



# Turkey's Growing Role as a Security Actor in Somalia: Dynamics and Motivations

*Türkiye'nin Somali'de Bir Güvenlik Aktörü Olarak Artan Rolü:  
Dinamikler ve Motivasyonlar*

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## Atıf/Citation

Siradag, Abdurrahim . "Turkey's Growing Role as a Security Actor in Somalia:  
Dynamics and Motivations". Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi 17 / 2 (Ekim 2022): 389-404.  
<https://doi.org/10.17550/akademikincelemeler.1115931>

**Makale Türü/Article Type:** Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article  
**Geliş Tarihi/Date Received:** 12.05.2022  
**Kabul Tarihi/Date Accepted:** 08.10.2022  
**Yayın Tarihi/Date Published:** 15.10.2022

**ISSN:** 1306-7885

**E-ISSN:** 2602-3016

Cilt/Volume: 17 | Sayı/Issue: 2 |  
Yıl/Year: 2022 (Ekim/October)

16. yıl

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## Abstract

Somalia has a special place in the foreign policy of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which has been in power since 2002. Turkey's relations with Somalia began to develop after the official visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Somalia on 19 August 2011, who was the prime minister at that time, to support Somalis affected by severe drought and civil war. After 2011, Turkey launched one of the largest humanitarian aid campaigns to Somalia. Turkey has not only developed a soft power policy in Somalia but also started to implement a hard power policy. In this respect, Turkey has been training hundreds of Somali soldiers and police in both Ankara and Mogadishu since 2012. At the same time, Turkey opened its largest military base abroad in Somalia in 2017. This research explores the reasons and dynamics behind Turkey's deepening of its security policy in Somalia and sheds light on what Turkey's security policy means for Somalia. The research argues that there is a combination of factors driving Turkey's security policy towards Somalia, including socio-cultural, economic, and geopolitical. This study examines Turkey's security policy with a holistic approach, using conceptual and theoretical perspectives.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Somalia, Africa, Security, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Foreign Policy

## Türkiye'nin Somali'de Bir Güvenlik Aktörü Olarak Artan Rolü: Dinamikler ve Motivasyonlar

### Öz

2002 yılında iktidara gelen Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin (AK Parti) dış politikasında Somali'nin özel bir yeri bulunmaktadır. Türkiye'nin Somali ile ilişkileri, dönemin başbakanı olan Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın 19 Ağustos 2011 yılında şiddetli kuraklıktan ve iç savaştan etkilenen Somalilere destek olmak amacı ile bu ülkeye düzenlediği resmi ziyaretin ardından gelişmeye başlamıştır. 2011'den sonra Türkiye, Somali'ye en büyük insani yardım kampanyalarından birini başlatmıştır. Türkiye, Somali'de sadece bir yumuşak güç politikası geliştirmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda bir sert güç politikası da uygulamaya başlamıştır. Bu kapsamda Türkiye, 2012 yılından bu yana hem Ankara'da hem de Mogadishu'da yüzlerce Somalili asker ve polise eğitim vermektedir. Aynı zamanda Türkiye, 2017 yılında yurtdışındaki Türkiye'nin en büyük askeri üssünü Somali'de açtı. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'nin Somali'de güvenlik politikasını derinleştirmesinin ardındaki nedenleri ve dinamikleri incelemekte ve Türkiye'nin güvenlik politikasının Somali için ne anlama geldiğini tartışmaktadır. Araştırma, sosyo-kültürel, ekonomik ve jeopolitik dahil olmak üzere Türkiye'nin Somali'ye yönelik güvenlik politikasını yönlendiren faktörlerin bir kombinasyonu olduğunu savunuyor. Bu çalışma, kavramsal ve teorik perspektifler kullanarak Türkiye'nin güvenlik politikasını bütüncül bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Somali, Afrika, Güvenlik, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti), Dış Politika

### Introduction

While Turkey mainly focused on developing relations with the West at the highest level after 1923, it ignored maintaining its connections with Africa keeping the relationship at the lowest level until the 1990s. Turkish governments took significant steps to improve relations with Africa at different times and periods such as in 1979 and 1998, but these efforts and initiatives could not develop relations with Africa as desired due to the structural economic and political crises in the country. After the AK Party came to power in November 2002, Turkey redefined the parameters of traditional Turkish foreign policy (TFP) and made structural adjustments to TFP. In particular, developing multilateral and multidimensional foreign policy, and strengthening an Afro-Eurasian identity have become significant objectives of the foreign policy of the ruling AK party governments.

