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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37458/ssj.6.2.7>

Review Paper

Received: June 17, 2025

Accepted: August 9, 2025

TÜRKIYE'S HYBRID PEACEKEEPING STRATEGY IN AFRICA: A MIDDLE-POWER ENGAGEMENT IN SOMALIA, LIBYA, AND CHAD

Abstract: *This article analyses Türkiye's evolving role in African peacekeeping and peace support operations. It argues that Türkiye advances a hybrid middle-power model that blends security assistance, development cooperation, and cultural diplomacy. Using a qualitative process-tracing approach across three case studies (Somalia, Libya, Chad), the article applies four analytical lenses—negative/positive peace, hybrid peacebuilding, human Security, and supply-side dynamics—to evaluate how Türkiye operationalises influence through bilateral training bases, TİKA projects, defence exports, and religious/cultural outreach. The findings show that Türkiye's model delivers agility and local resonance but generates structural tensions—dependency risks, centralised project design, inclusivity concerns, and multilateral coordination gaps. The paper concludes with policy guidance for Türkiye, African partners, and multilateral institutions to enhance sustainability and multilateral coherence. The study concludes with policy recommendations to strengthen Türkiye's contribution to sustainable and multilateral peacebuilding frameworks.*

Keywords: *Türkiye, Africa, peacekeeping, hybrid peacebuilding, human Security, middle-power peacebuilding, Libya, Somalia, Chad.*

Introduction

Since their establishment in 1948, United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions have evolved from predominantly monitoring ceasefires to implementing multidimensional strategies aimed at stabilizing fragile states and enhancing institutional resilience. As mandates have expanded to address challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, state collapse, and climate-related insecurities—including resource scarcity and displacement—the limitations of traditional frameworks have become increasingly evident. This has prompted calls for more adaptive and hybrid approaches (Brahimi, 2000, p. 3). Today, peacekeeping is recognized as a collaborative effort focused on safeguarding fragile peace, monitoring political agreements, protecting civilians, and restoring legitimate governance (Guéhenno et al., 2008).

Africa remains the focal point for these missions, hosting over 70% of global peacekeepers—approximately 58,000 personnel deployed across operations such as AMISOM in Somalia and MINUSMA in Mali, as well as other regional missions (Claire & Ferragamo, 2023). The continent is characterized by complex security environments marked by insurgency, resource competition, and contested governance. Within this multipolar context, emerging actors like China, India, and Gulf states are combining military support with economic outreach and ideological soft power.

Türkiye has established itself as a strategically adaptable actor within this diverse landscape. While firmly anchored in NATO, Türkiye sets itself apart through a culturally distinctive, partnership-oriented approach that integrates infrastructure development, religious diplomacy, and humanitarian assistance (Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2022). Unlike China's infrastructure-driven strategy or the financial diplomacy employed by Gulf states, Türkiye's model synergizes direct military training, civil-military coordination, and development aid to formulate a unique peacebuilding approach characteristic of middle powers. This framework provides a coherent lens through which to analyse how nations like Türkiye utilise integrated statecraft—bridging Security, development, and geopolitics—in ways that traditional peacebuilding theories, which focus primarily on either liberal state-building or humanitarian intervention, fail to capture fully. Consequently, this study contributes to ongoing discussions regarding the role of middle powers in peace operations, a key concern for Security Science journals.

Türkiye's historical connections to Africa trace back to the Ottoman era. Still, its contemporary strategic realignment, initiated with the 1998 "Africa Action Plan," gained momentum under the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP) government. Through high-level summits, an expanding network of embassies, and numerous bilateral agreements, Türkiye has significantly enhanced its presence on the continent. Supported by a permanent training facility

(Camp TURKSOM), Türkiye's engagement in Somalia integrates security capacity-building with civilian reconstruction and development assistance (Eyrice-Tepeciklioğlu, 2021).

This article enhances the peacekeeping literature by introducing a Middle-Power Peacebuilding Model that illustrates how emerging actors like Türkiye use a combination of Security, development, and cultural tools to challenge traditional peacekeeping norms. This perspective enriches existing theories by demonstrating how middle powers can reshape peace governance through hybrid, context-specific engagements rather than relying solely on large-scale interventions.

The article critically analyses Türkiye's role in African peacekeeping through three lenses: (1) hybrid peacebuilding, which integrates top-down strategies with local engagement; (2) human Security, focusing on civilian protection, development, and participatory governance; and (3) supply-side dynamics, emphasizing strategic national interests in mission selection. This analysis assesses how Türkiye's evolving contributions both align with and diverge from conventional peacekeeping paradigms, providing broader insights into the alternative strategies employed by emerging middle powers within global security governance.

Methodology

Building upon the methodological framework introduced in the Introduction, this section employs a qualitative process-tracing strategy to explore the functioning of Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model through three illustrative cases: Somalia, Libya, and Chad. The analysis synthesizes primary documents (from the Turkish Court of Accounts, UN, MFA, and TIKa), institutional reports from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), as well as recent media coverage and scholarly literature. This triangulation aims to identify patterns in military assistance, development diplomacy, and defence-industry linkages. The process-tracing approach connects Ankara's policy decisions to tangible outcomes on the ground, thereby illustrating how Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model adapts across various African contexts. The selection of cases emphasizes variation in political circumstances—specifically, fragile states, contested states, and the Sahel frontier—to assess the model's explanatory power.

