

TURKEY'S INTERESTS IN SOMALIA

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Abstract

This study examines Turkey's policies in Somalia, and it's guided by the conceptual framework composed of national interest and analysis of foreign policy. The research employs qualitative methods of data collection, and it collects data mainly from official documents and speeches of political leaders. This study finds that Turkey has historical relations with Somalia and has significant interests in the country. Turkey's Justice and Development Party(AKP) government has paid great attention to its increasing political, economic, and social ties with Somalia. Growing diplomatic relations between Turkey and Somalia pave the way for increasing their economic and trade relationship. Turkey has been developing its economic and trade ties with Somalia by diversifying its foreign policy.

The study also finds that Ankara, the former capital city of Turkey, implemented a policy to strengthen its geostrategic position in Somalia. Furthermore, Somalia required Turkey's assistance as well. Hence, Turkey has been launching developmental projects across the country in areas such as education, health, transportation, agriculture, infrastructure, and security sectors, contributing to the rebuilding process of Somalia. Turkey helped Somalia's stabilisation and reconciliation efforts by providing necessary aid. In this context, the Turkish government played a mediation role and hosted reconciliation talks between the Somali government and Somaliland. This study suggests that it would be in the best interest of Turkey to continue assisting Somalia. In exchange, the Somali state will be able to help Turkey in the pursuit of its interests. Therefore, Turkey should assist in the resolution of the Somali conflict and the state- building process.

Keywords

Turkey, Somalia, national interest, economic ties.

Introduction

The Republic of Turkey is an economically and politically rising regional power. Its influence in the Middle East, the Balkans, Central Asia, and the African continent is growing. In addition, it is interesting to observe that, despite there being no colonial history with African nations, Turkey-Africa relations can be traced back to the Ottoman period. Turkish-Somali relations can be dated back to the 16th century when the Ottomans aided the Somalis in fighting against the expeditionary forces of the Portuguese. As a result, Somalia initiated its diplomatic mission in Ankara in 1976, while Turkey began its first diplomatic mission in Mogadishu in 1979. Turkey's relations in Somalia served the country until the Somalian Civil War began in 1991.

Turkey has become actively engaged in Africa since the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) to power. It introduced the policy of the "African

initiative", which focuses on humanitarian, economic, and security assistance to Somalia. Moreover, Turkish interest has focused on contributing to political and financial stability in Somalia within the framework of the Strategic Development of Economic Relations with Africa.

Turkey intends to expand its influence on the continent not only in terms of trade volume but also in terms of humanitarian aid projects. In 2011, then-Turkish Prime Minister Mr Erdogan (now the president), some ministers, and several affiliates of Turkey's cultural and commercial elite visited Somalia. Their visit provided moral support to Somalis who were experiencing food scarcity. In addition, Mr Erdogan became the first leader who went to Somalia in the last two decades. In 2011, Turkey became the first nation among the European and Asian countries to assign an emissary to Somalia after the collapse of the central government in 1991. Thus, this study examines Turkey's interests in Somalia. It tries to answer the following questions: -

1. Why does Turkey want to stabilise the Somali state?
2. How Turkey world's humanitarian, economic, and security relations with Somalia help achieve its interests?
3. What is the outlook of the Somali elites on the interest of Turkey in Somalia?

Conceptual Framework

This study investigates Turkey's role in Somalia. The conceptual framework guiding this study is based on the role of national interest, with reference to Turkey's role in Somalia.

National Interests

National interests are a significant concept in international relations. All states are constantly involved in the process of fulfilling or establishing their objectives in the national interest. Every state aims to advance and broaden its national interests. According to Van Dyke, national interest is one that states hope to secure or accomplish in collaboration with other nations. Therefore, national interests are divided into three categories: core interests, middle-range interests, and long-range interests.

Core Interests

Core interests are those that must be accomplished at all times. These include independence, national security, regional integrity, and the welfare of the people. The principle of protecting Turkey's autonomy and regional integrity within its constituted borders, as well as anticipating strength and battle in relation to its interests against external threats, are critical values that should be part of Turkey's national interest. Therefore, the nation's foreign policy should always be focused on defending its core interests.

Middle-Range Interests

Middle-range interests, such as economic growth and social development, are less urgent and require collaboration from states. The financial circumstances of a nation decide the status of its global field. Turkey implemented "the Strategic Development of Economic Relations with Somalia", which became a strategic policy for the continent.

Long-Range Interests

Long-range interests are the slightest prompt. They relate to the state's long-term interests and are the subject of very deliberate alteration. Leaders have sufficient time to determine their progress and accomplish these goals.

