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Türkiye's Foothold in the Basin Extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea: Scratching an Ad-Hoc Regional Security Complex
Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz'den Arap Denizi'ne Uzanan Havzada Varlığı: Özgün Bir Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksinin Şekillendirilmesi

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TÜRKİYE’İN DOĞU AKDENİZ’DEN ARAP DENİZİ’NE UZANAN HAVZADA VARLIĞI: ÖZGÜN BİR BÖLGESEL GÜVENLİK KOMPLEKSİNİN ŞEKİLLENDİRİLMESİ

Abstract

Türkiye pursues an effective and assertive foreign policy as a decisive power in the transformations in the regional security architecture in its immediate basin. It is a generally accepted idea today that foreign policy moves are parts of an interconnected and systemic strategy rather than individual initiatives. Recently, the basin extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea have brought substantial threats, risks and advantages for Turkish foreign policy. Türkiye has resorted to using bilateral cooperation instruments against these challenges. At a time of evolving global and regional dynamics, a set of foreign policy moves and bilateral cooperations established with certain states in the region has served the common purpose of increasing Türkiye’s political presence and leverage in this basin, leading to the formation of an ad-hoc regional security complex. The study deals with the regional security complex theory with a qualitative approach, analyzes Türkiye’s recent engagement with the subject basin in the light of this theory, and puts forward general implications regarding the regional balance of power. The study is assessed to make a unique contribution to the literature as it considers Türkiye’s foreign policy moves related to the subject basin as connected and systematic initiatives.

Keywords: Regional Security Complex, Türkiye, Eastern Mediterranean, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden.

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Öz

Türkiye, yakın havzasında bölgesel güvenlik mimarisindeki dönüşümlerde belirleyici bir güç olarak iddialı ve etkili bir dış politika yürütmektedir. Gerçekleştirilen dış politika hamlelerinin münferit girişimlerden ziyade birbiriyle bağlantılı ve sistemik bir stratejinin parçaları olduğu günümüzde genel kabul görmüş bir düşüncedir. Son dönemde Doğu Akdeniz’den Arap Denizi’ne uzanan havza; Türk dış politikası için ciddi tehditler, riskler ve avantajlar getirmiştir. Türkiye, bu sınamalara karşı iş birliği enstrümanlarını kullanmak yoluna gitmiştir. Küresel ve bölgesel dinamiklerin dönüştüğü bir dönemde birtakım dış politika hamleleri ve bölge ülkeleriyle tesis edilen ikili iş birlikleri, Türkiye’nin bu havzadaki siyasi varlık ve nüfuzunu artırmaya yönelik ortak amaca hizmet ederek özgün bir bölgesel güvenlik kompleksinin meydana gelmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. Çalışma; nitel bir yaklaşımla bölgesel güvenlik kompleksi teorisini ele almakta, Türkiye’nin yakın dönemde bu havzadaki angajmanlarını söz konusu teori ışığında analiz etmekte, bölgesel güç dengesine yönelik genel sonuç ve çıkarımlar ortaya koymaktadır. Türkiye’nin tanımlanan bu havzaya yönelik dış politika hamlelerini bağlantılı ve sistematik inisiyatifler olarak ele alması itibarıyla çalışmanın literatüre özgün bir katkı sağladığı değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi, Türkiye, Doğu Akdeniz, Kızıldeniz, Aden Körfezi.

INTRODUCTION

The basin, which includes the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, is a region of global importance as it hosts a wide variety of natural resources led by hydrocarbon resources, and is located on a strategic maritime passage route.

The geostrategic and geopolitical projections of regional and global powers for this basin have created unique security equations, and the foreign policies of the great powers have been shaped by the security requirements concerning the region. Having deep-seated historical ties with the region, Türkiye wants to shape the security architecture of the region with a view to remaining one of the major stakeholders of the region's important political and economic advantages.

The general framework of the study is Türkiye's projections and policies aimed at shaping the regional security architecture in the basin extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Gulf of Aden. Examining Türkiye's efforts to shape the regional security architecture through bilateral relations with the states in the region and engagements in the wider region based on security and cooperation, the study aims at concluding that Türkiye is shaping an ad-hoc Regional Security Complex through its security policies in the subject basin.

