

A NEW DIMENSION IN SOMALI-TURKEY RELATIONS: WHY SOMALIA SEES TURKEY AS A SECURITY PARTNER?

НОВИЙ ВИМІР У СОМАЛІЙСЬКО-ТУРЕЦЬКИХ ВІДНОСИНАХ: ЧОМУ СОМАЛІ РОЗГЛЯДАЄ ТУРЕЧЧИНУ ЯК ПАРТНЕРА У СФЕРІ БЕЗПЕКИ?

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Abstract. *Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions characterized by civil wars, terrorism and instability. This situation has required countries in this geography to identify strategies and take various measures to protect themselves from risks and threats. Security and stability in the region are of great importance for the Somali state, which is located in the Horn of Africa and in today's conjuncture, both fighting against terrorist organizations such as Al-Shabaab, which continue to exist in the region, and trying to counter piracy activities on its coasts opening to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. In this context, Somalia has chosen Turkey, with which it has positively deepened its relations, as its strategic security partner among many dominant actors in the region against potential risks in the region and has given Turkey an effective mission for the security and stability of its coasts with the new 'Defense and Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement' signed in February 2024. At this point, this article will mainly focus on why Somalia, grappling with security challenges in the Horn of Africa, has embraced and favoured Turkey as a strategic partner and ally, and will also examine the putative relationship dynamics that led to the signing of a new agreement. By addressing these dynamics from a historical perspective and analyzing Somalia's security needs, this study will also examine the dynamics behind Turkey's important role in Somalia and try to analyze the dynamics behind Turkey's important role in Somalia's coastline in line with the question of why Somalia sees Turkey as a security partner.*

Keywords: *Somalia, Turkey, Security Partner, Defense and Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement*

Анотація. *Підсахарська Африка є одним із регіонів, який характеризується громадянськими війнами, тероризмом і нестабільністю. Ця ситуація змусила країни цього регіону розробити стратегії та вжити різноманітних заходів для захисту себе від ризиків і загроз. Безпека та стабільність у регіоні мають велике значення для Сомалі, яка розташована на Африканському Розі та в сучасному контексті веде боротьбу як проти терористичних*

організації, таких як Аль-Шабааб, що продовжують існувати в регіоні, так і проти піратських дій на її узбережжях, що виходять до Червоного моря та Індійського океану. У цьому контексті Сомалі обрала Туреччину, з якою вона позитивно поглибила свої відносини, як свого стратегічного партнера з безпеки серед багатьох домінуючих акторів регіону для захисту від потенційних ризиків і надала Туреччині важливу роль у забезпеченні безпеки та стабільності її узбережжя в рамках нового 'Рамкової угоди про оборону та економічне співробітництво', підписаної у лютому 2024 року. У цьому дослідженні основну увагу буде приділено тому, чому Сомалі, яка бореться з викликами безпеки на Африканському Розі, вибрала та віддала перевагу Туреччині як стратегічному партнеру та союзнику, а також будуть розглянуті передумови, які призвели до підписання нової угоди. Вивчаючи ці динаміки з історичної точки зору та аналізуючи потреби Сомалі у сфері безпеки, дослідження також спробує проаналізувати важливу роль Туреччини у забезпеченні безпеки сомалійського узбережжя через питання, чому Сомалі вбачає в Туреччині партнера з безпеки.

Ключові слова: Сомалі, Туреччина, Партнер з безпеки, Рамкова угода про оборону та економічне співробітництво.

