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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A relational approach to Turkey's security engagement with African states

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Abstract

South-South security cooperation is increasingly reshaping Africa's security governance, as emerging actors introduce new military doctrines, institutions, and technologies. Among these, Turkey's security engagements have become increasingly prominent, influencing military modernization, external dependencies, and security assemblages.This article employs a relational ontology to examine Turkey's security engagements with African states, arguing that they do not represent a linear shift from Western alliances to South-South cooperation but instead operate within entangled global security hierarchies. This multiplicty stems from Turkey's "both-and" positioning—as a non-Western, non-core NATO member that is simultaneously expanding security partnerships with the Global South. Furthermore, this study argues that Turkey's security interactions with African states demonstrates how Turkey actively articulates and adapts logistical, operational, organizational, and normative security practices between the Global South and the Global North, positioning itself as both a recipient and producer of global military norms, rather than acting as a passive intermediary in global security governance. By analyzing Turkey's military training programs, defense diplomacy, arms sales, and forward-basing strategies n Africa, this article demonstrates how Turkey both reproduces and transforms global security hierarchies by contributing to the homogenization of military practices and security assemblages.

Keywords: entangled (in)securities; military isomorphism; relational ontology; South–South cooperation; Turkey–Africa security relations

Introduction

Turkey has increasingly identified itself with the Global South, accompanied by an expanding dimension of security cooperation and engagement over the past two decades, signifying a considerable transformation considering the country's long history of identity formation around 'Westernisation' and its post–World War II policy of joining the Western alliance. In November 2017, at the 9th United Nations Global South–South Development Expo's opening ceremony in Antalya, the then foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu proclaimed, '[Turkey] has been implementing the principles of South–South cooperation for decades, [and] attaches importance to multidimensional cooperation within the framework of non-interference in internal affairs, mutual respect, sovereignty and mutual benefit'.[1] This new direction in policymaking has catalysed Turkey's Southern foreign policy, emphasising enhanced relationships and self-identification as a member of the Global South. Post–Cold War, Turkey leveraged South–South cooperation frameworks,

[1] Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, 'Speech to the 9th UN Global South–South Development Expo', Antalya, 27 November 2017, translation and emphasis by the author.

endorsed by the United Nations, to advance economic collaboration. Stemming from its semi-peripheral economic status and shared developmental challenges with the Global South, Turkey has positioned South–South cooperation as an integral aspect of its development agenda.[2] This inclination has evolved into Ankara's new posture and foreign policy activism towards the Global South, characterised by multidirectionality.[3]

While Turkey's Cold War and post–Cold War foreign policy framed it as a steadfast NATO ally, what distinguishes the current phase is the increasing salience of security as a core tenet of Turkey's engagement with the Global South, particularly Africa.[4] Turkey's security involvement in Africa includes military training, the establishment of bases in Somalia and Libya, and the expansion of arms exports alongside security cooperation, all underpinned by narratives of capacity-building and modernisation of African security institutions. This approach marks a divergence from Turkey's historical post-independence policies of securing the country through Western-oriented foreign policy[5] and positions Ankara as a significant actor in African security governance.

Existing literature has extensively examined Turkey's activities in Africa, its implications for regional security, and its broader foreign policy trajectory.[6] Also, the scholarly discourse surrounding the Southern direction of Turkey's foreign policy, especially in relation to its dealings with Africa, showcases a comparable diversity of perspectives.[7] Yet, as Turkey simultaneously adopts and adapts Western security frameworks within its South–South cooperation strategies, this complicates conventional categorisations of security partnerships. Hence, the studies often overlook the critical interplay between Turkey's NATO membership and its engagement with the Global South. As noticed by Donelli, unlike other Southern providers such as China, Turkey's historical and geographical positioning complicates its classification as a member of the Global South. Despite this, Turkey actively promotes itself as a 'Southern' actor, particularly through symbolic and economic gestures.[8]

[2]The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 'Türkiye's Development Cooperation: General Characteristics and the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Aspect', available at: {https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-development-cooperation-fr.fr.mfa}.

[3]Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yilmaz, 'Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign policy activism in Turkey during the AKP era', *Turkish Studies*, 10:1 (2009), pp. 7–24; Ziya Öniş, 'Multiple faces of the "new" Turkish foreign policy: Underlying dynamics and a critique', *Insight Turkey*, 13:1 (2011), pp. 47–65; Kemal Kirişci, 'Turkey's engagement with its neighborhood: A "synthetic" and multidimensional look at Turkey's foreign policy transformation', *Turkish Studies*, 13:3 (2012), pp. 319–41; Reşat Bayer and E. Fuat Keyman, 'Turkey: An emerging hub of globalization and internationalist humanitarian actor?', *Globalizations*, 9:1 (2012), pp. 73–90; Mehmet Özkan and Birol Akgün, 'Turkey's opening to Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 48:4 (2010), pp. 525–46.

[4]See also Adam Sandor, Philippe M. Frowd, and Jana Hönke, 'Productive failure, African agency, and security cooperation in West Africa: The case of the G5 Sahel', *European Journal of International Security* (this issue), for new forms of South–South security cooperation in Africa.

[5]Pınar Bilgin, 'Securing Turkey through Western-oriented foreign policy', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40 (2009), pp. 105–25.

[6]Abdurrahim Sıradağ, 'Turkey–Africa alliance: Evolving patterns in security relations', *African Security Review*, 27:3–4 (2018), pp. 308–25; Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu and Ali Onur Tepeciklioğlu (eds), *Turkey in Africa: A New Emerging Power?* (London: Routledge, 2021); Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu, François Vreÿ, and Bahar Baser, 'Introduction: Turkey and Africa. Motivations, challenges, and future prospects', in Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu, François Vreÿ, and Bahar Baser (eds), *Turkey's Pivot to the African Continent* (London: Routledge, 2024), pp. 1–6; Eva Magdalena Stambøl and Tobias Berger, 'Transnationally entangled (in)securities: The UAE, Turkey, and the Saharan political economy of danger', *Security Dialogue*, 54:5 (2023), pp. 493–514; Volkan İpek and Gonca Biltekin, 'Turkey's foreign policy implementation in sub-Saharan Africa: A post-international approach', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 49 (2013), pp. 121–56.

[7]Mürsel Bayram, 'Turkey and Africa in the context of South–South cooperation', *Current Research in Social Sciences*, 6:1 (2020), pp. 39–51; Federico Donelli, 'Turkey's changing engagement with the Global South', *International Affairs*, 97:4 (2021), pp. 1105–22; Mehmet Özkan, 'Turkey in South–South cooperation: New foreign policy approach in Africa', *Vestnik RUDN: International Relations*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 565–78; Federico Donelli and Ariel González Levaggi, 'Becoming global actor: The Turkish agenda for the Global South', *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 1:2 (2016), pp. 93–115.

[8]Federico Donelli, 'Being "Southern" without being of the Global South: The strange case of Turkey's South–South cooperation in Africa', in Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu and Ali Onur Tepeciklioğlu (eds), *Turkey in Africa: A New Emerging Power?* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 75–89.

Additionally, the literature lacks a nuanced exploration of the shifts in Turkey's (in)security narratives and self-identification, and how these shifts inform its security interactions with the Global South, particularly Africa. Many studies conceptualise Africa as a geographical locale of multipolar competition, framing Turkey's actions as a middle power, seeking strategic autonomy from traditional Western alliances. Yet they fail to address how Turkey's NATO-derived security practices intersect with its distinctive norms and strategies tailored for African contexts.

To address these gaps, I argue that Turkey's growing security relations need to be understood within a conceptual framework embracing the interconnection and multiplicity of the Global North and South. The analysis proceeds in three steps: first, Turkey's membership in NATO and security governance structure of the Global North as a non-Western, non-core actor as well as its search to alter power hierarchies between West and itself needs to be introduced to the discussion. Second, the analysis illustrates these dynamics through Turkey's security engagements in Africa. Finally, the article applies a relational perspective to analyse and frame the distinct roles and positions that Turkey assumes within varying spatial and temporal contexts. This relational approach moves beyond binary frameworks of 'either–or' logic to a 'both–and' perspective, situating Turkey–Africa relations within an intricate web of interdependent connections. It further highlights how this multiplicity produces isomorphic security practices, where NATO-style approaches merge with Turkey's security practices, military practices, and technologies. This embeddedness of overlapping networks of influence and interaction contributes to regional entanglement, where there are interdependence and reciprocal influences between Turkey, African states, and other regional actors as well as the Global North.[9]

The next section critically reviews the existing literature, highlighting gaps in the understanding of Turkey's (in)security interactions with the West and the Global South. The third section develops a conceptual framework grounded in relational ontology to understand the multiplicity of Turkey's security interactions with the Global North and South, and how this multiplicity contributes to the homogenisation of military practices globally, referred to as security isomorphism, while impacting dependencies between the Global South and North in the military aspect of security. The fifth section demonstrates how these adapted practices are strategically tailored to Turkey's engagements with African states, offering insights into its role as a security partner in the Global South. Finally, the concluding section synthesises these empirical findings, drawing on relational theories to illuminate Turkey's distinct approach to South–South cooperation. It underscores the article's broader contribution to understanding the interconnectedness of Turkey's Western security orientation and its evolving role in reshaping global security governance within the Global South.

