

# TÜRKİYE'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOMALIA'S SECURITY SECTOR: THE TÜRK SOM CASE STUDY (2011–2024)

August 2026 No: 80

Yusuf ABUKAR MOHAMED



## TÜRKİYE'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOMALIA'S SECURITY SECTOR: THE TÜRK SOM CASE STUDY (2011–2024)

Following the fall of Siad Barre's government in 1991, Somalia entered a period of political vacuum and experienced one of the longest-lasting instances of state fragmentation in modern history. Research on failed and collapsed states has generally focused on the causes and effects of the armed conflicts of the 1990s, which occurred in the post-Cold War era, examining the driving factors and dynamics behind these conflicts (Rotberg, 2003; Zartman, 1995; World Bank, 2005). As Rotberg (2003) notes, "despite being a nation-state with a shared language, religion, and history of nationalism," Somalia began to collapse in the late 1980s and soon collapsed entirely. Similarly, Zartman (1995) defines failed states as "situations in which the state's basic functions can no longer be performed" and cites Somalia as the most significant example of this phenomenon.

The collapse of state authority in Somalia has led to a serious security vacuum. The Al-Shabaab movement, established in 2006, rapidly seized control of Somalia's central and southern regions and has become one of the largest and most powerful terrorist organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Africa (Hansen, 2013; Menkhaus, 2014). Although they were forced to withdraw from Mogadishu, their continued ability to maintain a presence and retain the capacity to conduct attacks across the country's vast rural areas serves as compelling evidence of the shortcomings of international security assistance models in understanding Somalia's unique security dynamics (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019).

International efforts to address the security vacuum in Somalia have quickly evolved into a multi-stakeholder framework with overlapping components. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM, 2007–2022), the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS, 2022–2024), and the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), which began in 2025, have made significant contributions to the restructuring of the Somali National Forces (SNF). Other key elements of this multi-stakeholder environment include the U.S. Advisory Program, the EU Training Mission (EUTM), and training initiatives led by the UAE. However, the steps taken by the international community toward security sector reform have often achieved only limited success due to issues such as a lack of coordination, insufficient sustainable financing mechanisms, and the complex nature of local political dynamics (ICG, 2022; UNDP, 2024). In this context, Türkiye has emerged as the stakeholder with the most distinctive intervention model.

Türkiye's relations with Somalia began with the historic visit to Mogadishu by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in August 2011, marking the first time in nearly 20 years that a leader from outside the West had visited Somalia (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019; Özkan & Orakçı, 2015). As Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud noted in 2016, "Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdoğan's 2011 visit to Somalia was a turning point in the country's progress toward security and stability; I am not exaggerating" (Stearns & Sucuoğlu, 2017, p. 1). Launched in 2011 in response to the catastrophic famine in the region, this humanitarian aid program was carried out through direct aid and emergency support packages provided by organizations such as

the Turkish Red Crescent, TİKA, and İHH. This strategy led Somalia to view Türkiye not merely as a “savior” but as a “partner” (Wheeler, 2011; Akpınar, 2013). According to the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2012), Türkiye successfully positioned itself during that period as a foreign actor that was “not feared, but emulated.”

Initially, Türkiye's activities in Somalia focused primarily on providing humanitarian aid and infrastructure development; however, following the establishment of the TÜRKSOM (Türkiye-Somalia Joint Task Force) military training base in 2017, it has assumed a significant role in the security sector. Spanning approximately 400 hectares, TÜRKSOM is Türkiye's largest military base abroad and serves as a central hub for training the Somali National Army and enhancing its institutional capacity (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019; USIP, 2020). According to Demirtaş and Piriñçi (2024), “TÜRKSOM is helping to enhance Somalia's security capacity and plays a vital role in the training of the Somali National Army; thus, Türkiye is positioning itself as a security provider and development partner in the region.” It is projected that between 2024 and 2026, TÜRKSOM will have trained over 20,000 Somali soldiers who will form the backbone of elite units such as the Gorgor (Eagle) Commando Brigades (Hiraal Institute, 2022; TRT Africa, 2025). As of June 2023, nine Gorgor Commando Brigades have completed their training at both the TÜRKSOM facility and the commando training center in Isparta (Trends Research & Advisory, 2024).

However, TÜRKSOM's capacity-building mission is closely linked to the structural issues affecting Somalia's security sector. Significant obstacles hindering the

effectiveness of international training programs include clan loyalties, divisions within the armed forces, irregular salary payments, the presence of ghost soldiers, and political interference (ICG, 2023; Williams & Elmi, 2023). Furthermore, Türkiye's security partnerships have brought with them the threat of attacks by al-Shabaab targeting Turkish personnel and facilities (Caasimada Online, 2025). The Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement, signed in February 2024 and valid for 10 years, demonstrates that this partnership has made significant progress (Al Jazeera, 2024; Trends Research & Advisory, 2024). In recent years, Türkiye has further expanded its military presence in Somalia—particularly through the deployment of F-16 fighter jets in 2026 and agreements regarding maritime zones—thereby increasing Ankara's strategic engagement in the region (Aurora Israel, 2026; Defense Mirror, 2026).

A review of the existing literature on security sector reform (SSR) shows that most studies evaluating international organizations' participation in state-building have focused on Western donor countries and UN initiatives (OECD-DAC, 2005; UN Security Council, 2008). In contrast, Türkiye's engagement in the security sector through TÜRKSOM fills a significant gap in the literature. This engagement offers a unique framework that integrates Islamic solidarity, humanitarian diplomacy, and the development of military capabilities. This distinctive framework distinguishes Türkiye's engagement from traditional peacekeeping operations and typical Western governance and security reform methodologies (Akpınar, 2021; Bilgiç & Nascimento, 2014).

This analytical study examines Türkiye's role in the development of Somalia's security sector by treating TÜRKSOM as a case study and focusing on the period between 2011 and 2024. The study focuses on the following central question: To what extent, and through which methods, did Türkiye support the development of Somalia's security sector via TÜRKSOM during the 2011–2024 period, and how does this strategy compare with other security assistance models in terms of legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability?

Within this framework, the research will assess the core components of Türkiye's security cooperation strategy, TÜRKSOM's concrete contributions to enhancing the capabilities of the Somali National Army, the relationship between these efforts and regional security dynamics, and the obstacles faced by current practices. The study employs a qualitative case study methodology and conducts a comprehensive review of reports by international organizations, academic literature, official documents, and current news articles.

### State-Building and Security Sector Reform

This section addresses the three conceptual dimensions that underpin this study: state-building and post-conflict stability theory, security sector reform (SSR) theory, and the relationship between security and humanitarian diplomacy in Türkiye's foreign policy. This framework clarifies the position of the TÜRKSOM model within both state-building and SSR literature, while examining Türkiye's hybrid approach within a comparative context alongside other global models.

### a. State-Building and Post-Conflict Stability

State-building is a complex process that involves reestablishing legitimacy, capacity, and essential public services (such as security, the rule of law, and other services) in societies emerging from conflict. In the literature, the term "failed state" describes a state that cannot fulfill the basic functions defined by Weber. Rotberg (2004, p. 9) elaborates on this situation as "the state's inability to provide its citizens with basic political goods," citing Somalia as the prime example: "Despite being a nation-state with a shared language, religion, and nationalist heritage, Somalia failed in the late 1980s and subsequently collapsed" (Rotberg, 2004, p. 11). Zartman (1995, p. 5) defines collapse as "a situation in which the state can no longer be defined as a state" and emphasizes that recovery is possible only through local ownership.

State-building during the post-conflict stabilization phase has been reshaped in light of criticisms directed at the "liberal peacebuilding" model. Paris (2004) emphasizes the importance of strengthening institutional capacity rather than focusing on rapid liberalization. In Somalia, this effort is affected by instability stemming from clan-based systems. Effective state-building requires simultaneously strengthening security and legitimacy. Menkhaus (2003; 2007) notes that the concept of "governance without government" in Somalia demonstrates how local clan mechanisms (the *xeer* system) maintain order in the absence of a formal state and highlights that competition among clans has hindered the establishment of a central authority. In this context, state-building goes beyond merely developing institutional capacity; it also



requires adherence to the principles of inclusivity, gradual progress, and internal ownership (OECD, 2011).

