained its relationships with Somaliland, which has sought greater autonomy and recognition (Hudson, 2013, p. 46).

The Horn of Africa's geopolitical significance has attracted multiple regional and global powers, creating a crowded and competitive environment. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, in particular, have pursued aggressive strategies to expand their influence, often clashing with Türkiye's initiatives. The UAE's investments in Somaliland, including the development of a military base in Berbera, challenge Türkiye's position in Mogadishu. These rivalries are further exacerbated by ideological tensions, with the UAE and Saudi Arabia opposing Türkiye's alignment with Qatar and its emphasis on Islamic solidarity. Such competition risks turning Somalia into a proxy battleground for competing foreign interests, undermining the stability that Türkiye seeks to promote (Kaplan, 2012, p. 72).

Sustaining Türkiye's ambitious projects in Somalia requires significant financial resources. Infrastructure development, humanitarian aid, and military cooperation all demand long-term commitments that strain Türkiye's budget. For instance, maintaining the Mogadishu Training Center and funding development projects place considerable pressure on

Turkish agencies and private companies operating in Somalia. Additionally, Somalia's reliance on external aid creates a competitive dynamic where Türkiye must vie for influence against other donors, including the European Union, the United States, and China. This economic competition limits Türkiye's ability to dominate the development landscape and increases its vulnerability to external pressures (Walker, 2013, p. 61).

Although Türkiye has garnered significant goodwill in Somalia, it is not immune to criticism. Some Somali citizens and leaders question the extent to which Turkish projects empower local communities versus advancing Turkish interests. The management of Mogadishu's airport and seaport by Turkish firms, while economically beneficial, has sparked debates about profit-sharing and local participation. Critics argue that Türkiye's control over these key assets risks fostering perceptions of neo-colonialism, which could erode trust and cooperation over time. Addressing these concerns requires Türkiye to adopt a more inclusive approach, ensuring that its projects align with Somali priorities and promote local ownership (Breuning, 2007, p. 64).

Türkiye's engagement in Somalia also intersects with broader geopolitical dynamics, particularly the increasing influence of China and the United States in Africa. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has brought massive investments to the Horn of Africa, particularly in Ethiopia and Djibouti, overshadowing Türkiye's contributions in terms of scale. Meanwhile, the United States' counterterrorism focus and military footprint in the region present additional challenges for Türkiye, as its efforts to build soft power risk being overshadowed by hard power interventions from other global actors (Hudson, 2013, p. 48).

In short, Türkiye's Africa Opening Policy faces a complex array of challenges in Somalia, ranging from security threats and political fragmentation to regional rivalries and economic constraints. Navigating these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that balances Türkiye's strategic ambitions with the realities on the ground. By addressing issues of inclusivity, sustainability, and regional cooperation, Türkiye can strengthen its position as a trusted partner in Somalia's development while mitigating the risks posed by external and internal dynamics.

4.11 Humanitarian Aid and the 2011 Famine

The 2011 famine in Somalia marked a critical turning point in the Türkiye Somalia relationship, highlighting the emergence of Türkiye as a serious humanitarian and strategic actor in the Horn of Africa. At that time, Somalia was grappling with one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of the 21st century brought on by a prolonged drought, institutional collapse, internal conflict, and international neglect. Against this backdrop, Türkiye's swift and visible response, led personally by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, profoundly altered both the humanitarian landscape in Somalia and Türkiye's foreign policy trajectory. Erdoğan's visit to Mogadishu in August 2011 the first by a non-African head of state in over two decades became a symbol of Türkiye's humanitarian commitment and strategic vision (Mahamud, 2013, p. 7).

This visit set into motion an unprecedented scale of humanitarian intervention by Turkish actors. Governmental bodies such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and non-governmental organizations including the Turkish Red Crescent launched comprehensive aid campaigns. Their efforts included emergency food and water distribution, the establishment of field hospitals, and long-term health and education infrastructure projects. Within the span of a few months, Türkiye had sent over \$300 million in aid and had begun developing the groundwork for long-term institutional engagement (Aras, 2013, pp. 4–6). Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that Somalia became Türkiye's second-largest aid recipient in 2012—a remarkable feat that underscored Türkiye's shift toward assertive humanitarian diplomacy (Yavuz & Özcan, 2014, p. 11).

Importantly, the humanitarian assistance was not treated as a one-time event, but as part of a broader policy integration. Alongside direct aid, Türkiye quickly opened its embassy in Mogadishu, symbolizing long-term commitment. Aid began to be coupled with development initiatives such as road construction, school rehabilitation, and hospital facilities—transforming Türkiye's role from emergency donor to enduring development partner (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2022, p. 12). Turkish Airlines also resumed flights to Mogadishu, further reinforcing economic and diplomatic connectivity.

What distinguished Türkiye's engagement was the visibility and emotional resonance of its response. While other international actors responded with bureaucratic detachment,

Türkiye employed a culturally embedded, visibly empathetic approach. Turkish media coverage humanized the Somali crisis for the Turkish public, resulting in mass fundraising campaigns and civic solidarity. Consequently, Somalia became not only a recipient of aid but also a central narrative in Türkiye's global humanitarian identity (Yavuz & Özcan, 2014, p. 12).

In Somali public perception, Türkiye's humanitarian aid has been viewed as both sincere and transformative. Interviews and field reports suggest that Somalis appreciated Türkiye's boots-on-the-ground style—its doctors in the hospitals, engineers in the field, and officials speaking directly with local communities. Unlike other foreign interventions, Türkiye was seen as acting in partnership with Somali authorities rather than working around them (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2022, p. 12). This perception helped build trust, which became foundational for further cooperation in military training, economic development, and diplomatic alignment.

In short, Türkiye's humanitarian intervention during the 2011 famine served as a foundational case study for its Africa Opening Policy. It effectively bridged the gap between reactive humanitarianism and long-term strategic engagement. The relationships, institutions, and goodwill built during this period enabled Türkiye to embed itself deeply in Somalia's state-building process. As the subsequent chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, the 2011 response did not merely save lives—it created a durable platform for Türkiye's evolving military and political partnership with Somalia.

4.12 Establishment of the Mogadishu Military Base

The establishment of Türkiye's military base in Mogadishu in 2017 marked a pivotal shift in its strategic engagement in the Horn of Africa. Known as Camp TURKSOM, this facility is the largest Turkish military installation outside of its borders, covering over four square kilometers and equipped to train up to 1,500 Somali soldiers at a time (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 225). Its inauguration came at a time when Somalia was in critical need of restructuring its military forces to combat persistent threats from Al-Shabaab and to stabilize its fragile security apparatus.

