

Review

Turkey-UAE rivalry in Somalia and its implications on regional dynamics

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This study analyzes the rivalry between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Somalia, focusing on its implications for regional dynamics through the lens of constructivist theory. Constructivism asserts that international relations are shaped by social structures, identities, and norms rather than mere material power. In this context, the study explores how Turkey's historical ties from the Ottoman era and its Muslim identity influence its strategies in Somalia through humanitarian aid, development projects, and military cooperation, fostering norms of peace and enhancing its positive image. Conversely, the UAE emphasizes stability, security norms, and a modern Arab identity, advancing its influence through substantial investments and security partnerships. This study examines how these dynamics manifest politically, militarily, and economically in Somalia, highlighting Turkey's support for democratic values and the UAE's strategic alliances. It also considers the broader strategic competition between these two states and its impact on Somalia's development and regional stability. By applying constructivist theory, the study underscores how identities, norms, and social structures shape international relations, providing a deeper understanding of the ongoing Turkey-UAE rivalry in Somalia and its broader implications.

Key words: Geopolitical competition, diplomatic relations, security partnerships, influence in africa, regional power dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The recent rivalry between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Somalia has become a significant issue in international relations and regional dynamics within the Horn of Africa. This study, therefore, aims to provide a deeper understanding of the identities, norms, and perceptual structures behind Turkey and the UAE's engagement in Somalia by analyzing their rivalry through the lens of constructivist theory. Constructivist theory posits that international relations are shaped not only by

material power and interests but also by social structures, identities, and norms (Wendt, 1999:1-5). From this perspective, it is essential to consider how local actors in Somalia perceive these dynamics and how such perceptions influence international relations within the region, thus deepening the theoretical understanding of the competition between these two countries. Consequently, this study extends beyond a realpolitik analysis to include an examination of how local actors

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internalize and respond to the norms and identities projected by Turkey and the UAE.

Turkey leverages its historical ties and Muslim identity, rooted in the Ottoman Empire, to foster strong relations with the Somali people. The UAE, in parallel, promotes its modern Arab identity and economic power projection. Turkey's engagement includes humanitarian aid, development projects, contributions to state-building, counter-terrorism efforts, and military training, which collectively promote norms of peace and cooperation. However, these actions are also shaped by the perceptions of Somali actors, underscoring that they are not merely acts of power projection. In contrast, the UAE's investments and security cooperation in the region emphasize norms of stability and security. The way Somali actors interpret these norms is crucial to understanding the broader impact of the UAE's engagement in the region.

These norms and perceptions influence how local actors in Somalia view both Turkey and the UAE, and how the rivalry between the two countries affects regional dynamics.

It is also observed that the UAE seeks to secure its interests in the Horn of Africa and along the Red Sea trade route through security and economic partnerships with regional countries. For instance, the UAE capitalized on concerns over sustainable partnerships following Turkey's general elections in May 2023 to strengthen its ties with Somalia through a security and cooperation agreement. In addition, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made his first foreign visit to the UAE after his election in 2022, underscoring the UAE's influence on Somalia. Meanwhile, Turkey, as a rising regional power, pursues a multifaceted partnership approach in Africa, encompassing humanitarian aid, development projects, and military training within its broader foreign policy strategy. Turkey stands out as a primary rival to the UAE's influence in the region. The positive perception of Turkey in Somalia, reinforced by the results of Turkey's May 2023 elections, led to the revitalization of their partnership, further strengthened by the signing of a Maritime Security Agreement in February 2024.

The recent signing of a port agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland on January 1, 2024, which poses a potential threat to Somalia's border security and sovereignty, is seen as a factor that strengthens the partnership between Turkey and Somalia. The UAE's support for this Ethiopia-Somaliland port agreement has contributed to Somalia's preference for Turkey as a more reliable partner over engagement with the UAE. Building on this context, this study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the ongoing UAE-Turkey rivalry in Somalia and its implications for regional dynamics by integrating these developments within a constructivist theoretical framework.

The objective of this research is to address the following questions: first, what norms and values shape

the political, military, and economic relations between Turkey and the UAE in Somalia? Second, how do local actors in Somalia perceive Turkey and the UAE, and how do these perceptions impact Somalia's political processes? Lastly, what effect does the UAE-Turkey rivalry have on Somalia's internal dynamics and the broader regional balance?

This study employs a comprehensive research methodology to analyze the rivalry between Turkey and the UAE in Somalia. The research begins with a review of the existing academic literature within the framework of constructivist theory, encompassing sources that discuss constructivist principles, the regional dynamics of the Horn of Africa, and the roles of Turkey and the UAE in Somalia. This literature review lays the theoretical foundation for the study and identifies existing research gaps.