Introduction. Somalia, geographically positioned with the Indian Ocean to its east and south, the Gulf of Aden to its north, and its proximity to the Red Sea, is one of the most strategically important countries in the Horn of Africa. While this situation is perceived as an advantage for Somalia, it has also brought various and multidimensional challenges for both the Somali state and its people throughout history. At this juncture, Somalia's strategically significant position has attracted the attention of various international actors over the course of history, leading it to be seen as a country over which they seek to exert influence in various ways. Especially since the dawn and intensification of colonialism and imperialism worldwide, Somalia, targeted by powerful actors within the axis of imperialism, has been worn down and exploited in various ways due to its inherent values. Despite declaring its independence in 1960, Somalia has given the impression of a country trying to struggle with the problems from the past and the unstable and weak structure within the country and trying to make its own destiny and existence sustainable in the geography where it is located. This situation in Somalia has caused it to be seen in the international system as a country that often needs the support of foreign countries. In this context, Turkey stands out as an actor that has largely redirected its focus towards the African continent, particularly Somalia, through its 'Africa Opening' foreign policy doctrine established in 1998 with the aim of expansion and globalization in its foreign policy agenda, followed by various actions taken towards the continent. Especially since 2011, Turkey has approached Somalia as an actor seeking to develop its relations with Somalia and deepen its historical ties, emphasizing its support to the Somali government and people in humanitarian, economic, political, and military aspects, with the aim of fostering stability in Somalia in every sense. In this respect, Turkey's positive steps towards Somalia and the various supports it has provided to the region within the framework of a constructive approach have been welcomed by Somali rulers. This has resulted in Somalia's increased interest in and sympathy for Turkey as well as being seen as a partner. Similarly, the relationship dynamics between the two actors, which started in 2011 and gradually gained momentum, continued to diversify in the following years and created a new area of cooperation in terms of military and security, especially with the opening of a military base in Mogadishu in 2017. At this point, Turkey's military and security support to Somalia, both in the resolution of past instabilities and in response to the security problems in various fields that Somalia needs today, has further expanded and gained new dimension with the "Defense and Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement" signed in February 2024.

The Purpose of article is to examine and analyze the dynamics behind Somalia's perception of Turkey as a strategic partner in line with the main research question "Why does Somalia prefer Turkey as a security partner?". To answer this research question, the first section will examine various historical milestones that have been important in the development and deepening of relations between Somalia and Turkey based on the existing literature review and analyze the relationship networks established between both actors from the past to the present. In the second part of the study, various

security needs that pose risks and threats to Somalia in its efforts to build a stable state in the Horn of Africa will be analyzed. In this way, it will be analyzed what are the security needs that Somalia faces in its geography and how they affect Somalia. In the third and final part of the study, in connection with both the second part and the research question, it will be analyzed why the Somali State considers Turkey as a security partner and the dynamics behind the perception of Turkey as a partner will be evaluated and the causal motivations for the preference of Turkey by Somalia will be discussed.

Literature review. The interaction between Somalia and Turkey has been addressed especially with historical dimensions and there are various studies on Turkey's opening to Africa. In this regard, the interaction and relations between Turkey and Somalia were largely superficial before the 2000s, and relations were generally tried to be established through diplomatic contacts that took place in small amounts. However, even in this process, Turkey has been an actor following the developments and events in Somalia. Somalia, located in the middle of the Horn of Africa, was ruled by Mohamed Said Barre for 22 years, but in the last years under his rule, protests and demonstrations by opponents of the government grew and sparked a civil war. This led to many problems within the country, including famine, and the conflict and political crisis within the country made itself felt for a long time. (*Şen, 2019, p.219*). At this point, it has been observed that Turkey has tried to make direct or indirect contributions to various efforts both to find solutions to the problems in Somalia and to end the ongoing conflict in the country and to stabilize the country. At this point, Turkey's relations with the African continent and the countries in the region started to gain momentum with the Ak Party(AKP) government that came to power with the change of government in Turkey in the early 2000s. Turkey, which had turned its foreign policy towards the West in the previous period, has been in various initiatives towards the African continent since 2002 and has taken various steps to develop and deepen its relations with the countries in Africa. In this context, the AK Party, which came to power after 2002, made a significant move by declaring the year 2005 as the 'Year of Africa,' thereby accelerating the implementation of the 'Africa Opening Action Plan' adopted in 1998 to expand Turkey's influence both regionally and internationally. (*Firat, 2009, p.4*). In this regard, the concrete and practical implementation of the foreign policy adopted by the AK Party in power during this period can be exemplified by Turkey's relations with Somalia, which can be seen as a strategically important country in Sub-Saharan Africa (*Sıradağ, 2017, p.700*).