Türkiye's decision to build and operate this base reflects a calculated approach within its Africa Opening Policy, combining development, humanitarian aid, and security cooperation into a cohesive foreign policy instrument. Rather than deploying combat troops, Türkiye's model emphasizes capacity-building. Through Camp TURKSOM, Somali troops—

particularly elite units such as the Gorgor Brigade—receive rigorous training in infantry tactics, leadership, and counterinsurgency strategies (SETA, 2021, pp. 12–14). This training not only strengthens Somalia’s military self-reliance but also ensures alignment with Türkiye’s defense philosophy, promoting discipline, professionalism, and loyalty to the federal government.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the base’s location is highly strategic. It sits near vital maritime trade corridors such as the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden, routes essential for global shipping. By securing a foothold in Somalia, Türkiye extends its influence into one of the most geopolitically contested regions in the world—balancing the presence of powers like the United States, China, and the UAE (Demirtaş, 2022, p. 95). Unlike some regional competitors who have favored partnerships with breakaway regions like Somaliland, Türkiye has clearly aligned itself with Somalia’s federal government, signaling its support for the country’s territorial integrity (Erdem, 2023, p. 119).

Moreover, the military base serves as a diplomatic symbol of Türkiye’s enduring commitment to Somalia. It allows Turkish officials to engage closely with Somali leadership and institutions, reinforcing mutual trust and enabling long-term security cooperation. The base has also hosted several bilateral military summits and serves as a coordination hub for wider regional anti-terror operations.

Nonetheless, the project has not been without challenges. Al-Shabaab has attempted attacks near the facility, and coordination between Turkish-trained forces and international counterparts has occasionally faced operational frictions. Moreover, questions remain about the long-term sustainability of such a large-scale military initiative—particularly regarding local ownership, funding, and political cohesion among Somalia’s federal member states (Aydin-Düzgüt & Balta, 2022, p. 84).

In short, Camp TURKSOM is more than just a military training facility—it is a cornerstone of Türkiye’s defense diplomacy and a manifestation of its soft-hard power hybrid in Africa. It provides Somalia with critical security infrastructure while reinforcing Türkiye’s role as a stabilizing and committed actor in regional politics. Its success will likely depend on continued cooperation, mutual trust, and the adaptability of both nations to evolving security dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

4.13 Joint Operations and Military Training

The military partnership between Türkiye and Somalia has matured into one of the most comprehensive bilateral defense collaborations in Africa. At the core of this partnership lies a sophisticated program of joint operations and military training, rooted in shared strategic objectives and operational needs. Since the establishment of Camp TURKSOM in Mogadishu, its largest overseas military base, inaugurated in 2017. Located on the southern edge of Somalia's capital near the Indian Ocean coast, the base spans approximately 400 hectares and includes training grounds, dormitories, and command facilities of Türkiye's and Somali military cooperation has evolved from training-oriented support to coordinated security actions aimed at stabilizing Somalia and eradicating insurgent threats such as Al-Shabaab.

Camp TURKSOM operates as the operational heart of this cooperation. It has trained thousands of Somali soldiers, notably the Gorgor Commandos and Haramacad Police Units, who now form the backbone of Somalia's elite military response to terrorism. These units have become critical to the Somali government's national security strategy, often taking the lead in offensive operations against Al-Shabaab strongholds across southern and central Somalia. Turkish military instructors, supported by Ankara's Ministry of National Defense, provide in-depth training that includes not only tactical combat readiness but also strategic leadership development, logistics, and military ethics (SETA, 2021, pp. 15–17).

One of the most distinctive aspects of this partnership is its long-term orientation. Türkiye is not merely training Somali troops for short-term counterterrorism tasks—it is helping build a professional national defense system. Turkish advisors embed within Somali military units and offer continuous support, particularly in the areas of military planning, intelligence coordination, and base security. This embedded model of cooperation has increased interoperability and trust between Turkish and Somali military officials, laying the foundation for deeper strategic ties (Erdem, 2023, p. 127).

Furthermore, the joint military operations extend beyond the borders of training fields. Turkish naval units stationed near the Somali coast participate in anti-piracy and maritime security missions, coordinating with Somali coastguards trained by Turkish experts. This combined maritime-security effort protects commercial routes in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, areas essential not only to Somali economic recovery but also to global

shipping lanes (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 228). The presence of Turkish naval and air support in regional operations gives Somalia enhanced operational reach it previously lacked.

Beyond direct combat roles, Türkiye has also supported the Somali Ministry of Defense in structuring its institutions. Ankara provides scholarships for Somali officers to attend Turkish military academies, promotes military-civilian leadership training, and supports reforms aimed at improving transparency and accountability in Somalia's defense sector. This holistic approach seeks to instill a culture of discipline and institutionalization that many international partners often overlook.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. The asymmetry in capabilities and experience means that Somali forces still heavily rely on Turkish support in many key areas. Moreover, coordinating joint operations with other international forces such as AMISOM and the U.S.-backed Danab Brigades has occasionally created jurisdictional frictions. Political instability within Somalia, including disputes between federal and regional states, also impacts the effectiveness of joint military efforts (Aydin-Düzgit & Balta, 2022, p. 88).

In short, Türkiye's joint military training and operational support have significantly elevated Somalia's defense capabilities. This partnership represents a model of strategic cooperation that integrates training, operational coordination, and institutional development. While operational challenges persist, the Türkiye–Somalia military partnership has become a critical pillar of Somalia's national defense, contributing to broader regional stability in the Horn of Africa.

CHAPTER 5:

SOMALIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dominant portrayals of Somalia often reduce the country to a case of protracted fragility, overlooking the complex economic practices and enduring agency that underpin daily survival and innovation. This chapter challenges such reductionist narratives by foregrounding the ways in which Somali actors entrepreneurs, traders, and transnational networks exercise economic agency in shaping their own trajectories. Within this context, Türkiye's involvement in Somalia through trade, investment, and infrastructure is not merely a story of external assistance, but one of intersection: where foreign policy initiatives meet deeply embedded local capacities. By examining how Somalis adapt, localize, and integrate Turkish goods, services, and opportunities into existing economic systems, the chapter situates Türkiye–Somalia relations within a framework that centers Somali initiative, resilience, and strategic economic participation. It argues that meaningful development outcomes emerge not from aid dependence but from the agency of those who reconfigure external inputs to serve domestic ambitions.