The data collection process includes qualitative data from diverse sources, such as reports from international organizations, bilateral agreements signed by Turkey and the UAE with Somalia and local governments, and academic studies. Additionally, the evolution of Turkey and the UAE's engagement in Somalia is assessed by analyzing both local and international developments. The collected data is then analyzed through content analysis, focusing on the power projections, identity-building, and normative influences of Turkey and the UAE. The study evaluates the implications of the UAE-Turkey rivalry on regional stability while addressing ethical considerations.

Combining qualitative and quantitative data, this research aims to enhance the understanding of how international relations in Somalia are shaped by social structures, identities, and norms. The hypothesis of the study contends that Turkey and the UAE's involvement in Somalia should be evaluated not only in terms of material engagements and power projections but also through the lens of historical, cultural, and religious ties, as well as norms and perceptions.

This perspective will contribute significantly to the theoretical approach that explains how international relations are influenced by social structures and norms.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in constructivist theory, which posits that international relations are shaped by social structures, identities, and norms, rather than solely by material power. To substantiate the alignment of modern scholars with this theoretical approach, key constructivist studies are referenced throughout. Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) is foundational, asserting that state behavior is shaped by identities and the social structures in which states operate a core principle of constructivist theory. In addition to Wendt, Ted Hopf's *Social Construction of International Politics* (2002)

explores identity politics, illustrating how foreign policy decisions are driven by identity, thereby reinforcing the constructivist view that state actions are socially constructed and influenced by social identities. Within this framework, Turkey's reliance on its historical ties and Muslim identity positions it as a benevolent actor in Somalia, demonstrated through humanitarian aid, development projects, and cultural diplomacy. Similarly, the UAE's projection of its modern Arab identity, coupled with strategic economic investments, reflects its effort to shape regional dynamics through the promotion of stability and security norms.

Moreover, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)'s study on international norm dynamics further illustrates how states adopt and diffuse norms to shape global political outcomes, providing empirical support for constructivist principles. Their work on norm promotion helps explain the UAE's emphasis on security cooperation and economic investment as a means to consolidate stability in Somalia, while Turkey's promotion of peace, education, and infrastructure aligns with its projection of cooperative and humanitarian norms. These normative engagements are not merely strategies for influence but are deeply rooted in each state's identity and how they perceive their roles within the region.

By applying these constructivist concepts, the study demonstrates that the foreign policies of these two states are shaped not only by material interests but also by their projected identities and normative goals. The study's findings clearly tie into these constructivist principles. Turkey's role in Somalia, characterized by extensive use of soft power, aligns with the constructivist approach to identity-building in state actions. Empirical data shows that Turkey's engagement is not purely transactional but embedded in its projection of religious solidarity and historical ties, which resonate with Somalia's predominantly Muslim population. This echoes Wendt's idea that identities shape behavior, as Turkey's identity as a Muslim-majority nation significantly informs its foreign policy toward Somalia. Similarly, the UAE's strategic focus on security and economic stability is closely tied to its identity as a modern, economically developed Arab state. The UAE's investments in infrastructure, such as the Berbera port, illustrate how it uses economic norms to assert its influence. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)'s framework on norm diffusion further explains how these actions aim to embed norms of stability and modernity within Somalia's political landscape.

In this context, the engagement of Turkey and the UAE in Somalia offers a valuable case for analyzing their identity-building processes and their relationship with international norms. Turkey's involvement in Somalia is widely regarded as a successful example of soft power in international relations. By emphasizing its historical ties from the Ottoman era and its Muslim identity, Turkey has cultivated a positive image in Somalia. Scholars like

Barnes (2016) and Kurt (2023) argue that Turkey has established a sustainable presence through humanitarian aid, education, healthcare, and development projects, which have been well-received by the Somali people. Turkey's contributions to infrastructure, education, and healthcare in Somalia have played a significant role in the country's social and economic development, positioning Turkey as not only an aid provider but also a long-term strategic partner. Additionally, Turkey's policies that support peace and stability contribute significantly to Somalia's democratization process and enhance regional security. Overall, Turkey's engagement is seen positively by both local actors and the international community, with its soft power strategies, humanitarian aid, and development initiatives bolstering its role in international relations and promoting regional stability. The literature underscores that Turkey's strategic involvement in Somalia is an important example of identity and norm-building within the framework of constructivist theory.