Argument

The Somali state collapsed in the 1990s. Many attempts have been made to revive it, but they all failed. The question is whether Turkey will be able to stabilise and revitalise Somalia. This study argues that Turkey, like any other state, seeks to pursue its interests, and a more potent, more stable, and inclusive Somali state will help Turkey achieve its objectives. Furthermore, this study assumes that Turkey is interested in transforming Somalia into an inclusive and sound condition.

Methodology Research design

This research is qualitative. It gathers non-numerical data and aims to interpret meaning from these data so that the researcher can better understand social life by studying target populations or places. It is used to improve an understanding of fundamental reasons, ideas, and motivations.

Data Collection

In order to examine Turkey's interests in Somalia, the data for this study will be collected from primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources such as official documents, agreements signed between the two countries, commentaries, and official speeches were gathered, studied, and analysed.

On the other hand, secondary sources included books, journal articles, newspaper reports, articles published by various international agencies, correspondence, photographs, and diaries from the internet.

It is expected that the multitude of sources of information will provide a complete understanding of the subject matter and will be of great support in delivering significant results in this study.

Data Analysis

The paper adopts an interpretive analysis approach. Interpretive researchers view social reality as part of social settings in which they interpret reality through a sense-making process rather than a hypothesis-testing process. An interpretive analysis is a technique for making inferences through systematic analysis of written documents or recordings of verbal messages.

Turkey's Interests in Somalia

Turkey's interests in Somalia are political, economic, and military. However, before discussing Turkey's interests, diplomacy and political interests will be considered first.

Dipomacy and Political Interests

he first official contact between Turkey and Somalia occurred on the 29th and 30th of January 2007, when the former Turkish Prime Minister, Mr Erdogan, attended the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa. At the summit, Mr Erdogan met with Somali President Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed and requested that he submit a proposal to Ankara addressing Somalia's issues and needs. Hence, the former Transitional Federal

Government (TFG), President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, made three visits to Turkey before Mr Erdogan paid his first official visit to Somalia in August 2011. However, the first Turkey-Somalia conference was held in Istanbul from 21st to 23rd May 2010, and the Istanbul Declaration was adopted at the conference. The UN General-Secretary and high-level representatives of international organisations took part in this conference.

It is important to note that Turkey appointed Mr Cemalettin Kani Torun as the Turkish ambassador in Somalia. Mr Erdogan highlighted that the primary purpose of Turkey's involvement in Somalia included: (1) strengthening historical relations, (2) alleviating the humanitarian crisis, (3) rebuilding the country, (4) restoring peace and security in

the country, (5) attracting the attention of the most significant drought in the world, and (6) contributing to peace and security in the region. President Erdogan emphasised that "regardless of which culture we come from or where we live, I am confident that our common heritage as human beings will motivate us to ease the suffering of Somalia". On May 26, 2012, Turkey organised a Somali Civil Society Groups meeting in Istanbul, and more than 300 representatives from Somalia attended this meeting. The representatives discussed existing problems surrounding Somalia and its future. The Second Turkey-Somalia conference was held in Istanbul from 31st May to June 2012 under the theme "Preparing Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015

President Erdogan opened the largest and most advanced Turkish embassy in Africa on June 3, 2016, in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia. In December 2018, the Istanbul conference explored Turkey-Somalia and East Africa partnerships as the theme of the "East Africa Development Forum." An annual conference in Istanbul aims to push for groundwork for high-level collaboration on future Somali-Turkish ties by pursuing non- African outlooks in an effort to clarify misunderstandings and add new perspectives on the new Turkish strategy towards East Africa. The core of Turkey's diplomatic efforts in Somalia is to stabilise the war-ridden country. Hence, Turkey's strategy for stabilising Somalia is due to its geostrategic significance in Turkey's foreign policy, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.2 Geostrategic Interests

Turkey aimed to broaden its influence and strengthen bilateral relations with Somalia and other African countries. Turkey stated this as a win-win situation and that Somalia is a component of this policy. Besides, Somalia has the longest coastline in the Indian Ocean, a significant sea route through which more than 20,000 ships pass yearly. Somalia has some resources that would make it a promising partner in the long term. It strategically sits on the Gulf of Aden, just at the entrance of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, a pivotal global shipping lane connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, as indicated in figure 5.

This sea route is crucial to the world economy, accounting for 20% of global yearly exports as of 2012. Turkey recognised Somalia's strategic location along some of the

world's major shipping lanes and saw opportunities to build seaports and other transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, Turkey's experience with Somalia will significantly impact its broader African agenda. It was argued that Turkey's interests in Somalia recognised Turkey as a "political" role in Africa and expanded its policy into a more complex and multifaceted one. It also assumes that Turkish engagements in Somalia have been effective, contributing to both Somalia's recovery and Turkey's status as an emerging global player.