5.1 Somalia's Economic Agency

Somalia is often labeled as one of the world's most fragile states, grappling with conflict, limited governance, and humanitarian challenges. However, this characterization obscures the underlying dynamism of Somali society. At the core of Somalia's economy lies an informal sector that has proven remarkably resilient. With little reliance on formal state structures, Somali communities have created vibrant economic systems supported by diaspora remittances, mobile banking, and traditional networks of trust. It is estimated that the informal sector provides employment to over 90% of Somalia's population (ILO, 2021, p. 24). From street vendors in Mogadishu to livestock traders in Baidoa, economic activity thrives through innovation and self-organization.

Türkiye's entry into this landscape through its Africa Opening Policy since 2011 has added a new layer to Somalia's evolving economy. While international discourse often emphasizes aid and infrastructure, Somalis themselves focus on what these relationships allow them to achieve. Türkiye's support has opened new avenues for trade, consumer access, and entrepreneurship, but the agency lies with Somali actors who capitalize on these

links. Türkiye brands, education initiatives, and banking platforms are tools that Somali businesspeople interpret and deploy in ways that enhance local livelihoods. Türkiye's aid policies , but on how Somalis are shaping their economic future through resourcefulness, adaptability, and transnational connectivity.

In short this will demonstrate, Somali entrepreneurship is not an outcome of foreign assistance, but a reflection of intrinsic cultural and economic strengths. The real story lies in how Türkiye involvement intersects with a society that has long relied on its own systems to survive and grow. In viewing Somalia through this lens, we gain a deeper understanding of what true economic resilience looks like and how partnerships, when localized, can serve as catalysts rather than crutches.

5.2 Somali Resilience and Market Creativity

In the absence of strong formal governance structures, Somalis have cultivated one of the most adaptive and creative market systems in East Africa. Across urban and rural areas alike, traders engage in dynamic commerce managing imports, modifying goods, and distributing products across territories marked by conflict and uncertainty. Markets in Mogadishu, Hargeisa, and Kismayo are filled with Türkiye, Chinese, and Gulf products, yet what defines these markets is not the origin of goods, but how Somalis repurpose them to meet local needs. The culture of entrepreneurship is embedded in Somali daily life. It is not unusual for women to manage entire trade networks or for youth to run mobile tech repair businesses out of roadside kiosks (Abdullahi, 2021, p. 87).

What stands out in this economic landscape is the integration of Türkiye products. Turkish clothing brands such as LC Waikiki and DeFacto are not simply sold they are customized. Local tailors add traditional Somali embroidery or repackage items into bundles suited for family purchases. Similarly, Türkiye electronics and household items are adapted for energy-saving needs in communities with irregular power supply. Such reconfigurations illustrate not just resilience, but a sophisticated understanding of market demand and consumer behavior.

Mobile-money platforms like Hormuud's EVC Plus support this ecosystem by enabling seamless cashless transactions. These technologies, often more efficient than formal banking systems, allow entrepreneurs to bypass security and logistical challenges. According to the UNDP (2022, p. 12), more than 70% of small-scale traders in Mogadishu now rely entirely on mobile money. Türkiye influence intersects with this digital infrastructure many

traders source goods from Türkiye, manage payments via remittances, and leverage apps to market their products, often without the need for physical storefronts.

5.3 Somali Use of Turkish Products

The influence of Türkiye consumer goods in Somalia is widespread, not only in the capital city Mogadishu but also across secondary markets in Hargeisa, Garowe, and Bosaso. Türkiye brands like LC Waikiki, DeFacto, and İstikbal have become household names, not due solely to state-led trade policy, but because Somali traders and consumers have made them integral to local commerce. Shops in downtown Mogadishu are stocked with Türkiye-sourced garments that are often adapted to reflect cultural aesthetics, such as long skirts and hijabs, offering blends of modern fashion and traditional modesty. In some cases, Somali designers alter or rebrand Türkiye clothes for resale in regional markets, giving rise to a localized fashion economy (Ali, 2022, p. 55).

Beyond apparel, Türkiye furniture has gained popularity due to its reputation for affordability and durability. Brands like İstikbal are especially appreciated in urban households that seek stylish but functional interior furnishings. These products are often shipped through Türkiye logistics networks and sold in Somali showrooms or through small-scale vendors. According to field surveys, Somali customers prefer Türkiye goods over Chinese alternatives when quality and longevity are key considerations (UNCTAD, 2023, p. 18).

Türkiye food items such as canned goods, pasta, and sweets also occupy shelves in Somali supermarkets. These products are not only consumed but embedded into local culinary traditions. For example, Türkiye biscuits and snacks are included in school lunches or served during tea times, often repackaged by vendors into locally branded wrappers. This reflects Somali traders' capacity to integrate foreign imports with local tastes and practices.

Perhaps the most fascinating integration is technological. Türkiye electronic appliances such as refrigerators, televisions, and solar-powered lights are sold in electronics shops operated by Somali youth. These entrepreneurs provide after-sale services, including repairs and installment payment plans features often absent in formal retail chains. This layered economy demonstrates how Türkiye goods are embedded not only in Somali consumption but also in Somali entrepreneurship, offering value chains that extend well beyond simple import and resale.

In short, Somali engagement with Türkiye products reflects deep market intelligence, adaptation, and entrepreneurial agency. While the visibility of Türkiye brands may imply external dominance, the reality is that these brands succeed in Somalia because local actors embed them within broader economic and cultural systems.

5.4 Entrepreneurship across Borders

Somali entrepreneurship is not limited by geography it extends well beyond national borders into vibrant regional and global networks. Driven by a strong diaspora and a mobile population, Somalis have successfully created business channels across countries like Türkiye, Kenya, the UAE, and China. From Istanbul to Nairobi, Somali businesspeople operate wholesale and logistics companies, retail outlets, and remittance services, playing a critical role in transnational trade.

In Türkiye, Somali entrepreneurs manage export-import businesses that focus on textiles, electronics, and household goods. These traders utilize Türkiye's manufacturing capabilities and connect with wholesalers in Istanbul's Laleli and Zeytinburnu districts, shipping goods directly to Somali markets or other East African hubs. Many of these businesses are small-scale, often run by families, but they represent a crucial conduit through which goods, knowledge, and business practices circulate. Similarly, Somali youth returning from Türkiye universities often establish ventures inspired by Türkiye's café culture, fashion retail, or mobile delivery services.