Turkey's (in)security in relation with Global South and North

Despite notable similarities in the insecurities faced by Turkey and states in the Global South – such as concerns over independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty, rooted in their shared status as developing states and their historical interactions with the global core – their responses to these challenges have been markedly different.[10] Turkish policymakers prioritised securing the country within the Western fold, emphasising close ties with the United States and NATO membership as pillars of its security strategy.[11] By contrast, many Global South states opted for non-alignment or actively resisted pro-Western alliances during the Cold War, reflecting their broader scepticism of the Western-led international order.

Turkey's Cold War and post–Cold War security strategies remained firmly aligned with the West, despite occasional divergences and challenges in its relationships with Western allies.

[9]Tobias Berger and Markus-Michael Müller, 'South–South cooperation and the (re)making of global security governance', *European Journal of International Security* (this issue).

[10]Pınar Bilgin, 'Security in the Arab world and Turkey: Differently different', in Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney (eds), *Thinking International Relations Differently* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 27–47.

[11]Bilgin, 'Securing Turkey', pp. 103–23.

This alignment was underpinned by a perception that NATO membership was indispensable to Turkey's national security. Since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Turkey has consistently demonstrated a commitment to Western institutions and frameworks. Its foundational role in international organisations such as the United Nations (1945), NATO (1952), the Council of Europe (1949), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1960), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (1973), along with its partnership with the Western European Union (1992) and participation in the European Customs Union (1995), underscores its long-standing Western orientation.

This distinct strategic alignment has profoundly influenced Turkey's relations with the Global South, particularly in the realm of security, from two critical perspectives. First, Turkey's alignment with the Global North has often constrained its engagement with Global South states. For example, in 1951, Turkey declined Egypt's invitation to join the Arab League's efforts to establish a non-aligned bloc.[12] Similarly, Turkish policymakers were critical of the Non-Aligned Movement, spearheaded by leading Global South powers during the Cold War. At the Bandung Conference in 1955 – which sought to advance non-alignment as a guiding principle for Global South states – Turkey argued against neutrality, asserting that it could jeopardise national independence.[13] Instead, Turkish representatives framed communist expansion as a form of colonialism, aligning with the Western Cold War narrative.[14]

Second, Turkey's interactions with the Global South have been shaped by its membership in NATO and its role in the Western security architecture. During the early Cold War, Turkey adopted a pro-Western stance and played a proactive role in deliberations over the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), a US- and UK-led initiative aimed at establishing a collective defence pact in the Middle East. Known as the 'Northern Tier', MEDO was designed to contain Soviet influence by creating a military alliance that would connect NATO in Europe with SEATO in Asia.[15] Having joined NATO in February 1952, Turkey strongly supported the creation of what it called a 'Middle East NATO'.[16] Although MEDO ultimately failed to materialise,[17] its collapse led Western powers to pursue alternative strategies, culminating in the Baghdad Pact – later renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) – in 1955. Comprising Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the UK, CENTO was nominally a regional alliance but was heavily influenced by Western powers, particularly the UK and US (although the latter did not formally join).[18] Turkey played a central role in negotiating the pact and actively tried to convince the US to join the pact.[19]

Similarly, Turkey's security engagements in the 1990s and early 2000s with regions such as the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans were significantly shaped by NATO's post–Cold War crisis management operations and initiatives aimed at strengthening the defence capabilities of allied nations. In the Balkans, Turkey actively participated in NATO-led

[12]Bilgin, 'Security in the Arab World and Turkey', p. 31.

[13]Gürol Baba and Senem Ertan-Dilek, 'Turkey at the Bandung Conference: A fully aligned among the non-aligned', paper presented at the International Studies Association (ISA) Asia-Pacific Region Conference, June 2016.

[14]Turgay Murat, 'Bandung Konferansı ve Türkiye' (Bandung Conference and Turkey), *The Journal of International Social Sciences*, 28:2 (2018), pp. 373–4.

[15]S. C. Bhowmick, 'The Middle East organizations: A critical review', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 26:4 (1965), pp. 192–201 (p. 193), available at: {https://www.jstor.org/stable/41854107}.

[16]Kevin Ruane, 'SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British foreign policy and the collective defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 16 (2005), pp. 169–99 (p. 182), available at: {https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290590916185}.

[17]Western powers aimed to include key regional states such as Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. However, Arab states were sceptical, partly due to fears of becoming pawns in the Cold War and the perception that the pact would primarily serve Western interests. MEDO failed to materialise due to resistance from Arab countries, particularly Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser viewed such alliances as an infringement on regional sovereignty and sought non-alignment.

[18]Ara Sanjian, 'The formulation of the Baghdad Pact', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 33:2 (1997), pp. 226–66 (p. 229), available at: {https://www.jstor.org/stable/4283868}.

[19]M. Bürkan Serbest, 'Bağdat Paktı'nın Kuruluş Süreci ve Gelişiminde Türkiye'nin Rolü' (Turkey's role in the process of the establishment and development of the Baghdad Pact), *Manas Journal of Social Studies*, 5:3 (2016), pp. 401–24 (p. 415).

missions such as the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo Force (KFOR).[20] In the Middle East, NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue served as a critical platform for shaping Turkey's security cooperation with regional partners, facilitating engagement with Middle Eastern and North African states on counterterrorism and maritime security. Also, NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme enabled Turkey to expand its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia by fostering closer military and diplomatic ties with countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan.[21]

A substantial body of literature, informed by diverse theoretical perspectives, explores how Turkey's membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions has allowed its policymakers to assert the country's 'Western' identity.[22] Bilgin, from a post-colonial international relations (IR) perspective, argues that Turkey's post-independence policies of 'Westernisation' and its post–World War II alignment with the Western alliance reflect attempts to achieve 'similarity' with the West.[23] One manifestation of this strategy has been Turkey's adoption of a Western-oriented foreign policy and its integration into institutions of the North Atlantic. Consequently, Turkish policymakers, along with scholarly narratives, have often framed the Global South and its challenges through a Western security lens, positioning Turkey as a bridge between NATO, the West, and strategically important adjacent regions.[24] This narrative has attributed a geopolitical significance to Turkey for NATO, stemming from its location at the crossroads of multiple regions.

Building on this foundation, another body of literature interprets Turkey's increasing security engagements with the Global South as evidence of its divergence from Western allies.[25] This shift has been characterised as a 'shifting its axis',[26] pursuing a policy of 'neo-Ottomanism',[27] becoming 'Middle Easternised',[28] and practising 'Turkish Gaullism',[29] referring to Charles de Gaulle. Additionally, Ankara's rhetorical challenges to the liberal international order, coupled with aspirations for revised regional and global status, have significantly altered global perceptions of Turkey's alignment. In turn, analysts have often categorised Turkey alongside economies adopting autonomous foreign policy strategies, labelled as one of the 'swing states' of the Global South,[30]

[20]Uğur Güngör, *United Nations Peace Operations and the Motivations That Lie at the Root of Turkey's Involvement* (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2015)

[21]Ahmet Yüce, 'Azerbaijan–Turkey military cooperation within the context of NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) program', *The Caucasus and the World: International Scientific Journal*, 21 (2016), pp. 1–11 (p. 7); Vecdi Gönül, 'Turkey–NATO relations and NATO's new strategic concept', *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9:1 (2010), pp. 15–21.

[22]Eylem Yilmaz and Pinar Bilgin, 'Constructing Turkey's "Western" identity during the Cold War: Discourses of the intellectuals of statecraft', *International Journal*, 61:1 (2005/6), pp. 39–59; Bilgin, 'Security in the Arab world and Turkey'; Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, 'The evolution of the national security culture and the military in Turkey', *Journal of International Affairs*, 54 (2000), pp. 199–216; G. Aybet and M. Müftüler-Bac, 'Transformations in security and identity after the Cold War: Turkey's problematic relationship', *International Journal*, 55:4 (2000), pp. 567–82; Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, 'Modernity, identity and Turkey's foreign policy', *Insight Turkey*, 10:1 (2008), pp. 55–75.

[23]Bilgin, 'Security in the Arab world and Turkey', p. 41

[24]Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Turkey's security and the Middle East', *Foreign Affairs*, 62:1 (1983), pp. 157–75; Lerna K. Yanık, 'The metamorphosis of metaphors of vision: "Bridging" Turkey's location, role and identity after the end of the Cold War', *Geopolitics*, 14:3 (2009), pp. 531–49; Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); İsmail Sosyal (ed.), *Between East and West: Studies on Turkish Foreign Policy* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2001).

[25]Cengiz Dinç and Mustafa Yetim, 'Transformation of Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East: From non-involvement to a leading role', *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 11:1 (2012), pp. 67–84 (pp. 72–4).

[26]Svante E. Cornell, 'What drives Turkish foreign policy? Changes in Turkey', *Middle East Quarterly*, 19:1 (2012), pp. 13–24 (p. 17); Ahmet Sözen, on the other hand, describes the changes in Turkish foreign policy as a paradigm shift: Ahmet Sözen, 'A paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy: Transition and challenges', *Turkish Studies*, 11:1 (2010), pp. 103–23.