Regional Security Complex is a theorized sub-concept related to the concept of security, which is addressed with several different approaches in the discipline of international relations. On the way to understanding the Regional Security Complex Theory, specific capstone and keystone academic works related to the concept of security have been examined. The works by Lippman (1943), Wolfers (1952; 1962), Waltz (1979) and Baldwin (1997) have been referred to for a better understanding of how security has been defined in different approaches since the early stages of the formation of the literature. For the regionalism aspect, the works by Beeson (2005) and Lake & Morgan (2010) have been referred to. As to the Regional Security Complex Theory, the work by Buzan & Wæver (2003) has been the main reference. Buzan's works (1983; 2016) have supported understanding how the regional security complex theory has evolved.

For Türkiye's foreign policy towards the subject basin, several contemporary works of different types have been viewed and referred to.

The theoretical framework, literature review and review of the more contemporary works have framed the following auxiliary research questions. How is security defined? What are the places of “regionalism” and “regional security complex” in the family of theories related to security? What are the context and dynamics of Türkiye’s engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean in terms of security? What are the dynamics of Türkiye’s engagement with the Red Sea region in terms of security? What are the dynamics of Türkiye’s engagement in the Gulf of Aden? These questions are followed by the principal research question of the study: Is Türkiye shaping an ad-hoc regional security complex through security relations in the subject basin?

The study has been designed in a way that covers the research questions respectively. In the first section, the regional security complex theory and its place in the family of theories related to security will be analyzed.

For the following sections, three regions of the subject basin will be referred to and analyzed within three sectors: the north west sector corresponding to the Eastern Mediterranean and its eastern vicinity, the middle sector corresponding to the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, and the south east sector corresponding to the Gulf of Aden and its east. Türkiye’s engagements with the defined sectors in terms of security will be analyzed in section two through four in order.



Map-1: The Sectors Defined in the Study

The study will be concluded by assessing how Türkiye's security engagements with the subject basin fit into the regional security complex theory, and leading us to understand that Türkiye is shaping an ad-hoc regional security complex in the region.

1. REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY

Security ranks amongst the leading phenomena that have been subject to different understandings and approaches in social sciences. In international relations discipline, the term has been conceptualized in distinct ways that interplay at one point or another.

Scholars of the World War II and post-war eras tend to associate security with state sovereignty. Lippman draws a frame to security calling it the ability of state to secure rightful interests resorting to war when conditions require (Lippman, 1943, 51). Wolfers views security as the capacity of preserving the core values of a nation. In his perspective, when there is no threat against these values and there is no fear that these values can be attacked, the state of security is achieved (Wolfers, 1962, 150;1952, 484-85). Waltz regards security as a prerequisite for states to attain such principal goals as power, inner-peace and welfare (Waltz, 1979, 126).

Baldwin stresses the very fact that security is a contested concept with no single definition and no obvious approach of conceptualization (Baldwin, 1997, 10). The wide spectrum of the literature conceptualizing security corroborates his assessment. The distinction in the literature emanated from the interaction among multiple disciplines, the emergence of new phenomena in areas related to security led by war and defense studies and the materialization of new dimensions to security especially towards and subsequent to the end of the Cold War (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, 1-3).

Regionalism has been a major part of the different approaches to security since the concept began to blossom in 1950s (Beeson, 2005, 970-73). In the post-Cold War era, power struggles between the two superpowers were over and regional conflicts and competitions overrode. The major regional powers and superpowers averse to tackling the heavy burdens of remote areas set their focus on their immediate areas. Confrontations with outside threats took place at regional levels

as the practical and analytic roles of regional relations grew more important (Lake & Morgan, 2010, 3-7).

Out of the different ontological and epistemological approaches, region can simply be defined as a territory with geographical coherence hosting more than one state (Buzan et al., 1998, 18-19) or as a band of states interconnected by geographical ties and a certain level of mutual interdependence (Hettne, 2005, 544). In terms of security, the region holds together a set of states which have closely-linked security matters and concerns (Buzan, 2016, 184). States with similar security interests in a region form what is defined as a regional security complex, which is conceptualized by Wæver and Buzan. In the neorealist approach, anarchy, balance of power and hegemony are the key pillars of regional politics. Regional security complex can be considered as the fourth to these, which is also suggested by Wæver and Buzan (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, 481-83).