With the AK Party government, Turkey has taken significant steps to improve relations with Africa in many areas. The first and most important of these steps and initiatives is the opening of new diplomatic missions across African countries. Until 2009, Turkey was

one of the countries that had the fewest diplomatic representations, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. While Turkey only had 12 embassies in Africa until 2009, this number reached 43 in 2021. Similarly, whereas only 10 African countries had diplomatic missions in the capital of Turkey Ankara in 2008, this number increased to 37 today (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2021a). At the same time, Turkey's total trade with Africa was 5.4 billion dollars in 2003, but it exceeded over 28 billion dollars in 2021 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2022). Turkey aims to strengthen its political legitimacy and economic relations in the African continent by increasing the number of its diplomatic missions. It also aims to become a recognized and visible actor on the continent by strengthening its political legitimacy.

It is important to highlight that there were only a few actors in making traditional foreign policy in Turkey, namely the politicians, the bureaucrats, and the military class but this has changed after the AK Party came to power in 2002. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey has actively begun to work with the different actors to develop a proactive foreign policy toward Somalia including NGOs, businessmen, various state and non-state actors, universities, and religious organizations.

Furthermore, Turkey has been actively involved in the fields of defense and security in Africa since 2012. In this sense, Turkey has made defense industry cooperation agreements with more than 25 African countries and established military bases in Somalia and Libya. Furthermore, 82.9 million dollars of the 2.2 billion dollars in defense and aerospace exports were made to African countries in 2020 (Alemdar, 2021). It is worth mentioning that the success of the Turkish drones in Syria, Libya, and Azerbaijan has become a significant driving factor in increasing Turkish defense export to Africa. Despite the impact of Covid-19, Turkish defense industry export to Africa grew by 9.2% in 2020 compared to 2019. Whereas the African continent was the 5th market in Turkish defense industry exports in 2021 (Ibid.), it became the second market in 2022 (Kuş, 2022). There are three important reasons for the emergence of Turkey as an important actor in the fields of the defense industry in Africa. The first is that Turkey has undergone a great political and economic transformation in the last 20 years. The second is Turkey's development of an active foreign policy both in the region and outside the region. Thirdly, Turkey aims to find new markets for defense industry products both in Somalia and other African countries.

The number of academic writings on Turkey-Africa relations has increased among the Turkish and non-Turkish academics as a result of the AK Party governments' active involvement in Africa since 2005 but the most articles on Turkey-Somalia generally deal with Turkey-Somalia relations from one dimension and ignore the other dimensions. This research aims to explore the new dimensions and the dynamics driving Turkey's security policy in Somalia. The study also argues that Turkey's security policy in Somalia has evolved as a part of its wider humanitarian aid policy toward Somalia. This research particularly aims to answer the following questions: Why has Turkey been actively involved in security in Somalia since 2012? What are the factors and the dynamics driving Turkey's security policy toward Somalia?

## **1. Conceptual and theoretical framework**

Since the end of the Cold War era, the concept of security has undergone a significant transformation. While the concept strictly had a military meaning during the Cold War era, it has included new perspectives after the 1990s such as human security and

economic security. The new threats and challenges have shifted the traditional focus of the concept profoundly (Buzan, 1997, 6-12). For instance, economic crises, global terrorism, and the Covid-19 pandemic have added new values to the concept and made it too blurry. Therefore, the concept of security is defined as a contested concept (Ibid.). There are several fundamental questions about the concept of security to clarify. The first question is what is the main objective of security? Is it to protect the individuals, the state, or the international system? The second one is what are its values? (Baldwin, 1997, 13-14). The third question is what strategies should be developed by the states to eliminate the defined threats? The last question is how much the states need security? From which threats the state should be protected? Is the threat ideological, economic, or military? (Ibid., 14-15).

The main reason for using structural realist theory among the theories of international relations in this study is that it is the theory that most plausibly explains the change and transformation in world politics after the 2000s and the effects of this change. Secondly, in this study, the constructivist approach was preferred as the theory that most strongly explains the motives behind Turkey's security policy. The structural realists or neo-realists maintain that the structure of the international system has transformed radically since the end of the Cold War era. The multipolar international system emerged in the post-Cold War era. The rise of new global powers like China, India, Turkey, Brazil, and Russia has led to the emergence of security competition among the global powers. The new system has forced the states to increase their military power to survive in the self-help system. Moreover, there is no higher authority above the state and no trust among the actors. The states aim to maximize their power in the anarchic world. The security competition among the actors is more likely to increase and cause wars. The distribution of power among the new rising actors is more likely to exacerbate security competition among the actors (Mearsheimer, 2013, 72-80).