[27]Ömer Taşpınar, 'Turkey's Middle East policies between neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism', *Carnegie Papers*, no. 10 (2008), p. 8

[28]Tarık Oğuzlu, 'Middle Easternization of Turkey's foreign policy: Does Turkey dissociate from the West?', *Turkish Studies*, 9:1 (2008), pp. 3–20 (p. 3).

[29]Ömer Taspinar, 'The rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish American relations right', *Insight Turkey*, 13:1 (2011), pp. 11–17.

[30]Cliff Kupchan, '6 swing states will decide the future of geopolitcs', *Foreign Policy*, 6 (June 2023), available at: {https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/06/geopolitics-global-south-middle-powers-swing-states-india-brazil-turkey-indonesia-saudi-arabia-south-africa/}.

a member of the rising New South[31] and near-BRICS. These categorisations emphasise Turkey's role in crafting multipolarity through active multi-alignment, challenging the Western-led rules-based liberal order, and ostensibly threatening the cohesion of the NATO alliance. Critiques of Turkey's security engagement with the Global South frequently link these developments to the country's internal political and regime dynamics. Scholars have argued that Turkey's middle-power activism reflects its evolving domestic political landscape. A democratic and liberal economic structure has traditionally aligned Turkey with pro-Western liberal norms and institutions, while its authoritarian and populist turn has redirected its middle-power activism towards revisionist and multi-alignment tendencies.[32] Some scholars further attribute this transformation to Turkey's status as a newly emerging middle power with moderate military and economic capabilities, which enables it to pursue ambitious and, at times, assertive foreign policy agendas. These tendencies underscore the complexity of Turkey's evolving foreign policy, where domestic regime characteristics increasingly shape its international orientation and strategic choices.[33]

Similarly, the academic literature mirrors these broader premises in its analyses of Turkey's expanding relations with African countries. Scholars variously depict Turkey as either an alternative partner and donor offering a 'third way' distinct from Western and Chinese approaches[34] or as a 'neo-Ottomanist' nationalist and imperial power seeking to assert influence in Africa.[35] A common thread in these studies is the interpretation of Turkey's intensified security relations with the Global South, along with its broader foreign policy shifts, as signalling a departure from the institutional and normative frameworks of the Global North. Such perspectives implicitly reinforce a dichotomous understanding of the global system: either as a 'rules-based order', governed by established norms and international institutions, or as a domain of unrestrained *realpolitik*, characterised by power politics where stronger states exploit weaker ones, disregarding norms and sovereignty.[36] This dualistic lens provides a polarised but ultimately reductive framework for understanding global dynamics as well as Turkey's interactions with the Global South. By framing Turkey's actions within such binary models, much of the literature fails to capture the complexity of the relational entanglements that define its security interactions with African states. This reductionist approach often overlooks the extent to which Western security practices, norms, and institutional frameworks are embedded in Turkey's engagements. As a result, the intricate ways in which global, regional, and local actors co-constitute and shape these security practices are insufficiently explored.

[31]Len Ishmael, 'The new South in a multipolar world: Multi-alignment or fence sitting? Lessons from South Africa, India, and others', Policy Paper 16/23, Policy Center for the Global South (October 2023).

[32]Mustafa Kutlay, Ziya Öniş, 'Turkish foreign policy in a post-western order: strategic autonomy or new forms of dependence?', *International Affairs*, 97:4 (July 2021), pp. 1085–104. Meliha Benli Altunışık, 'The Trajectory of a Modified Middle Power: An Attempt to Make Sense of Turkey's Foreign Policy in Its Centennial', *Turkish Studies*, 24:3–4 (2022), pp. 658–72 '.

[33]Umut Aydın, 'Emerging middle powers and the liberal international order', *International Affairs,* 97:5 (2021), pp. 1377–94,; Anna Grzywacz and Marcin Florian Gawrycki, 'The authoritarian turn of middle powers: Changes in narratives and engagement', *Third World Quarterly*, 42:11 (2021), pp. 2629–50.

[34]Federico Donelli, 'The Ankara consensus: The significance of Turkey's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 30:1 (2018), pp. 57–76; Hasan Aydın and Yi Liu, 'Questioning the West and creating an alternative: China's and Türkiye's similar approaches toward Africa', *Insight Turkey*, 26:3 (2024), pp. 251–74; Brendon J. Cannon, 'Turkey in Kenya and Kenya in Turkey: Alternatives to the East/West paradigm in diplomacy, trade, and security', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 10:5 (2016), pp. 56–65; Sema Kalaycıoğlu, 'Between mission and business: Turkey's new approach to Africa', *Journal of US–China Public Administration*, 8:11 (2001), pp. 1288–97; Mehmet Özkan, 'Turkey's rising role in Africa', *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9:4 (2010), pp. 93–205.

[35]Mark Langan, 'Virtuous power Turkey in sub-Saharan Africa: The "neo-Ottoman" challenge to the European Union', *Third World Quarterly*, 38:6 (2016), pp. 1399–414; Paul Antonopoulos, Oliver Villar, Drew Cottle, et al., 'Somalia: Turkey's pivot to Africa in the context of growing inter-imperialist rivalries', *Journal of Comparative Politics*, 10:2 (2017), pp. 4–18; M. Venkatachalam, 'Turkey in Africa: Voyeurism, neo-Ottomanism and Islamic humanitarianism', *African Studies Centre Leiden, ASC Working Paper 145* (2019), pp. 1–13.

[36]Thorsteinn Kristinsson, 'Webs of world order: A relational theory of rising powers and the evolution of international order [Doctoral Thesis (compilation), Department of Political Science]' (Lund: Lund University, 2022), p. 70.

To address these gaps and move beyond reductive binaries, I propose an alternative conceptual framework that better reflects the multiplicity of security interactions between Turkey and its African counterparts. This framework emphasises the co- constitutive and entangled nature of these relationships, accounting for the dynamic interplay of global, regional, and local actors in shaping Turkey's security practices in Africa. By doing so, it offers a more nuanced and holistic understanding of Turkey's role in the evolving security landscape of the Global South.

Relational ontologies and the complex web of Turkey–Africa security relations

Relational theory offers a compelling yet underexplored lens to analyse Turkey's evolving interactions with the Global South, particularly in contexts that resist classification within traditional theoretical binaries and the ontological separation embedded in conventional International Relations (IR) theories, which often treat states as bounded, autonomous entities whose interactions are shaped by zero-sum logics.[37] Relational approaches, in contrast, emphasise interdependence and interconnectedness, viewing the 'other' not as an externalised actor but as constitutive of a relational whole. By shifting the analytical focus from fixed categorisations to the dynamic processes of becoming that emerge through interactions, relational theory highlights the embeddedness of states within overlapping and contingent networks of influence.[38] In 'Differing about difference: Relational IR from around the world', for instance, the authors advocates for a shift towards relational ontologies that view interconnection as the fundamental condition of existence, a 'both–and' logic, rejecting hierarchical binaries and embracing diversity as complementary rather than oppositional. Drawing from non-Western cosmologies such as Andean, South Asian, East Asian, and Middle Eastern traditions, each author provides a relational understanding of beings, offering alternatives to Western dichotomies of universality and particularity.[39] Similarly, Chengxin Pan in 'Toward a new relational ontology in global politics: China's rise as holographic transition' introduces a 'holographic relational ontology' to capture the complexities of China's rise in international relations and its deep entanglements with global systems and processes.[40] Others introduces relational ontology for studying region-making and regional institutional developments,[41] interconnectedness among humans, non-humans, and the environment,[42] and fluid and interconnected conceptualisations of international relations, as exemplified by the Chinese concept of *guanxi*, which contrasts with state-centric Western models.[43]

The existing literature already inform us about Turkey's in-between, both–and self. Much of these studies discussed Turkey's liminality,[44] its 'ambivalent self',[45] and how this liminality has

[37]Kristinsson, 'Webs of world order', p. 77.

[38]Tamara Trownsell, Arlene B. Tickner, Aníbal Querejazu Escobari, et al., 'Differing about difference: Relational IR from around the world', *International Studies Perspectives*, 21:1 (2020), pp. 25–64; David L. Blaney and Tamara A. Trownsell, 'Recrafting International Relations by worlding multiply', *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 18:70 (2021), pp. 45–62; Laura Zanotti, 'Reorienting IR: Ontological entanglement, agency, and ethics', *International Studies Review*, 19:3 (2017), pp. 362–80.

[39]Trownsell et al., 'Differing about difference'.

[40]Chengxin Pan, 'Toward a new relational ontology in global politics: China's rise as holographic transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 339–67.

[41]Yong Wook Lee, 'Relational ontology and the politics of boundary-making: East Asian financial regionalism', *Politics*, 39:1 (2019), pp. 18–34.

[42]Arturo Escobar, 'Thinking-feeling with the earth: Territorial struggles and the ontological dimension of the epistemologies of the South', in Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Meneses (eds), *Knowledges Born in the Struggle*, 1st Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 11–32.

[43]Astrid H. M. Nordin and Graham M. Smith, 'Reintroducing friendship to International relations: Relational ontologies from China to the West', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 369–96.