At this point, the official visit to Somalia in 2011 holds significant importance in the relations between the two actors. In this context, then Prime Minister Erdogan, accompanied by important figures such as his wife Emine Erdogan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Family and Social Policies, and the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, conducted an official visit to Somalia in 2011. (*Şen, 2019, p.221*). Another significance of this visit is the fact that since the beginning of the civil war and turmoil in Somalia, no other state, except Turkey, has paid a visit to Somalia with the status of prime minister. (*Şen, 2019, p.222*). Moreover, the fact that Turkey was the first country to open its diplomatic mission in Somalia in this period was seen as an important development in terms of developing mutual dynamics as an indicator of the importance it attaches to Somalia. (*Sıradağ, 2017, p. 700*). At this point, it is possible to say that this visit, conducted in that year, played a crucial role in the development of Turkey's relations with Somalia and the construction of bilateral dialogues.

Similarly, another significant event that contributed to the strengthening of interaction and communication between Turkey and Somalia was evident during the famine crisis that greatly affected Somalia in the summer months of 2011. In response to the outbreak of famine in Somalia, Turkey has made efforts to help the heavily affected Somalia and has tried to alleviate the burden of the famine on the Somali people, both by providing financial support and by sending personnel to help resolve the humanitarian crisis. (*Şahin, 2021, p.III*). Additionally, Turkey, in its efforts to strengthen ties with Somalia, has strived for the sustainability of its activities in the region during this period, emphasizing that the endeavors were not only aimed at combating the famine in Somalia but also at addressing the longstanding imbalance in the political structure of the region and the resulting instability. Turkey's efforts and aid initiatives during this period have been positively received by the Somali people, leading to their embrace of Turkey, and showing interest in it. (*Bingöl, 2013, p. 82*).

In the subsequent years after 2011, Turkey continued to extend a helping hand to Somalia and diversified its support efforts. In this context, particularly from this year onwards, Turkey, under the leadership of the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay), continued to provide health and hospital services to Somalis and sustained its support to them. Subsequently, the interaction between Turkey and Somalia took on a new dimension, with military relations increasingly becoming one of the most important areas of cooperation between the two actors. This situation has also resulted in Turkey being perceived as a 'Strategic Partner' by Somali rulers and decision makers in various fields of the country and has been seen as an important factor in deepening the relations of both actors and strengthening ties. (*Şahin, 2021, p.119-120*). At this point, it is possible to see that the turning points that can be seen as important in Turkey's relations with Somalia paved the way for Somalia to see Turkey as an ally and partner in many respects today.

Main results of the research. The relationship between Turkey and Somalia has gained momentum and diversification over time within Turkey's strategy of outreach to the African continent. In this regard, it is observed that Turkey's policies and actions initiated towards the African continent have taken a step further, particularly in the case of Somalia. (*Mehmetçik& Belder, 2017, p. 457*). Turkey, in the post-2011 period, has continued to enhance the effectiveness of its bilateral ties with Somalia by increasing its support to Somalia not only in terms of humanitarian aid and financial assistance but also in addressing both the governance-related instability and combating the Al-Shabaab terrorist organization, which has been a source of trouble for Somalia. This situation is seen to form the basis for Somali decision-makers and officials viewing Turkey as a partner not only in other areas but also in ensuring national security and fostering stability in Somalia.

In this context, when examining the reasons why Turkey is perceived as a reliable partner for Somalia, the reasons why Somalia feels the need for security, especially in the context of recurrent crises, also plays a key role. At this point, it is possible to mention four different points that have contributed to Somalia's security needs.

The first reason for the emergence of security needs in Somalia, from past to present, is prominently attributed to the colonial activities experienced by Somalia and their ramifications to the present day. Like many other African countries, Somalia fell under the influence of both French and British administrations in the late 19th century, leading to colonization. This situation has subjected Somalia to both political and humanitarian crises for a long period. As a result of the repercussions of the colonial process, the unstable environment in Somalia has hindered the use of democratic solutions, such as holding democratic elections to choose leaders in Somali politics, and this situation has been replaced by the dominance of militarily strong and authoritative figures in Somalia. (*Pirinççi & Demirtaş,2020, p.784*). Additionally, until Somalia gained independence status, it endeavored to struggle against or resist major international powers that exploited or showed tendencies of exploitation towards the country; however, this situation led to disagreements and divisions among local tribes in Somalia. (*Tepebaş, 2013, p. 233*). This situation is still seen as the primary factor contributing to political instability in the Somali state today, as a legacy of the colonial era.