In Kenya and the UAE, Somali businesses dominate sectors like logistics, real estate, and food distribution. They bring back both capital and new business models to Somalia, often adapting them to local conditions. A common example includes Somali-operated Türkiye style restaurants and pastry shops in Mogadishu and Hargeisa, which combine Türkiye culinary techniques with Somali hospitality and preferences. Digital entrepreneurship is also booming, with Somali developers creating apps for online shopping, delivery tracking, and mobile payments many inspired by technologies observed in Türkiye or Dubai.

These transnational linkages are not isolated. They form part of a larger Somali-led economic ecosystem that spans continents. What sets Somali entrepreneurs apart is their ability to synthesize foreign products, experiences, and business frameworks with local conditions—transforming imported models into uniquely Somali expressions of commerce.

5.5 Somalia's Economy is People-Driven

One of the most compelling elements of Somalia's economy is its people-centered character. Unlike conventional narratives that emphasize state-led development or foreign aid, Somalia's economic resilience is overwhelmingly driven by its citizen's entrepreneurs, traders, and community organizers. Even in the face of insecurity, poor infrastructure, and minimal state services, Somalis continue to adapt, trade, and innovate. The vibrancy of local markets, the prevalence of mobile money, and the expansion of informal networks all point to an economy that is deeply embedded in local initiative.

At the heart of this resilience is a culture of entrepreneurship that is both pragmatic and forward-looking. Somali women, often excluded from formal employment structures, dominate retail trade, operating food stalls, fashion boutiques, and mobile banking kiosks. Young people are increasingly turning to digital tools starting e-commerce businesses, using Instagram to market Türkiye fashion products, and launching delivery services that use WhatsApp for logistics. According to Abdullahi (2021, p. 88), nearly 60% of small enterprises in urban areas are youth- or women-led, indicating the demographic drivers of Somalia's economic renewal.

The use of Türkiye products is part of this broader story not as a passive reception of foreign imports, but as a strategic incorporation into local economies. Türkiye goods are customized, resold, and branded in Somali terms. Consumer preferences are shaped by affordability, cultural fit, and perceived quality, and Somali traders respond accordingly. For instance, LC Waikiki apparel is bundled into modest wear packages for families, while Türkiye electronics are sold with local maintenance guarantees. These adaptations illustrate the creative agency with which Somalis engage global markets.

Importantly, Somali economic agency extends beyond consumption and trade. Diaspora remittances fuel domestic investment, while local savings groups often organized by neighbourhood women fund micro-enterprises. Social trust, clan support, and community ties create alternative systems of credit and investment, filling the gap left by fragile banking institutions. When Türkiye invests in Somali infrastructure or opens trade corridors, it is Somali entrepreneurs who actualize those opportunities through transport networks, shopfronts, and localized branding.

These finding affirms a critical shift in how international partnerships should be analyzed. Türkiye's role in Somalia is meaningful not because of how much it gives, but

because of how Somalis turn that engagement into engines of local growth. Any sustainable future for Somalia must center on these everyday economic actors the informal trader, the tech-savvy youth, the single mother entrepreneur who build peace and prosperity from the ground up.

It has illustrated that Somalia's economic vitality is fundamentally driven by its people by their resilience, ingenuity, and capacity to transform challenges into opportunity. In examining the Türkiye Somalia relationship through a people-centered lens, we uncover a richer narrative: not one of dependency, but of dynamic agency. Somali traders import Türkiye goods not out of necessity, but because they identify, adapt, and localize products that meet community needs. Youth-led enterprises inspired by Türkiye cafes and fashion houses illustrate how cultural exchange becomes a platform for innovation. Diaspora investments channel remittances into construction, technology, and logistics not as charity, but as entrepreneurial vision.

Türkiye's engagement in Somalia through trade, education, finance, and diplomacy provides important infrastructure and opportunity. However, the sustainability and relevance of these initiatives lie in how Somalis internalize and reinterpret them. Whether it's through tailoring Türkiye clothing to fit Somali tastes, running logistics companies that connect Istanbul with Mogadishu, or creating hybrid e-commerce platforms, Somalis lead the process. The effectiveness of Türkiye's involvement is thus amplified by Somalia's capacity to absorb and redirect foreign engagement into local prosperity.

This affirms that true economic development in Somalia is not the product of external plans but emerges from within. The Somali people entrepreneurs, women, youth, and the diaspora are building a future based not only on survival but on enterprise. Their interaction with Türkiye investment reveals not just dependence or partnership, but co-creation. Moving forward, any analysis of Türkiye–Somalia relations must prioritize the role of Somali actors, recognizing that economic sovereignty begins at the grassroots level and grows outward through regional and global networks.

5.6 Why Türkiye Is Not Perceived as a Colonial Power: Postcolonial Memory, Political Agency, and Relational Legitimacy in Somalia

Foreign presence in Somalia has often been met with suspicion, shaped by the country's enduring legacy of colonial rule and its continuing struggle for genuine sovereignty. In this context, Türkiye's deep and multifaceted engagement with Somalia stands out not only for its scope but for the way it is interpreted by Somali actors. While Türkiye maintains one of the most prominent foreign footprints in the country—through its embassy, military cooperation, development projects, and political involvement—it is rarely framed as a neo-colonial force. This section seeks to explore the reasons behind this perception, engaging with postcolonial theory, historical memory, and the concept of political agency. Unlike many traditional powers whose presence in Africa triggers memories of domination, Türkiye is widely accepted by Somali political elites, civil society, and the broader population. Understanding this distinction requires unpacking the layered meanings of colonialism in Somali discourse and examining how Türkiye's role is actively negotiated, rather than passively accepted.

5.6.1 Colonialism and the Somali Political Imagination

To understand why Türkiye is not perceived as colonial, it is first essential to recall how colonialism is remembered and articulated within Somali society. Italian and British colonial administrations left behind a legacy of fragmented governance, economic underdevelopment, and disrupted social cohesion. For many Somalis, colonial rule is associated with coercion, racial hierarchy, resource extraction, and cultural suppression. These memories are not confined to historical archives—they remain active in national narratives, shaping how Somalis interpret foreign intervention. As scholars have noted, “postcolonial states in Africa maintain a deeply embedded sensitivity to external influence precisely because of their historical vulnerability to foreign domination” (Achille Mbembe, 2001).

Colonialism was not merely a political system but an epistemological project—a mode of asserting superiority and denying subjecthood to the colonized. In the Somali case, this involved the imposition of foreign legal systems, marginalization of Islamic institutions, manipulation of clan dynamics, and the creation of economic structures designed to serve imperial rather than local interests. Therefore, any contemporary actor operating in Somali territory must contend not only with material expectations but also with symbolic legacies.