Constructivists allege that international politics is socially and historically constructed. International politics is shaped by shared ideas, values, history, and culture. Power politics is not given by nature, and it is not static. The states can change static relations through social interactions and communication. However, structural realists believe that power politics is given by nature and is fixed. According to the structural realists, the global actors act and live in the self-help system and anarchic world that pushes the states to militarize themselves. Constructivists assert that interests and identities are also socially constructed (Alexander, 1992, 403-7). Wendt points out that 500 British nuclear weapons never threaten US security, but only 5 North Korean nuclear weapons have been a massive threat to the US because Britain shares the same values, beliefs, and ideas with the US. However, the US does not share the same values as North Korea (Alexander, 1999, 255).

In light of the conceptual and theoretical discussion, there are three important results regarding Turkey's Somali security policy. First, Turkey considers its security policy toward Somalia as a part of its humanitarian and development assistance policy, and at the same time, Turkey aims to contribute to the formation of the political and economic stability of Somalia with its security policy. Secondly, Turkey wishes to strengthen its geopolitical position both in East African politics and in world politics with a more active foreign policy in the reshaped world system. Thirdly, Turkey's common historical relations with this country and its common socio-cultural identity play a very important role in the formation of its strategic relationship with Somalia.

## 2. Security in Somalia

Understanding the main dynamics affecting Somalia's security is vital for building lasting peace and security in Somalia. Somalia has multiple and complex security problems. After the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, the civil war began in Somalia. There was not a functioning central government in Somalia from 1991 to 2011. Though the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established in 2012, security still remains a massive problem in the country. There are several major reasons and dynamics destabilizing security in Somalia. The first is the legacy of colonial history. Somalia was divided and ruled by the former colonial powers including France, British, and Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dersso, 2009, 1-2). The colonial actors divided the country regardless of the consideration of the ethnic identity of the local population. Due to the colonial legacy, Somalia has enduring border problems with the neighboring countries since it gained independence in 1960. Somalia has followed an irredentist policy to unite all the Somalis living in the neighboring countries under one flag. For this purpose, Somalia went to war with Ethiopia in 1977-8 to seize the Ogaden region to unite the Somalis living in Ethiopia and build a greater Somalia in the region (Menkhaus, 2011, 2).

The second reason is the clan system in the country. The struggle among the different clans intensified after the Siad Barre regime lost the Ogaden War with Ethiopia (1977-8). Then, the Siad Barre regime heavily started cracking down on the members of the Isaaq and Majerten clans who were against the Barre regime (World Bank, 2005, 9-10). Furthermore, the Barre regime intensively armed its favorite clans to attack the opposing clans including the Isaaq clan that mostly live in northwestern Somalia. After the Siad Barre regime collapsed in 1991, the clans have endeavored to fill the power vacuum, therefore they have fought over the control of key territories and access to recourses. Even though the Isaaq clan declared independence in 1991, the *de facto state* known as Somaliland has not since been recognized by the international community. Similarly, the Majerten clan located in the northeast known as Puntland declared its autonomy in 1998. In addition, there has been an enduring conflict between the different clans in Somaliland and Puntland to capture the territories in the disputed area in the north of Somalia (Mahmood, 2019, 3-5).

When the Federal Government of Somalia was established in 2012, the balance between the clans has become the most significant in selecting presidents, prime ministers, and ministers. There is a 4.5 clan system in Somalia shaping the government structure. According to this system, the number 4 represents the four big clans selecting the top members of the government. The number 5 accounts for the small clans having a small impact in choosing the high members of the government (Hoehne, 2010, 35-7).

The third dynamic is the involvement of international organizations and external powers in Somalia's internal affairs. The United Nations (UN) implemented United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM I and II) between 1992-1995 to preserve peace and coordinate humanitarian assistance. The U.S. also carried out the Unified Task Force known as Operation Restore Hope in December 1992-May 1993. It is important to highlight that Lieutenant-General Çevik Bir as a Turkish commander was appointed as force commander of UNOSOM II between 1993-94 but none of these operations brought lasting peace and security to Somalia (Møller, 2009, 12). The UN and US operations increased anger among the Somalis and resulted in more destabilizing of the country. While Ethiopia militarizes and supports the opposing groups within Somalia, Somalia also politically and militarily backs up the opponents within Ethiopia. Ethiopia militarily