The second point that can be seen as causing Somalia's security needs in today's international context is the security concerns arising from the political crises resulting from the problems in bilateral relations with its neighbors in the Horn of Africa. In this context, especially Ethiopia and Kenya stand out as actors that exert influence both on the Somali state and on Somalis through their policies and strategies developed specifically for Somalia. Currently, both Kenya and Ethiopia's dominance over parts of the historic Somali territory and the fact that these regions are mostly inhabited by Somali communities contribute significantly to the crisis becoming an effective component. (*Çelenk, 2021, p. 70*). However, when Somalia's security concerns are taken into account, Ethiopia is one step ahead. At this point, Somalia's dynamics with Ethiopia since the 1960s, when Somalia got rid of Italian colonialism and gained independence status, have been characterized by insecurity and conflict concerns, and both actors have not been able to gain a healthy dimension in their relations since this process. (*Jimale,2019, p. 21*). This situation causes Ethiopia, which can be seen as a regional power compared to other state actors in its geography, to see Somalia as a potential rival, especially politically and economically. The tense environment created by these bilateral

dynamics from the past is seen to create insecurity for Somalia in the current conjuncture. Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland signed on January 1, 2024, to ensure its access to the Red Sea and for its own economic and political interests was seen as a major threat to Somalia's territorial sovereignty. (AA, 2024). In the face of this situation, Somali decision-makers and the leadership saw Ethiopia's move as an aggression on their behalf and stated that they would oppose this agreement. (Independent, 2024). Therefore, the actions taken by Somalia's neighbors in the region and the alliances they attempt to establish pose a risk to Somalia's security and highlight the security needs.

On the other hand, problems such as piracy and maritime banditry, which Somalia frequently encounters in its geopolitical position, are seen as the third reason for Somalia's security needs. Somalia plays a key role in the Horn of Africa with its strategic location due to its coasts and its strategic position as a transit point between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Although this situation seems to be an advantage for Somalia, it is seen that piracy groups carry out actions both off the coast of Somalia and around the Gulf of Aden, causing great damage to both global trade and Somalia, and this situation shows itself as one of the most important topics on the agenda of global mariners today. (Beyoğlu, 2013, p.2). Piracy activities conducted in the region involve pirates attacking passing merchant vessels, looting them, and demanding ransom, thereby compromising the security of Somali coastlines. Additionally, the high trade potential of Somalia's location opens the door to piracy activities and maritime piracy in the region, providing pirate groups with a significant advantage, especially in ransom negotiations. (Şahin, 2020, p. 886). On the other hand, piracy activities and maritime banditry in the region, which reveal Somalia's security needs, cause great damage to the Somali state and the local population and are seen as one of the most important factors of the country's lack of stability in terms of both economic and political structure. Groups carrying out piracy activities largely provide economic support to terrorist organizations such as al-Shabaab and various tribes that cause instability and aim to receive support from these organizations and tribes to carry out their actions (Çalık, 2017, 415). In this context, in today's conjuncture, these pirate groups, which continue their activities on the Somali coast, are seen as one of the main reasons for Somalia's security needs by causing great economic and political damage to Somalis.