[44]N. Eliküçük Yıldırım, 'Turkey–China rapprochement: Turkey's reconstruction of its liminality?', in B. Erdoğan and F. Hisarlıoğlu (eds), *Critical Readings of Turkey's Foreign Policy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), pp 173–92; Efser Rana Coşkun, 'Liminal identity of Turkey in humanitarian government', *Globalizations*, 20:7 (2023), pp. 1120–43.

[45]Gülsah Çapan and Ayşe Zarakol, 'Turkey's ambivalent self: Ontological insecurity in "Kemalism" versus "Erdoğanism"', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32:2 (2019), pp. 263–82.

been constructed.[46] However, their focus is on Turkey's ontological insecurities within the spatio-temporal hierarchies of colonial modernity, the limits of Turkey's socially constructed identity. Additionally, substantial work exists on Turkey's Janus-faced global positioning, often tied to its pursuit of strategic autonomy as a middle power.[47] Rather than framing Turkey as oscillating between the Global North and South, this scholarship highlights its multi-vectoral approach to foreign policy, emphasising its goal of achieving strategic autonomy. Strategic autonomy, as defined by Hisarcıklı, entails reducing dependency on traditional Western allies while maintaining strong ties to preserve flexibility in pursuing national interests.[48] Aydın situates this within Turkey's grand strategising, which seeks to balance relationships with major global and regional powers while leveraging its transatlantic ties pragmatically.[49] Turkey's aggregated 'swing state' scores within the GMF dataset reflect Turkey's in-betweenness, with high scores in security cooperation with the United States and European Union juxtaposed against its interactions with regional actors like Russia and China.[50] While these discussions elucidate Turkey's multiple attachments, and its strategising strategic autonomy in changing its position in the global transformation, they often fail to interrogate the relational dynamics of its engagements with the Global South, rather focusing on Turkey's efforts to renegotiate its position within Western-dominated power hierarchies.

Instead, a relational ontology provides a better understanding to capture Turkey's in-between, both–and self's deep entanglements with Western institutions, norms, and processes and those of the Global South. If we shift our focus to the relational dynamics, such a lens not only makes it possible to frame the complex multi-vectoral foreign policy of Turkey but also shows how Turkey, through interactions on security, produces multiplicity in practices. From a relational ontology, seeing interconnection as the primordial condition of existence, it is possible to understand Turkey's interaction with the Global South and North via its embeddedness in overlapping networks of influence and interaction.

The objective here is to analyse how Turkey's security interactions with African states are informed by and, in turn, influence its security framework as a NATO member, connecting discussions of how Turkey interacts with the countries of Global South and influences the security assemblages.[51] The aim is not merely to highlight the (in)security dimension of Turkey's engagement with Africa or its in-betweenness[52] between the Global South and North but to explore the entangled (in)securities that emerge at this nexus. Turkey's security interactions with Africa, as a non-Western NATO member, offer a critical site for examining these dynamics.

One way to analyse these entangled (in)securities is by empirically investigating the military isomorphism within Turkey–Africa security interactions. Military isomorphism refers to the process

[46]Lerna Yanık, 'Constructing Turkish "exceptionalism": Discourses of liminality and hybridity in post–Cold War Turkish foreign policy,' *Political Geography*, 30:2 (2011), pp. 80–9; Bahar Rumelili and Rahime Suleymanoglu-Kurum, 'Brand Turkey: Liminal identity and its limits', *Geopolitics*, 22:3 (2017), pp. 549–70

[47]Kutlay and Öniş, 'Turkish foreign policy in a post-Western order'.

[48]Özgür Hisarcıklı, 'Alliances in a shifting global order: Turkey', GMF, (2 May 2023), available at: {https://www.gmfus.org/news/new-geopolitics-alliances-rethinking-transatlantic-engagement-global-swing-states/turkey}.

[49]Mustafa Aydın, 'Grand strategizing in and for Turkish foreign policy: Lessons learned from history, geography and practice', *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 25:2 (2021), pp. 203–26.

[50]The aggregate score of Turkey is the highest with the US (4.1) and the EU (4.4) compared to other swing states. The security-related swing score shows that Turkey is tilted towards its Western partners in the context of Ukraine (4), the Indo-Pacific (4), and defence agreements (5), but in neighbouring and other regions prefer regional actors (3) and Russia (3), in addition to its Western allies, the US (4) and the EU (3), and when it comes to industrial cooperation and arms purchases, even though the US (4) and Europe (4) are ahead, Russia (3) and China (3) are pivoting. GMF, 'Alliances in a shifting global order: Interactive tools', (2 May 2023), available at: {https://www.gmfus.org/news/new-geopolitics-alliances-rethinking-transatlantic-engagement-global-swing-states/explore-graphs}.

[51]Stambøl and Berger, 'Transnationally entangled (in)securities'.

[52]Altunışık, 'The trajectory of a modified middle power'

by which peripheral military organisations adopt the norms, practices, and structures of core powers, and the homogenisation of military practices globally.[53] Historically, conceptions of the 'modern military' among peripheral elites have been shaped by the military cultures of dominant states. This process is often driven by their dependencies on external resources of the core, such as military equipment, technical expertise, and financial aid, which facilitate the transfer of technical standards, operational models, and cultural norms from the core to the periphery. For instance, as Farrell highlights, the practice of sending officers from peripheral states to military academies in dominant states reinforces the normative pull of Western military models, embedding the standards and practices of the core within peripheral military structures.[54] As argued by DiMaggio and Powell, isomorphism stems from coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures.[55] This dependency reproduces the structural asymmetries of the global military order by aligning peripheral militaries with Western-oriented conceptions of modernity.

For Turkey, the adoption of NATO standards – encompassing quality assurance, interoperability, and operational safety – has been central to its formal recognition and integration within the alliance. These standards have shaped Turkey's military structures and doctrines, embedding Western-oriented practices within its defence policies. In the context of Turkey's security interactions with African states, security isomorphism manifests in two key ways. First, Turkey acts as a conduit for the diffusion of NATO military standards, models, and practices through its participation in NATO-led security assistance programmes. Second, Turkey's own military doctrines, capabilities, and technologies – developed in alignment with NATO standards – serve as vehicles for transferring these practices to African partners.

Turkey has been an active contributor to NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP)[56] programmes, establishing a PfP Training Centre in Ankara in 1998.[57] The PfP operates on a flexible, individualised basis, allowing partner nations to define their engagement levels and objectives. The security engagements promoted under the PfP framework fall into three broad categories: fostering peace and stability (e.g. conflict prevention, post-conflict stabilisation, and democratic control of armed forces), enhancing defence cooperation (e.g. improving interoperability with NATO forces through joint exercises, training programmes, and technical cooperation), and building capabilities (e.g. supporting partner nations in modernising their defence sectors, enhancing disaster response mechanisms, and combating transnational threats such as terrorism).[58] Spanning Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and other regions, this broader security network extends NATO's influence and cooperative reach. Turkey has played a proactive role in all these areas, hosting PfP-related training programmes and exercises, contributing its military expertise, and

[53]Joelien Pretorius, 'The security imaginary: Explaining military isomorphism', *Security Dialogue*, 39:1 (2008), pp. 99–120; Theo Farrell, 'Culture and military power', *Review of International Studies*, 24:3 (1998), pp. 407–16; Theo Farrell, 'World culture and military power', *Security Studies*, 14:3 (2005), pp. 448–88; Nikolay Pavlov, 'NATO's concept development and experimentation approach in the EU's common security and defence policy? An institutional isomorphism perspective', *Defence Studies*, 22:2 (2021), pp. 211–30; Matias Ferreyra and Joseph Soeters, 'Multinational military cooperation in the Global South', *Armed Forces & Society*, 50:1 (2024), pp. 25–54.

[54]Farrell, 'World culture and military power', p. 465

[55]Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields', *American Sociological Review*, 48:2 (1983), pp. 147–60.

[56]The Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme was launched by NATO in 1994 as a cooperative initiative aimed at building trust, fostering dialogue, and enhancing interoperability between NATO members and non-member states, particularly in the post–Cold War context. It seeks to address common security challenges, promote transparency in defence planning, and develop military and operational capacities in partner countries. Rebecca R. Moore, *NATO's New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post–Cold War World* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2007).

[57]H. Tarık Oğuzlu and Uğur Güngör, 'Peace operations and the transformation of Turkey's security policy', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 27:3 (2006), pp. 472–88.

[58]NATO, 'Partnership for Peace Programme', NATO (28 June 2024), available at: {https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm}.

actively participating in PfP exercises to enhance interoperability with both NATO and partner forces.[59]

In this context, Turkey's dual role as a semi-peripheral state within NATO and a centre for security partnerships with Global South countries reflects its dependency on NATO's military structures and norms while simultaneously positioning itself as a key intermediary for peripheral countries. This dependency involves both the transformation of Turkey's military structures according to Western standards and the role it plays in assisting Global South countries to develop modern military frameworks. This dynamic is frequently emphasised in the discourses of Turkish policymakers and those of countries receiving Turkish security support. Turkey is often portrayed as a viable alternative for the Global South seeking to modernise their armed forces without directly relying on core NATO members or Western powers, offering a unique blend of Western standards and non-core identity.[60] The security isomorphism is particularly evident in Turkey's dual role: first, in the homogenisation and Westernisation of its own military structures, practices, and doctrines within NATO; and second, in its dissemination of these norms through bilateral security assistance programmes.