Theoretical framework

This section presents four complementary analytical lenses—negative vs. positive peace, hybrid peacebuilding, human Security (along with local ownership), and supply-side mission selection—that collectively shed light on Türkiye's strategic and operational choices in Africa. These analytical perspectives intersect in practice: Türkiye's pursuit of negative peace (for instance, training Somali commandos) is intricately linked with its positive peace initiatives (such as TIKa's vocational training programs). Hybrid peacebuilding serves as the operational bridge between these two

approaches, framed by a human-security narrative yet informed by supply-side strategic considerations.

Negative vs. Positive Peace

Johan Galtung's influential typology distinguishes between two primary dimensions of peace: negative peace, defined as the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which encompasses the presence of structural conditions that foster long-term societal well-being—such as participatory governance, institutional reform, and socio-economic equity (Galtung, 1964, pp. 1–4). Negative peace typically involves monitoring ceasefires and separating combatants, while positive peace necessitates proactive investment in addressing the root causes of conflict, tackling inequalities, and enhancing governance.

Hybrid Peacebuilding

The hybrid model in practice demonstrates how Türkiye effectively coordinates military training, development projects, and religious diplomacy to achieve both legitimacy and impact (Mac Ginty, 2010). Türkiye implements this model through coordinated civil-military mechanisms that combine direct military support with civilian development initiatives. In fragile states—where threats can include insurgency and disinformation—hybrid peacebuilding utilizes civil-military interaction (CMI) to foster both stability and legitimacy (Björkdahl & Höglund, 2013, pp. 289–299).

Middle-Power Peacebuilding Model

Drawing on Galtung, Mac Ginty, and supply-side perspectives, this article proposes a Middle-Power Peacebuilding Model to conceptualise Türkiye's Africa strategy. This model integrates three core dimensions—Security Assistance, Development Cooperation, and Geopolitical Strategy—that collectively demonstrate how Türkiye operationalizes peacebuilding through multifaceted statecraft rather than conventional interventionism. Together, these elements capture how middle powers can mobilise integrated instruments to secure influence, offering a framework that complements and extends existing peacebuilding theories by foregrounding the strategic motives and tools of emerging state actors (Waltz, 2010). This model highlights how middle powers like Türkiye integrate Security, development, and diplomatic instruments to bridge the gap between traditional peacekeeping and state-centric geopolitics.

The Brahimi Report (2000), a landmark UN review of peace operations, urged the UN to adopt more robust, multidimensional mandates combining military stabilisation with political support, development assistance, and institution-building—shifting policy away from narrowly defined

ceasefire monitoring toward integrated state-building efforts (Brahimi, 2000)³³. However, implementing such dual mandates often encounters operational friction, as efforts to secure short-term stability—such as strengthening national armies—may delay deeper institutional reforms, sideline local ownership, or reinforce external dependency (Holt et al., 2005).

Yet, prioritising Security can deepen external dependency, as critics of liberal peacebuilding warn, echoing concerns raised in the literature about its tendency to emphasise short-term outputs over sustainable structural change (Paris, 2004; Gizelis et al., 2022, p. 17). Additionally, the concentration of aid and infrastructure investment in urban centres like Mogadishu may reinforce regional inequalities and reflect political or institutional biases in project allocation. These tensions underscore the need for peacebuilding strategies that carefully balance urgency with inclusion and sustainability.

However, challenges persist. Project planning remains highly centralised in Ankara, potentially limiting responsiveness to local needs (Özkan, 2014). Furthermore, while foreign-led military training enhances tactical capacity, it may prolong operational dependency—reproducing the power asymmetries that hybrid models aim to overcome (Paris, 2004). The question remains whether Türkiye's model fosters genuine co-production or strategically masks its national interests in culturally resonant terms.

Human Security and Local Ownership

The concept of human Security, gaining prominence in post-2000 UN doctrine following failures in externally led missions (e.g., Haiti, South Sudan) that lacked local legitimacy, shifts attention from state-centred peace to the lived realities of vulnerable populations. Embedding local voices is now recognised as crucial for mission fragility and durable peace. The human security framework shifts focus from state sovereignty to individual welfare, emphasising access to food, healthcare, education, and participatory governance as key pillars of durable peace (UNDP, 1994; Paris, 2001). Closely linked is the principle of local ownership, which argues that peacebuilding should be driven by the affected communities rather than imposed by external actors (UNESCO, 2018; Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). Together, these frameworks challenge elite-centric peace processes by emphasising the agency of those subjected to peacekeeping efforts—the "*peacekept*"—and advocating for the inclusion of local perspectives in peacebuilding initiatives.

Türkiye's approach often emphasises working "*with*" rather than "*for*" local communities. In Somalia, participatory infrastructure projects and mosque-building programs led by the Presidency

³³ The Brahimi Report recommended that the UN Secretariat identify the core requirements for peace operations in dangerous environments.

of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) aim to align with local needs. However, scholars caution that such rhetoric may obscure donor-centric agendas, particularly when project design and financing remain centralised (Mac Ginty, 2010; Donais, 2012). The activities of cultural institutions such as the YEE further reinforce this hybrid dimension. Through branches in Somalia, Libya, and across the Sahel, YEE promotes Turkish language education, cultural heritage workshops, and interfaith dialogue events. In 2024, its *"My Somalia"* initiative celebrated shared oral history and arts, enhancing Türkiye's image as a culturally connected peace partner (Yunus Emre Institute, 2025). These initiatives, alongside Diyanet's religious diplomacy, constitute soft-power extensions of Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding architecture, integrating cultural familiarity with social reconstruction. Furthermore, Türkiye's emphasis on Islamic solidarity and Ottoman heritage may unintentionally marginalise secular or non-Muslim constituencies, raising questions about inclusivity. Kofi Annan stated, *"Reconciliation means different things to different people, as individuals in various communities experience violence and peace in unique ways"* (Kofi Annan Foundation, 2018).