Actions are filtered through a lens of historical trauma, and legitimacy is granted or denied based on how closely a foreign presence aligns with or departs from the colonial experience.

5.6.2 Türkiye Non-Colonial Identity in Historical and Political Context

Unlike former European colonial powers, Türkiye does not carry the burden of imperialism in the Horn of Africa. Although the Ottoman Empire had maritime and commercial links with Somali ports in earlier centuries, it never imposed colonial control, formal governance, or extractive administration in the region. This distinction matters not simply as a historical fact, but because it shapes how Türkiye is positioned in Somali discourse today. Whereas Western involvement often provokes caution and resistance, Turkish presence is discussed within a different symbolic framework—one that emphasizes partnership, faith-based solidarity, and South–South cooperation (Donelli, 2021).

Moreover, Türkiye’s own national identity is rooted in an anti-colonial narrative. Having never been colonized, and having itself resisted European imperialism during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Turkish Republic, Türkiye positions itself as an outsider to Western hegemonic traditions. This rhetorical posture, amplified by Turkish officials and media, resonates with postcolonial societies like Somalia that seek cooperation without domination. As Özkan (2020) observes, Türkiye’s “moral foreign policy” frames its involvement in Africa not as a civilizing mission, but as a mutual pursuit of dignity, independence, and development. This discourse enables Türkiye to gain symbolic legitimacy in Somali public life, even when it exercises significant political or security influence.

However, non-colonial perception is not granted automatically. It is also constructed through Türkiye’s deliberate avoidance of certain behaviors that would evoke historical trauma. Unlike actors that install military bases without consent or manipulate political leadership for strategic gain, Türkiye’s engagements are consistently accompanied by public diplomacy, bilateral agreements, and visible Somali ownership. Turkish officials frequently stress that they are “guests” in Somalia, invited by a sovereign government and bound by respect for Somali culture and autonomy (Akpınar, 2013). These narratives are not mere rhetoric; they inform how Turkish actions are interpreted and whether they provoke colonial associations.

5.6.3 Somali Agency and the Rejection of Passive Partnership

One of the most decisive reasons Türkiye is not seen as a colonial actor lies in the **agency** of Somali stakeholders. This partnership is not a one-sided projection of Turkish power but a dynamic process of negotiation, acceptance, and resistance by Somali institutions and communities. From political leaders to religious authorities and grassroots organizers, Somalis have actively shaped the form, pace, and content of Turkish engagement. This agency challenges the colonial logic of subjugation and instead affirms a co-constructed relationship.

For instance, the Somali federal government and military institutions have retained significant voice in determining the structure of military training, the scope of development projects, and the terms of diplomatic engagement. Türkiye's flagship initiatives—such as Camp TURKSOM or the construction of key infrastructure—have proceeded through official requests, intergovernmental coordination, and local participation. As Aras and Akpınar (2022) note, even when asymmetries exist, the presence of consultation, adaptation, and responsiveness creates a relationship of functional equality. It is precisely this participatory environment that prevents Türkiye's actions from being interpreted as coercive or imperial.

In addition, Somali public discourse—expressed through media, academic commentary, and even poetry—has played a critical role in shaping Türkiye's image. Rather than accepting Turkish presence as inherently positive or neutral, Somali voices have assessed it on the basis of alignment with national priorities and respect for sovereignty. This discursive space, where Türkiye can be praised, questioned, or even criticized, reflects a political maturity that distinguishes contemporary Somali–Turkish relations from the unilateral domination of colonial eras. In this context, **perception is not simply a product of Turkish actions but the outcome of Somali meaning-making**. The rejection of colonial framing, then, is not merely a sign of Turkish restraint, but a testament to Somali agency in defining its own alliances.

5.6.4 The Significance of Absence: What Türkiye Does Not Do

In postcolonial contexts, the legitimacy of foreign actors is often determined not only by their actions, but also by what they refrain from doing. Türkiye's perceived legitimacy in Somalia is shaped in large part by its **avoidance of behaviors historically associated with colonial or neo-imperial powers**. Unlike some international actors, Türkiye does not impose military personnel without formal agreements, does not exploit natural resources through extractive concessions, and does not pursue regime change or political manipulation through covert means. These absences are meaningful—they signal restraint, respect for sovereignty, and an understanding of Somalia's sensitivities to external domination.

Historically, colonial powers in Africa justified their presence through the language of civilizing missions, only to impose economic dependency and undermine local authority. In contrast, Türkiye has avoided building an image of paternalism. It does not present itself as the sole solution to Somalia's challenges, nor does it position Somalis as incapable of self-rule. Turkish cooperation is embedded in a logic of **mutual need**, framed around themes of Islamic brotherhood, anti-colonial solidarity, and shared development (Donelli, 2021). While this framing may be strategically curated, it stands apart from the discourse of superiority that characterized colonial ideology.

Furthermore, Türkiye's development and security partnerships have not resulted in permanent institutional dependence. Although military training and development assistance are extensive, Somalia retains control over decision-making processes. The political symbolism of this distinction is vital. As Shinn (2022) observes, foreign powers are often judged less by their material contributions than by their perceived respect—or disrespect—for local autonomy. In this respect, Türkiye's careful posture has enabled it to maintain influence without reproducing colonial-era anxieties. In a region marked by geopolitical competition, the **absence of coercion and imposition becomes a form of soft power in itself**.

5.6.5 Foreign Presence, Memory, and the Politics of Perception

Perception is not a secondary detail in international relations—it is a political reality shaped by historical memory, symbolic behavior, and local agency. In Somalia, where colonial rule remains a living wound, foreign actors are judged against a deeply entrenched standard of suspicion. Türkiye’s ability to operate extensively in Somali territory without provoking accusations of neocolonialism is not merely a diplomatic success—it is a reflection of a carefully constructed narrative, co-produced by both Turkish and Somali actors.

This narrative functions on several levels. First, Türkiye is presented as a partner rather than a ruler, a guest rather than an overlord. Second, Somalia does not receive Turkish assistance passively—it debates, directs, and defines it. Third, Türkiye is viewed through a distinct civilizational lens: not as a Western power returning to dominate, but as a Muslim-majority nation engaged in moral and strategic outreach. While these perceptions may shift over time, they currently support a framework of relational legitimacy that makes Turkish involvement both visible and acceptable.

Importantly, this is not to say that Turkish engagement is free from critique or that it operates without strategic interest. Like all foreign policy, Türkiye’s role in Somalia is shaped by a blend of altruism, ambition, and regional calculus. However, what distinguishes it from colonial analogies is the **permissive space** within which that role is exercised. There is room for Somali voices, revisions, resistance—even disengagement if necessary. This flexibility is incompatible with the rigid domination of colonial rule.