The governance of security, or securitization and de-securitization processes of states in a regional security complex (RSC) are interdependent, and their security issues are far from being managed individually. Persistent enmity-amity patterns distinguish RSCs (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, 44-45). The theory also embraces historical overviews. The characteristics of an RSC can be shaped by enmity-amity patterns and historical roots of relationships among states in the region.

RSCs are standing subsystems of the global security complex which can harmonize the intentions and courses of action of states with similar security interests. They build a synergy of security which is usually more than the aggregate of the individual security senses of the states composing the complex.

The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) outlines four levels of what is named as security constellation: [1] domestic structure and dynamics which form the vulnerabilities and security needs of the subject state, [2] the mutual relations of the subject state with other sovereign states in the region, [3] the interactions of the subject region with neighboring regions, and [4] the level of interference of global powers in the subject region. Out of these four levels, RSCT suggests that the regional level, the interactions of the region between neighboring regions, will always be operative and determinant even if not dominant all the time.

The structure of a RSC comprises four variables: [1] geographic and social boundaries of the region, [2] anarchic structure with more than one sovereign components, [3] polarity in terms of distribution of power among components, and [4] social construction shaped by patterns of amity and enmity (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, 50-53). RSCs can be standard ones in which polarity depends on the structure, conjuncture and level of involvement of regional powers rendering the complex from unipolar to multipolar; or centered ones in which the characteristics of unipolarity and dominance by a great, super or regional power prevail (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, 55-63).

In conclusion, a region can be defined as a geographically cohesive area comprising several states or as a group of states interconnected through mutual dependence and geographic links. From a security perspective, a region consists of a group of states with closely related security issues and concerns. Those states that have aligned security interests within a region form what is referred to as a regional security complex, as explained in the Regional Security Complex Theory.

Within the context of this study, all the arguments related to the Regional Security Complex Theory are assessed to boil down to the core understanding that the existence of systemic bilateral relations between states with similar security interests within different offshoots of a network of relationships centered around a strong regional power points to the formation of an ad-hoc regional security complex rather than independent individual foreign policy moves.

2. THE NORTH WEST SECTOR: THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Türkiye's security engagements in the north west sector encompass recent bilateral relations in Ankara-Tripoli axis, assertive diplomatic moves to preserve its rights in its southern blue homeland, diplomatic quests for reconciliation with Syria and diplomatic moves as part of the strong political stance against Israel's blatant aggression in the region.

In Libya, the extensive conflicts in the post-Gaddafi era culminated in the onset of civil war in 2019, driving a wedge between the western and eastern regions. Numerous armed militias, associated with various tribes and warlords, exploited the resulting power vacuum to secure particular advantages,

subsequently transforming into political entities that undermined efforts towards achieving lasting peace.

Since the onset of the Libyan conflict, Türkiye has been a consistent advocate and engaged observer in promoting Libya's stability during its democratic transition, endorsing peace initiatives and supporting the legitimate government based in the West (Telci, 2020, 46).

Türkiye's involvement was pivotal, significantly altering the course of the conflict by assisting pro-government forces in halting the advances of the Eastern-based Haftar forces.

In response to the Haftar forces' assault on Tripoli in 2019, Türkiye and the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) signed two significant agreements. The first, signed on 27 November 2019, concerned the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. This agreement aligned the maritime boundaries of the two countries in a manner that advanced Turkish interests and obstructed foreign interference in the region (Acer, 2019, 11-13), much to the displeasure of global and regional powers engaged in active policies regarding the area (Kurt, 2020, 13-19). The second agreement, a security and military cooperation pact, was signed on 30 December 2019. Following this accord and at the official request of the GNA, the Turkish parliament approved a bill on 2 January 2020, leading to the deployment of Turkish Armed Forces to Libya in support of the GNA (Kurt, 2020, 12). Türkiye's critical military aid which halted Haftar's moves eventually solidified its influence in Libya (Zoubir, 2020), and earned the GNA legitimate grounds in the context of international efforts to resolve the conflict (Kekilli, 2020).