However, over time, Turkey has developed and implemented its own security assistance programmes for allied countries, modelled closely on NATO's PfP modules and the practices of NATO-led out-of-area operations such as in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Somalia. These training programmes mirrored NATO's procedural approach, including the Individual Partnership Program (IPP), and reflected Turkey's adoption of NATO-standard practices and certifications.[61]

Rather than acting as a passive intermediary that 'transfers' logistical, operational, organisational, and normative practices between the Global South and the Global North, Turkey places its domestically developed military practices, norms, and technologies – rooted in its pursuit of strategic autonomy – at the core of its security relations. Hence, Turkey also disseminates its own military doctrines, capabilities, and technologies, shaped by its post–Cold War security interests and needs, which often diverge from those of its Western partners. Some of these security practices are tactical, developed through the extensive counterterrorism operations of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). These operations have focused on border security, neutralising terrorist threats, and reclaiming territorial control. Since the mid-1980s, TAF's strategy has centred on hot pursuit operations beyond Turkey's borders, relying on air force capabilities and occasional ground troop deployments to counter external threats and safeguard territorial integrity. Over the years, this approach evolved into a forward-basing strategy, with Turkey stationing forces in neighbouring countries, such as Syria and Iraq, to conduct military operations and maintain control over defined areas beyond its borders. Beyond these tactical practices, Turkey promotes a standardised vision of the organisation, training, and logistics systems of allied and friendly countries' armed forces.[62] This standardisation is evident in Turkey's provision of advanced, NATO-standard defence systems – including UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) – along with comprehensive training and experience transfer. Unlike many Western defence suppliers, Turkey provides systems and services with fewer political conditions than many others, raising its appeal in markets across Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle

[59]The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 'Turkey's Contributions to International Peace-Keeping Activities', available at: {https://www.mfa.gov.tr/ii_—turkey_s-contributions-to-international-peace-keeping-activities.en.mfa}.

[60]See Markus Hochmüller and Markus-Michael Müller, 'Homologies and modelling in Colombian South–South security cooperation,' *European Journal of International Security* (this issue), for observations regarding Colombia.

[61]Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon, 'Re-examining the "base": The political and security dimensions of Turkey's military presence in Somalia', pp. 167–88 (p. 182); İbrahim Karataş, 'Turkey's military presence in Somalia: Doing what, why, and for whom?', in Abdulkadir Osman Farah and Mohamed Eno (eds), *Theorising Somali Society: Hope, Transformation and Development* (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2022), pp. 167–90.

[62]An official website on Turkey's policies towards African countries, endorsed by the Turkish Presidential Communications Directorate, available at: {https://www.turkiye-africa.com/guvenlik}.

East.[63] The TAF's UAV- and UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle)-based tactics have become a model for other militaries, excelling in roles such as intelligence gathering, precision strikes, target marking, and ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance).[64] Ankara's security assistance integrates training, equipment provision, technical cooperation, and defence industry support, creating a distinct and cohesive security ecosystem. By leveraging its ability to transfer advanced military technologies and deterrent capabilities, Turkey offers solutions for addressing symmetric, asymmetric, and hybrid threats while embedding its military practices and models into recipient states' security frameworks.

As a result, Turkey's security interactions simultaneously reproduce security isomorphism, aligning with NATO standards, and create dependencies that reinforce its influence among partner states. These interactions foster an intricate web of interdependence and entanglement, with Turkey's relations with the Global South playing an increasingly central role in its strategic autonomy. By embedding its security practices and technologies within its broader foreign policy framework, Turkey reshapes the dynamics of global military cooperation, positioning itself as both a product of and a contributor to evolving security assemblages.

Turkey's NATO-aligned and South–South strategies in African security partnerships

Turkey's engagements in Africa illustrate the entangled (in)securities and relational dynamics that underpin its evolving role as both a NATO member and a Global South actor. This section examines the five interlinked pillars of Turkey's security interactions – forward-basing, capacity-building, modernisation of security forces, peacekeeping contributions, and defence diplomacy.[65] Together, these pillars reveal Ankara's efforts to construct a hybrid security framework that integrates its NATO-aligned practices with domestically developed strategies tailored to the African context. By embedding its security practices within relational networks of influence, Turkey not only reproduces elements of security isomorphism but also positions itself as a central node in the co-constitution of security assemblages across Africa. This empirical analysis unpacks how these engagements simultaneously reflect Turkey's strategic autonomy ambitions and its commitment to fostering interdependence with its African partners.

Military training

During the 2024 Ministry of National Defence budget discussions at the Turkish Parliament General Assembly, Güler also touched upon relations with Africa and informed the assembly that military training cooperation activities with 21 countries in Africa would continue. Notably, Turkey has signed security personnel training agreements with a wide array of African nations, including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Tunisia. In addition to training agreements, there is a growing number of security cooperation agreements that are broader in scope, including military framework agreements.

Turkey's security training initiatives encompass a spectrum of areas, such as the operational and tactical capabilities of military personnel, the organisational structure of armed forces, unit equipment and logistics, and personnel management. Beyond conventional military training, Turkey also extends cooperation to specialised domains such as military intelligence, the defence industry,

[63] Arda Mevlütoğlu, 'Türkiye'nin Politikaları ve Savunma Sanayii: İHA İhracatı', *Perspektif* (4 March 2022), available at: {https://www.perspektif.online/turkiyenin-politikalari-ve-savunma-sanayii-iha-ihracati/}.

[64] 'Genelkurmay Başkanı Güler: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri rol model konumunda', *Sabah* (17 March 2017), available at: {https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2022/05/17/genelkurmay-baskani-guler-turk-silahli-kuvvetleri-rol-model-konumunda}.

[65] Despite the predominantly 'ad hoc and opportunistic' nature of Turkey's security engagements in sub-Saharan Africa, Ankara has methodically developed a framework consisting of five distinct types of security interactions. Brendon J. Cannon, 'Turkey's military strategy in Africa', in Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu and Ali Onur Tepeciklioğlu (eds), *Turkey in Africa: A New Emerging Power?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 127–43 (p. 143).

military legal systems, and technical skills development. This comprehensive approach positions Turkey as a key partner for African nations seeking to modernise and professionalise their security apparatuses.

A significant facet of this collaboration lies in police training programmes, which align closely with Turkey's vision of harmonising practices across security institutions.[66] Since 2007, the 'International Police Training Cooperation Project', jointly implemented by TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) and the **Turkish National Police**, has provided specialised training to police forces from numerous African countries. These programmes cover a wide array of topics, including basic shooting techniques, community policing, counter-terrorism, cyber-crime prevention, human trafficking, public order management, and intelligence operations.[67] Similar programmes, conducted in partnership with the Gendarmerie General Command, aim to strengthen cooperation between Turkey and allied nations. Participants in these programmes hail from a diverse range of countries, including Tunisia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Tanzania, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Zambia.

Additionally, the Turkish National Defense University (TNDU)[68] plays a pivotal role in advancing military education for African personnel. Through the Guest Military Personnel Training Program,[69] TNDU has hosted trainees from countries such as Libya, Gambia, and Somalia.[70] With its extensive network of military schools, research institutes, and vocational training centres, TNDU offers a platform for African officers to acquire advanced skills and experience. President Erdoğan touched upon the significance of this initiative during his speech to TNDU's 2023 graduates, expressing the hope that these personnel will act as goodwill ambassadors, fostering closer bilateral ties between Turkey and their home countries.[71]

Turkey's military bases in Libya and Somalia play a role in its training and capacity-building initiatives. These bases serve as hubs for intensive training programmes, enabling Turkey to train high number of security forces personnel more effectively in a shorter time. For instance, a total of 3,000 Libyan troops divided into groups of 500 received 14 months of training in the field of Internal Security in the city of Isparta during the academic year 2013–14.[72] Compared to that, in less than a year, Turkey provided training to 2,301 soldiers at training bases in Libya during 2020.[73] This number reached 8,500 by the beginning of 2022.[74] On the other hand, these countries also receive advanced training programmes such as commando or air force pilot training in training facilities in Turkey. Similarly, Turkey has played a transformative role in Somalia, where

[66]'Türk polisinin verdiği eğitim göz kamaştırıyor', *TRT Haber* (15 February 2018), available at: {https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/turk-polisinin-verdigi-egitim-goz-kamastiriyor-350943.html}.

[67]Zuhal Demirci, 'Türkiye Dünyanın Birçok Ülkesinden Polisleri Eğitiyor', *Anadolu Agency* (27 January 2018), available at: {https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiye-dunyanin-bircok-ulkesinden-polisleri-egitiyor/1043881}.

[68]The Army War Institute, formerly the Army War Academy, is an academic institution of the National Defence University. It is sometimes referred to in English as the Turkish Military College.

[69]'Başkan Erdoğan'dan MSÜ Kara Harp Okulu diploma ve sancak devir teslim töreninde önemli açıklamalarda bulundu', *Takvim* (30 August 2023), available at: {https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2023/08/30/baskan-erdogandan-msu-kara-harp-okulu-diploma-ve-sancak-devir-teslim-toreninde-onemli-aciklamalar}.