### **b. Security Sector Reform (SSR)**

Security sector reform is a comprehensive strategy designed to ensure that the military, police, intelligence agencies, and judicial institutions operate under democratic oversight, protect human rights, and function efficiently. According to the OECD-DAC (2005, p. 20), SSR is defined as “ensuring security and justice within the framework of democratic norms, human rights, and the rule of law” and emphasizes three core components: a comprehensive institutional framework, the governance of security institutions, and professional, accountable security forces. The United Nations Secretary-General’s 2008 report (S/2008/39) characterizes SSR as “a guarantee of peace and development”. It underscores the importance of local ownership: “International support must be led by national actors and tailored to the national context.”

The Security Reform Initiative (GSR) in Somalia has been implemented through AMISOM/ATMIS and various multilateral initiatives; however, its effectiveness has been hampered by coordination issues, insufficient funding, and structural challenges. According to Williams and Elmi (2023, pp. 12–15), key obstacles include clan-based loyalties, irregular salary payments, ghost soldiers, and political interference. Furthermore, reports by the International Crisis Group (2022; 2023) emphasize that strategic misalignment among international partners has further exacerbated the fragmentation of the Somali National Army. In this context, GSR

is not merely about enhancing military capabilities; it requires the integrated functioning of police, intelligence, judicial, and civilian oversight systems (Sedra, 2016).

### **c. The Link Between Security and Humanitarian Diplomacy in Türkiye’s Foreign Policy**

Türkiye’s presence in Somalia reflects a “hybrid” strategy that differs from traditional Western-centric global security intervention (GSR) frameworks. This approach combines humanitarian diplomacy with the strengthening of security capabilities. Akpınar (2013, p. 736) describes Türkiye’s peacebuilding efforts in Somalia as “an example that pushes the boundaries of humanitarian diplomacy” and emphasizes the shift from soft power toward strategic depth by focusing on the idea of being “a partner rather than a savior.” Siradag (2022, pp. 389–404) defines this strategy as “a combination of humanitarian diplomacy principles and the enhancement of military capabilities” and assesses the establishment of TÜRK SOM as the concretization of Türkiye’s role as a security actor.

Rossiter and Cannon (2019, p. 167) define TÜRK SOM as an “educational facility,” arguing that the term “base” is a misnomer and asserting that it reflects Türkiye’s strategy of establishing long-term partnerships and transferring capabilities: “SNA’s training aligns with Türkiye’s foreign policy objectives in the country.” This approach distinguishes itself from OECD-DAC and UN standards by focusing on Islamic solidarity rhetoric and enduring partnerships; however, it continues to face criticism from some quarters regarding coordination, accountability, and

sustainability (Akpınar, 2021; Middle East Institute, 2021). The theoretical framework demonstrates that the TÜRK SOM example addresses a gap in both state-building and GSR literature. Although Türkiye faces typical theoretical challenges regarding sustainability and local ownership, it has adopted a “people-centered hybrid peacebuilding” model that differs from traditional donor frameworks.

### Historical Development: The Security Vacuum in Somalia and Foreign Interventions (1991–2011)

This section examines the origins of the security vacuum in Somalia, the clan-based dynamics of the civil war, the evolution of international interventions, and the reasons for their failure during the 1991–2011 period; it then addresses the limited nature of Türkiye–Somalia relations prior to 2011. This historical process provides essential background for understanding the turning point marked by President Erdoğan’s visit in August 2011.

#### a. Civil War and Clan-Based Conflicts

The collapse of Somalia’s modern state structure began with the overthrow of the Siad Barre government in 1991, plunging the country into years of chaos. Barre seized power in a military coup in 1969 and maintained an authoritarian regime for over two decades. However, repressive measures implemented by the regime against clan-based opposition in the late 1980s triggered a civil war (Lewis, 2008, pp. 78–82). In January 1991, following the seizure of Mogadishu by armed groups led by the United Somali Congress (USC), Barre was forced to flee the country; however, internal conflicts within the USC particularly the conflict between General Muhammad Farah Aydid and Ali Mahdi

Muhammad, the two leaders of the Hawiye clan quickly escalated into a destructive power struggle in the capital (Compagnon, 2013, pp. 34–37).

The clan-based structure of Somali society has shaped the conflict’s fundamental dynamics. The country has a complex social hierarchy consisting of four main clans: Darod, Hawiye, Dir, and Rahanweyn, and their sub-clans. Menkhaus (2003, p. 408) defines the clan system as “both a means of social organization and a fundamental element of political competition.” The Barre regime adopted a “divide and rule” approach among the clans to maintain its authority; this tactic created lasting fragilities within the clans (Lewis, 2008, p. 85). The conflicts among Hawiye groups in Mogadishu during 1991–1992 led to the destruction of the city and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people (Compagnon, 2013, pp. 41–43).

During this period, various regional administrations emerged, such as Somaliland in the northwest, which declared independence in 1991 and established a relatively stable governance structure, and Puntland in the northeast, which declared itself an autonomous region in 1998 (Hersi, 2021, pp. 56–58). These developments demonstrate that the characterization of Somalia as a “failed state” is not consistent across the country; alternative governance models have effectively taken root in certain regions (Roele, 2021, pp. 630–632). The famine of 1991–1992 was exacerbated by conflicts that devastated grain-producing regions. According to the United Nations, approximately 300,000 people lost their lives due to starvation and violence during this period (UN, 1992, p. 5).

| A Basic Chronology of the Somali Civil War (1969–2004) |                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date                                                   | The Incident                                                                                                                     |
| 1969                                                   | General Siad Barre came to power through a military coup; the foundations were laid for the MOD clan's 21-year dictatorship.     |
| 1977-1978                                              | The Ogaden War: Somalia was defeated by Ethiopia; Barre's reputation was severely damaged.                                       |
| 1981                                                   | The Somali National Movement (SNM) was founded; the Isaaq clans launched an organized armed resistance against the Barre regime. |
| 1988                                                   | The Bombing of Hargeisa: The Barre regime devastated the northwest; an estimated 200,000 Isaaq civilians lost their lives.       |
| January 27, 1991                                       | Barre fled Mogadishu; the Somali state effectively collapsed, and clan militias filled the power vacuum.                         |
| November 1991–March 1992                               | More than 14,000 people were killed in the clashes in Mogadishu between Ayidid's forces and Ali Mahdi's forces.                  |
| December 1992                                          | UNITAF (led by the U.S.) has been deployed; 37,000 personnel have been deployed to the field to open humanitarian aid corridors. |
| October 3–4, 1993                                      | Black Hawk Down: 18 U.S. soldiers were killed in the Battle of Mogadishu; the decision to withdraw was made in 1994.             |
| 2000                                                   | Arta Peace Conference (Djibouti): A Transitional National Government was established; its domestic legitimacy quickly eroded.    |

|      |                                                                                                                           |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2004 | The Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established; issues regarding its capacity and legitimacy persisted. |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### b. Interventions and Failures of the International Community

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, the international community established the United Nations Integrated Task Force (UNITAF), authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 794 in December 1992. Led by the United States, UNITAF, comprising 37,000 troops, ensured the safe distribution of humanitarian aid and contributed to partially alleviating the famine (Drysdale, 1994, pp. 112–115). The UNOSOM II mission, which began in May 1993, aimed to transition from providing humanitarian aid to establishing a stable state; it assumed various responsibilities, including reestablishing the central government, forming a police force, and rebuilding infrastructure (Drysdale, 1994, pp. 118–120).

UNOSOM II's greatest failure was the loss of its neutrality after the UN targeted General Aidid's faction following an attack on Pakistani troops in June 1993. The Battle of Mogadishu on October 3, 1993, commonly known as the "Black Hawk Down" incident, resulted in the deaths of 18 American soldiers; this event triggered the U.S. withdrawal and the end of UNOSOM II (Bowden, 1999, pp. 78–82). According to Paris (2004, p. 45), this intervention "is the most striking example of how international actors' disregard for local dynamics can lead to disaster." Following the conclusion of UNOSOM II in March 1995, Somalia was largely left to its own devices by the international

community; this vacuum was filled by the emergence of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006 and the subsequent establishment of Al-Shabaab (Hansen, 2013, pp. 56–65).

Established in 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was created to support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and launched its military operations against al-Shabaab in 2010 (Williams, 2018, pp. 23–25). However, AMISOM was unable to achieve complete success due to personnel shortages, logistical challenges, and poor coordination (ICG, 2012, pp. 8–10).

### c. Türkiye-Somalia Relations Before 2011

Prior to 2011, relations between Türkiye and Somalia consisted of rare diplomatic contacts and humanitarian aid, with virtually no political or military interaction. Diplomatic relations began in 1960, coinciding with Somalia's independence. However, following the outbreak of civil war in 1991, the embassy in Mogadishu was closed, and communications were conducted via Nairobi (Wheeler, 2011, pp. 48–49).