Türkiye has also aimed to assist Libya in recovering from the prolonged effects of the conflict (Telci, 2020, 49-51). Libya's state-building and reconstruction efforts will span years, requiring Türkiye's support to rehabilitate its energy, security, transportation, healthcare, and infrastructure sectors (El-Gamaty, 2020). Türkiye's involvement in Libya reflects historical ties and regional responsibilities in the Mediterranean (Telci, 2020). The primary motivation for Türkiye's active engagement is linked to escalating geopolitical tensions and emerging energy dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean. The maritime border shared in the Mediterranean under Türkiye's Blue Homeland

Doctrine underscores the importance of strong political ties with Libya (Köse & Öztürk, 2020, 121).

Türkiye has continued its support for the legitimate government (Mezran & Cristiani, 2021), and relations with authorities in eastern Libya, previously strained by the actions of putschist Haftar and the war, showed signs of improvement (Fetouri, 2021). Despite international calls to end foreign military involvement in Libya, Türkiye remains resolute, justifying its stance on legitimacy grounds in international forums (Blanchard, 2022, 19).

Türkiye pursues active diplomacy and balanced policy for a united Libya, which is vital for the security architecture that is being shaped by Ankara. It is important for Türkiye's interests in the region that relations with all of the conflicting parties in Libya are normal and above normal. The Tripoli Court of Appeal invalidated the October 2022 memorandum of understanding between the governments of Türkiye and Libya on cooperation in the hydrocarbon energy sector, which is a testimony to the fact that Türkiye's interests will be under threat unless Libya is united soon. To this end, Türkiye is set to achieve a comprehensive diplomatic opening to the east of the country through the reopening of the Benghazi Consulate.

Another dimension of Türkiye's quest for stability in Libya can be associated with the protection of national interests and balances in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this context, the policies implemented under the 'Blue Homeland' Doctrine have made Türkiye's involvement in the political process in Libya a necessity in the recent past. The UN ratification of the maritime borders between the two countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Hydrocarbon Agreement gave Türkiye upper-hand in Mediterranean geopolitics and frustrated energy equations that sought to exclude Türkiye. Türkiye's active diplomacy and dialog mechanisms with different local actors in the face of the cracks rising from within and outside Libya against this agreement prevent political tendencies from getting in the way of potential partnerships (Şefkatli, 2024).

Another aspect of Türkiye's security engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean is its assertive energy diplomacy. Against the antagonists of Greece, Israel and Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC), Türkiye has objected to all

kinds of moves excluding itself and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) from the energy equation in the region all along.

In March 2021, Türkiye submitted an official objection to the decision made by GASC, Greece, and Israel to construct the EuroAsia Interconnector, an undersea power cable designed to connect the electricity grids of Israel and Greece via the island of Cyprus. This decision was made without the consultation of Türkiye or the Turkish Cypriots, and involved an area that Türkiye asserted as its continental shelf. The Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline Project serves as another notable instance of failure. Initially backed by the EU and the USA, the project aimed to transport regional energy resources to Europe while sidelining Türkiye. However, Türkiye's proactive policies and its Exclusive Economic Zone, which intersected the proposed route, contributed to the project's collapse when the USA withdrew its support due to political challenges and high costs (Kerr, 2024).

2003 through 2010, the GASC signed maritime delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon and Israel. These were condemned by Türkiye and the TRNC and were followed by the continental shelf delimitation agreement between the two states in 2011. The GASC launched seismic searches and drillings in the unilaterally declared areas. A portion of these areas coincided with the areas declared by Türkiye and the TRNC (Pirinççi, 2021, 18-20).

In the 2020-2022 timeframe, Türkiye thrived to deter several drilling activities by the GASC-licensed foreign petroleum corporations in the disputed areas and facilitated national drilling activities escorted by the Turkish Navy forces despite growing tension (International Crisis Group, 2023). As a matter of fact, Ankara has proved resolute in defending and preserving its rights in its Blue Homeland despite political moves by the antagonists.