interfered in Somalia in 2006 with the support of the U.S. to stop the growing power of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) which became a significant actor in the country after the Siad Barre regime collapsed (Barnes – Hassan, 2007, 152-3). The U.S. designated Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization in 2008 which has existed as a youth wing of the UIC (Dersso, 2009, 6-8). Al-Shabaab has also seen Turkey as a representative of the Western invaders in Somalia. Therefore, it has organized several attacks against Turks and Turkish institutions in the country. For example, the Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu was bombed on 27 July 2013, killing three people and wounding 9 people (Omar – Sheikh, 2013). Furthermore, a suicide truck bomber killed 72 students waiting at the Ministry of Education of Somalia for applying for the scholarship in Turkey (CNN, 2011).

After the Ethiopian forces withdrew from Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) launched its operation in 2007 to maintain peace and security in the country but Al-Shabaab has started attacking the forces of AMISOM as well as the countries providing logistical support to it. Furthermore, the actors from the Middle East have also actively engaged in Somalia. For instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) set up a military base in Somaliland and provides political and financial support (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2019, 6-9). Due to the strategic importance of Somalia, the global and regional powers have been actively engaged in Somalia at different levels. Finally, environmental factors and natural disasters such as famine, drought, poverty, and disasters are also seen very commonly in Somalia which is also another important factor destabilizing peace and security in the country.

In order for Turkey to become a permanent and effective actor in Somalia, the factors affecting the security of this country must be carefully analyzed. Due to the country's very important geopolitical position both in the region and in world politics, many international and regional actors are in competition both in Somalia and in the East African region. At the same time, the tribal system in Somalia plays a very sensitive role in shaping domestic politics in the country. Therefore, a correct analysis of this tribal system will provide us with very important information about the future of the country.

### **3. Turkey's Foreign and Security Policy**

There are four important forces and dynamics driving Turkey's foreign and security policy, namely the legacy of the Ottoman State, the geographical position of Turkey, the geopolitical challenges, and the official ideology of Turkey (Oğuzlu, 2015, 228). First, the legacy of the Ottoman State has been influencing Turkey's foreign and security policy. The Ottoman State had a multi-ethnic identity and its borders extended to very vast swathes of geography including the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, the Middle East, and Africa. Whenever there is a potential conflict or security crisis in the former territories of the Ottoman State, Turkey plays a proactive role in preventing the conflicts to sustain peace and security in these regions and help the civilians who have been affected by conflicts. For example, when the war began in Bosnia in 1992, thousands of civilians immigrated to Turkey. Likewise, millions of civilians migrated to Turkey from Syria due to the civil war that began in 2011 (Aydın, 2004, 19-21).

The second dynamic and force are the geographical position of Turkey. Turkey has a unique geographical position in world politics that connects the two continents including Europe and Asia. Due to its geographical importance, global actors have been involved in politics in Turkey for many years (Ibid., 24-6). Turkey was defined as a buffer state by the great actors in the Cold War era. In this sense, the U.S. established its military base in

Turkey in 1951 and provided financial and military support during the Cold War era. Turkey has also become an energy transit country. As a result of Turkey's long years of developing a western-oriented foreign policy, it has not been able to develop constructive relations with neighboring and regional countries. With the end of the Cold War, Turkey reevaluated its geographical and historical dynamics and took steps toward becoming a more active actor in its region. After the 2000s, AK Party governments started to develop multi-dimensional relations not only with the western continent but also with Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, in accordance with the Afro-Eurasian identity.

The third factor is the geopolitical developments in the region and in the world that have a significant impact on the evolution of Turkey's foreign and security policy. For example, the Syrian war has presented political, social, and security challenges to Turkey (Kutlay – Öniş, 2021, 1087). For instance, millions of Syrian refugees migrated to Turkey during the civil war. Moreover, the Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organizations increased attacks against Turkey after the Syrian civil war began in 2011. Furthermore, the U.S. and the EU have also provided economic, political, and military support to the PKK terrorist organization in Northern Syria (Aknur – Durmuşlar, 2019, 1358). The severe tension between Turkey and Greece regarding gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean has led to the emergence of new threats and challenges for both sides and resulted in the establishment of a new strategic alliance against Turkey consisting of Greece, France, Egypt, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). Turkey has been more ambitious in developing and employing hard power to survive and protect its national interests in the Mediterranean after 2016 (Oğuzlu, 2020, 136). To answer the security challenges against Turkey, Ankara carried out two military operations in Syria in 2016 and 2018 and put more importance on the manufacturing of weapons such as drones, helicopters, and naval. At the same time, it opened its new military bases in Qatar and Somalia in 2015 and 2017 respectively, and more recently in Libya in 2020.