When examining the UAE's engagement in Somalia, it becomes evident that it has made substantial contributions to the country's economic development and security through its strategic investments. The UAE's activities, particularly in economic investments and infrastructure, are pivotal to Somalia's development. According to Almezaini and Rickli (2017), the UAE's influence in the Horn of Africa has grown through strategic partnerships with regional countries, which are instrumental in fostering economic development and strengthening security in Somalia. Their research highlights that UAE investments, especially in maritime and port infrastructure, have expanded Somalia's international trade capacity and supported its economic integration. Moreover, the UAE's security cooperation has bolstered Somalia's counter-terrorism capabilities, enhancing internal security. Therefore, the UAE's strategic engagements in Somalia are considered crucial for supporting regional stability and advancing Somalia's long-term development goals.

Conversely, a detailed analysis of the literature reveals critical perspectives on the engagements and initiatives of both Turkey and the UAE in Somalia. As previously noted, Turkey's activities in Somalia are shaped by its historical ties from the Ottoman Empire and its emphasis on Muslim identity, with its soft power strategies supported by education and development projects. However, authors like Barnes (2016:12-14) and Ylönen (2019:299-301b) discuss potential negative impacts of Turkey's actions on local actors. They critique Turkey's close relationships with certain political groups, suggesting that this may compromise its perception of neutrality and, over time, could diminish its influence in Somalia. Similarly, Hopf's (2002:17-21) work on the role of social structures and identities in international politics provides a useful framework for understanding the identity-building processes of Turkey and the UAE. Turkey's emphasis on its Ottoman heritage and Muslim

identity, as well as the UAE's focus on its modern Arab identity and economic prowess, can be viewed as strategies for identity construction in Somalia.

Barnes (2016:12-16) further elaborates on Turkey's soft power strategies, highlighting educational initiatives and development projects as part of its identity-building efforts. Nevertheless, he critically notes that these initiatives may shape the ideological orientations of future Somali leaders and increase political and economic dependency on Turkey.

This, he argues, could undermine Turkey's perceived neutrality and reduce its influence over the long term. Barnes' assessment is valuable in considering the mixed impacts of such engagements on regional actors. Huliaras and Tsamitou (2016:603-606) analyze Turkey's expanding influence in Africa, particularly in Somalia. They discuss how Turkey's alliances with certain political factions might affect its perceived neutrality, noting that although Turkey's support for democratic processes is a positive contribution to Somalia's political development, it may raise questions among some observers, potentially weakening Turkey's long-term influence. Evaluated through a constructivist lens, such perceptions are significant as they influence the success of Turkey's identity- and norm-based foreign policy.

The UAE's activities in Somalia have also faced criticism. Scholars like Huliaras and Tsamitou (2016:608-610) and Shay (2017:12-15) argue that the UAE's military and economic engagements could threaten regional stability. They contend that the UAE's strategic partnerships and attempts to establish military bases may disrupt Somalia's internal dynamics and contribute to political fragmentation. Likewise, Salisbury (2018:18-20) warns that the UAE's activities could undermine regional peace efforts and increase instability within Somalia. These critiques suggest that both Turkey's and the UAE's strategies in Somalia are met with mixed reception, highlighting the complex interplay of identity, power, and normative influence within the framework of constructivist theory.

The UAE's foreign policy in Somalia, particularly its military and economic engagements, has faced criticism for potentially undermining regional peace and stability. Analyses by Cummings and Guled (2019) suggest that the UAE's actions in Somalia could fragment the country's political structure. Their study argues that the UAE's strong alliances with specific regional administrations, bypassing the central government in Mogadishu, weaken the authority of the central government and fuel secessionist movements across the country, thereby threatening Somalia's national sovereignty (Cummings and Guled, 2019:45-48). Furthermore, critics argue that the UAE's targeted economic investments in regions such as the port of Berbera may exacerbate inequalities among local communities and intensify political tensions between the central government and local governments over resource

distribution (Ibid).

The parameters used in this study to compare Turkey and the UAE—such as political influence, security cooperation, and normative engagements—were chosen due to their alignment with the constructivist theoretical framework. Constructivism posits that states' actions are shaped by their social identities and the norms they promote. Turkey's focus on political ties through development projects and religious solidarity reflects its identity as a Muslim-majority state with historical ties to Somalia. Similarly, the UAE's strategic investments and security agreements are expressions of its modern Arab identity and its aim to promote regional stability. Consequently, the political, security, and normative dimensions analyzed in this study are closely linked to constructivist concepts, underscoring the idea that state behavior is influenced by socially constructed identities and norms, thereby creating a clear link between theory and practice.