[70]'Foreign students trained at Turkey's military Academy', *Anadolu Agency* (1 May 2015), available at: {https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/foreign-students-trained-at-turkeys-military-academy/51689}.

[71]Ferdi Türkten and Yıldız Nevin Gündoğmuş, 'Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Milli Muharip Uçak KAAN'ın 2023 senesi bitmeden havalandığını göreceğiz', *Anadolu Agency* (30 August 2023), available at: {https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-milli-muharip-ucak-kaanin-2023-senesi-bitmeden-havalandigini-gorecegiz/2979304}

[72]Onur Sazak and Nazlı Selin Özkan, *Turkey's Contributions to Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Conflict-Affected Countries* (Karaköy, Istanbul: Sabanci University, Istanbul Policy Center, 2016), p. 13.

[73]'Turkish soldiers continue to provide military training, consultancy for Libyan Army', *Daily Sabah* (29 November 2020), available at: {https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkish-soldiers-continue-to-provide-military-training-consultancy-for-libyan-army}.

[74]'Turkish Ministry of Defense: 8,500 members of Libyan armed forces have received training', *The Libya Observer* (11 February 2022), available at: {https://libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/turkish-ministry-defense-8500-members-libyan-armed-forces-have-received-training}.

it aims to train one-third of the national army.[75] By 2022, Turkey had trained over 5,000 Somali soldiers and 1,000 special operations police, with the number of trained personnel reaching 6,000 by 2024.[76]

Military modernisation of security forces

Turkey has sought to position itself as a partner in African nations' defence modernisation efforts, leveraging its defence industry and strategic engagement to align military standards and build partnerships. Through the provision of advanced military technologies, logistical support, and financial assistance, Turkey, while supporting the modernisation of African security forces, positions itself as both a supplier and an influencer in the evolving security dynamics of the continent.

Turkey's approach to military modernisation unfolds through three primary mechanisms: foreign military aid, facilitated loans, and direct arms sales. First, Turkey employs a foreign military aid system coordinated by its Ministry of National Defence, allowing direct procurement from Turkish defence firms, often with financial assistance from Turkey's foreign military aid budget under the Military Financial Cooperation Agreement (AMIBA), Cash Assistance Implementation Protocol (NYUP), and Logistics Implementation Protocols.[77] Somalia and Gambia, significant examples, received military equipment and financial aid from Turkey as part of this aid system. For example, Somalia received 12 Kirpi mine-resistant vehicles as part of the Military Financial Cooperation between the two countries in 2020, and then mine-protected armoured personnel carriers, 8 BMC-produced Kirpi I TTZA and 14 Aktan fuel tankers in 2021.[78] The Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) and the TAF signed a bilateral agreement for the provision of logistical assistance to the Gambia Armed Forces. Turkey also donated $600,000 to help Gambia with its peacekeeping mission in Mali and other logistical issues. In April 2024, Turkey provided security equipment to Gambia that included shields, gas masks, radios, and other items. Other donations have included thousands of uniforms, tents, water bottles, and other equipment.[79] In 2019, it was announced that Turkey had provided $1.4 million in military assistance to The Gambia, the content of which was not disclosed.

Second, Turkey also offers loans to facilitate military procurements from Turkish defence companies by African nations. For instance, interest-free loans have been provided to Tunisia for purchasing Turkish military gear, with significant funding from Türk Eximbank. In 2013, Turkey and Egypt also reached a similar loan agreement, to the sum of 250 million dollars,[80] for the procurement of Turkish-made UAVS by Egypt, but the deal was cancelled after the two countries broke their diplomatic relations in 2013.[81] The lending capabilities of Türk Eximbank are considered insufficient when juxtaposed with global benchmarks.

Direct arms sales represent the most prevalent mechanism for Turkey's defence engagement with African nations. Unlike many Western suppliers, Turkey's non-restrictive export policy has

[75]Lokman Ilhan and Zuhal Demirci, '1 of 3 Somalian troops to be trained by Turkey: Envoy', *Anadolu Agency* (4 July 2020), available at: {https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/1-of-3-somalian-troops-to-be-trained-by-turkey-envoy/1931275}.

[76]Yusuf Emir Işık, 'Türkiye 6 bin Somalili askeri ve özel harekat polisini eğitti', *Defence Turk* (6 June 2022), available at: {https://www.defenceturk.net/turkiye-6-bin-somalili-askeri-ve-ozel-harekat-polisini-egitti}; '6,000 Somali military personnel trained by Türkiye since 2017', TRT World (12 March 2024), available at: {https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xdi36dM9XWA}.

[77]Ministry of National Defence, *Annual Activity Report* (2022).

[78]Turkish Defence Ministry, X Account, available at: {https://tinyurl.com/5n6dwrvt}.

[79]'Gambia orders APCs from Turkey', *The African Criminology Journal* (27 June 2022), available at: {https://theafricancriminologyjournal.wordpress.com/2022/06/27/gambia-orders-apcs-from-turkey/}.

[80]'Türkiye'den Mısır'a Savunma Sanayi Desteği!', *Haber Türk* (10 May 2013), available at: {https://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/para/haber/843294-turkiyeden-misira-savunma-sanayi-destegi}.

[81]'Artık Mısır'a Türk Silahı Yok', *Türkiye Gazetesi* (24 August 2013), available at: {http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/ekonomi/66916.aspx}.

facilitated its access to African markets,[82] raising criticism about its potential long-term implications for regional security dynamics. Since the mid-2010s, Turkish defence companies have diversified their offerings to African nations, expanding from small arms and ammunition to advanced technologies such as UAVs, armoured vehicles, surveillance systems, mine clearance vehicles, and electro-optical sensor systems.[83] Turkey has also signed Defense Industry Cooperation agreements with over 25 African countries, promoting technology transfer, joint production, and long-term defence partnerships.[84] These agreements allow African nations to modernise their security forces while fostering interoperability with Turkish defence standards, reinforcing the harmonisation of military practices.

Turkey's military bases and forward-basing posture in Africa

In Africa, Turkey has military training facilities in two countries, Somalia, and Libya. Turkey's strategy of extending its influence beyond its borders is increasingly manifested through its expanding network of military posts and bases,[85] with Africa playing a critical role in this emerging trend. Rossiter and Cannon suggest that the term 'bases' often conjures images of Cold War-era facilities designed for power projection; however, Turkey's forward-basing in Somalia represents a departure from this notion, as it focuses on training missions over hard power projection, and hence they cannot be classified as traditional overseas bases.[86] However, Can Kasapoğlu categorises these as forward bases, differentiating them based on the mission and tasks of the deployed Turkish military forces.[87] From this perspective, this distinction underlines Turkey's multifaceted use of external military bases, with forward-operating bases near Turkey, such as in Iraq and Syria, addressing national security concerns, and those in distant nations like Somalia and Libya serving broader goals including training and deterrence.[88]

Ankara's establishment of military training camps in Somalia and Libya marks Africa as a central element of Turkey's contentious expeditionary military policy and forward-basing strategy.[89] Turkey's overseas military bases are part of a strategic shift in its defence and foreign policy, focusing on opportunities for its middle power activism and autonomy in its foreign policy as well as threats. This includes a combination of domestically produced military hardware and overseas basing, which has allowed the TAF to develop interregional operational capabilities on the one hand, and new endeavours for defence diplomacy and interoperability with African allies on the other hand.[90] This aligns with Turkey's deterrence-oriented defence posture,[91] its transformation of the

[82]Mevlütoğlu, 'Türkiye'nin Politikaları ve Savunma Sanayii: İHA İhracatı'; Çağlar Kurç, 'No strings attached: Understanding Turkey's arms exports to Africa', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 26:3 (2024), pp. 378–95.

[83]Hürcan Aslı Aksoy, Salim Çevik, and Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 'Visualising Turkey's activism in Africa', Centre for Applied Turkey Studies (3 June 2022).

[84]Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 'Unpacking Turkey's security footprint in Africa: Trends and implications for the EU', *SWP Comment*, 2022/C 42 (30 June 2022), pp. 1–7.

[85]Rich Outzen, 'Turkey's global military footprint in 2022', *Defense Journal by Atlantic Council in Turkey* (22 December 2022), available at: {https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/ac-turkey-defense-journal/turkeys-global-military-footprint-in-2022/}.

[86]Rossiter and Cannon, 'Re-examining the "base"'.

[87]Can Kasapoğlu, 'Turkey's forward-basing posture', *EDAM Foreign Policy and Security Paper Series* (2017), available at: {https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/sinirstratejisien.pdf}.

[88]Nebahat Tanriverdi Yaşar, 'Syria and Libya's contributions to the evolution of the Turkish "forward defence" doctrine', *Geneva Center for Security Policy* (14 June 2021), available at: {https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/syria-and-libyas-contributions-evolution-turkish-forward-defence-doctrine}.

[89]Kasapoğlu, 'Turkey's forward-basing posture'.

[90]Rich Outzen, 'Turkey's global military footprint in 2022', *Defense Journal by Atlantic Council in Turkey* (22 December 2022), available at: {https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/ac-turkey-defense-journal/turkeys-global-military-footprint-in-2022/}.