The last reason, which can be seen as the most important among other reasons for Somalia's security needs today, is the Al-Shabaab terrorist organization, which has a strong influence in the African continent and harms the countries of the region with its actions and attacks. The failure to address the internal conflict and the absence of a central political authority resulting from the division, particularly evident in Somalia as a reflection of the colonial era, have laid the groundwork for the emergence of terrorism problems in Somalia and the adverse effects it has created. (Tepebaş, 2013, p. 241). Although the al-Shabaab terrorist organization explains its ideology as the fight against Islamophobia and the creation of a Somali caliphate, it is seen that its main goal is to create an environment where Western influence is eliminated. (Yalçın, 2016, p.20). However, with its various actions in Somalia, the organization draws a different axis from the goals it has adopted and causes the death of Somali people with its actions. Moreover, the organization defines itself as the hegemonic power in Somalia and includes individuals and armed groups from various tribes of Somalia. At this point, especially the high density of young population in Somalia and the unemployment caused by this situation increases the participation in terrorist groups and structures such as al-Shabaab and paves the way for recruitment. (Bingöl, 2013, p.89). The consequences of this situation cause great hardship to the Somali people and pose a risk to stability and confidence in Somalia.

Accordingly, when the reasons why Somalia sees Turkey as a security partner in line with its security needs are analyzed,

Turkey's increasing military and political influence in the international arena, especially in recent years, and its strong diplomatic relations in various geographies have paved the way for Turkey to be seen as an important and powerful actor by many countries. In this context, Turkey, especially in recent years, has given the impression of a country that has gradually increased its presence and influence in strategic locations such as the Middle East and Africa, and has evolved into a country that is frequently mentioned in the international system with its actions in solving or resolving various crises and problems. Similarly, in recent years, Turkey has taken steps to increase its military capacity

and military technology as a result of reducing foreign dependence and the importance it attaches to the domestic defense industry. This situation has been seen as a significant development for the establishment of a stable state in Somalia, a strategically important country in the Horn of Africa that requires various forms of assistance from allies, especially in terms of security. (*Mukhtar & Ahmed, 2021, p.45*)

In this regard, it is possible to evaluate the dynamics that contribute to Turkey being perceived differently by Somalia and being seen as a security partner compared to other actors in Sub-Saharan Africa in four different sub-points.

The historical ties that both actors have established in the past play a critical role as the first and foremost reason why Somalia sees Turkey as a security partner and prefers Turkey. In this context, it has been observed that Turkey's historical ties with the East African region extend back to the 16th century and that it has had political, economic, and especially security relations since this period. (*Sıradağ, 2017, p. 699*). It is understood that the Ottoman Empire, which was dominant in the Horn of Africa during this period, was directly or indirectly interested in both Somalia and the region in various ways. (*Küçükaltan & Bozkurt & Kesikbaş, 2022, p.113*). On the other hand, it has been observed that during both the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ajura Empire and the Adal Sultanate, which ruled the region, established commercial, cultural, and military relations with the Ottoman Empire and especially the Ottoman Turks. During this period, records indicate that the Ottoman Empire provided direct military support to the Adal Sultanate in the conflicts that arose between Somalia's Adal Sultanate and Abyssinia. (*Merga & Dashu, 2021, p.11*). Considering the historical process, it is understood that this situation played a key role in terms of Turkey's first support to Somalia.

In addition, when look at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, it is seen that even when the Ottoman Empire was in a difficult period economically, politically and militarily, it supported and helped Somalia through its provinces such as Hejaz and Yemen, especially against the colonialism initiated by European states in the region. (*Kavas, 2017, p.11*). At this point, it is seen that the long historical ties between the two actors have played an important role in shaping the Somali government's view of Turkey in the current conjuncture and its positive interest and tendency towards Turkey.

On the other hand, the second dynamic that influences Somalia's perception of Turkey as a strategic and security partner is the convergence of both countries around a common religious belief. In this regard, the fact that both Somalia and Turkey share the same Islamic faith, and particularly the significance of this religion in both societies socially and culturally, is seen as a common ground for both actors. In this context, especially Turkey has supported Somalia in various ways religiously throughout history and has made its presence felt among Somalis and the Somali government through solidarity around the common religious belief. At this point, it has been observed that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Turkey supported the "Somali Dervish Movement," which can be seen as a religious and social movement in Somalia emphasizing the power of Islam and played a significant advisory role during this action. (*Merga & Dashu, 2021, p.12*). Moreover, the impact of this common religious phenomenon from the past has also manifested itself in the recent past and has been effective in Somalia's perception of Turkey as a partner. For instance, Turkey organizing a fundraising conference for Somalia, a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in 2011, and coordinating with other Muslim countries to increase the scope of aid, can be seen as a concrete example of this influence (*Merga & Dashu, 2021, p.16*).