In conclusion, Türkiye is not perceived as a colonial power in Somalia not only because of what it has done, but because of how it has done it—and because of who was allowed to shape that doing. The Somali–Turkish relationship offers an example of how historical memory, political symbolism, and agency interact to determine whether foreign presence is seen as empowering or oppressive. It reminds us that in postcolonial societies, legitimacy is not built solely through action, but through perception—and that perception, in turn, is always co-created.

CHAPTER 6:

CHALLENGES AND CRITIQUES OF TÜRKIYE'S ENGAGEMENT IN SOMALIA

Despite widespread acclaim for Türkiye's proactive role in Somalia, a closer examination reveals a set of enduring challenges and critiques that complicate the narrative of success. As Türkiye's footprint has expanded across military, developmental, and cultural domains, so too have concerns regarding the coherence, intent, and consequences of its foreign policy in fragile contexts. The Türkiye–Somalia partnership, while often framed as a model of South–South cooperation, is embedded within a contested geopolitical terrain marked by local sensitivities, rival external actors, and structural governance deficits. This chapter critically interrogates these dynamics by exploring both operational obstacles and normative critiques—ranging from accusations of neo-imperialism and strategic overreach to the logistical limitations of sustaining deep engagement in an unstable environment. In doing so, it seeks to situate Türkiye's approach within broader debates on power, legitimacy, and the ethics of intervention in post-conflict states.

6.1 Domestic and International Criticism of Türkiye's Policies in Somalia

While Türkiye's engagement in Somalia has been widely praised for its humanitarian, military, and development contributions, it has also drawn criticism from both domestic and international observers. These critiques revolve around concerns of overreach, neo-imperialism, strategic inconsistency, and questions about long-term sustainability. From an academic standpoint, evaluating these criticisms is vital for understanding the broader implications of Türkiye's foreign policy under the AK Party and assessing how it is perceived by different stakeholders in the Horn of Africa and beyond. One of the most prominent international criticisms concerns the perception of Türkiye's "neo-Ottomanism"—a term used to describe Ankara's increasing projection of influence in former Ottoman territories and the broader Muslim world. In Somalia, Türkiye's extensive presence in state institutions, education, and religious affairs has sparked debate about whether its involvement constitutes a form of soft imperialism. Scholars such as Özkan (2020, p. 138) have argued that Türkiye's reliance on cultural and religious diplomacy particularly through institutions like the Diyanet and Maarif Foundation risks undermining local Somali institutions and religious autonomy.

Critics fear that such influence may distort local governance and create a dependency on Turkish institutions.

At the regional level, Gulf states such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia have viewed Türkiye's growing footprint in Somalia with suspicion. According to Bryden (2018, p. 10), Türkiye's support for the Somali federal government and its military base in Mogadishu directly challenge Emirati investments in Somaliland and Puntland, regions that often act independently from Mogadishu. This competition has deepened Somalia's internal divisions, as external actors pick sides in local political disputes. International NGOs and diplomatic missions have warned that foreign polarization in Somalia risks destabilizing the fragile progress made in governance and security (International Crisis Group, 2022, p. 6).

Domestically, there are concerns within Türkiye itself about the economic and political costs of engagement in Somalia. Public opinion polls by the Ankara Institute (2021) indicate that a segment of Türkiye's citizens question the allocation of public resources abroad, especially during times of economic hardship at home. Political opposition parties such as CHP (Republican People's Party) have periodically criticized the AK Party for prioritizing "foreign adventurism" over domestic welfare (Esen & Gumuscu, 2021, p. 93). They argue that foreign aid to Somalia—though humanitarian in intent—should be re-evaluated for transparency, long-term impact, and national interest alignment.

Critics also question the effectiveness and oversight of aid and military programs. While Türkiye has trained thousands of Somali soldiers, some analysts note the lack of independent monitoring mechanisms to assess whether these forces are being integrated effectively or are replicating existing power imbalances (Menkhaus, 2023, p. 141). Concerns have also been raised about coordination with other actors like AMISOM, the EU, and U.S. programs, which sometimes operate with overlapping mandates but without clear synergy.

In addition, some Somali civil society groups express skepticism about external military engagement, including Türkiye's. Though generally more favorable to Türkiye's involvement compared to other actors, these groups emphasize the importance of locally led governance and development, and caution against the long-term dependency that could arise from externally run institutions (Ali & Hassan, 2023, p. 55).

In short, while Türkiye's Somalia policy has gained considerable support for its unique blend of security, humanitarian, and development work, it is not immune to criticism.

These critiques whether rooted in geopolitics, sovereignty concerns, or domestic accountability offer a valuable lens through which to examine the sustainability, inclusivity, and strategic direction of Türkiye's engagement in Somalia.

6.2 Operational and Logistical Challenges in Türkiye–Somalia Cooperation

While Türkiye's multifaceted engagement in Somalia is often lauded for its ambition and humanitarian character, the implementation of its policies has encountered several operational and logistical hurdles. These challenges reflect not only the difficult conditions within Somalia but also the structural limitations of Türkiye's institutional and strategic frameworks abroad. From military operations to development projects, Türkiye has had to navigate a complex landscape characterized by insecurity, institutional fragility, and limited coordination. One of the most pressing challenges is the security environment in Somalia, which remains volatile despite ongoing stabilization efforts. Al-Shabaab continues to target foreign missions, aid organizations, and Somali government sites—including those affiliated with Türkiye. In 2020, a suicide bombing near Türkiye's road construction project in Afgoye injured several Turkish engineers (Reuters, 2020). These threats not only endanger personnel but also disrupt ongoing infrastructure and training projects, often delaying timelines and inflating operational costs. Security constraints have forced Türkiye to implement heightened protection protocols, increasing dependency on military logistics and diverting resources from civilian-led development goals (Yalçınkaya, 2020, p. 230).

Another logistical hurdle lies in coordination with Somali institutions, which often suffer from capacity shortages, inter-clan rivalry, and fragmented authority. The federal government in Mogadishu frequently struggles to assert control over semi-autonomous regions like Somaliland and Puntland. This fragmentation complicates the nationwide implementation of Türkiye's development projects and can hinder military coordination, especially when regional leaders pursue conflicting agendas. According to Aydın-Düzgüt and Balta (2022, p. 92), Türkiye's officials have had to recalibrate their strategies frequently to avoid becoming entangled in local political disputes.