Supply-Side Dynamics

Finally, supply-side dynamics offer a strategic lens to examine Türkiye's peacekeeping mission selection, challenging the normative portrayal of peacekeeping as purely humanitarian. Extensive research highlights how troop-contributing countries (TCCs) often pursue geopolitical and economic benefits—ranging from alliance-building and military diplomacy to defence exports and market access—alongside normative goals (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006; Bellamy, 2013).

Türkiye's involvement in Africa reflects this dual logic. While humanitarian discourse is central, its contributions also serve national interests—supporting the export of defence technologies, expanding bilateral partnerships, and enhancing its diplomatic footprint within Africa's evolving security landscape. These dual motivations underscore the complex interplay between normative goals and strategic calculus in Türkiye's peacekeeping engagements.

In synthesis, these frameworks reveal enduring tensions at the heart of modern peace operations: between short-term stability and long-term reform, between multilateral legitimacy and national sovereignty, and between international intervention and local ownership. The following empirical sections revisit these dynamics through the lens of Türkiye's evolving peacekeeping model in Africa, offering concrete illustrations of how such trade-offs unfold in practice. These frameworks collectively guide the subsequent case analyses of Somalia, Libya, and Chad, illustrating the diverse applications of Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding strategy across the continent. In the following case studies, the pursuit of negative peace (e.g., military training) and positive peace (e.g., TIKA-led reconstruction) is operationalized through hybrid peacebuilding, narrated via human Security, yet often guided by supply-side dynamics.

The following sections illustrate how these theoretical dimensions manifest empirically in three African contexts—Somalia, Libya, and Chad—demonstrating the operational variations of Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model across diverse political and Security environments. The Middle-Power Peacebuilding Model captures how Türkiye integrates security assistance, development cooperation, and geopolitical strategy as mutually reinforcing instruments of influence. Unlike traditional liberal peacebuilding, which privileges multilateral norms or transactional models focused on resource extraction, Türkiye's approach exemplifies pragmatic, bilateral hybridism.

Historical Evolution of Turkey–Africa Security Cooperation

Building on these institutional developments, the following section analyses Türkiye's operational engagements in African peacekeeping.

Ottoman Legacy and Contemporary Revival

Turkey's engagement with Africa is deeply embedded in a historical legacy that predates the modern republic. The Ottoman Empire maintained a political and cultural presence across North Africa for over four centuries, while also establishing far-reaching trade and diplomatic networks in the Horn of Africa and West Africa. Ottoman influence remains visible today in architectural heritage, legal-administrative traditions, and linguistic patterns in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Algeria.

This historical footprint is frequently reinterpreted in contemporary Turkish foreign policy narratives, positioning Türkiye as a culturally familiar, non-colonial partner in contrast to Western powers. Policymakers and think tanks often invoke Ottoman-era legacies to reinforce Ankara's soft power legitimacy in Africa (Özkan & Akgün, 2010).

Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of the secular Turkish Republic in 1923, Ankara shifted its strategic focus westward, prioritising integration with Europe and alignment with NATO. However, the post-Cold War environment—marked by economic liberalisation, regional instability, and evolving global south-south dynamics—prompted a recalibration of Türkiye's foreign policy.

The *Africa Action Plan (AAP)*, adopted in 1998 under the initiative of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, marked a pivotal shift toward institutionalised engagement with the African continent (Öztürk & Duman, 2023). Developed during a period of coalition governments and economic uncertainty, the AAP reflected Ankara's desire to diversify diplomatic ties and expand export markets, counterbalancing its longstanding Eurocentric orientation. While initially limited by political and financial constraints, the AAP nonetheless established crucial bureaucratic groundwork

for deeper economic, diplomatic, and development cooperation. It also resonated with emerging African initiatives at the time, such as the African Development Bank's call for stronger intra-regional and global partnerships in its 1998 African Development Report (African Development Bank, 1998).

This foundational framework would later be significantly expanded under the AKP, especially after 2005, through high-level summits, increased embassy presence, and sectoral collaboration in areas such as education, health, and Security.

The AKP era and Strategic Expansion

The rise of the AKP in 2002 catalysed a multidimensional transformation in Türkiye–Africa relations. A mix of pragmatic economic diplomacy, religious solidarity, and neo-Ottoman soft power narratives has driven this shift. Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Africa has become a foreign policy priority, underscored by over 30 high-level visits and a discursive emphasis on "equal partnership" and shared development (Republic of Turkey, MFA, 2022).

This renewed attention translated into significant institutional developments. The First Türkiye–Africa Partnership Summit, held in Istanbul in 2008 and attended by representatives from over 50 African countries, established a formal framework for ongoing cooperation. Türkiye's development agency, TİKA, expanded from just five programs in Africa in 2005 to over 35 by 2020, signalling growing investment in education, health, and infrastructure. Simultaneously, Turkish Airlines emerged as Africa's largest non-African carrier, connecting 39 destinations and symbolising Türkiye's infrastructural soft power (Besenyő, 2021, pp. 74–77).