The last driving force shaping Turkey's foreign and security policy is the official ideology of Turkey. The founding elites of Turkey adopted secularism and Westernization as the official ideology of Turkey in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman State. The fundamental aim of the ideology was to Westernize and secularize Turkish society. The founding elites implemented significant numbers of radical reforms in a wide range of fields to embrace Westernization and secularization (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008, 60-1). Turkey followed a Western-oriented foreign and security policy in line with its official ideology in the Cold War era. In this regard, Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952 and the Council of Europe in 1949. Also, Turkey applied for EU membership in 1964 to reinforce its Western identity (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000, 209).

Turkey's historical legacy in Somalia dating back to the Ottoman period has been playing a significant role in shaping Turkey's security policy toward Somalia. In addition, we can say that the Afro-Eurasian identity that Turkey strengthened during the AK Party governments contributed to the shaping of the Somali security policy. Turkey had aimed to overcome its security problems that increased in the region after the Arab Spring, by establishing strategic security cooperation with Somalia and with East Africa. Finally, Turkey's security policy in Somalia shows that it has abandoned its Western-oriented foreign policy and has instead developed a foreign policy that is compatible with Turkey's geographical and historical dynamics and protects its strategic interests.

#### 4. Turkey's Opening Up to Africa

Though Turkey has been actively engaged in Africa since 2005, its historical relations with Africa go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When the Ottoman Sultan Selim I conquered Egypt in 1517, Ottoman involvement in Africa commenced. The Ottoman State became a significant actor in African politics for almost four centuries and it actively remained a significant actor in African politics until the Ottoman State lost Trablusgarb in 1912. Importantly, the Ottomans played a critical role in preventing the colonial activities of Spain in North Africa and Portugal in East Africa. Additionally, the Ottoman State provided political, economic, and military support to the Muslim Sultanates in Africa (Kavas, 2007, 78-81). For instance, the Ottoman expanded its socio-cultural influence on Sub-Saharan Africa by sending an Islamic scholar Abubakr Effendi to South Africa in 1863 to educate the Muslims living in Cape Town in the light of Islamic knowledge (Ibid., 80-1).

Beyond the opening of the Turkish embassy in Ethiopia in 1926, Turkey's foreign policy toward Africa remained very limited. When African countries gained their independence from the former colonial powers after the 1950s, Turkey immediately recognized the independence of all African countries. However, Turkey failed to develop a consistent foreign policy toward Africa. For instance, it failed to support demands for independence of the North African countries including Algeria and Tunisia at the UN General Assembly in the 1950s and 60s (Tepeciklioğlu, 2012, 72-3).

Turkey faced significant political and security challenges coming from the West when the Cyprus issue emerged in the 1960s. Turkey could not find any political support for its Cyprus cause at the UN level even from the African countries. Besides, the U.S. put a military embargo on Turkey after the military involvement of Turkey in Cyprus in 1974. Turkey's high dependency on the West in the fields of defense and security was seen as a huge security problem by the Turkish policymakers of the time after the Cyprus intervention of 1974 (Ibid., 73). Accordingly, developing multilateral relations with different actors and efforts for manufacturing its weapons to diminish its dependence on the West became strategic goals for Turkish foreign policy. However, Turkey continued to remain a heavily dependent actor on the West's capabilities until the end of the Cold War in the 1990s.

The then foreign minister Ahmet Gündüz Gökçün prepared the first Africa Action Plan of 1979 to develop multifaceted relations with African countries. In light of this plan, the government decided to open new embassies in Somalia and Tanzania, and also some African countries were visited including Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda to increase bilateral relations. Besides, Turkey provided political support for Zimbabwe and Namibia throughout their independence process at the UN (İncesu, 2020). On the other hand, the first African Action Plan was not implemented successfully due to the military coup of 1980 in Turkey. Meanwhile, the Turkish embassies in Somalia, Tanzania, and Gana were closed by the military government in 1980 due to economic reasons (Ibid.). In Turkish foreign policy, the Cyprus problem is the most important motivation for starting strategic relations with African countries. The foundations of Turkey-Africa relations in the history of the Republic are based on the Cyprus problem. With the emergence of the Cyprus problem in the 1960s, it became a necessity to develop political relations with Africa (Turhan, 2021, 469)

A new global system emerged in the post-Cold War world which brought about significant changes in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey went through a significant change under the



administration of Turgut Özal (1983-1993), who drew special attention to developing political and economic relations with the former territories of the Ottoman State including the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. Özal made an official visit to Algeria in 1985 and gave an official apology to this country due to Turkey's inconsistent foreign policies toward Algeria in the past (Bayram, 2014, 264-5).