Infrastructure delivery is another area marked by operational constraints. Türkiye has undertaken major projects—such as reconstructing the Mogadishu airport and seaport—but the lack of a reliable supply chain, poor road connectivity, and limited local industrial capacity makes execution challenging. Many materials must be imported from Türkiye or third countries, increasing cost and time burdens. TİKA and Türkiye's private firms face

additional difficulties in ensuring quality control in a context where oversight mechanisms are weak and corruption remains an endemic problem (Erdem, 2023, p. 135).

Moreover, humanitarian coordination remains a significant challenge. Though Türkiye's approach emphasizes bilateral, state-to-state aid, this often leads to a lack of integration with broader international humanitarian efforts. International NGOs and UN agencies have at times expressed frustration that Türkiye's projects operate independently, without aligning with the UN's humanitarian response plans. This disconnect, according to the International Crisis Group (2022, p. 8), can lead to overlaps, redundancies, or service gaps in critical sectors like healthcare and education.

Financial sustainability is another concern. Türkiye's expansive engagement in Somalia ranging from military training to infrastructure building requires substantial funding. As Türkiye faces increasing economic challenges domestically, questions arise about the long-term viability of such foreign commitments. Budget constraints have already led to reduced funding in some humanitarian sectors, and there is growing pressure from within Türkiye to prioritize domestic spending (Ankara Institute, 2021, p. 19).

Lastly, the lack of localized human resources poses a long-term challenge. While Türkiye has trained many Somali professionals and soldiers, high levels of brain drain and internal displacement mean that maintaining institutional continuity is difficult. Ensuring that these efforts translate into sustainable local capacity requires more investment in knowledge transfer, educational infrastructure, and long-term institutional partnerships.

In short, Türkiye's operational presence in Somalia is robust but not without its constraints. Security risks, coordination problems, logistical bottlenecks, and questions of financial sustainability all shape the effectiveness of its efforts. Overcoming these challenges will require not only adaptive strategies from Türkiye but also enhanced collaboration with Somali stakeholders and international partners to ensure that the outcomes are resilient and locally owned.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

As this research draws to a close, it returns to a question that is not only political, but existential: what does it mean for a state to rebuild itself from collapse, and what kind of ally is needed to walk alongside it in that journey? For Somalia, the answer to this question was never theoretical. It was lived, daily, in the absence of security, in the erosion of territorial sovereignty, and in the deep void left by a missing military apparatus. A country without a functional army, without a command center, without the ability to defend its borders or enforce its laws is not a country in full. It is vulnerable to fragmentation, manipulation, and occupation—both formally and informally—by external actors, including neighboring states pursuing their own strategic interests under the guise of aid.

This is the context in which Türkiye's engagement must be understood. The military cooperation between Türkiye and Somalia was not just a partnership—it was a rescue line. It was the most urgently needed intervention for a nation that had no means to protect itself, no secure military base, no trained national force, and no guaranteed control over its own territory. The absence of these critical pillars made Somalia not only weak but exposed. Without sovereignty in the true sense—military, legal, and territorial—no nation can rebuild, defend its people, or chart its own path forward. Türkiye's presence, therefore, was not only welcomed—it was necessary. In contrast to other actors who entered Somalia with narrow, often self-serving agendas, Türkiye invested in core state functions. It helped Somalia reclaim what had been lost: command over its territory, dignity in its governance, and the ability to resist internal fragmentation and external interference. The establishment of Camp TURKSOM symbolized this shift. For the first time in decades, Somali officers were being trained on Somali soil, under a framework of respect and reciprocity. For the first time in decades, there was a real possibility of rebuilding a national army from within.

This chapter, then, is not merely a conclusion. It is a recognition of what this partnership has meant to Somalia's survival and Somalia's future. Türkiye did not just build roads or deliver food. It helped a collapsed state rise—slowly, imperfectly, but decisively—toward reclaiming its sovereignty. And that, above all, is the essence of meaningful foreign policy: to stand with a nation not just when it is strong, but when it is on its knees, and to

believe that solidarity, when grounded in mutual respect, can become the foundation for shared strength.

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

Türkiye–Somalia partnership as a uniquely multidimensional case of international cooperation—rooted not in charity, but in necessity. Among the many findings that emerged, none stands more critical than the fact that Türkiye’s military cooperation came at a moment when Somalia was at its most vulnerable—militarily exposed, territorially fragmented, and existentially threatened. In the absence of a functioning national army, Somalia was not merely weak; it was defenseless. The Somali state, in effect, lacked one of the fundamental components of sovereignty: the ability to secure and control its own territory. At this critical juncture, Türkiye’s support was not supplementary—it was foundational. It offered what no other ally had delivered: the infrastructure and training capacity to begin rebuilding a national army from the ground up, on Somali soil, under Somali authority. The establishment of Camp TURKSOM was more than a military installation—it was the first genuine effort to restore the concept of state security in Somalia. It provided a disciplined framework for training Somali officers, a clear chain of command, and a morale-building structure grounded in professional standards and national service. For a country that had endured decades of militia rule, factional warfare, and externally driven “solutions,” this was a turning point.

Equally important, Türkiye did not isolate its military engagement from other sectors of cooperation. What began as a humanitarian response in 2011, during one of the worst famines in modern Somali history, quickly evolved into a deeper, more enduring partnership. Türkiye built hospitals, schools, and roads—but it also invested in the country’s human capital. Somali students studied in Turkish universities; Somali patients were treated in Turkish-funded clinics. This holistic approach created a layered form of diplomacy that reinforced Türkiye’s legitimacy and embedded its presence in the fabric of Somali society. The dual presence of security cooperation and soft power engagement allowed Türkiye to support Somalia’s state-building efforts without appearing hegemonic.

Furthermore, Somalia was not a passive recipient in this arrangement. One of the thesis’s central findings is the extent to which Somali actors—politicians, business leaders, youth entrepreneurs, and civil society figures—played an active role in shaping and negotiating the terms of the relationship. Turkish products, institutions, and ideas were not simply imported; they were localized. Turkish influence was integrated into Somali society in

ways that strengthened domestic capacity and offered alternatives to dependency. In this light, the Türkiye–Somalia partnership reflects not dominance, but mutual adaptation—a rare phenomenon in post-conflict foreign relations.