Similarly, Turkey continues to provide financial support to Islamic-based schools, mosques, and various Islamic initiatives in Somalia through NGOs that can be considered as part of its soft power elements. Another example is the active involvement of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) in Turkey, especially in 2011, sending imams and teachers to Somalia with the aim of distributing Qurans and providing education, which is understood as a tangible indication of Turkey's religious support and commitment to Somalia (*Crises Group, 2012, p.2*). At this point, it is seen that Turkey's actions based on common religious values in Somalia, from the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey, have been effective in Somalia's sympathy for Turkey and its preference for Turkey for various cooperation, especially security and military cooperation.

The third focal point of Somalia's perception of Turkey as a security and strategic partner is associated with Turkey's increasingly influential image and globalized identity both in its region and in the international system. Factors such as the ability to shape public opinion and geopolitical significance, which are considered decisive in establishing a country's reputable and powerful image in various international platforms, play a key role in the international activities of actors. (*Gültekin, 2013, p.129*). At this point, thanks to its power to create public opinion on certain important issues in the international system, especially in recent years, Turkey has been trying to draw international attention to issues that it sees as problematic in the international system and has found itself in the position of an actor trying to play a direct or indirect role in the solution of these problems. To give an example, Turkey gives the impression of being an important actor globally, especially in the Middle East, thanks to its increased international visibility, such as its mediation efforts in the Russia-Ukraine war, which has had an impact on the international system in recent years, and its ability to meet with the parties of both countries, and the Turkish image identity that it tries to globalize with its humanitarian and political support to Gaza, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian war, where civil unrest and wars still continue in today's conjuncture. Moreover, the steps Turkey has been trying to take on certain issues have also manifested themselves in Somalia and this has reinforced the deepening of bilateral relations. In Somalia, where the lack of political authority has been felt for a long time due to various internal problems such as Somaliland and Puntland, ensuring security has been seen as the top priority. (*Küçükaltan & Bozkurt & Kesikbaş, 2022, p.129*). At this point, Turkey has assumed a mediation role in the resolution of internal problems, especially in Somaliland and Puntland, in order to eliminate the internal turmoil and frayed political balances in Somalia and to restore peace in the country. In this context, Turkey has organized Somali conferences involving actors from both sides to rebuild peace in Somalia and has made efforts to draw the attention of the international press and public opinion on this issue in international meetings at the United Nations. (*Şahin, 2021, p.121*). Moreover, especially during the period when Turkey continued its mediation efforts, in its statements on Somalia, Turkey both showed the importance it attaches to the territorial integrity of the Somali state and focused on the peaceful resolution of the existing problems in the continent in order to ensure peace and stability in Africa. (*Tepeciklioğlu 2019, p.39 & Özkan, 2014, p. 87*). At this point, Turkey's efforts for Somalia in both regional and international platforms have been seen as one of the effective dynamics in Somalia's perception of Turkey as a strategic partner and as an important milestone that reinforces Somalia's trust in Turkey.

The final dynamic in Turkey's perception of Somalia as a security partner is that Turkey's approach to Somalia is "pragmatic" rather than colonialist approach. In the past, the colonial activities carried out by European states all over the African geography made itself felt to a great extent in Somalia. This is seen as one of the main reasons for the political problems and general instability in the country today, and the legacy of colonization is seen as creating a security need for Somalia. (*Pirinççi & Demirtaş, 2020, p.786*). At this point, it is seen that Turkey's approach towards Somalia is not based on the exploitation and purely interest-based approach of other Western states in the past, but rather on a sustainable and long-term approach to meet the basic needs of Somalis, such as economic and political development, as well as their current security needs. For example, Turkey's actions and initiatives in response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia in 2011 not only increased Turkey's presence in Somalia and deepened bilateral ties but also went beyond the conventional aid provided by Western states and Turkey's engagement in Somalia was seen as an important step towards state-building in Somalia (*Donelli, 2018, p.57*). In this context, especially when Turkey's approach to Somalia is evaluated, the humanitarian aid provided for Somalia, the support for health facilities such as hospitals within the scope of the reforms promoted in the field of health, and the efforts made to ensure peace in Somalia, especially within the scope of security, can be shown as evidence of Turkey's helpful attitude and humanitarian approach towards Somalia. (*Merga & Dashu, 2021, p.18*).