The then Foreign Minister İsmail Cem prepared the second Africa Action Plan in 1998 for developing comprehensive relations with Africa along with Turkish NGOs, businessmen, ambassadors, think tanks, and related stakeholders. According to İsmail Cem, Turkey was to endeavor to increase its relations with the non-Western regions for its national interests (Hazar, 2016, 294-96). However, the Africa Action Plan was also not carried out successfully by the coalition government of the time due to the economic and political crises in the country (Ozkan, 2010, 534). According to Davutoğlu, Turkey has a unique position in world politics due to its geographical and historical depth which gives Turkey a special status to play a more active role in global politics. The end of the Cold War era enabled Turkey to redefine its position and rethink its historical and geographical dynamics. In this regard, to ignore Africa or see it as an underdeveloped continent would be a big strategic mistake for Turkey. Turkey must be in Africa to expand its sphere of influence in global politics. To do this, it is necessary to undertake renewal in the psychology of foreign policy-making to initiate an African opening (Davutoğlu, 2001, 208).

Turkey has taken steps to strengthen its strategic relations with regional and sub-regional organizations in the continent. In this sense, the African Union accepted Turkey as a strategic partner of the continent in 2008. Turkey has been accredited to regional African organizations such as the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) (Sıradağ, 2020, 9-10). Turkey became a non-regional member of the African Development Bank in 2008. Turkey aims to further deepen its political and economic relations with African countries by strengthening its strategic relations with regional and sub-regional organizations in the African continent.

Moreover, Turkish Airlines flies to 40 African countries and 60 destinations in the continent while it was only flying to the North African countries before 2005. The fact that Turkish Airlines is the airline that flies to most countries in the African continent has some important consequences. Firstly, visits from Turkey to African countries have become easier, and thus, it has become easier for Turkish businessmen to go to African countries to conduct commercial activities and to meet with African businessmen. Secondly, there has been an increase in the number of African tourists visiting our country from Africa. Third, Turkey strengthens its soft power policy in the African continent through THY.

Turkey has been aiming to strengthen its strategic relations at the continental level by organizing Turkey-Africa summits since 2008. In this regard, the AK Party government has organized Turkey-Africa Summits to institutionalize Turkey-Africa relations since 2008. The first Turkey-Africa summit was held in Istanbul with the participation of 49 African countries. The participant countries decided to expand collaboration in different areas including trade, energy, education, infrastructure, agriculture, etc. The second one was organized in Equatorial Guinea's capital Malabo with participants from 32 African countries in 2014. The leaders of the countries at the second summit decided to organize the third summit in Turkey. The third Turkey-Africa Summit was held in Istanbul on 16-7 December 2021 with the participation of 26 heads of African states and governments and 102 African ministers (African Business, 2021). Turkey-Africa Summits are of great

importance in terms of deepening Turkey's relations with the continent, recognition of Turkey as a political actor by the countries in the continent, and laying the groundwork for the development of bilateral relations with African countries.

The dynamics and the reasons that are contributing to the development of Turkey-Africa relations are as follows: First, President Erdoğan attaches great importance to the development of relations with Africa. In this context, President Erdoğan has been playing an important role in the development of bilateral relations with African countries by visiting more than 30 African countries since 2005. According to Turan (2000, 10-11), the leadership role of Erdoğan to develop relations between Turkey and Africa stems from moral responsibility, common history, culture, and religion. The second reason and dynamic is Turkey's intensive work with state and non-governmental organizations in humanitarian and development aid activities in African countries, contributing to Turkey's development of multifaceted relations with the continent (Siradag, 2015, 15-17). The third reason is that Turkey does not put forward political and economic conditions in order to improve its relations with the continental countries, unlike western countries, which contributes to the faster development of Turkey-Africa relations. The fourth reason is Turkey's lack of a history of exploitation in the continent and its efforts to develop its relations based on a win-win model contribute to the growth of strategic relations with Africa. The last one is that Turkey aims to expand its trading partners and strengthen its economic relations with the continent.