Despite the increased interest in Africa in the early 2000s, driven by Türkiye's efforts to open up to the outside world, Somalia did not rank as a priority among target countries (Özkan, 2012, pp. 34–36). Between 2005 and 2010, the Turkish Red Crescent and TİKA implemented small-scale projects in health, education, and infrastructure; however, these efforts did not evolve into a structured framework of



cooperation (TİKA, 2010, pp. 12–14). In 2009, Türkiye reestablished diplomatic relations with the Transitional Federal Government and opened an embassy in Mogadishu in 2010 (Özkan & Orakçı, 2015, p. 345). This step was regarded as a notable effort during a period when many other countries refrained from maintaining diplomatic missions in Mogadishu due to security concerns (Wheeler, 2011, p. 49).

In the defense sector, while the Agreement on Cooperation in Education, Technical, and Scientific Fields in the Military Domain, signed in 2010, established a theoretical foundation, no concrete steps were taken (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019, p. 172). In academic discussions, the period prior to 2011 is characterized as the initial phase of Türkiye's Africa strategy; a significant transformation began with Erdoğan's visit to Mogadishu in August 2011 (Özkan, 2012, p. 42; Stearns & Sucuoglu, 2017, p. 1).

### **The Establishment, Structure, and Mission of TÜRKSOM**

In this section, TÜRKSOM, the framework for Türkiye's security activities in Somalia, is examined through three analytical perspectives: the establishment process and strategic objectives; physical facilities, training capacities, and organizational structure; and the scope of training programs, developed operational capabilities, and the expanding dimensions of the mission beyond 2024. These three dimensions transform TÜRKSOM from a mere bilateral agreement text into a concrete institutional reality. This case study can be conceptualized and evaluated alongside other models in academic literature.

#### **a. Establishment Process and Strategic Objectives**

The establishment of TÜRKSOM was not the result of a single decision, but rather the outcome of a series of comprehensive bilateral legal agreements that reinforced one another. According to the official timeline compiled by Daily Sabah and Anadolu Agency (2025), the key legal milestones in this development are summarized as follows: In 2010, a "Framework Agreement on Cooperation in Military Training, Technical, and Scientific Fields" was signed between Türkiye and Somalia, followed in 2012 by the "Bilateral Military Training Cooperation Agreement." Subsequently, the "Turkish Task Force Protocol" entered into force in 2014; this protocol was formalized by a decision of the Turkish Council of Ministers in 2015. TÜRKSOM officially commenced operations on September 30, 2017, and most recently, a ten-year "Framework Agreement on Defense and Maritime Cooperation" was signed in February 2024 (Al Jazeera, 2024; Trends Research & Advisory, 2024). This legal framework demonstrates that TÜRKSOM is not merely the establishment of a base, but rather the result of comprehensive negotiations and institutionalization efforts between the two countries.

The TÜRKSOM construction project began in March 2015 and was completed at a cost of approximately \$50 million (USIP, 2020, p. 12; TRT World, 2017). The facility was inaugurated on September 30, 2017, with the participation of Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire and Turkish Chief of General Staff General Hulusi Akar (Al Jazeera, 2017; Reuters, 2017). General Akar's remarks during the event summarized the mission's essence and

objectives: “This is the largest training base outside of Türkiye. The Turkish government and military will provide our brothers in Somalia with any support they need.” (Akar, Al Jazeera, October 1, 2017).

Khaire, who was Somalia’s Prime Minister at the time, also referred to the base’s purpose as a national obligation during the ceremony: “This academy is a concrete expression of our determination to strengthen our military. It reflects our determination to train well-educated forces that represent the Somali people rather than being based on clan loyalties” (Reuters, 2017). These two statements clearly demonstrate that TÜRKSOM addresses both Türkiye’s strategic commitment and Somalia’s need to develop its national security capabilities.

The strategic objectives established at TÜRKSOM’s founding can be evaluated within a three-phase framework. As summarized in the institutional analysis by Demirtaş and Piriñçi (2024) published in *Insight Türkiye*, these objectives are as follows: first, to enhance the Somali National Army’s (SNA) operational capacity against al-Shabaab; second, to ensure the functional operation of Somalia’s state security institutions in the medium term, thereby reducing dependence on foreign aid; and finally, to strengthen Türkiye’s strategic position in the Horn of Africa by establishing TÜRKSOM as a base for defense industry exports, maritime partnerships, and access to energy resources (Demirtaş & Piriñçi, 2024, pp. 112–115). This hierarchy of objectives positions TÜRKSOM not merely as a humanitarian aid organization but as the institutional backbone of Türkiye’s regional power projection.

In the International Crisis Group’s (2012, p. 7) initial assessment, it was noted that Türkiye’s approach toward Somalia has evolved to prioritize security and position itself as a foreign actor that is “not feared, but emulated.” This strategic stance ensured that TÜRKSOM was organized within the framework of bilateral agreements with the Somali government rather than as part of a multilateral initiative. Rossiter and Cannon (2019, p. 171) emphasize that this decision was influenced by an understanding of the coordination challenges inherent in multi-actor frameworks such as AMISOM/ATMIS and the legitimacy gap emerging within the Somali public sphere.

In an analysis prepared for the Jamestown Foundation, Kasapoğlu (2020) assesses TÜRKSOM not merely as a base for Türkiye’s military presence in Africa, but also as the hub of a unique “military training” initiative. Kasapoğlu (2020) articulates this perspective as follows: “In Somalia, Türkiye is not merely establishing forward bases; more importantly, it is training new graduates and creating a new military-social identity aimed at shaping Somalia’s future.” This perspective clearly distinguishes TÜRKSOM from other global training initiatives: Türkiye is not merely imparting technical skills but is also actively developing a distinct military culture and identity.

Siradag (2022, p. 393) notes that this legitimacy is based on “Islamic solidarity, a collective historical memory, and the spirit of self-sacrifice that emerges during humanitarian crises.” In contrast, Rossiter and Cannon (2019, pp. 170–172) highlight three key differences between TÜRKSOM and traditional military base models: First, it stems from bilateral agreements directly with the Somali government rather than a

multilateral mission framework. Second, it is structured as a multifunctional facility that integrates not only military training but also humanitarian aid, infrastructure initiatives, and development projects.

Finally, it is grounded in a legitimacy largely detached from the historical perception of “colonial intervention” typically associated with Western institutions.

|                    |                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 2010           | The Türkiye-Somalia Framework Agreement on Military, Technical, and Scientific Cooperation was signed, establishing the legal foundation for TÜRKSOM. |
| August 2011        | Erdoğan's historic visit to Mogadishu was a symbolic turning point marking the transition from humanitarian engagement to strategic partnership.      |
| 2012               | The Bilateral Military Training Cooperation Agreement was signed, providing a concrete legal basis for training activities.                           |
| 2013               | Operations at Mogadishu Airport were transferred to the Turkish company Favori LLC.                                                                   |
| 2014               | The Turkish Task Force Protocol was signed, paving the way for the construction of TÜRKSOM.                                                           |
| 2014               | The Port of Mogadishu was transferred to the Turkish company Albayrak Group.                                                                          |
| March 2015         | The construction of TÜRKSOM began with an investment of approximately \$50 million.                                                                   |
| 2015               | The Turkish Council of Ministers approved the Turkish Task Force Protocol.                                                                            |
| September 30, 2017 | The official opening ceremony of TÜRKSOM, Türkiye's largest military base abroad, has become operational.                                             |
| April 2019         | Graduation ceremony for the 1st Infantry Battalion; 152 officers and non-commissioned officers were deployed.                                         |
| 2021               | The first group of Somali female police officers trained in Türkiye has arrived in Mogadishu.                                                         |
| 2022               | Gorgor forces joined the Galguduud operations; their first large-scale deployment to the operational theater.                                         |

|               |                                                                                                                   |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 2024 | A 10-year Framework Agreement on Defense and Maritime Cooperation was signed.                                     |
| April 2024    | An additional 500 Turkish counterterrorism personnel were deployed, bringing the total to approximately 800.      |
| July 2024     | The Turkish Grand National Assembly granted a two-year authorization for the deployment of up to 2,500 personnel. |
| October 2025  | Over 300 Somali police officers were trained in Türkiye; the bandits' forces were expanded.                       |
| January 2026  | Graduation Ceremony of the 20th Kartal (Gorgor) Battalion                                                         |

### b. Structure and Capacity of TÜRKSOM

TÜRKSOM is located 20 kilometers south of Aden Abdule International Airport and southwest of Mogadishu, covering approximately 400 hectares (4 km<sup>2</sup>). This facility is the largest military training base established by Türkiye abroad (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019, p. 169; Wikipedia, 2025). According to reports, the construction cost of the base exceeded \$50 million (USIP, 2020, p. 12; TRT World, 2017).