On the other hand, Turkey's pragmatic approach based on mutual cooperation is also evident in the military sphere where Somalia's security needs are felt. In this context, it is seen that Turkey has established cooperation with Somalia in the military and security field with the aim of training and

modernizing Somalia's relatively weak and inadequate military personnel and revitalizing the Somali National Army with its largest military base opened in Mogadishu in 2017 within the scope of the "Turkey-Somalia Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement" signed in 2016. (*Dhaysane, 2021*). Accordingly, Turkey's cooperation with Somalia aims both to increase Somalia's capacity to cope with major security threats such as terrorism and piracy, and to build a backbone that will form the basic structure and strength of the Somali army in the future by increasing the training capacity of Somali soldiers (Sönmez & Batu & Arslan, 2023, p.197).

The military base, which was opened in 2017 and is still active and effective today, can be considered as the biggest proof of Turkey's support and cooperative approach to Somalia, especially in the military and security field, where Turkey has significant security needs. The effects of this pragmatic approach, which was initiated at the time and continued, have been welcomed by the Somali state, and this approach is largely reflected in today's conjuncture. As the strongest evidence of this, the '*Defense and Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement*' signed between Turkey and Somalia on February 8, 2024, which deepens and advances the military and security cooperation between the two countries, can be cited as an example. (*BBC, 2024*). In this context, Somalia has taken an important step by signing a defense agreement with a powerful actor like Turkey against the agreement signed between Ethiopia, which poses a security problem for Somalia, and Somaliland, which separated from Somalia but whose independence is not recognized, and which laid the foundations for Ethiopia's access to the sea. (*Diriliş Postası, 2024*). Also, with this agreement, Somalia has authorized Turkey to protect Somali territorial waters and marine resources off the Somali coast for a period of 10 years. (*BBC, 2024*). To go deeper, under the agreement signed between both actors, Turkey commits to provide support to Somalia in some important areas such as bringing maritime resources to the Somali economy, protecting maritime resources, and providing military support in the form of air, naval and land operations in case of defense needs and creating common security areas. (*Diriliş Postası, 2024*). This is seen as a key development in terms of showing that Turkey will provide effective security support in areas where Somalia needs security such as terrorism and piracy activities. Moreover, it is seen that Turkey is trying to provide a more secure and stable environment to Somalia through its military and security support and is approaching Somalia with a cooperative pragmatic approach. This situation can be considered as one of the most effective dynamics and elements in the consolidation of Somalia's closeness to Turkey and Somalia's perception of Turkey as a partner.

Conclusion. In line with the research question, this paper has first analyzed the major events that are seen as historical turning points in the dynamics of bilateral relations between Somalia and Turkey, based on specific periods and events. In this way, it has uncovered the foundations of Somalia's affinity for Turkey and the subsequent evolution of this affinity into a partnership dimension. In this context, Turkey's engagement with Somalia, especially since 2011, has manifested itself in economic, military, humanitarian, and developmental ways, which have fostered a sense of trust and partnership between the two actors.

Secondly, the article analyzed Somalia's challenges, both in terms of its geographical location and various internal and external security concerns and shed light on the areas where Somalia needs security measures and the role and consequences of these needs within Somalia's particularly unstable political and economic framework. Specifically, Somalia's security needs have been addressed under four different sub-headings, and the sub-headings that emphasize each security need have examined the issues that Somalia has struggled with in the past and is still struggling with in the current conjuncture.

Thirdly, the study analyzed the factors that make Somalia see Turkey as a strategic and security partner in the context of its struggle with its security needs, different from other actors, and analyzed the dynamics affecting Somalia's preference for Turkey as a partner under four different headings, while revealing the motivations behind Somalia's preference for Turkey by analyzing each of these different dynamics in depth.

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