## **5. Turkey's Involvement in Somalia**

Though Turkey's first diplomatic mission in Somalia was opened in 1979 it was closed in 1991 due to the beginning of the civil war. The diplomatic mission was reopened in November 2011 but the largest complex of Turkey's diplomatic mission abroad was opened in 2016 in Mogadishu with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's participation. Turkey also opened a consulate general in Hargeisa in 2014, the capital of Somaliland. Turkey organized Somali Conferences in Istanbul in 2010 and 2012 in cooperation with the UN to find new solutions for the structural problems of Somalia and look for new strategies to rebuild the country. Meanwhile, Turkey also hosted a conference between Somalia and Somaliland in Ankara in 2016 to reunite the two sides in Somalia (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022b).

After Turkish President Erdoğan's first visit to Somalia with a large delegation from the political, business, and art circles in 2011, the AK Party government initiated the biggest humanitarian aid campaign along with the Turkish non-governmental organizations to help the victims who were deeply affected by famine and drought in Somalia. Turkey has spent more than 1 billion dollars on its humanitarian activities. Turkey's humanitarian policy toward Somalia has broader dimensions including establishing schools, hospitals, government buildings, supporting the local peoples' business initiatives, providing scholarships, and training police and soldiers. Turkey's broader humanitarian aid policy in Somalia has not only provided emergency aid but also implemented developmental aid in the country which aims to pave the way for emerging lasting peace and security.

Turkey's economic relations have been expanding with Somalia since 2011. While Turkey's total trade with Somalia in 2002 was about 500 thousand dollars, it reached 362 million dollars in 2021 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2022). Also, Turkey's direct investment in Somalia is about 100 million dollars. In addition, Turkey operates Mogadishu International Airport and Mogadishu Seaport (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022b).

In this context, Turkey's efforts to permanently build security in Somalia are of great importance for the future of Turkey's commercial and economic relations in this country.

With regard to Turkey's security engagement with Somalia, Turkey signed a "Military Training Cooperation Agreement" with Somalia in Ankara on 13 April 2012 and a "Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement" in Mogadishu on 25 January 2015. Turkey has widened and deepened its security relations with Somalia since 2012. According to the defense and security agreements made between the two countries, Turkey has provided military training to the Somali police forces and soldiers in both Ankara and Mogadishu (Abdulle – Gürpınar, 2019, 57-61). In addition, Turkey opened its largest military training complex abroad in Somalia on 30 September 2017 which cost 50 million dollars. 1500 Somali soldiers have received military training at the complex every year (Ibid.). According to Brendon, Turkey's military complex should not be seen as the traditional military base as the Western powers in Africa. The Western powers' military bases generally in Africa do not provide military training to the African soldiers (Rossiter – Cannon, 2019, 169-171). Furthermore, Turkey has maintained a military naval force in cooperation with the UN since 2009 in the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Somalia, and the Arabian Sea to protect Turkish business vessels, prevent the activities of pirates, and stop armed robbery in these regions.

Turkey's active foreign policy in Somalia and being very active in humanitarian and development aid have paved the way for Turkey's recognition and its emergence as an important strategic actor in the continent. At the same time, the fact that Turkey is active in Somalia has helped Turkey find a market for both its commercial products and defense industry products in this country (Sıradag, 2018, 10). Turkish Airlines (THY) flights to Somalia contribute to the development of this country's relations both with the countries in the region and with the world. Turkey's Somali policy has also helped Turkey deepen its African policy and establish more strategic relations with other African countries. In addition, Turkey has gained significant experience during the re-establishment of Somalia.

## **6. Dynamics and Motivations behind Turkey's Security Policy in Somalia**

Turkey has very strong historical relations with Somalia dating back to the 16th century. At the same time, there are common religious and socio-cultural similarities between the people of the two countries. Turkey's comprehensive humanitarian and development aid policy toward Somalia, which has been initiated in 2011, makes a significant contribution to the deepening of Turkey-Somalia relations (Ozkan – Orakci, 2015, 344). All these factors paved the way for Turkey to develop strategic security cooperation with this country. In addition, the lack of colonial history of Turkey in Africa, and the newly evolving Afro-Eurasian identity of Turkey are contributing factors to the development of Turkey's security policy toward Somalia.

Even though the Western powers and institutions have provided financial and military support to Somalia since 1993, they have not achieved establishing permanent peace and security in the country. Understanding the root causes of conflict and developing a human-oriented security policy are crucial to preserving peace and security in Somalia. Without supporting political, economic, and social structures, activities for peace and security in Somalia have become ineffective. In this regard, Turkey has first endeavored to strengthen the political, economic, and social structures of Somalia, then it has been

actively involved in peace and security including providing training to Somali soldiers and establishing a military base.