The base's physical facilities include all elements necessary for modern military training. In addition to indoor and outdoor training areas, firing ranges, classrooms, living quarters, a medical center, a mess hall, and administrative buildings, accommodation facilities have been constructed to meet the needs of both Turkish forces and the Somali soldiers undergoing training (Anadolu Agency, 2017). The central facility, known as "Anadolu Barracks," supports the Somali National Army's organizational growth (Türkiye Today, 2025). Turkish construction companies participated in the base's establishment, and materials and

equipment sourced from Türkiye were used in the infrastructure work.

The number of Turkish military personnel assigned to TÜRKSOM has varied over time and according to need; between 2017 and 2024, it generally consisted of 200 to 300 officers, non-commissioned officers, and specialist training personnel (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019, p. 170). In April 2024, an additional 500-member Turkish counterterrorism unit was deployed. Following the Turkish Grand National Assembly's two-year authorization in July 2024 to deploy up to 2,500 personnel, the total number reached approximately 800 (Garowe Online, 2024; Daily Sabah, 2025). The training team consists of personnel specially selected from the Turkish Land Forces Command and prepared to serve in Somalia. After Somali soldiers complete basic Turkish language training, instruction is conducted in Turkish. Simultaneous interpretation services are provided both in classroom settings and during practical training exercises (Ministry of National Defense, 2023).

Although estimates of TÜRKSOM's training capacity vary by source, there is general agreement that the total number of Somali

security forces trained at this facility between 2017 and 2025 will range from 16,000 to 25,000 (Africa Defense Forum, 2025; Inside Somalia, 2026; USIP, 2020, p. 13). According to the Hiraal Institute (2022, p. 8), this figure had exceeded 20,000 as of 2022. Training programs are organized in a multi-tiered format covering not only basic military skills but also specialized fields such as infantry, commando, sniper, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), intelligence, communications, and logistics (Ministry of National Defense, 2023).

Among the units that have completed training at TÜRK SOM, the Gorgor Commando Brigades, whose name means “Eagle” in the local language, stand out. As of June 2023, a total of nine Gorgor Commando Brigades have undergone training both at the TÜRK SOM facility and at the Commando and Counter-Terrorism Training Command in Isparta (Trends Research & Advisory, 2024, p. 5; Wikipedia, 2025). The training program is divided into two phases: candidates first complete a three-month basic training at the TÜRK SOM facility and are then sent to the

advanced training center in Isparta for further preparation in commando operations, special operations, urban warfare, and strategies against IEDs (Kasapoğlu, 2020).

Serving as the most significant force within the Somali National Army, these units form the backbone of offensive operations against Al-Shabaab (Hiraal Institute, 2022, p. 9). It has been observed that the training of Gorgor units has been influenced by Türkiye’s counterterrorism expertise, particularly the commando training techniques developed in the fight against the PKK (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019, p. 174).

In a comparative assessment conducted by Levy (2025) on behalf of the Washington Institute, the level of competence demonstrated by the Gorgor brigades was noted to “rank just behind the U.S. Danab program in terms of scalability, while being more prone to being used for political purposes.” This comparative assessment highlights both the advantages and structural weaknesses of TÜRK SOM.

| Education Stakeholder         | Key Features and Structural Layout                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Türkiye — TÜRK SOM            | Dual-use site; ~400 hectares; 1,500-person capacity; ~800 Turkish staff (2025); Gorgor + Haramad + Deniz; \$50 million investment |
| United States — Danab Program | AFRICOM coordination; small-scale, high-quality, special forces-focused; independent command structure.                           |
| UAE — Special Forces          | Facility in Mogadishu; elite model; past strategic competition with Türkiye; 2017 Somaliland agreement                            |
| EU — EUTM Somalia             | Multilateral, broad-based basic training; limited operational presence outside Mogadishu                                          |



|                |                                                                                                                        |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ATMIS / AUSSOM | Regional contributor countries under the EU umbrella; funding and troop shortages; the transition to AUSSOM after 2025 |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Reference:** Rossiter & Cannon (2019). Insight Türkiye; USIP (2020); Hiraal Institute (2022); Anadolu Ajansı (2025-2026); Trends Research & Advisory (2024)

c. Scope of the Mission

The scope of TÜRK SOM’s mission is not limited to military training activities; it also encompasses social, economic, and infrastructural dimensions as part of Türkiye’s “holistic” engagement model in Somalia. This approach is defined as “human-centered hybrid peacebuilding” according to Akpınar’s (2021, p. 499) conceptualization.

The Somali National Army provides both basic and advanced military training, which constitutes the most comprehensive component of its activities. The training programs offered at TÜRK SOM include classroom-based theoretical instruction, practical field exercises, marksmanship skills, commando training, and special operations training (Ministry of National Defense, 2023). The training curriculum is specifically designed to address the security challenges facing Somalia, particularly the asymmetric warfare tactics employed by Al-Shabaab. According to the Hiraal Institute (2022, p. 12), training at TÜRK SOM has played a significant role in strengthening unit cohesion within the Somali Army and instilling a professional military ethos that transcends traditional clan loyalties.

A key component of the military mission is the Haramad (Cheetah) Special Operations Police units, established to ensure urban security and public order. Trained and

equipped by Türkiye, this special police unit conducts internal security operations and contributes to the development of military-police integration (SDE, 2024). A notable normative achievement of this initiative is the inclusion of gender equality in the security sector. In 2021, the first group of Somali female police officers trained in Türkiye arrived in Mogadishu to join the ranks of Haramad (Strategic Thinking Institute, 2021). This feature distinguishes TÜRK SOM from a purely military training approach and links it to a more comprehensive vision for the development of the security sector.

TÜRK SOM’s training mission goes beyond training individual soldiers to focus on developing institutional capacities. In this context, support is provided across various areas, including the development of a training doctrine for the Somali National Army, training-of-trainers programs, logistics systems, and the strengthening of command-and-control structures (USIP, 2020, p. 13). According to official statistics compiled by Anadolu Agency (2025), Türkiye plays a role through TÜRK SOM in organizational efforts, training programs, military infrastructure development, improvements in logistics systems, and providing support to units on duty.

The most notable aspect of the TÜRK SOM mission is its dimension that goes beyond mere military training: the relationships fostered through social infrastructure initiatives carried out around the base and

throughout Mogadishu. Organizations such as TİKA, AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent, and IHH, in collaboration with TÜRK SOM, have constructed schools, health facilities, water wells, and mosques near the base, organized vocational training programs, and provided humanitarian aid (TİKA, 2023, pp. 18–22). These efforts strengthen the Turkish military's legitimacy in the eyes of the local population and increase societal acceptance of military training.

Akpınar (2013, p. 738) explains the strategic rationale behind this comprehensive approach as follows: "When humanitarian diplomacy serves as the foundation of legitimacy, it can become a powerful tool of foreign policy; Türkiye's initiative in Somalia aims to formalize this legitimacy by integrating military training with development initiatives." Similarly, Rossiter and Cannon (2019, p. 173) note that TÜRK SOM operates "not only as a military base but also as a center coordinating Türkiye's civilian and military efforts in Somalia."

The development of naval and air capabilities has become a key component of the mission, particularly after 2024. The Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in February 2024 has elevated TÜRK SOM's mission to a qualitatively new level (Al Jazeera, 2024; Trends Research & Advisory, 2024). As Donelli (2024) noted, Türkiye's mission is to protect Somalia's 3,898-kilometer-long coastline, provide maritime simulation technology, and develop shipyard facilities. Since 2022, the Turkish Armed Forces have been using Akıncı and Bayraktar TB2 uncrewed aerial vehicles to target Al-Shabaab; a RUSI (2025) analysis highlights that this development has transformed

TÜRK SOM from merely a training center into an active operations center.

One of the core elements of TÜRK SOM's mission is its engagement with regional security dynamics. The base is tasked not only with training the Somali National Army but also with coordinating with African Union forces deployed in the region under the ATMIS (formerly AMISOM) framework and performing specific operational support functions (Williams, 2018, p. 156). However, by maintaining limited relations with multilateral organizations, TÜRK SOM preserves its unique position based on bilateral agreements. This decision is believed to have been influenced by the desire to address concerns highlighted by the ICG (2022, p. 16) regarding "various actors supporting different segments of the Somali army according to their own interests."