In conclusion, when examined through the lens of constructivist theory, the engagement of Turkey and the UAE in Somalia provides a significant example of these countries' identity and norm-building processes. Understanding how local actors perceive these processes and how these perceptions align with international norms is critical to assessing the influence of Turkey and the UAE in Somalia. The literature reviewed offers a comprehensive analysis of these issues and lays a solid foundation for strengthening the theoretical coherence of this study. In the following sections, Turkey's and the UAE's engagements with Somalia are analyzed in terms of political, military, and economic relations, with a detailed assessment of their impact on identity, norms, and values.

TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA

To analyze Turkey-Somalia relations effectively, it is essential to consider the context of East African geopolitics and realpolitik. This is because the region's dynamics, shaped by both global and regional multi-actor competition, significantly impact the foreign policy balances of countries within the region, particularly Somalia. In this context, Turkey's bilateral relations with Somalia extend beyond humanitarian aid and security cooperation to encompass large-scale, long-term investments in economic collaboration and state-building initiatives.

Political relations

Identity and perceptions

Turkey seeks to cultivate a strong perception of Somalia by emphasizing its historical ties to the Ottoman Empire and its Muslim identity (Kavas, 2018). Within this

framework, as Aras and Akpınar (2017) argue, Turkey aims to build a partnership grounded in a shared Muslim identity by leveraging these historical ties, especially in Somalia (137-158).

Similarly, Doğan (2020), notes that one of the main elements of Turkey's soft power strategy in Somalia is to evoke the Ottoman period and highlight its Muslim identity (87-108). These strategies are seen as part of Turkey's efforts to present itself as a friendly and allied Muslim nation in the region. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire's interest in East Africa in the 16th century and its influence in the region provide historical depth to Turkey's relationship with Somalia, playing a significant role in Turkey's current foreign policy and legitimizing its presence in Somalia. In this context, Turkey's humanitarian aid and development projects reinforce norms of peace and cooperation (Demirtaş, 2020).

Turkey has garnered attention for its humanitarian aid activities in Africa, particularly in Somalia. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Somalia following the 2011 drought and famine is seen as a pivotal moment in relations between the two countries. This visit underscored Turkey's sensitivity to humanitarian crises in Somalia and its commitment to provide assistance. Erdoğan's visit had a positive impact on the Somali people, enhancing Turkey's image in the region (Smith and Ahmed, 2021). Following this visit, Turkey launched a major humanitarian aid operation in Somalia, further strengthening the favorable perception of Turkey among the Somali population.

Turkey's humanitarian aid and development projects in Somalia have provided not only emergency relief but also long-term development initiatives. Turkish companies and institutions have made substantial contributions to improving Somalia's infrastructure, education, and health services, especially through projects implemented by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) (Kurt, 2023). These projects have made Turkey's presence in Somalia sustainable and reinforced the positive perception of Turkey among Somalis. Additionally, Turkey's Muslim identity resonates with the majority of Somali society, enhancing its legitimacy in the region. Turkey's extensive assistance to Somalia is based on the principles of religious brotherhood and solidarity, which appeal to Somalia's Muslim population and deepen the bilateral relationship.

However, there are concerns that Turkey's emphasis on its Muslim identity could potentially foster sectarian divisions within Somalia or empower specific political groups at the expense of national unity. In this regard, Huliaras et al. (2016:603-1620) discuss how some local actors in Somalia perceive Turkey's emphasis on its Muslim identity, and they highlight concerns that this emphasis may exacerbate sectarian divisions or favor certain political groups.

Turkey's educational and cultural projects contribute to a positive perception in Somalia, particularly by

supporting the education of younger generations through the establishment of schools and educational institutions in the country. A notable example is the Somalia Mogadishu Recep Tayyip Erdogan Vocational School of Health Services, which began formal education in Mogadishu with a Turkish Language Preparatory Program in 2016 (uhs.edu.tr, 2024). These educational projects positively impact the Somali youth and strengthen cultural ties between the two countries. In conclusion, Turkey's identity and perception-building efforts in Somalia are manifested through historical ties, humanitarian aid activities, development projects, and cultural initiatives. These efforts enhance Turkey's favorable perception and contribute to the deepening of bilateral relations. However, there are criticisms suggesting that Turkey's involvement in the education sector may be viewed as an attempt to shape the ideological leanings of future Somali leaders, potentially fostering a dependency on Turkish political and economic support. In this regard, Barnes (2016) examines Turkey's soft power strategy in Somalia, discussing how educational activities influence Somalia's political and ideological structure. He critiques Turkey's educational investments as having the potential to increase Turkey's political influence and shape the ideological orientations of future Somali leaders, and he assesses how such programs may impact Somalia's political independence and economic development (Barnes, 2016).