Another aspect of the security engagement is Türkiye's quests for normalization with Syria. The initiative for reconciliation between Ankara and Damascus came at a time of changing geopolitical landscapes both regionally and globally, with Israel's blatant occupation and war crimes in Gaza and Lebanon being the primary driver.

The road to reconciliation between Damascus and Ankara is fraught with challenges, stemming from a legacy of distrust and considerable disagreements on

key contentious matters. These issues include the repatriation of Syrian refugees from Türkiye, differing priorities in counterterrorism efforts, and Türkiye's military presence in Syria along with its backing of opposition groups (Al-Radad, 2024).

Türkiye's strong political stance against Israel's recent aggression in the region is the final component of the security engagements in the north west sector. One year into the Gaza conflict, initiated by a major Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the war has left significant political and humanitarian impacts in the region. Israel's response has included extensive airstrikes and a ground invasion targeting Hamas, leading to the ongoing violence. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has escalated dramatically, with about more than forty thousand reported deaths, widespread destruction, severe food shortages, and nearly two million people displaced (The Atlantic Council, 2024). Despite worldwide international calls to stop war crimes, Israel extended the aggression through targeted killings of substantial political and military figures of Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, and setting up a new front against Hezbollah in Lebanon and the invasion of the country (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Türkiye has been one of the most formidable opponents against Israel's blatant war crimes all along. Ankara resorted to punitive measures and proved one of the most vociferous actors condemning Israel's actions globally. Having called for an Islamic alliance against Israel (Directorate of Communications, 2024), Türkiye revised its threat perception calling itself Israel's farthest target in the north in the quest for what is called the promised land (Hürriyet Daily News, 2024). Türkiye proves resolute in realizing necessary foreign policy moves in collaboration with the regional powers with security concerns related to Israel in the short and long term.

Through bilateral relations with the abovementioned states in security terms and the security gains in its favor in the Eastern Mediterranean against the antagonists led by Israel, Greece and GASC as discussed, Türkiye is assessed to have built a security pillar in what is defined as the north west sector of the basin extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea.

3. THE MIDDLE SECTOR: THE RED SEA AND BOTH ENDS OF THE SUEZ

Türkiye's foreign policy efforts in terms of normalization with the Cairo government and relatively minor quests in the Red Sea constitute the security pillar in this sector.

After a decade of diplomatic tensions triggered by the military coup by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the overthrow of the former President Morsi in 2013, the relations on the Ankara-Cairo line started following a more positive pattern. The challenging political and economic environment in the wider region pushed both countries to recognize that cooperation serves their respective economic and security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The bilateral relations went through a thaw in 2021 when the rhetoric of both countries in opposite directions softened. Ankara strived harder than Cairo to normalize relations. The turning point was when the leaders of both countries met at the World Cup in Qatar in 2022. The catastrophe in Gaza drew both countries close to each other and Erdoğan's visit to Cairo in February in 2024 marked the zenith of the normalization process (Aksoy, 2024).

In the new era of improved relations, bilateral trade and economic ties form one of the main pillars of improvement. The current trade scale is expected to rise by %50 in five years through prospective agreements and mutual investments. New projects in energy and transportation are slated to improve economic ties (Çelik, 2024).

The other pillar is the potential collaboration for the establishment of peace and security in Libya. Türkiye and Egypt have been the key foreign actors in the west and east of the country sharing a long maritime and land border with Libya respectively. Unlike the past, both countries could work together for a united Libya in which democracy, transparent and fair elections, and a legitimate governance system representing all factions of the society fairly can materialize. A more stable Libya would serve the national interests of both countries (Telci, 2024).

The third pillar is the cooperative security agenda. The MENA region is characterized by deep-seated instabilities, a constant arms race among rival

actors, weak state sovereignties and protracted proxy wars. The establishment of a stable security architecture is vital for both Türkiye and Egypt. Defense industry relations and military cooperation are potential areas of security cooperation. Cairo seeks to benefit from the defense industry advancements in Türkiye so as to diversify its weapon systems sources. The drone deal between the two countries is expected to boost wider cooperation in various sectors beyond defense as well (Yeşiltaş, 2024b).