In terms of operational effectiveness, the performance of units trained in this environment has been documented in concrete and detailed terms. According to data compiled by Anadolu Agency (2025), Gorgor forces under Turkish command and Special Forces Battalions affiliated with the Turkish Armed Forces have been actively engaged since 2023 in missions to reestablish government control over vast areas, particularly in the Galguduud and Hirshebbelle regions. A comparative assessment by Levy of the Washington Institute (2025) indicates that the Gorgor battalions possess the most comprehensive and methodical individual training program in the region in terms of scalability.

### Implementation, Impacts, and Challenges (2017–2026)

TÜRK SOM's role in the development of Somalia's security sector from its establishment in 2017 through 2026 presents a multifaceted picture shaped by significant improvements in military capacity, structural constraints, and global geopolitical competition. This section examines TÜRK SOM's concrete impacts on the Somali National Forces (SNF), its relationship with regional security contexts, the primary obstacles it faces, and the criticism it has encountered throughout the implementation process. Beyond 2024, particularly in the context of the maritime jurisdiction agreement, the expanding scope of TÜRK SOM's mission presents both new opportunities and increasing geopolitical challenges.

#### a. Impact on the Somali National Forces (SNF)

TÜRK SOM's most significant impact on the Somali National Army lies in the number of personnel trained and in enhancing their operational capabilities. According to reports, the total number of Somali security personnel trained by TÜRK SOM between 2017 and 2026 ranges from 20,000 to 25,000. This constitutes a significant portion of the Somali Army's total strength and makes TÜRK SOM the largest bilateral military training initiative in the country (Hiraal Institute, 2022; Africa Defense Forum, 2025; Inside Somalia, 2026). Turkish officials have noted that the number of soldiers trained through TÜRK SOM has shown a steady upward trend since 2017 and that by 2025, approximately one-third of the Somali Army will have received training from Türkiye (Washington Institute, 2024).

The Gorgor (Eagle) Commando Brigades are TÜRK SOM's most significant contribution to the Somali army. A report by the West Point Counterterrorism Center (CTC, 2024) states, "The Gorgor commando brigades trained under TÜRK SOM are recognized as the most effective force and the foundation of the Somali Army in the unconventional war against Al-Shabaab" (CTC, 2024, p. 14). The fact that nine Gorgor brigades had been trained as of June 2023 indicates that nearly all elite units within the Somali army have received training from Türkiye (Trends Research & Advisory, 2024, p. 5). These units have served as the primary combat force in offensive operations against Al-Shabaab in the Galguduud and Hirshabelle regions since 2022 (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Imgelem Magazine, 2024).

A report published by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2024) states: "The Gorgor battalions demonstrate superior morale, discipline, and operational effectiveness compared to other SNA units; the Turkish training system is assessed as highly effective in fostering a professional military ethos that transcends clan-based loyalties" (EUAA, 2024, p. 23). The training program at TÜRK SOM is divided into two phases: candidates first complete a three-month basic training, followed by a ten-week advanced training course at the Commando and Counter-Terrorism Training Command in Isparta (Anadolu Agency, 2022; Kasapoğlu, 2020).

TÜRK SOM's impact has not been limited to merely increasing personnel numbers; it has also aimed to bring about a qualitative transformation in the institutional capacity of the Somali National Army (SNA). In an analysis prepared for the Jamestown Foundation, Kasapoğlu (2020) explains that

TÜRK SOM is “not merely a soldier training program, but a project focused on institutional capacity-building aimed at changing the Somali army’s training doctrine, command and control framework, and military culture” (Kasapoğlu, 2020, p. 4). In this context, programs designed to train local instructors in Somalia have also been implemented under the TÜRK SOM initiative (Ministry of National Defense, 2023). Advisors from the Somalia-Türkiye Task Force Command (STGK) carry out direct advisory roles at the level of the Presidency and the Ministry of Defense, as well as at the level of the General Staffs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force (Imgelem Magazine, 2024).

TÜRK SOM’s impact on the SNA is also clearly evident in the development of maritime and air capabilities. The Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement, signed in February 2024, addresses the protection of Somalia’s extensive 3,025-kilometer coastline, the acquisition of maritime simulation technology, and the development of shipyard facilities (Donelli, 2024). Since 2022, Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 uncrewed aerial vehicles have been used in operations targeting Al-Shabaab, significantly enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Somali military (RUSI, 2025). As of 2026, reports indicate that Turkish-made Akıncı UAVs have been deployed in Somalia and are currently in active operational use (Defense Mirror, 2026).

A cautious approach is required when assessing TÜRK SOM’s impact on the SNA. According to the Hiraal Institute (2022, pp. 12–15), in its assessment of the Somali military’s capabilities, while TÜRK SOM

training has yielded notable improvements at the individual soldier level, structural challenges at the institutional level, including clan-based divisions, inconsistencies in salary payments, and the issue of ghost soldiers, persist. The report includes the following comment:

“Gorgor units trained in Türkiye are clearly more effective operationally than other SNA units. However, these units still constitute only a small portion of the total military force. Furthermore, challenges in reintegrating trained soldiers after discharge, inadequate logistical support systems, and the ongoing influence of clan-based loyalties hinder the sustainable implementation of improvements in the training sector.” (Hiraal Institute, 2022, p. 14).

The International Crisis Group (ICG, 2023, pp. 18–20) offers a similar assessment, noting that TÜRK SOM has significantly enhanced the capabilities of elite SNA units such as “Gorgor,” but that a similar level of transformation has not yet occurred across the military as a whole. According to the ICG (2023, p. 19), “Türkiye’s training program alone is insufficient to resolve the SNA’s structural issues; addressing these issues requires a comprehensive political agreement and a sustainable financing strategy.” Turkish intelligence assessments also indicate that the SNA remains dependent on external support and cannot independently guarantee national security (Nordic Monitor, 2025).

## **b. Interaction with Regional Security Dynamics**

TÜRK SOM’s involvement in regional security issues can be assessed at three distinct levels: cooperation with African

Union missions; the interplay between competition and cooperation with other global actors (particularly the United States and the United Arab Emirates); and the geopolitical consequences arising from the maritime boundary agreement to be signed after 2024.

The interaction between the African Union's ATMIS mission and TÜRKSOM has been complementary rather than direct. In his analysis of AMISOM activities in Somalia, Williams (2018, p. 156) states, "Türkiye's bilateral training initiatives, delivered through TÜRKSOM, have to some extent addressed the lack of 'qualified local partners' faced by AMISOM." " ICG (2022, p. 16) emphasizes that Somalia has not yet developed the capacity to guarantee its own security following ATMIS's planned withdrawal by the end of 2024, noting that TÜRKSOM has assumed a vital support role during this transition phase. Reports indicate that Türkiye's bilateral training initiatives continued throughout the operations of AUSSOM (African Union Somalia Support and Stabilization Mission), which replaced ATMIS in 2025, and that coordination with the multilateral framework (African Union, 2025) remained minimal.

One of the most significant developments in the field of regional security is the assessment of TÜRKSOM's role in the context of its competitive and cooperative interactions with other global actors, particularly the United States and the United Arab Emirates. In a report prepared for the Washington Institute, Levy (2025) characterizes the Gorgor battalions as a capability level that "reflects the scalability of the U.S. Danab program but is more amenable to use for political purposes" (Levy, 2025, p. 6). This observation highlights the difference between the U.S.

Danab program, which emphasizes smaller-scale, high-quality special forces training, and Türkiye's TÜRKSOM model, which is larger in scale but possesses the potential to expand political influence.

The UAE's presence in Somalia has at times appeared to conflict with Türkiye's. While the UAE has consistently supported the Somali federal government, it has expressed concerns regarding Türkiye's growing influence in Mogadishu (Horn Review, 2025). Particularly between 2017 and 2020, the UAE aimed to develop an alternative approach to Türkiye's activities in Mogadishu by targeting Somaliland (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019, pp. 176–177). This competition gained significance, particularly after 2024, following Somalia's signing of an agreement with Türkiye aimed at weakening the UAE, which led to a reduction in the financial and training assistance the UAE provided to Somali forces (Critical Threats Project / AEI, 2024). As a result of the Türkiye-Somalia agreements, the UAE has suspended the monthly \$256 supplementary payment it made to the 14,400 Somali soldiers it trained (The Century Foundation, 2025).