Diplomatic representation followed suit, with Türkiye's embassies increasing from 12 in 2009 to 43 by 2021. A reciprocal expansion of African missions in Ankara reinforced bilateral ties. This broadened institutional base paved the way for deeper security cooperation, including military training programs, defence attaché exchanges, and formal defence agreements with countries such as Nigeria and Somalia (Turan, 2025).

Institutionalization of Security Cooperation

Türkiye's engagement in African Security has evolved from sporadic bilateral contact into a structured and strategic partnership architecture. A notable milestone came in 2005 when African officer cadets began attending Türkiye's military academies, including the Turkish War College. These early exchanges created long-lasting professional ties and fostered mutual trust, laying the groundwork for future defence collaborations (Petrócz, 2024).

Türkiye's defence industry now serves as a cornerstone of this engagement, reflecting its emergence as a global arms exporter. In 2024, defence and aviation exports reached \$7.2 billion—a 29% increase from the previous year. This surge is driven by Türkiye's strategic pivot toward high- and medium-high-technology production, which now accounts for 47% of the sector's output, compared to 17% for low-tech manufacturing. Industrial clusters such as SAHA Istanbul, which expanded from 27 members to over 1,300 in just a decade, have played a central role in scaling this capacity (Türkiye Today, 2025).

These industrial gains have translated into tangible defence partnerships across Africa. Turkish-manufactured unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—most notably the Bayraktar TB2—alongside electronic warfare systems produced by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) and ASELSAN, have been exported to countries such as Niger, Tunisia, and Morocco. Their demonstrated battlefield effectiveness in recent conflicts—including the Libyan civil war, the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the ongoing war in Ukraine—has significantly boosted their appeal among African governments seeking affordable and proven defence technologies.

Domestically, the post-2016 political landscape—marked by increased centralisation and the rising influence of pro-government business networks—has shaped Türkiye's external defence posture. As Donelli (2022) argues, the synergistic alignment of political goals, economic ambitions, and military-industrial capabilities has produced a coherent strategy that now defines Türkiye's security engagement with Africa, effectively merging defence exports with broader foreign policy objectives (Donelli, 2022).

Turkey's Peacekeeping Engagements in Africa

Türkiye's involvement in African peacekeeping embodies a multidimensional strategy that goes beyond traditional troop deployment. Although its contributions to United Nations missions may be numerically modest, they hold significant symbolic value and are strategically placed. More importantly, Türkiye has established a strong model of bilateral security cooperation—rooted in military training, defence exports, and development assistance—which enhances its soft power initiatives, including humanitarian aid and religious diplomacy. This section explores the operational scope, regional patterns, institutional strategies, and unique characteristics of Türkiye's peacekeeping efforts across Africa, highlighting how Ankara integrates multilateral legitimacy with independent, culturally relevant initiatives to develop a new paradigm of middle-power intervention.

Türkiye's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa, though modest in scale compared to major troop-contributing countries like India, carry significant symbolic and strategic importance. Türkiye views peacekeeping not only as a security responsibility but also as a

diplomatic and humanitarian duty, thereby reinforcing its credentials as a middle power committed to responsible international engagement. Financial contributions to peacekeeping budgets and engagement in peacebuilding structures, such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, supplement its participation in UN missions. These broader commitments reflect Ankara's ambition to be recognised as a globally responsible and norm-shaping actor. Turkish personnel have served in various capacities—including as military observers, police units, and support staff—in operations across the Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Somalia. For example, according to UN Peacekeeping data, Türkiye deployed 50 personnel to MINUSMA (Mali) in 2021 and 20 to MONUSCO (DRC)—numbers far below those of traditional middle powers but symbolically important for showcasing South–South solidarity (Sıradağ, 2023).

Somalia: Security Assistance + Development Cooperation

Turkey's strategy in Somalia exemplifies a multifaceted engagement across various domains. Central to this initiative is the Camp TURKSOM training facility, established in 2017, which merges military capacity-building with ongoing civil development programs implemented by TİKA and related cultural organizations. By 2023, Turkish initiatives have reportedly trained over 5,000 Somali soldiers and around 1,500 police officers, including members of the Gorgor commando units. This training encompasses modular instruction in logistics, counter-insurgency, and commando tactics, supplemented by continuous advisory support (AA, 2025).

Simultaneously, TİKA and Diyanet collaborate with municipal councils and religious leaders to develop critical infrastructure, including water systems, schools, and clinics. These efforts are organized under UN Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) protocols, adopted in 2018, which mirror a whole-of-government approach akin to NATO's CIMIC³⁴ doctrine and the EU's comprehensive strategy (Heuer et al., 2022, p. 17). While these integrated measures have fostered localized improvements in security and service delivery, questions regarding sustainability persist—particularly regarding the long-term maintenance of equipment, the supply of spare parts, and the transition from external training to self-sufficient Somali logistics and institutional governance.

These capacity-building initiatives are aligned with civilian projects from TİKA's Mogadishu Coordination Office, which has overseen more than 150 projects since 2011. These include the rehabilitation of a 200-bed training and research hospital, vocational programs through the Mogadishu Polytechnic Centre, and improvements to transport infrastructure, such as the Mogadishu–Afgooye road (Erbay, 2018). Additional initiatives—such as agricultural mechanization in Afgooye, vocational training for women, and solar-powered water systems in Beledweyne—

³⁴ CIMIC is defined as a military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment.

highlight Turkey's commitment to building resilience and facilitating technical transfer. These interventions not only address urgent humanitarian needs but also tackle underlying vulnerabilities, such as the high youth unemployment rate (estimated at 40% in Mogadishu) and limited access to essential services (World Bank, 2022).