Somalia has a unique place in world politics which is very close to strategically important points in the region including Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea. Somalia is located at the oil transit point of the Middle East countries. Moreover, it lies at a very important geographical point for world trade. Due to its geopolitical importance in the world, global and regional actors have been actively involved in politics in the Horn of Africa. For instance, the US, France, Italy, and Japan, have military bases in Djibouti. China also has a logistical base in Djibouti. Moreover, the UAE has a military base in Eritrea and actively supports Somaliland financially and militarily. Turkey's security involvement in Somalia has increased its global visibility and prestige and also it has led to the emergence of an important geopolitical actor in African politics. In this regard, the regional actors including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have been more actively engaging with the region and working against Turkey in the Horn of Africa.

Turkey's defense industry has been growing significantly. While Turkey was highly dependent on the West until 2005 in the fields of defense and security, it today manufactures most of its weapons including drones, helicopters, naval vessels, rocket missiles, etc. Turkey has been developing and implementing its security policy rather than a Western-oriented security policy. Looking for new markets, selling its new defense industrial products in non-Western markets, and cooperating with non-western actors in different fields have become among the most important strategic objectives of the ruling AK Party governments.

Three important objectives of Turkey's security policy toward Somalia, namely, to protect economic interests, to sell the products of the Turkish defense industry and find new customers for Turkish goods, and to fight terrorism (Abdulle – Gürpınar, 2019, 62-3). Brendon argues that Turkey aims to strengthen its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean by expanding its sphere of influence in the Horn of Africa (Cannon, 2021a, 4-6). He also argues that Turkey's increasing support to the Federal Government of Somalia makes the people in Somaliland nervous because they believe that if the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) is becoming very strong militarily, it can attack the people in Somaliland as it happened in the past during the Siad Barre regime (Cannon, 2021b, 131).

Since 1991, Somalia could not establish a strong national army and police force which is necessary for preserving peace and security in the country. In this sense, Turkey has trained Somalia's National Army (SNA) and police forces since 2012 and also equips them. Turkey has strengthened the capacity of the Somali National Army and the Somali police force where they have begun to fill a critical security vacuum in the country and fight the Al Shabab terrorist organization across the country more effectively since Turkey supports the FGS in the fields of peace and security. Importantly, when the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) will withdraw from the country fully in early 2023, the Somali army and police forces will take full responsibility to maintain peace and security in the country. In this regard, Turkey's training in peace and security for SNA and police forces are very critical to be able to get ready before 2023. It is also important for Somalia to cooperate with Turkey to diversify its foreign and security policy. At the same time, what makes Turkey a unique actor in Somalia is that Turkey has been sharing its military and technological experience with Somalia without putting any political and economic conditions.

## **Conclusion**

With the end of the Cold War, there has been a great change in the content of the concept of security. While the concept of security before the Cold War focused only on military power and nuclear wars, after 1990 it began to examine different dynamics such as economic, social, and political. In this context, security problems in Somalia cannot be analyzed with a single security approach. At the same time, examining the social, economic, and political dynamics that form the basis of Somalia's security problem and eliminating these problems primarily is of great importance in terms of permanently solving the security problem in Somalia.

After the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., a new geopolitical balance of power emerged in world politics. The new rising powers including China, Russia, India, Turkey, and Brazil have played more active roles in the international system. In particular, China and Russia's increasing role in the shifting global system have posed new economic and security threats to the U.S. and the West. Turkey has also increased its strategic visibility at the regional and global levels after the 2000s. In this regard, Turkey has been actively involved in African politics since 2005 and remained a significant humanitarian actor on the continent until 2015. After the failed military coup in Turkey in July 2016, Turkey has widened and deepened its strategic relations with the continent, particularly in the fields of hard power instruments.

This paper argues that Turkey has implemented a wider humanitarian aid policy that aims to sustain long-lasting peace and security in Somalia. Also, Turkey's security policy has been a component of Turkey's broader humanitarian and development aid policy in Somalia. This research emphasizes that Turkey's historical identity and its sociocultural identity have been determining factors in establishing a long-term-strategic security partnership with Somalia. At the same time, Turkey's economic and geopolitical interests in Somalia and the East African region can be shown among the important factors shaping Turkey's Somali security policy. This inquiry also argues that Turkey's soft and hard power policies in Somalia prove that Turkey has long-term strategic plans to stay in Africa.

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