With President el-Sissi's visit to Ankara on September 4, 2024, Türkiye and Egypt completed their final normalization stage, marked by the signing of 16 agreements and a comprehensive 36-point joint declaration following the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Meeting. The evolving regional dynamics have made Türkiye-Egypt relations increasingly strategic, shaped primarily by security and defense considerations. While Libya poses a significant challenge in their relationship, the situation in the Horn of Africa, particularly the Somaliland issue between Somalia and Ethiopia, offers opportunities for collaboration. Both nations also agree on the urgent need to address the Gaza conflict, advocating for a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. Their joint diplomatic efforts could pave the way for a united front in addressing regional challenges, particularly concerning the Palestinian issue (Yeşiltaş, 2024a).

Apart from relations with Egypt, Türkiye places great importance on the Red Sea, which hosts roughly 30 % of global container traffic and more than 10 % of global trade annually (Van Dalen et al., 2014). The collapse of the security architecture in the Red Sea due to armed conflicts over the past years has inflicted a heavy blow on the global and regional economy (Denamiel et al., 2024), which has brought the importance of the waterway to the forefront. A ten-day delay on the route which is alternative to the Red Sea waterway increases production costs, which constitutes challenges for the fragile economies of countries led by Türkiye. While the crises in the Red Sea bring opportunities to Türkiye, a more stable waterway in the region is vital for Ankara's interests in the wider region (Çalkaya, 2024). However, Türkiye's interest in the Red Sea is nothing new as the lease of the Suakin Island from Sudan and the establishment of a military base in Djibouti were on the agenda back in the 2017-2018 timeframe. Both prospects

were intended to introduce new security perspectives for Türkiye's engagement with the region (Van den Berg & Meester, 2019).

Through rapprochement with Egypt and reinforcement of relations on security grounds as well as security pursuits in the Red Sea region, Türkiye is assessed to have built a second security pillar in what is defined as the middle sector of the subject basin.

4. THE SOUTH EAST SECTOR: THE GULF OF ADEN AND EAST

The relationship between Türkiye and Somalia has become a prominent feature of Türkiye's foreign policy, characterized by a combination of economic investments, humanitarian aid, and military cooperation. This multi-dimensional relationship, which has significantly strengthened since the early 2010s, reflects Türkiye's broader strategic interests in Africa and its ambition to be a major player on the global stage.

While both countries share historical ties, their relationship gained significant momentum in the post-Cold War era, particularly in the 21st century. Several factors drive Türkiye's interest in Somalia. First, Türkiye's Africa policy, initiated in the early 2000s, aims to diversify its foreign policy and economic partnerships. Türkiye's engagement with Africa is part of a broader strategy to assert its influence in regions less dominated by Western powers. Somalia's strategic location in the Horn of Africa provides Türkiye with access to critical maritime routes and an opportunity to extend its soft power (Özkan, 2010).

Türkiye responded promptly to the severe famine and drought in Somalia in 2011 by highlighting the famine and catalyzing international attention. Since then, Türkiye's multi-dimensional policy towards Somalia has encompassed emergency humanitarian aid, development assistance, state-building, internal peace negotiations, international support mobilization, and social restructuring. Türkiye's emergency aid included substantial food and necessities distribution, earning international acclaim. Development assistance projects, coordinated by the TİKA organization, involved reconstructing infrastructure, such as Mogadishu's airport and roads, and improving healthcare and education facilities. State-building efforts focused on empowering local Somali actors to establish sustainable governance structures. Peace negotiations, facilitated by Türkiye, aimed at fostering dialogue between Somalia's central government and semi-

autonomous regions like Somaliland. Türkiye also sought international support, organizing high-profile conferences, and advocating for Somalia at the UN. Social restructuring initiatives included scholarships for Somali students to study in Türkiye, intended to cultivate future Somali leaders. Türkiye's comprehensive approach has differentiated its engagement in Somalia, emphasizing long-term development and stability (Özkan, 2014, 21-30).