The ideological differences between Türkiye and the UAE are particularly evident in the context of Somalia. While Türkiye supports the federal government, the UAE has adopted a stance in support of the federal states (Horn Review, 2025). Analysts describe this competitive environment as a "market for sovereignty," in which local power centers pit external actors against one another (Van den Berg & Meester, 2019).

The 10-year Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in February 2024 has significantly altered TÜRKSOM's role in regional security. This



agreement grants Türkiye the authority to oversee the protection of Somalia's maritime jurisdiction within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and, alongside an accompanying oil and gas cooperation agreement, enables the Oruç Reis seismic research vessel to operate near the Somali coast (Trends Research & Advisory, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2024). Donelli (2024) characterizes this development as "the clearest indication of Türkiye's shift from mere humanitarian aid toward a concrete strategic alliance."

In this context, the establishment of TÜRKSOM marks Türkiye's transition from a "soft power" role in humanitarian diplomacy to a "kinetic security provider" (Washington Institute, 2024). However, the regional implications of this agreement remain a subject of debate. The Horn Review (2025) notes that "the maritime agreement between Türkiye and Somalia could be viewed as a new dimension of the escalating geopolitical competition in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden; the agreement could be interpreted in various ways by other regional actors (particularly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE)" (Horn Review, 2025, p. 4). The Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Access, signed by Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024, has raised serious concerns in Somalia and directly influenced Türkiye's stance. While Türkiye initially aimed to play a mediating role between the parties, the agreement it reached with Somalia has significantly limited its options for intervention.

## Conclusion

This analytical study examines Türkiye's contributions to the development of Somalia's security sector, particularly

TÜRKSOM, from 2011 to the present. The findings demonstrate that Türkiye's engagement in Somalia has evolved into a unique model that began with humanitarian diplomacy and has since become a significant form of security cooperation through the establishment of TÜRKSOM in 2017. This model differs from traditional Western-oriented security sector reform methods in three key aspects: its framework based on bilateral agreements, its hybrid structure combining military training with development initiatives, and its legitimacy rooted in a history free of colonial influences. In these respects, TÜRKSOM functions as an institution that goes beyond being merely a military training facility, serving as the foundation for Türkiye's strategic role in the Horn of Africa and its objectives to position itself as a unique actor in the global security landscape.

When we assess TÜRKSOM's impact on the Somali National Army, both quantitatively and qualitatively, it is clear that more than 25,000 soldiers were trained between 2017 and 2026. The establishment of the Gorgor Commando Brigades demonstrates that Türkiye has carried out its most comprehensive bilateral military training initiative to date. The exceptional effectiveness of Gorgor units in clashes with al-Shabaab demonstrates that TÜRKSOM training has yielded significant operational results. Progress in developing naval and air capabilities, particularly the deployment of Bayraktar TB2 and Akıncı unmanned aerial vehicles, combined with the 2024 Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement, has expanded the TÜRKSOM mission's focus from land-based training to include maritime security. However, the limitations of TÜRKSOM's role in

strengthening Somalia's security sector are also evident. Structural challenges, including clan-based divisions within the Somali army, inconsistent salary payments, ghost soldiers, and political interference, hinder the long-term sustainability of TÜRK SOM's training program.

In the context of regional security dynamics, TÜRK SOM has served as a vehicle for strengthening Türkiye's strategic influence in the Horn of Africa. However, this influence is drawing Türkiye into geopolitical competition with other local actors (the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia). It creates the risk of making Türkiye a target for al-Shabaab. In the period following 2024, the expansion of the TÜRK SOM mission, when combined with a maritime jurisdiction agreement, presents both new opportunities (the protection of Somalia's maritime assets and Türkiye's projection of regional naval power) and new geopolitical challenges (increasing competition with neighboring countries and strained relations with Ethiopia). TÜRK SOM's structure, based on bilateral agreements, allows it to circumvent the transparency and accountability measures typically required for multilateral initiatives, raising concerns about the long-term legitimacy of this model.

In terms of the future outlook, TÜRK SOM's sustainability and its lasting impact on Somalia's security sector appear to depend on three interrelated key factors.

First, political stability in Somalia and the management of tensions between the federal government and member states will be critical. The conflict of loyalty between Gorgor units aligned with the federal government and trained by TÜRK SOM and the efforts of member states such as Puntland, Jubaland, and the

Southwestern State to strengthen their own clan militias are hindering the central army's ability to reinforce a sense of national unity. If this tension remains unresolved, the likelihood of TÜRK SOM-developed military capabilities being used for political purposes will increase, and the possibility of trained units becoming involved in power struggles between the federal government and member states will arise. Additionally, the implications of the direct elections based on the "one person, one vote" principle that Somalia plans to hold after 2026 on security sector reform are another factor that must be closely monitored.

Second, the trajectory of regional geopolitical competition and Türkiye's role in it will shape TÜRK SOM's future. The UAE's efforts to maintain its influence in Somalia, Ethiopia's goals of gaining access to the Red Sea, Egypt's growing military presence in the region, and Saudi Arabia's strategies to preserve the balance of power may limit Türkiye's options. However, they could also open the door to potential cooperation. Tensions arising from the Maritime Access Memorandum of Understanding signed by Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024 have hindered Türkiye's ability to act as a mediator and underscored the need for Ankara to develop a more balanced and inclusive approach to sustain its diplomatic influence in the region. While the AUSSOM process is expected to fully commence by 2025, the question of how Türkiye will align its bilateral educational initiatives with its multilateral efforts has come to the fore.

Third, initiatives to transfer institutional capacity and ensure its sustainability will be vital for TÜRK SOM. Strengthening instructor training initiatives, supporting the Somali Army in developing its own

training doctrine, and improving logistics systems will enable TÜRK SOM to evolve into a structure capable of functioning independently of Turkish personnel. The 2024 Defense and Maritime Cooperation Framework Agreement has solidified this institutionalization process, with a vision that extends through 2036. However, implementing these agreements will require increased funding from Somalia's own security budget and effective cooperation among international donors.

Three possible scenarios regarding the future of the TÜRK SOM model can be considered. In the first scenario, if Somalia maintains political stability and continues to receive international support, TÜRK SOM could evolve into a center that serves as the foundation of a comprehensive security framework operating under agreements valid through 2036 that continuously enhances the institutional capacity of the Somali military and includes cooperation in maritime security and the defense industry. In the second scenario, as geopolitical competition in the region intensifies and internal political polarization in Somalia strengthens, the likelihood of units trained at TÜRK SOM being used for political purposes may increase; Türkiye's model, based on bilateral agreements, may face challenges in coordinating with the multilateral AUSSOM framework, and the institutionalization of benefits derived from training may remain somewhat limited. However, in the third scenario, as TÜRK SOM increases its capacity-building efforts and Somalia gains the ability to train its own instructors, the presence of Turkish personnel could be gradually reduced, enabling a transition to a more sustainable framework that allows the model to

maintain Türkiye's "advisory" role in the region.

In summary, the TÜRK SOM model concretely demonstrates Türkiye's hybrid strategy, which combines humanitarian diplomacy with security cooperation in Somalia. This approach has led to tangible improvements in the operational capacity of the Somali military and contributed to the establishment of elite units such as Gorgor. TÜRK SOM's potential to create lasting change in Somalia's security structure depends on the country's internal political stability, the dynamics of regional geopolitical relations, and the effectiveness of Türkiye's institutional capacity-building strategy. TÜRK SOM serves as a fundamental pillar not only as a military training center but also as an initiative to establish Türkiye's strategic presence in the Horn of Africa and position itself as a unique actor within the global security architecture. The lasting success of this model will depend not only on developing military capabilities but also on steps taken to promote institutional sustainability, political legitimacy, and regional stability. Türkiye's participation in this process requires a transformation of its identity; Türkiye must view itself not merely as a security provider but as a strategic ally in Somalia's state-building efforts.