As a NATO member and occasional contributor to UN peace operations, Türkiye implements its hybrid principles in operational practice in Somalia. However, it also prioritizes bilateral initiatives that provide greater strategic flexibility outside UN frameworks, focusing on direct military capacity-building. Türkiye's expanding presence in Somalia serves to counterbalance other regional and global actors in the Horn of Africa (Webb, 2024), reinforcing Ankara's ambition to establish itself as a proactive security provider within the Global South.

A detailed examination of Türkiye's military doctrine beyond Africa—particularly in Syria—illustrates how autonomous peacebuilding models shape its engagements in Africa. This pursuit of autonomy is particularly evident in Türkiye's cross-border operations in Syria. Operations Euphrates Shield (2016), Olive Branch (2018), and Peace Spring (2019) targeted ISIS and Kurdish militias along Türkiye's southern border. Beyond their military objectives, these campaigns incorporated elements of post-conflict reconstruction, such as the formation of local councils, security force training, and support for basic infrastructure, suggesting a state-building rationale in Türkiye's near abroad (Erbay, 2020).

While this hybrid approach allows for flexibility, enabling Türkiye to align security operations with its national interests and regional dynamics, the relatively modest scale of its UN deployments raises questions about its long-term commitment to multilateralism. Nevertheless, aspects of Türkiye's model—such as its adaptability, integration of civil-military tools, and contextual sensitivity—are in line with UN recommendations for more responsive and people-centered peacekeeping (UN, 2024).

The export of advanced military technologies, notably the widely recognized Bayraktar TB2 UAV, has significantly bolstered Türkiye's strategic influence in Africa's security landscape. While the Bayraktar remains the most prominent system, it is part of a much larger industrial framework. As of March 2025, a total of 309 Turkish companies hold official licences to operate in the defence sector, encompassing a diverse range of fields, from UAV development to electronic warfare, communications, and armoured vehicle production (Ministry of National Defense, 2025). These exports exemplify the dynamics of supply-side peacekeeping, in which arms transfers and military training not only advance economic interests but also serve as instruments of geopolitical influence—particularly in fragile or transitional states (Besenyő & Málnácssy, 2022). For example, Morocco's acquisition in 2021 of 13 Bayraktar TB2 drones for \$70 million highlights both the

operational appeal and cost-effectiveness of Turkish defence platforms in the region (Africa Defense Forum, 2025).

Libya: Geopolitical Strategy + Security Assistance

Türkiye's involvement in Libya exemplifies the complex interplay of supply-side dynamics, in which strategic interests are closely linked to peacebuilding rhetoric. This engagement has evolved from direct military intervention into a sophisticated, multifaceted diplomacy that harmonizes hard power with soft power and pragmatic geopolitics.

Ankara's engagement initially manifested through military support for GNA in Tripoli, formalized by the pivotal 2019 MoU. This agreement delineated EEZs between Türkiye and Libya, serving as a strategic manoeuvre (Pénzváltó, 2020). It effectively countered maritime claims from Greece and Egypt, strengthened Türkiye's position within the Eastern Mediterranean energy corridor, and established a legal basis for its sustained presence in the region. This assertive posture not only safeguards Türkiye's energy interests but also directly confronts the strategic calculations of NATO allies Greece and France, positioning Ankara as an independent and disruptive force on the southern flank of the Alliance.

The 2019 Türkiye–Libya maritime MoU was registered with the UN in 2020; however, it faced legal and political challenges, including temporary suspensions due to parliamentary disputes (Hahn, 2025). Recent outreach to actors aligned with Khalifa Haftar suggests Ankara's efforts to expand recognition of the maritime agreement as part of a pragmatic stabilization strategy (Libyan News Agency, 2025). In addition to the naval agreement, Türkiye is also providing military training and logistical support to the forces in Tripoli, thereby aligning security cooperation with reconstruction initiatives in Misrata and Tripoli.

Russia's influence in Libya has primarily manifested through the Wagner Group, which provided support to Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) during the 2019-2020 campaign for Tripoli (Kharief, 2022). Evidence suggests that Gulf states, particularly the United Arab Emirates, have financially backed segments of Wagner's operations, aiming to undermine Islamist political entities, including affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood, while expanding their regional influence through proxy partners (Besenyő et al., 2024). Following the 2023 death of Wagner's founder, Moscow has sought to regularize and rebrand its paramilitary presence—reportedly under the banner of an "*Africa Corps*"—thereby maintaining its influence over oil facilities and airbases. This multilayered foreign involvement, encompassing Russia, the UAE, and Egypt, helps elucidate Turkey's recent pragmatic engagements with both Tripoli and Tobruk. Turkey aims to safeguard its

maritime and energy interests while limiting the influence of external actors on Libyan security outcomes.

In addition to its hard-power diplomacy, Türkiye has leveraged soft power initiatives to foster long-term legitimacy. TİKA has renovated hospitals and schools in Misrata and Tripoli, distributed educational materials, and supported municipal recovery efforts. Concurrently, YEE has facilitated cultural dialogue through Turkish language courses, cultural weeks, and scholarships, emphasizing the shared Ottoman-Libyan heritage. These initiatives seek to revive a collective cultural memory, creating a soft-power narrative that aligns with Türkiye's broader Security and diplomatic objectives.