Türkiye's involvement in Somalia also encompasses significant security and strategic interests. Early agreements, such as the 2010 Military Training Cooperation Agreement, indicate Türkiye's pre-2011 security commitments (Abdulle & Gurpinar, 2019, 57-62). Türkiye has significantly deepened its security engagement with Somalia since 2012, signing a "Military Training Cooperation Agreement" and a "Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement." Türkiye provides military education and training to Somali soldiers and police in Mogadishu and Ankara. Türkiye opened its largest overseas military training complex in Somalia in 2017, training 1,500 soldiers annually. Unlike traditional Western military bases in Africa, Türkiye's complex focuses on training. Additionally, since 2009, Türkiye has stationed a naval force in the Gulf of Aden, collaborating with the UN to protect vessels and combat piracy and armed robbery (Sıradağ, 2022, 398-99).

The Defence and Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with Somalia on February 8th, 2024 outlines a 10-year cooperation plan focused on defense and security. This agreement aims to bolster Somalia's sovereignty and includes combating external threats, terrorism, piracy, and illegal fishing, while protecting coastlines and developing maritime resources through the deployment of a joint naval force. The agreement presents significant geopolitical and economic opportunities for both countries. Somalia's strategic location near key maritime routes like the Cape of Good Hope, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean enhances the potential for securing trade routes and regional security. Joint maritime security efforts will mitigate piracy and terrorism threats, ensuring uninterrupted global trade. Enhanced military cooperation, facilitated by the lifting of UN restrictions on security equipment exports, will improve defense capabilities and expand Türkiye's defense industry in international markets (Devecioğlu, 2024, 9-11).

Relations between Ethiopia and Somalia have deteriorated following Ethiopia's agreement with the breakaway region of Somaliland in early 2024 to access the Red Sea port of Berbera. In response, Türkiye has been actively seeking to alleviate tensions between the two Horn of Africa nations. Türkiye facilitated indirect discussions between delegations from Ethiopia and Somalia to address the concerns stemming from Addis Ababa's arrangement with Somaliland (Çeliker, 2024).

Similar to the first two, through security relations with Somalia and security engagement in the Gulf of Aden and beyond, Türkiye is assessed to have built the third security pillar in what is defined as the south east sector of the subject basin.

EN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

As discussed in the first section of the study, a region can be described as a geographically unified area that includes multiple states or as a collection of states bound together by a degree of mutual interdependence and geographic connections. From a security standpoint, a region encompasses a band of states whose security issues and concerns are closely interrelated. States that share similar security interests within a region constitute what is known as a regional security complex, which is conceptualized in the Regional Security Complex Theory.

The governance and handling of security, or the processes of securitization and de-securitization within states in a Regional Security Complex (RSC), are intertwined, meaning their security concerns cannot be addressed in isolation. RSCs function as persistent substructures within the global security framework, aligning the aims and actions of states that share security priorities. Together, they create a collective security dynamic that often surpasses the sum of the individual security perceptions of the member states.

In the context of Türkiye's engagements in the basin stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea, it is possible to characterize the basin, which consists of the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea region, as a “region” in the sense that security issues are closely interrelated. The Red Sea and the Suez Canal link the security issues in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arabian Sea on both sides. The security concerns here cannot be addressed individually.

In this basin, which can be defined as a “region”, Türkiye has presided in similarly predominantly security-based engagements in line with the same foreign policy cores and principles in the three different sectors defined in the study.

It is not possible to say that all of the countries with which Türkiye has security engagements have direct security interest-based relations with each other. However, Türkiye has mutual security interests with the countries in the three identified sectors. Since there is no single explanation and prototype to regional security complexes, the binary combinations of Türkiye's security cooperations with these countries can be stated to enable the shaping (if not the formation) of an ad-hoc regional security complex in the “region”, led by Türkiye as a substantial regional power. The ad-hoc regional security complex that is being scratched is a centered one in which unipolarity prevails in favor of Türkiye as the driving power in the region.

With its assertive foreign policy steps, Türkiye has strived to raise objections to the formation of geopolitical equations excluding itself and jeopardizing its regional interests in its immediate. In this regard, Türkiye is sure to capitalize on the security engagements with the countries analyzed and the ad-hoc regional security complex shaped through its driving force.

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