## REFERENCES

- Africa Defense Forum. (2025, May 20). Türkiye deploys additional forces to support the fight against al-Shabaab. <https://adf-magazine.com/2025/05/Türkiye-deploys-more-forces-to-help-in-al-shabaab-fight/>
- African Union. (2025). *AUSSOM: Transition and consolidation*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- Africa Defense Forum. (2025, Kasım 17). Türkiye trains Somali police to take on Al-Shabaab. <https://adf->

[magazine.com/2025/11/Türkiye-trains-somali-police-to-take-on-al-shabaab/](https://magazine.com/2025/11/Türkiye-trains-somali-police-to-take-on-al-shabaab/)

Anadolu Ajansı. (2026, Ocak 6). *Somali Türk Görev Kuvveti Komutanlığında 20. Kartal Taburu mezuniyet töreni*

düzenlendi. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/somali-turk-gorev-kuvveti-komutanliginda-20-kartal-taburu-mezuniyet-toreni-duzenlendi/3792274>

Akpınar, P. (2013). Türkiye's peacebuilding in Somalia: The limits of humanitarian diplomacy. *Third World Quarterly*, \*34\*(5), 736–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.800737>

Akpınar, P. (2021). Türkiye's novel, enterprising, and humanitarian foreign policy in Africa. In G. Özcan, M. R. Uzun & P. Özel (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook on contemporary Türkiye* (pp. 495–507). London: Routledge.

Al Jazeera. (2017, October 1). Türkiye establishes the largest overseas military base in Somalia. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/1/Türkiye-sets-up-largest-overseas-army-base-in-somalia>

Al Jazeera. (2024, February 8). Türkiye signs a major defence agreement with Somalia. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/8/Türkiye-somalia-sign-defence-oil-and-gas-deal>

Anadolu Ajansı. (2017, September 30). Türkiye opens military base in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/Türkiye-opens-military-base-in-somalias-capital-mogadishu/922184>

Anadolu Ajansı. (2022). "Somali Kartalları" Mogadişu'daki Anadolu Kışlası'nda yetiştiriliyor. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/somali-kartallari-mogadisudaki-anadolu-kislasinda-yetistiriliyor/2667294>

Anadolu Ajansı. (2025). Somali'nin güvenliği ve istikrarında stratejik adım: TURKSOM Askeri Eğitim Üssü. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/somalinin-guvenligi-ve-istikrarinda-stratejik-adim-turksom-askeri-egitim-ussu/3712208>

Aurora Israel. (2026, January 30). Turquía desplega sus cazas en Somalia y aumenta su presencia en la región. <https://www.auroraisrael.com/>

Başbakanlık Mevzuatı Geliştirme ve Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü. (2012). Türkiye-Somali Askeri Eğitim İşbirliği Anlaşması. *Resmî Gazete*, \*28434\*. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/10/20121010-4.htm>

Bilgiç, A., & Nascimento, D. (2014). *Türkiye's new focus on Africa: Causes and challenges*. Oslo: NOREF Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.

Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi. (2008). *Report of the Secretary-General on security sector reform* (S/2008/39). New York: United Nations.

Bowden, M. (1999). *Black Hawk down: A story of modern war*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Bradbury, M., & Healy, S. (2010). Endless war: A brief history of the Somali conflict. *Accord*. <https://www.c-r.org/accord/somalia/endless-war-brief-history-somali-conflict>

Bryden, M. (2014). The reinvention of the Somali state: From fragmentation to consolidation? *Journal of Modern African Studies*, \*52\*(4), 569–593. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X14000432>

Caasimada Online. (2025, March 27). Türkiye's strategy in Somalia: Model for development & influence. <https://www.caasimada.net/turkiyes-strategy-in-somalia-model-for-development-influence/>

Compagnon, D. (2013). State failure and the international community: The case of Somalia. In R. I. Rotberg (Ed.), *State failure and state weakness in a time of terror* (pp. 31–68). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Critical Threats Project / American Enterprise Institute (AEI). (2024). *Africa file special edition: External meddling for the Red Sea exacerbates conflicts in the Horn of Africa*. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/africa-file>

Daily Sabah. (2017, September 30). Türkiye opens its largest overseas military base in Somalia. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Türkiye-opens-its-largest-overseas-military-base-in-somalia>

Daily Sabah. (2025, October 9). The Turkmen military base has been training Somali forces since 2017. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turksom-military-base-trains-somali-forces-since-2017>

Defense Mirror. (2026, January 9). Türkiye, Egypt, and Serbia rush heavy weapons to Somalia. <https://www.defensemirror.com/>

Demirtaş, İ. N., & Piringçi, F. (2024). Türkiye's security policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: A constructivist analysis. *Insight Türkiye*, \*26\*(2), 103–129. <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2024263.8>

Donelli, F. (2024, February 28). Red Sea politics: Why Türkiye is helping Somalia defend its waters. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/red-sea-politics-why-Türkiye-is-helping-somalia-defend-its-waters-224377>

- Drysdale, J. (1994). *Whatever happened to Somalia?* London: Haan Associates.
- Dünya Bankası. (2005). *Conflict and development: World Bank approach to conflict and development*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). (2024). *Country of origin information report: Somalia* - security situation. <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications>
- Garowe Online. (2024). Türkiye deploys troops to Somalia to support the fight against al-Shabab. <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/Türkiye-deploys-troops-to-somalia-to-support-fight-against-al-shabab>
- Hansen, S. J. (2013). *\*Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a militant Islamist group, 2005-2012\**. London: Hurst & Company.
- Heritage Institute for Policy Studies. (2023). *Security sector reform in Somalia: Challenges and opportunities*. Mogadishu: Heritage Institute for Policy Studies.
- Hersi, A. (2021). *Post-conflict state reconstruction in Somaliland: An African perspective of statebuilding processes*. Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies.
- Hiraal Institute. (2022). *The Somali national army: A capability assessment*. Mogadishu: Hiraal Institute.
- Horn Review. (2025, August 8). Middle power rivalry in the Horn of Africa: Türkiye and the UAE's competing visions. <https://hornreview.org/2025/08/08/>
- Horn Review. (2025, December 22). Türkiye as a new protectorate: Oil, gas, and fishing pacts. <https://hornreview.org/2025/12/22/Türkiye-as-a-new-protectorate-oil-gas-and-fishing-pacts/>
- İmgelem Dergisi. (2024). Savunma İş Birliği Kapsamında Türkiye-Somali İlişkileri: TÜRK SOM Askeri Eğitim Merkezi Örneği. *İmgelem*. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/imgelem/issue/86207/1435425>
- Inside Somalia. (2026, March 21). Türkiye trained 25,000 Somali soldiers. <https://insidesomalia.net/Türkiye-trained-25000-somali-army>
- International Crisis Group (ICG). (2012). *Assessing Türkiye's role in Somalia* (Africa Briefing No. 92). Nairobi/Brussels: ICG.
- International Crisis Group (ICG). (2022). *Somalia: The coming storm in the security transition* (Africa Report No. 316). Brussels: ICG.
- International Crisis Group (ICG). (2023). *Sustaining gains in Somalia's offensive against Al-Shabaab* (Africa Report No. 324). Brussels: ICG.
- International Crisis Group (ICG). (2025). *Somalia's federal conundrum: Managing center-periphery tensions* (Africa Report No. 342). Brussels: ICG.
- Kasapoğlu, C. (2020, November 20). Türkiye's 'African Eagle' trains Turkish-speaking troops in Somalia: Where next? *Jamestown Foundation*. <https://jamestown.org/Türkiyes-african-eagle-trains-turkish-speaking-troops-in-somalia-where-next/>
- Levy, I. (2025). To halt the jihadist advance in Somalia, work with Türkiye and the UAE. *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/halt-jihadist-advance-somalia-work-Türkiye-and-uae>
- Lewis, I. M. (2008). *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, history, society*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Menkhaus, K. (2003). State collapse in Somalia: Second thoughts. *Review of African Political Economy*, \*30\*(97), 405–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2003.9677866>
- Menkhaus, K. (2007). Governance without government in Somalia: Spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping. *International Security*, \*31\*(3), 74–106. <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/31/3/74/11882/Governance-without-Government-in-Somalia-Spoilers>
- Menkhaus, K. (2014). Al-Shabaab and social media: A double-edged sword. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, \*20\*(2), 309–327.
- Middle East Institute. (2021, May 5). *Far from a benefactor, the Turkish government is exploiting Somalia's fragility*. Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute.
- Millî Savunma Bakanlığı. (2023). *TÜRK SOM Askeri Eğitim Üssü faaliyetleri*. Ankara: T.C. Millî Savunma Bakanlığı.
- Nordic Monitor. (2025, December 5). Turkish intelligence report warns of Somalia's fragility. <https://nordicmonitor.com/>
- OECD-DAC. (2005). *Security system reform and governance* (DAC Guidelines and Reference Series). Paris: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2005/05/security-system-reform-and-governance\\_g1gh4ce3/9789264007888-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2005/05/security-system-reform-and-governance_g1gh4ce3/9789264007888-en.pdf)
- Özkan, M. (2012). *Türkiye'nin Afrika açılımı: İnsani diplomasiden model ortaklığa*. İstanbul: SETA Yayınları.