In conclusion, Türkiye's involvement in Libya serves as a compelling example of the supply-side dynamics of a mature middle-power state. By adeptly navigating internal fragmentation and intense external rivalries with actors such as Russia and the UAE, Ankara has demonstrated a hybrid model that integrates military diplomacy, energy security, and cultural outreach to stabilize the region and advance its strategic goals.

Chad: Development Cooperation + Political Strategy

Chad represents an emerging frontier for Türkiye's peacebuilding model, testing its adaptability in the volatile Sahel region, where engagement remains nascent but strategically significant. Since the opening of the Turkish embassy in N'Djamena (2013) and the establishment of reciprocal Chadian representation in Ankara (2014), bilateral relations have moved beyond diplomacy to include security dialogue, capacity-building, and humanitarian programming (Republic of Turkey, MFA, 2025).³⁵ High-level exchanges such as President Erdoğan's 2017 visit underscored the political will to deepen cooperation. According to TİKA's N'Djamena Coordination Office, ongoing projects focus on solar irrigation systems and capacity-building for local water engineers—marking a gradual shift toward sustainable resource management and local ownership (Erol et al., 2025).

Beyond diplomacy, Türkiye has pursued targeted security cooperation with Chad, including officer education, staff college courses, and civil-military exchanges dating back to the mid-2000s (Petrőcz, 2024). These exchanges have produced a cohort of Chadian officers familiar with Turkish doctrine and facilitated discussions on joint exercises and officer training. While formal major arms contracts are limited to date, Chad's central role in Sahelian counter-insurgency makes it a logical candidate for future intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) cooperation and potential materiel sales under Türkiye's supply-side logic. TİKA's N'Djamena Coordination Office reports

³⁵ President Idriss Déby Itno was killed in April 2021 during clashes with rebel forces. The country has since been governed by a transitional military council led by his son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby.

over 40 projects focused on water management, vocational training, and health centre rehabilitation, many of which include explicit clauses for local maintenance and technician training to encourage sustainability (TİKA, 2025).

TİKA's N'Djamena Coordination Office (est. 2014) reports on over 40 projects focused on water management, solar irrigation, vocational training, and health centre rehabilitation. Recent examples include the Massaguet deep-well drilling project and renovation of the N'Djamena Vocational Training Center; these programmes emphasise local maintenance capacity by training technicians and municipal staff, reflecting Ankara's stated aim of "*local ownership*" (Erbay, 2018; Republic of Turkey, MFA, 2025; TİKA, 2025).

Although promising, the Chad engagement remains nascent and instrumental—designed to build political capital and security ties rather than to deliver large-scale security transformations immediately. Domestic debates in Türkiye about overseas expenditures during economic strain also reduce political appetite for significant new commitments (T.C. Sayıştay Bakanlığı, 2024).

These arms exports are strategically complemented by humanitarian diplomacy, with agencies such as TİKA and Diyanet operating under a broader peacebuilding narrative. For example, since 2011, TİKA has implemented development projects in Somalia, including the creation of a tailoring workshop in Mogadishu's Central Prison to equip formerly incarcerated women with vocational skills (Dhaysane, 2022; Sezer, 2025). This synthesis of hard power and soft diplomacy strengthens Türkiye's influence across multiple layers of African society and governance.

Despite its strategic ambitions, Türkiye's peacekeeping approach is not without critique. One major limitation lies in the limited scale of its UN deployments. For example, deploying only 20 police units to MONUSCO in 2021 may raise questions about the depth of Türkiye's multilateral commitment, especially when juxtaposed with its broader influence claims (Ranking Royals, 2023).

In addition, concerns persist over the centralisation of project planning in Ankara—particularly in TİKA-led initiatives—potentially undermining responsiveness to local needs. Coupled with selective engagement in high-profile missions, this Ankara-centric approach may foster dependency or generate perceptions of asymmetry between Türkiye and its African partners. Nonetheless, Türkiye's targeted and hybrid interventions, especially in Somalia, have generated goodwill and produced visible outcomes where traditional actors have struggled—offering valuable lessons in adaptive peacebuilding (De Coning, 2023). Future engagements may benefit from greater decentralisation of project planning and enhanced participatory mechanisms with local communities to strengthen accountability and responsiveness. While Türkiye has built a unique hybrid model, it

is part of a broader shift where other non-Western actors are also reshaping peacekeeping practices—albeit through different strategies and tools.

China has emphasised infrastructure-driven diplomacy, large-scale economic investment, and robust troop contributions to UN missions. Yet its peacekeeping model is often viewed as transactional and geared toward long-term access to resources (Alden & Large, 2019). While China's approach prioritises state-to-state infrastructure investment, Türkiye's culturally adaptive strategy may yield deeper community-level legitimacy—though with more limited scalability. Türkiye, by contrast, combines modest troop deployments with development aid, religious diplomacy, and military training—relying on agencies like TIKA and Diyanet rather than state-owned enterprises.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) also employs a mix of hard and soft power, particularly in fragile coastal regions. However, the UAE's strategy typically emphasises elite partnerships, infrastructure investment, and maritime control, often with limited attention to local engagement or cultural resonance (Stambøl & Berger, 2023).

Türkiye's model—hybrid, culturally embedded, and rooted in a South–South cooperation narrative—stands apart. Its agility, religious and linguistic affinity with key African populations, and layered peacebuilding approach position it as a middle power with adaptive capabilities in an increasingly multipolar security environment.