[91]Murat Yeşiltaş, 'Deciphering Turkey's assertive military and defense strategy: Objectives, pillars, and implications', *Insight Turkey*, 22:3 (2020), pp. 89–114; Kasapoğlu, 'Turkey's forward-basing posture'; Can Kasapoglu and Soner Cagaptay, 'Turkey's military presence in Iraq: A complex strategic deterrent', *The Washington Institute* (22 December 2015); Mustafa Coşar Ünal

TAF into an expeditionary force,[92] and its ongoing efforts since the 1990s to solidify its role as a key security partner.[93]

Compared to conventional military bases, particularly those near Turkey's borders, the facilities in Libya and Somalia are relatively modest in terms of military equipment. As Connor contends, the capital investment and military capacity of the Somali base are not notably significant.[94] Primarily, the Mogadishu facility is intended for military training, tasked with strengthening the Somali military.[95] The Turkish ambassador to Mogadishu, in a *Daily Sabah* interview, underscored that the base is dedicated to enhancing the capabilities of the Somali military.[96] The Libyan bases, although more equipped than those in Somalia, still fall short of the capabilities of those closer to Turkey. In Libya, the bases are armed with air defence systems, missile systems, short-range air defence assets, UAVs, and armoured vehicles to bolster Tripoli's defence by Turkey during the Second Libyan Civil War.

Although the Turkish parliament allowed the deployment of combat troops, the soldiers deployed in Libya did not consist of combat elements. For example, the first batch of soldiers deployed was limited to 35 Turkish officials headed by a lieutenant general as a non-combatant unit tasked with coordination.[97] According to the official statement from Ankara, more TAF soldiers deployed to Libya, are responsible for military training and defence strategy and coordination of the Libyan units. The UN Expert report also notes that Turkey deployed military advisors during the conflicts in Libya.[98] Instead of Turkish soldiers, Ankara decided to deploy Syrian fighters in Libya as combat forces. According to a report prepared by the Pentagon, Turkey deployed between 3,500 and 3,880 Syrian fighters in the first half of 2020, when the war was at high intensity.[99] The 2021 UN Panel Expert Report, on the other hand, recorded that at least 4,000 Syrian fighters were under the command of the Government of National Accord (GNA), Libya's interim administration formed under the 2015 UN-led Libyan Political Agreement.[100] Since the ceasefire in June 2020, the Turkish Libya Force Group has intensified its efforts in military training.[101] Likewise, the military

and Petra Cafnik Uludağ, 'Eradicating terrorism in asymmetric conflict: The role and essence of military deterrence', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34:4 (2022), pp. 772–816.

[92]Can Kasapoğlu, 'Turkey's burgeoning defense technological and industrial base and expeditionary military policy', *Insight Turkey*, 22:3 (2020), pp. 115–30; Adar and Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 'Rethinking civil–military relations in Turkey'; Yeşiltaş, 'Deciphering Turkey's assertive military and defense strategy'.

[93]Ian O. Lesser, 'Turkey in a changing security environment', *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1 (2000), pp. 183–98; Bülent Sarper Ağır and Murat Necip Arman, *Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkan since the Post-Cold War Era: Political and Security Dimensions* (Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker Press, 2016); Bülent Aras, 'Turkey's rise in the Greater Middle East: Peace-building in the periphery', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 11:1 (2009), pp. 29–41; Ole Frahm, Katharina Hoffmann, and Dirk Lehmkuhl, 'Turkey and the Eastern partnership: Turkey's foreign policy towards its post-Soviet Black Sea neighbourhood', EU-Strat Working Paper (2018).

[94]Rossiter and Cannon, 'Re-examining the "base"', p. 169

[95]'Turkey sets up largest overseas army base in Somalia', *Al Jazeera* (1 October 2017), available at: {https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/1/turkey-sets-up-largest-overseas-army-base-in-somalia}.

[96]Yunus Paksoy, 'Turkish ambassador to Somalia Olgan Bekar: Turkey helping build state, military, infrastructure from scratch', *Daily Sabah* (25 May 2017), available at: {https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/05/25/turkish-ambassador-to-somalia-olgan-bekar-turkey-helping-build-state-military-infrastructure-from-scratch}.

[97]Ayşe Sayın, 'Libya'ya ilk etapta 35 asker gitti', *BBC News* (8 January 2020), available at: {https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-51029014}; Murat Aslan, 'Libya'da Ulusal Mutabakat Hükümeti: Kararlılık Ve Meydan Okumalar', *SETA Perspektif* (2020), available at: {https://setav.org/assets/uploads/2020/06/P284.pdf}; Eda Işık, 'Türk Askeri Libya'da', *Sabah* (8 January 2020), available at: {https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2020/01/08/turk-askeri-libyada}.

[98]Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya, S/2022/427 (27 May 2022), p. 23.

[99]Isabel Debre, 'Pentagon report: Turkey sent up to 3,800 fighters to Libya', *Washington Post* (17 July 2020), available at: {https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/pentagon-report-turkey-sent-up-to-3800-fighters-to-libya/2020/07/17/0736c972-c86d-11ea-a825-8722004e4150_story.html}.

[100]Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973, p. 8.

[101]Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Defence Land Forces Command, available at: {https://www.kkk.tsk.tr/bdh.aspx}.

base in Somalia serves strategic rather than direct combat roles, emphasising Turkey's broader security posture rather than immediate national defence.

Logistically, they markedly differ from geographically proximate bases, since their geographical distance from Turkey introduces constraints and challenges in terms of cost, supply, capability, and strategic prioritisation. For example, the establishment of maritime and aerial supply corridors from Turkey to Libya violated the arms embargo imposed on Libya by UNSC Resolution 1970 and caused tensions between Turkey and its European partners. More specifically, the maritime supply route initiated by Turkey during the peak of the conflict led to confrontations, first with a French frigate under NATO command and then with the European Union's Operation Irini task forces, during the implementation of the UN arms embargo. As the GNA, recognised by the UN as the legitimate government of Libya during the conflict, extended its control over areas around Tripoli, which contributed to making the airspace safer, as of mid-May 2020, an air bridge was created between Turkey and Libya with military cargo aircraft escorted by aircraft from the Turkish Air Force.[102]

Turkey's forward-basing strategy in Somalia and Libya illustrates its attempt to address various strategic objectives, though its long-term impact remains debated. While Turkish officials have articulated that these forward bases are envisioned as regional military training hubs designed to meet the security needs of African states, its regional ambitions are embedded in this strategy. In Somalia, Turkey's engagement is intricately linked to the strategic importance attributed to East Africa within its foreign policy. Similarly, Turkey's establishment of a military base in Libya exemplifies the overlapping dimensions of its foreign policy agendas, encompassing interests in the eastern Mediterranean, regional disputes with neighbouring countries, concerns over geopolitical isolation, and aspirations for a greater role on the African continent. This presence underscores Turkey's investment in Libya's security dynamics and broader geopolitical calculus in the Mediterranean region.

International peacekeeping and conflict management operations and missions

Turkey's engagement in peacekeeping and conflict management operations in Africa has expanded in recent decades, reflecting its evolving foreign policy priorities and security interests. This increased involvement includes participation in United Nations (UN), NATO, European Union (EU), and African Union (AU) peacekeeping missions, through either the deployment of military and police personnel or the provision of financial support.

Turkey's initial foray into peace operations in Africa followed the end of the Cold War, beginning with its role in the the UN **Operation in Somalia II** (UNOSOM II). This marked a shift in Turkish foreign policy towards a more active stance in international peacekeeping. From the 2000s onwards, Turkey has taken part in multilateral missions in conflict-affected areas, including Mali, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia.[103] Its participation in NATO's Operation Ocean Shield (2009–16), aimed at combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa, demonstrates Turkey's interest in securing strategic maritime routes.

An analysis of Turkey's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions between 1988 and 2022 shows a predominant focus on Africa, with 13 of its 15 contributions directed toward sub-Saharan missions. Early participation was largely limited to observation roles, with military observers tasked with monitoring ceasefires and reporting on hostilities. A notable exception was Turkey's engagement in UNOSOM II in 1993, where it contributed a mechanised unit and

[102]Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973, pp. 181–9.

[103]Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 'Unpacking Turkey's security footprint in Africa', *SWP Comment*, 42 (2022), available at: {https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C42/#:~:text=In%20the%202000s%2C%20Turkey%20started,%2C%20South%20Sudan%2C%20and%20Somalia}.

assumed a leadership role, with Lieutenant General Çevik Bir serving as the mission's first force commander.[104]

Since 2000, Turkey's participation in African missions has persisted, though its approach has shifted. Post-2014, there has been a reduction in troop deployments in favour of police contributions and capacity-building initiatives. This period also saw a transition from multilateral efforts to more bilateral engagements. For example, in Somalia, Turkey has worked through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) since 2013 to provide political advice, capacity building, and security sector reform, while supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which combats al-Shabaab and seeks to stabilise the Somali government.

Turkish defence diplomacy in Africa

Turkey's defence diplomacy in Africa reflects a shift in its foreign policy priorities, characterised by increased military engagement and the promotion of its defence industry.[105] A central component of this approach is the Turkish navy's port visits, which have extended beyond Turkey's traditional strategic theatres of the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea.[106] These visits serve several purposes: showcasing the capabilities of the Turkish navy, promoting domestically manufactured defence products, identifying potential export markets, and cultivating new alliances and spheres of influence. They highlight Turkey's efforts to integrate defence diplomacy with broader strategies, including military training and the expansion of its defence industry.