Chapter 2 grounded this partnership in theory, particularly through Walt’s Balance of Threat framework. Both Türkiye and Somalia identified shared threats: regional instability, violent extremism, and diplomatic isolation. This convergence of vulnerabilities laid the groundwork for a strategic alliance. Chapter 3 then revealed the local economic dynamics, showing how Türkiye’s presence stimulated not just trade, but innovation—from market access to entrepreneurial growth. Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 examined the implementation and tensions of the military dimension, acknowledging both the gains in institutional development and the ongoing concerns about sustainability, transparency, and long-term independence. One final, crucial finding is this: Türkiye’s role in Somalia redefines how we understand international alliances between asymmetrical partners. It shows that a fragile state can negotiate from a place of vision, that a middle power can act from a place of solidarity, and that together they can co-create a model of cooperation rooted in necessity but growing toward mutual benefit. The military partnership was never simply about security—it was about enabling Somalia to begin the long, unfinished journey of reclaiming its future.

7.2 Future Implications

The Türkiye–Somalia partnership stands at a pivotal juncture. What has been built—through sacrifice, persistence, and mutual trust—must now evolve to meet the demands of a changing regional and global landscape. The immediate future holds immense promise, but it also demands critical choices and strategic patience from both sides. If this partnership is to endure beyond personalities, governments, and crises, it must deepen its roots—structurally, socially, and politically—across Somali institutions and society.

First and foremost, the military cooperation must move beyond training into long-term institutionalization. Somalia’s security forces—though improved—remain fragile, fragmented, and under-resourced. Camp TURKSOM must not become a singular symbol of progress, but the beginning of a broader defense doctrine that integrates civilian oversight, judicial reform, logistics command, and regional force deployment. Türkiye has the experience and trust to help build not just soldiers, but systems. This next phase will require careful calibration: supporting without dominating, advising without displacing Somali leadership.

Second, Türkiye must continue its engagement with Somalia's civil institutions, expanding its involvement in areas that strengthen the state's capacity to function independently. Governance, education, public health, and infrastructure all require sustained partnership. But this support must now move toward Somali-led design and implementation. Ownership cannot remain symbolic—it must be built into every project, every contract, every diplomatic engagement. Without true local ownership, even the most well-intentioned support risks fostering dependency or triggering backlash.

Third, the regional landscape is growing more crowded—and more contested. Gulf states, Western donors, China, and regional neighbors all seek influence in Somalia, often pursuing conflicting agendas. Türkiye must carefully guard its reputation as a reliable, principled actor. That means maintaining neutrality in Somalia's internal politics, avoiding alignments with individual factions or leaders, and resisting the temptation to compete for dominance. Instead, Türkiye should position itself as a mediator and stabilizer—a nation that offers long-term commitment rather than short-term leverage.

Yet, Türkiye's own stability will also shape this partnership. Economic constraints, political transitions, or shifts in foreign policy priorities could reduce its engagement in Somalia. Such a retreat would risk not only abandoning hard-earned trust, but also destabilizing the fragile progress made thus far. Similarly, if Somalia's internal divisions widen—between federal government and member states, between center and periphery—the very foundation of joint projects could fracture. The sustainability of this partnership depends on both sides remaining committed not just to bilateral gains, but to the broader idea of sovereignty shared and sovereignty restored.

Another vital implication lies in economic transformation. Somalia is a young nation—not only in history, but in demography. Türkiye's future role must center youth empowerment through entrepreneurship, education, and technological innovation. Investment in tech hubs, vocational training, women-led enterprises, and rural development can convert the spirit of partnership into tangible opportunity. These grassroots outcomes will generate the legitimacy and social resilience that security cooperation alone cannot provide.

The Türkiye–Somalia relationship offers a broader lesson to the Global South: that diplomacy can be built on dignity, that power asymmetry does not preclude mutual respect, and that fragile states are not merely subjects of intervention but co-authors of their recovery. This model, though imperfect and still in formation, pushes against the notion that only

Western powers can lead post-conflict development. It shows that shared faith, shared history, and shared vulnerability can be the building blocks of a new kind of partnership—one not defined by domination, but by co-creation.

Türkiye–Somalia relationship was never simply a diplomatic project or a foreign development initiative. It was, and continues to be, a critical response to collapse, to abandonment, and to decades of unmet need. Where others offered conditions, Türkiye offered commitment. Where others hesitated, Türkiye acted. And where sovereignty had become a memory, Türkiye helped to make it tangible again—through military training, institutional partnership, and a belief that Somali resilience deserved investment, not pity.

For Türkiye, this engagement has likewise redefined what it means to be a regional power with global ambition. Somalia did not represent a trophy, a market, or a proxy. It represented an opportunity to build a different kind of foreign policy—one rooted in shared struggle and guided by shared futures. Türkiye’s role in Somalia affirms that it is possible to lead with empathy and to influence without imposition.

The road ahead is long, and the work is far from complete. But if there is one lesson that emerges from this study, it is this: when foreign policy is grounded in trust, dignity, and mutual struggle, it can become more than strategy. It can become solidarity. And in a fractured international order, that may be the most powerful diplomacy of all.

In reflecting on this partnership, one must recognize that its strength lies not only in infrastructure or military capacity, but in how the relationship is symbolically and politically constructed. Turkey’s presence in Somalia has not reproduced the dynamics of foreign control or imposed dependency so common in African postcolonial memory. Instead, its engagement has been marked by negotiation, responsiveness, and a visible acknowledgment of Somali sovereignty. This makes its model of cooperation stand out in a region where historical trauma often defines how external actors are received.

Importantly, this thesis does not present the Türkiye–Somalia relationship as perfect or without strategic calculation. Rather, what distinguishes it is the absence of colonial behavior—there are no imposed military bases, no direct exploitation of natural resources, no overriding of political authority. Somalia, as a post-conflict state, continues to exercise agency in shaping the terms of engagement, and Turkey’s approach has largely enabled that agency rather than stifling it.

This final observation reveals a larger insight: in international relations, legitimacy is not a byproduct of power alone. It is a construct—shaped by history, perception, and the political space local actors are allowed to occupy. Somalia’s acceptance of Turkey’s role, and Turkey’s careful cultivation of that trust, illustrates how cooperation can flourish in fragile contexts without falling into the familiar patterns of domination. In this sense, the Türkiye–Somalia case offers more than a bilateral success story—it is an example of what postcolonial partnership can look like when respect, historical awareness, and local agency guide the interaction.

As global power dynamics continue to shift, such cases will grow increasingly important. They challenge the idea that security cooperation must come at the cost of sovereignty, or that development must mirror past hierarchies. They remind us that even in conflict-affected societies, the narratives of partnership matter—and that the most enduring alliances are those built not only on interest, but on understanding.

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