Meanwhile, India remains a traditional leader in UN troop contributions but lacks Türkiye's integration of development and Security in its bilateral engagements, highlighting Türkiye's innovative hybrid approach.

Turkey in Comparative Perspective

Unlike China's infrastructure-led strategy or the UAE's security-for-profit engagements, Türkiye's approach merges soft power with localized partnership models. This hybrid posture situates Türkiye between normative liberal interventions and transactional South–South exchanges.

Country	Military / Security	Development / Soft Power	Primary Turkish Motive	Key Challenge
Somalia	Camp TURKSOM; >5,000 troops trained; police training	Hospital rehab (200-bed), vocational programs, roads; TIKA 150+ projects	Counter-terrorism; long-term strategic presence	Dependency risk; logistics/maintenance

Libya	Military support to GNA; outreach to LNA; maritime MoU	TIKA hospital/school rehab; YEE cultural initiatives	Maritime/energy security; influence in Eastern Med	Great-power rivalry; legal contestation of MoU
Chad	Officer training; staff courses; exchanges	Solar irrigation, vocational training (TIKA N'Djamena: 40+ projects)	Sahel presence; future security client	Limited local capacity; nascent security cooperation

Source: (Özkan, 2014; Republic of Turkey, MFA, 2022; TİKA, 2025)

Having examined these three contexts, the discussion now turns to the broader structural tensions and constraints inherent in Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model.

Critical Reflections and Structural Limitations

Turkey's blended approach to peacebuilding produces concrete benefits but also reveals underlying conflicts that deserve careful consideration. Four interconnected contradictions are especially notable:

Multilateralism vs. Bilateralism

Turkey's peacebuilding model operates simultaneously within and outside multilateral frameworks. Modest UN and AU deployments demonstrate their formal commitment to collective Security, while large-scale bilateral initiatives show a preference for autonomy and flexibility. Ideally, these approaches should be complementary: bilateral tools can provide rapid response and localized capacity-building that reinforce broader UN operations. However, without coordination, they risk duplication and political tension. Establishing systematic mechanisms for Türkiye–UN–AU cooperation could enhance coherence and mutual reinforcement in African peace operations (UN, 2024). Ultimately, Türkiye's hybrid engagement highlights the opportunity for middle powers to bridge gaps between local needs and international mandates—provided that coordination mechanisms with the UN and AU are institutionalized rather than ad hoc. This tension exemplifies the broader challenge for middle powers seeking legitimacy through multilateral frameworks while retaining strategic flexibility through bilateral channels.

Dependency–Autonomy Paradox

A persistent limitation is the risk of dependency. Turkish-led training initiatives, while effective in capacity building, often create operational reliance on Turkish instructors, spare parts, and logistical systems. For example, sustaining Turkish-trained Gorgor units in Somalia depends on continued access to Turkish technical support and equipment maintenance, which are not locally available. This dynamic raises wider critiques of capacity-building programs that rely on external logistics, suggesting that Türkiye's model, while efficient in short-term stabilization, may hinder full local

autonomy if long-term transfer mechanisms are absent. Future Turkish programs could mitigate this risk through 'train-the-trainer' modules and logistics-transfer agreements that promote genuine self-sufficiency.

Inclusivity and Ideological Boundaries

The inclusivity of Türkiye's model also presents challenges. Its strong emphasis on Islamic solidarity—reflected through institutions like the Diyanet and YEE—can inadvertently marginalize secular or non-Muslim communities in recipient societies. While these initiatives promote cultural affinity and social trust, they may limit participation from groups outside Türkiye's preferred ideological framework. Addressing this selectivity through broader engagement with civil society and multifaith actors would enhance the legitimacy and inclusiveness of Türkiye's soft power projection. Expanding partnerships with secular NGOs, women's associations, and interfaith councils would reinforce pluralism within Türkiye's human-security narrative.

Domestic Constraints and Political Risks

Economic instability and governance challenges within Türkiye can undermine the long-term sustainability of its overseas commitments. Politically framed projects sometimes suffer from inadequate oversight and financial inefficiency. A prominent example is the Sudan agricultural venture, initially promoted as a flagship investment to enhance food security and bilateral cooperation. The project was later suspended amid reports of mismanagement and political misuse, illustrating how domestic political narratives can distort development objectives (Yıldırım, 2024). These experiences highlight the need for transparent audit mechanisms and impact evaluations in future foreign development projects. Collectively, these challenges highlight the need for a more decentralised, transparent, and multilevel approach if Türkiye's hybrid model is to maintain legitimacy and resilience.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This article critically examines Türkiye's evolving role in African peacekeeping, highlighting a distinctive hybrid model that uniquely sits at the intersection of conventional and alternative approaches to global security governance. Using the theoretical frameworks of negative versus positive peace, hybrid peacebuilding, human Security, and supply-side dynamics, the analysis reveals a nuanced strategy. This strategy combines hard security measures, such as military training and defence exports, with a variety of soft power initiatives, including development aid, religious diplomacy, and cultural outreach.

Türkiye's approach is deeply rooted in a narrative of South-South solidarity and is significantly shaped by historical ties from the Ottoman era, distinguishing it from traditional Western-led

models. Rather than relying on large-scale troop deployments typical of conventional UN peacekeeping, Türkiye has strategically opted for targeted bilateral initiatives, particularly in nations where its cultural and geopolitical interests intersect. As discussed earlier, Türkiye's dual reliance on multilateral and bilateral instruments demonstrates both flexibility and fragmentation in its peacekeeping strategy.