Between 6 May and 6 July 2010, the Turkish navy visited 11 ports in 9 countries,[107] including Tunisia and Algeria, on a route extending to the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea, and participated in various exercises.[108] In 2014, the Barbaros Turkish Naval Task Group travelled throughout the African continent, visiting 25 ports in 24 African countries; 19 of these were first-time visits. This mission both participated in joint training exercises in South Africa and supported anti-piracy activities in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and adjacent regions. Ada-class corvette TCG *Büyükada* visited 11 ports in 7 countries, including Djibouti[109] and Sudan,[110] following the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Se,a and Persian Gulf routes between 26 January and 12 April 2015.[111]

These initiatives have been supported by various Turkish institutions, including the Undersecretariat for Defence Industries (SSM) and defence industry firms, alongside the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency TİKA. The missions have facilitated the introduction of Turkish-made defence assets, such as the TCG *Heybeliada* corvette, part of the MiLGEM (National Ship) Project, and the GENESIS integrated combat management system.[112] Port visits and associated missions have also included participation in anti-piracy operations, bilateral

[104]Gizem Sucuoğlu and Jason Sterans, 'Turkish aid in Somalia', in *Turkey in Somalia: Shifting Paradigms of Aid*, South African Institute of International Affairs Research Report (2016), pp. 16–28.

[105]Defence diplomacy, sometimes labelled military diplomacy, is considered to be the non-violent use of a state's defence apparatus to advance the strategic aims of a government through cooperation with other countries and is used as an umbrella term, covering activities as diverse as officer exchanges, ship visits, training missions, and joint military exercises: Gregory Winger, 'The velvet gauntlet: A theory of defense diplomacy', in Agata Lisiak and Natalie Smolenski (eds), *What Do Ideas Do?* (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. 33, 2014), pp. 1–14, available at: {https://files.iwm.at/jvfc/33_10_Winger.pdf}.

[106]These ventures are scrutinised in terms of their costs, gains, and associated risks. Babür Hüseyin Özbek, 'Donanmanın Afrika Seferi Gerekli mi: Üç Görüş', *Deniz Ticareti Gazetesi* (20 March 2014), available at: {https://www.denizticaretgazetesi.org/makale/donanmanin-afrika-seferi-gerekli-mi-uc-gorus-171}.

[107]Others are Spain, Italy, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia.

[108]List of Turkish Naval Task Groups, available at: {https://mavivatan.net/turk-deniz-gorev-gruplari/}.

[109]'TCG Büyükada'nın Cibuti Liman Ziyareti', *Mynet* (9 February 2015), available at: {https://www.mynet.com/tcg-buyukadanin-cibuti-liman-ziyareti-180101678763}.

[110]'Milli Gemi TCG Büyükada'nın 3 aylık yolculuğu yarın başlıyor', *Deniz Haber* (17 January 2015), available at: {https://www.denizhaber.net/milli-gemi-tcg-buyukadanin-3-aylik-yolculugu-yarin-basliyor-haber-59922.htm}.

[111]'TCG Büyükada 7 ülkedeki liman ziyaretlerini tamamladı', *Deniz Haber* (15 April 2015), available at: {https://www.denizhaber.net/tcg-buyukada-7-ulkedeki-liman-ziyaretlerini-tamamladi-haber-61364.htm}.

[112]Bülent Bostanoğlu, 'Interview', *MSI Dergisi*, 22 (2016), pp. 22–46.

and multilateral exercises, and NATO and UN-related missions, attracting attention from foreign delegations and media representatives.

Turkey has complemented its naval diplomacy with high-level visits from senior officials, including defence ministers, force commanders, and intelligence leaders, to African states. These visits aim to deepen military cooperation, foster defence industry partnerships, and strengthen bilateral ties. Particular attention has been given to countries like Libya and Somalia, where Turkey maintains military bases, reflecting its focus on specific African security contexts.

Joint military exercises also constitute a significant aspect of Turkey's defence diplomacy in Africa. However, none of these joint exercises organised by Turkey are as comprehensive and dedicated only to African countries when compared to the US-led African Lion hosted by Morocco, Ghana, Senegal, and Tunisia or AFINDEX carried out by India.[113] Bilateral exercises, such as with Tunisia[114] and Libya[115] are one of the pillars of the joint exercise strategy developed by Turkey for African countries. Another pillar is the invitation of African countries to the international exercises organised by Turkey itself, as in the EFES exercises. For example, Algeria participated in the EFES-2018 Combined Joint Live Fire Exercise,[116] and many African states, including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Cameroon, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somalia, participated in the EFES-2022 exercise.[117] African countries Ethiopia and Libya also participated in the Winter Exercise 2023, which was held with the participation of 17 countries in total.[118] Additionally, Turkey leverages NATO exercises, such as Mavi Balina (Blue Whale) and Kurtaran, to engage with African states, including Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa, Libya, and Sudan.[119] Beyond exercises, the Multinational Maritime Security Centre of Excellence in Aksaz offers capacity-building training to African states, promoting maritime security cooperation, but most importantly seeking to maintain a continuity of relations through sustained engagement and capability enhancement.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Turkey's security engagements with African states reveal a multiplicity in its identity and positioning – an in-betweenness/both–and that allows Turkey to act as both a NATO-aligned actor and a Global South partner. This duality, or 'both–and' nature, reflects Turkey's embeddedness in overlapping networks of influence and interaction. By navigating these intersecting realms, Turkey creates a space of contingency and unpredictability, challenging binary categorisations of North–South or core–periphery relationships. While Turkey leverages this multiplicity to transcend traditional geopolitical hierarchies, positioning itself as a critical

[113]'About African Lion, the US Army Europe and Africa', available at: {https://www.europeafrica.army.mil/What-We-Do/Exercises/African-Lion/};

AFINDEX-2023, with a total of 25 nations from the African continent, was held from 16 to 29 March 2023. Indian Ministry of Defence, 'India–Africa joint military exercise "Afindex-23" concluded at Foreign Training Node, Aundh, Pune' (29 March 2023), available at: {https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID = 1911766#: ~:text = AFINDEX%2D2023%20was%20held%20from,participated%20in%20the%20multinational%20exercise}.

[114]'Tunisian–Turkish joint military exercise conducted January 17–25', *Tunisie Numerique* (28 January 2021), available at: {https://news-tunisia.tunisienumerique.com/tunisian-turkish-joint-military-exercise-conducted-january-17-25/}.

[115]'Libya ve Türk deniz kuvvetleri tatbikat düzenledi', *Yeni Şafak* (29 September 2022), available at: {https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/libya-ve-turk-deniz-kuvvetleri-ortak-tatbikat-duzenledi-3861284}.

[116]Defence Turkey, 'EFES-2018 combined joint live fire exercise "distinguished observer day" successfully accomplished' (June 2018), available at: {https://www.defenceturkey.com/en/content/efes-2018-combined-joint-live-fire-exercise-distinguished-observer-day-successfully-accomplished-3028}.

[117]'Efes-2022′de yerli silahlar göz doldurdu', *TRT Haber* (10 June 2022), available at: {https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/efes-2022de-yerli-silahlar-goz-doldurdu-687065.html}.

[118]'17 Ülkeden Askerin Katıldığı "Kış Tatbikatı-2023" Başarıyla Tamamlandı', *MSB* (3 February 2023), available at: {https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/322023-67408}.

[119]'Turkish-led exercise Mavi Balina 2016 concludes in the Med', *Euro Marfor* (29 November 2016), available at: {https://www.euromarfor.org/article/10/379}; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Defence, 'Press release after KURTARAN-2023 joint exercise', *MSB* (3 May 2023), available at: {https://www.msb.gov.tr/Basin-ve-Yayin/Aciklamalar/c89b73129e5c4fa0920ff0d8449fb2e2}.

intermediary within evolving global security architectures, simultaneously the embeddedness of its security practices, norms, structures, and technologies in overlapping networks of influence and interactions reproduces dependencies between core and periphery, North and South.

A key finding of this study is Turkey's role in shaping perceptions of the 'modern military' in non-Western, non-core contexts. Through its vast array of security interactions – spanning military training, forward-basing, defence diplomacy, and technology transfers – Turkey transmits a comprehensive set of military practices, structures, institutions, norms, and technologies. These engagements not only modernise African security forces but also embed NATO-inspired standards and Turkish-developed innovations within local military frameworks.

Concurrently, these interactions contribute to security isomorphism in Africa, where Turkey's practices align with global trends in military homogenisation. By disseminating NATO-inspired norms and technologies, Turkey fosters dependencies between Global South militaries and global security frameworks, thereby reinforcing existing asymmetries. However, the relational dynamics of Turkey's engagements also highlight a transformative potential – one that reconfigures traditional dependencies by integrating locally produced and adopted security practices and its pursuit of strategic autonomy.

Ultimately, Turkey's security interactions illuminate a broader trend in global security governance: the entanglement of diverse actors within fluid and interdependent networks. Turkey's case offers a lens to understand how multiplicity in security practices challenge conventional binaries and create new spaces of influence.

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