- Özkan, M., & Orakcı, S. (2015). Viewpoint: Türkiye as a 'political' actor in Africa – An assessment of Turkish involvement in Somalia. *Journal of East African Studies*, \*9\*(2), 343–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2015.1007828>
- Paris, R. (2004). *At war's end: Building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Philipp, C. E. (2005). Somalia – A very special case. *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, \*9\*, 517–554. [https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf2/mpunyb\\_philipp\\_9\\_517\\_554.pdf](https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf2/mpunyb_philipp_9_517_554.pdf)
- Reuters. (2017, October 1). Türkiye opens military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/Türkiye-opens-military-base-in-mogadishu-to-train-somali-soldiers-idUSKCN1C50J9>
- Reuters. (2024, February 22). Türkiye to provide maritime security support to Somalia. <https://www.reuters.com/world/>
- Reuters. (2025, November 15). Two Turkish soldiers were wounded in an attack in Somalia's capital. <https://www.reuters.com/world/>
- Roele, I. (2021). Modular sovereignty and infrastructural power: The elusive materiality of international statebuilding. *Security Dialogue*, \*52\*(6), 627–646. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106211051943>
- Rossiter, A., & Cannon, B. J. (2019). Re-examining the 'base': The political and security dimensions of Türkiye's military presence in Somalia. *Insight Türkiye*, \*21\*(1), 167–188. <https://www.insightTürkiye.com/articles/re-examining-the-base-the-political-and-security-dimensions-of-Türkiyes-military-presence-in-somalia>
- Rotberg, R. I. (Ed.). (2003). *State failure and state weakness in a time of terror*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2004). *When states fail: Causes and consequences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror\\_chapter.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror_chapter.pdf)
- RUSI. (2025). *From Syria to Somaliland: Türkiye-Israel competition reshapes region*. London: Royal United Services Institute. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/syria-somaliland-Türkiye-israel-competition-reshapes-region>
- RUSI. (2026). *Maritime security in the Red Sea: New actors, new dynamics*. London: Royal United Services Institute.
- Sedra, M. (Ed.). (2010). *The future of security sector reform*. Waterloo, ON: Centre for International Governance Innovation. <https://www.cigionline.org/publications/future-security-sector-reform-0/>
- Sedra, M. (Ed.). (2016). *Security sector reform in conflict-affected countries: The evolution of a model*. London: Routledge.
- Siradag, A. (2022). Türkiye's growing role as a security actor in Somalia: Dynamics and motivations. *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, "17" (2), 389–404. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2424866>
- Stearns, J., & Sucuoğlu, G. (2017). *Türkiye's involvement in Somalia* (SAIIA Policy Insights No. 43). Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs. [https://www.southernthinktanks.org/sites/default/files/Publication/saia\\_spi%2043\\_stearns-sucuoğlu\\_20170509.pdf](https://www.southernthinktanks.org/sites/default/files/Publication/saia_spi%2043_stearns-sucuoğlu_20170509.pdf)
- Stratejik Düşünce Enstitüsü (SDE). (2021, September 2). Türkiye'de eğitilmiş ilk Somalili kadın polis özel harekât grubunda Mogadişu'da. <https://www.sde.org.tr/>
- Stratejik Düşünce Enstitüsü (SDE). (2024). *Türkiye-Somali Anlaşması'nın nedenleri*. <https://www.sde.org.tr/turkiye-somali-anlasmasin-nedenleri-konu-694>
- The Century Foundation. (2025). *The Horn of Africa needs an end to the Gulf's proxy wars*. <https://tcf.org/content/report/>
- The New Humanitarian. (2025, December 15). A new way forward is needed for Somalia. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2025/12/15/somalia-new-way-forward-needed>
- TİKA (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı). (2010). *Somali faaliyet raporu 2010*. Ankara: TİKA.
- TİKA (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı). (2023). *Somali faaliyet raporu 2023*. Ankara: TİKA.
- Trends Research & Advisory. (2024a). *Maritime security aspects of the Türkiye–Somalia defense cooperation agreement*. Abu Dhabi: Trends Research & Advisory. <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/maritime-security-aspects-of-turkiye-somalia-defense-cooperation-agreement/>
- Trends Research & Advisory. (2024b). *Türkiye and Somalia: A 'special relationship'*. Abu Dhabi: Trends

- Research & Advisory. <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/turkiye-and-somalia-a-special-relationship/>
- TRT Afrika. (2025, August 12). The Somali army inaugurates a new Turkish-built base in Mogadishu. <https://www.trtafrika.com/>
- TRT Haber. (2017, September 30). TÜRK SOM Askeri Eğitim Üssü açıldı. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/turksom-askeri-egitim-ussu-acildi-334634.html>
- TRT Haber. (2024). *TRT Haber Somali'de: Türkiye'nin yurt dışındaki en büyük üssü*. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/trt-haber-somalide-turkiyenin-yurt-disindaki-en-buyuk-ussu-843529.html>
- TRT World. (2017, September 30). Türkiye opens military base in Somalia. <https://www.trtworld.com/>
- Türkiye Today. (2025, October 10). Turkish military training base TÜRK SOM has been training Somali forces since 2017. <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/world/turkish-military-training-base-turksom-trains-somali-forces-since-2017-3208185>
- United Nations. (1992). *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia* (S/23829). New York: United Nations.
- United Nations. (2008). *Securing peace and development: The role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform* (S/2008/39). New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024). *Rule of law and human rights annual report 2024: Somalia*. New York: UNDP.
- United Nations Security Council (UNSC). (2022). *Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia* (S/2022/XXX). New York: United Nations.
- United States Institute of Peace (USIP). (2020). *Türkiye's strategic approach in Somalia: From humanitarian to security partnership* (Special Report No. 471). Washington, D.C.: USIP. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/05/Turkiyes-strategic-approach-somalia>
- Van den Berg, W., & Meester, J. (2019). *Türkiye in the Horn of Africa: Between the Ankara consensus and the Gulf crisis*. Clingendael Institute. [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/PB\\_Türkiye\\_Horn\\_of\\_Africa.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/PB_Türkiye_Horn_of_Africa.pdf)
- Washington Institute for Near East Policy. (2024). *To halt the jihadist advance in Somalia, work with Türkiye and the UAE*. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/halt-jihadist-advance-somalia-work-turkiye-and-uae>
- West Point Combating Terrorism Center (CTC). (2024). *The Somali national army versus al-Shabaab: A net assessment*. West Point, NY: United States Military Academy. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/>
- Wheeler, T. (2011). Ankara to Africa: Türkiye's outreach since 2005. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 18(1), 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2011.564459>
- Wikipedia. (2025). Camp TÜRK SOM. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp\\_TURKSOM](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_TURKSOM)
- Williams, P. D. (2018). *Fighting for peace in Somalia: A history and analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007-2017*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, P. D., & Elmi, A. (2023). *Security sector reform in Somalia: Challenges and opportunities*. Mogadishu: Heritage Institute for Policy Studies. <https://heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Security-Sector-Reform-Jan-31.pdf>
- Zartman, I. W. (Ed.). (1995). *Collapsed states: The disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. <https://dokumen.pub/collapsed-states-the-disintegration-and-restoration-of-legitimate-authority-9781685853907.html>



DİPLOMATİK İLİŞKİLER ve POLİTİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER for DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS and POLITICAL STUDIES



+90 216 310 30 40



info@dipam.org



+90 216 310 30 50



www.dipam.org



Merdivenköy Mah. Nur Sok. Business İstanbul  
A Blok Kat:12 No:115, Kadıköy/İstanbul

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Yusuf ABUKAR MOHAMED** earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Celal Bayar University in Manisa. He completed his undergraduate thesis on "The Links Between Drought and Security Issues in Somalia," in which he analyzed how environmental stressors intersect with security instability in the Horn of Africa.

I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Security Studies at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. In my thesis, titled "From Humanitarian Aid to Strategic Partnership: The Evolution of the Security Dimension in Turkey–Somalia Relations (2011–2024)," I examined the transformation of relations between the two countries in a multidimensional manner, focusing on defense and security cooperation, as well as the dynamics of diplomatic and economic integration.

He holds certifications in humanitarian aid activities, field research, and crisis and risk management, having participated as a volunteer with the Turkish Red Crescent and AFAD.

He is currently serving as an intern at DİPAM and continues his research on regional studies, with a focus on Somalia.