Somalia exemplifies this hybrid strategy, in which the integration of direct military operations, extensive infrastructure support from TIKA, and ideological alignment through Diyanet has resulted in both immediate security gains and long-term developmental benefits. This operationalizes the hybrid peacebuilding logic previously discussed, translating theoretical principles into practice through Camp TURKSOM's coordinated civil–military training and TIKA's parallel humanitarian initiatives. Concurrently, Türkiye has maintained a symbolic, albeit modest, participation in multilateral UN missions, reinforcing its identity as a responsible stakeholder in global security governance while fulfilling its international obligations. The analysis, however, also underscores the inherent internal tensions and external critiques of this distinctive model. The centralised nature of project planning and decision-making in Ankara, particularly within TIKA-led initiatives, raises concerns about responsiveness to diverse local needs and the true extent of local ownership. This approach, coupled with Türkiye's limited scale of UN deployments, can create perceptions of asymmetry or foster dependency among African partners, potentially undermining Ankara's "equal partnership" rhetoric. Ensuring greater inclusivity—particularly the participation of secular and non-Muslim communities—remains crucial to prevent cultural selectivity and to strengthen the representativeness of Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model.

Furthermore, Türkiye's focus on Islamic solidarity and its historical Ottoman heritage provides substantial cultural capital, enabling engagement in specific contexts. However, this emphasis may inadvertently lead to exclusionary outcomes for secular or non-Muslim groups within the diverse fabric of African societies, thereby challenging the principles of comprehensive inclusivity and human Security. These critiques underscore the intricate trade-offs involved in balancing strategic national interests (supply-side dynamics) with the normative goals of sustainable peacebuilding and local legitimacy.

Despite various challenges, Türkiye's approach showcases notable adaptive innovation within the increasingly multipolar landscape of peacekeeping. Its ability to effectively integrate emerging defence-industrial growth, comprehensive humanitarian assistance, and a sophisticated diplomatic framework into a cohesive strategic vision positions it as a versatile and influential middle power in African security affairs. In scenarios where traditional Western actors have encountered significant legitimacy issues, operational limitations, or historical baggage, Türkiye's agile and culturally

attuned model has often yielded tangible results, offering valuable lessons in adaptive peacebuilding. This is particularly evident in its nuanced engagement in Libya, where it has adeptly navigated complex political fragmentation and external influences—most notably Russia's assertive presence—to safeguard its strategic maritime interests and foster stability.

As we look to the future, Türkiye's hybrid peacekeeping model—integrating capacity-building, humanitarian outreach, and culturally sensitive diplomacy—is well-positioned to align with the United Nations' evolving vision for peace operations. With the UN increasingly adopting politically focused, people-centred strategies and promoting adaptability through new technologies and modular mission structures, Türkiye's existing strengths in these domains become highly pertinent.

Empirical evidence from and YEE operations in Somalia, Libya, and Chad demonstrates that Türkiye's hybrid model is not abstract but institutionalised through measurable development and cultural outcomes—an aspect that future studies should quantify more systematically. To enhance its long-term impact in peacekeeping and solidify its role as a responsive and context-aware security actor in Africa, Türkiye should focus on strengthening multilateral cooperation, decentralising development planning to empower local stakeholders, and institutionalising robust channels for local feedback. These initiatives would not only improve responsiveness and align its efforts with the UN's changing priorities and regional needs, but also bolster the legitimacy and sustainability of its peacebuilding efforts.

Ultimately, Türkiye's strategic evolution in African Security presents a compelling case study of how emerging powers navigate the intricate demands of contemporary peacekeeping, influencing both regional and global security frameworks through innovative, adaptable, and sometimes contentious hybrid models.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding approach has transformed it into a key middle power shaping the evolution of peace operations in Africa. Its fusion of military, developmental, and cultural tools demonstrates both innovation and complexity. Yet, the model's sustainability will depend on balancing ambition with inclusivity, transparency, and coordination within multilateral frameworks.

For Türkiye: (1) Türkiye should decentralize TIKA's project design and increase transparency in defence agreements to enhance long-term legitimacy; (2) institutionalize "train-the-trainer" and logistics transfer clauses in military training contracts to limit long-term dependency; (3) increase modest UN troop/police contributions and produce transparent reports on defence exports related to training partnerships.

For African partners: insist on capacity-transfer clauses (maintenance, instructor-of-trainers) and ensure inclusive consultations with rural, secular, and minority communities.

For the UN/EU/NATO: develop structured modalities to integrate capable middle powers' hybrid tools (joint training standards, CMCoord protocols) and ensure mission coordination to avoid duplication.

The significance of Türkiye's model lies in demonstrating that middle powers can reshape peacekeeping norms not through large troop deployments but through agile, bilateral, and culturally grounded engagements that challenge both Western liberal and Global South transactional paradigms. Future research should examine the measurable impacts of Türkiye's hybrid interventions on local governance, gender inclusivity, and long-term security outcomes. Addressing domestic criticisms through transparent evaluation and enhanced local participation will be vital for maintaining the legitimacy and sustainability of Türkiye's expanding peacebuilding footprint in Africa.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my very great appreciation to **Dr. Póczik Szilveszter** for his valuable and constructive suggestions during the planning and development of this research work. And to **Prof. Dr. János Besenyő** for his valuable technical support.

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