Norms and values

Turkey promotes democratic values and norms of good governance in Somalia (Kurt, 2023). In this context, Turkey's foreign policy toward Somalia aims to enhance stability and strengthen democratic governance systems in the region.

Turkey's diplomatic presence in Somalia, including its embassy in Mogadishu, represents important steps toward realizing this goal. As one of the 44 Turkish embassies in Africa, the embassy in Mogadishu institutionalizes Turkey's presence in Somalia and strengthens political ties between the two countries (Özkan, 2021). Moreover, the Turkish government's political support for the Somali government has significantly contributed to the democratization process in the country, particularly during Somalia's transition from a transitional government to a federal structure. Turkey has provided technical assistance for electoral processes in Somalia and, through election observation missions, has helped ensure that elections are conducted transparently and fairly. These contributions serve to establish democratic norms in Somalia and enhance the credibility of electoral processes (Smith and Ahmed, 2021). However, some observers have raised concerns about Turkey's alignment with specific political groups, which could lead to accusations of partiality in its support for

democratic processes. For instance, Ylönen analyzes Turkey's strategic engagement in Somalia, focusing on how its relations with certain political groups can negatively affect perceptions of neutrality. In this critical study, Ylönen argues that Turkey's close ties with specific political factions may hinder its image as an equal partner across the country, potentially weakening its long-term influence (Ylönen, 2019:423-442a).

Turkey's efforts to promote good governance norms in Somalia have been supported by institutional capacity-building projects. These projects, primarily implemented through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), aim not only to strengthen public administration and law enforcement but also to establish norms of transparency, accountability, and effective governance in Somalia (Kurt, 2023). Additionally, Turkey's diplomatic presence in Somalia plays a key role in reinforcing political relations between the two countries. As previously mentioned, the Turkish embassy in Mogadishu serves as an important center for conducting diplomatic relations and coordinating development and humanitarian aid projects in the region. This diplomatic presence is a crucial tool for Turkey to achieve its long-term strategic goals in Somalia (Özkan, 2021).

In light of this information, it can be argued that Turkey's efforts to promote democratic values and good governance norms in Somalia contribute to peace and stability in the region. Turkey supports peace-building and counter-terrorism efforts within Somalia and collaborates with the Somali government in these processes. Undoubtedly, Turkey's support for peace initiatives in Somalia enhances political stability and strengthens democratic governance systems (Kavas, 2018). Furthermore, Turkey's training and capacity-building projects also contribute to the dissemination and entrenchment of democratic norms by increasing the capacity of local governments and civil society organizations.

Military relations

Analyzing the military relations between Turkey and Somalia is crucial for understanding the depth, scope, and impact of strategic cooperation between the two countries. Turkey's military support and training in Somalia have a direct effect on regional security dynamics and enhance Somalia's national security capacity. Moreover, as these relations are viewed as part of Turkey's strategy to increase its influence in Africa, they also play a critical role in shaping regional and international politics.

Security cooperation

Turkey is strengthening its security cooperation through

its military presence in Somalia. In this regard, the TURKSOM military training base, established in Mogadishu in 2017, plays a crucial role in training and equipping Somali security forces (Kavas, 2018). TURKSOM is one of Turkey's largest military training facilities abroad and was created to enhance the capacity and professionalism of the Somali army. The base is vital in bolstering Somalia's counter-terrorism capabilities, particularly in the fight against al-Shabaab, which presents serious challenges to the country. International support is essential for Somalia's battle against terrorism, and Turkey provides comprehensive training to Somali security forces through TURKSOM, enhancing their counter-terrorism skills (Görmez, 2023). The training at TURKSOM encompasses not only military skills but also modern warfare techniques, strategic planning, and logistical support.

These comprehensive programs enable Somalia's security forces to operate more effectively and in a coordinated manner. Furthermore, Turkey's military training assistance contributes to achieving Somalia's long-term security and stability goals (Kavas, 2018). Turkey's military cooperation with Somalia is also part of international efforts to ensure regional security and stability. In addition to supporting Somalia's security forces, Turkey collaborates with other international actors to create a comprehensive security network, effectively addressing Somalia's security needs (Smith and Ahmed, 2021). Moreover, Turkey's military presence fosters deeper strategic relations between the two countries, paving the way for strong ties not only in security but also in diplomatic and economic spheres. In this way, Turkey's military presence in Somalia reinforces the relationship of trust between the two countries and enhances the Somali people's positive perception of Turkey (Özkan, 2021). In conclusion, this military assistance contributes to achieving Somalia's long-term security objectives and serves to deepen the strategic relationship between the two countries.

Defense and security agreements

The Maritime Security Agreement between Turkey and Somalia, signed in February 2024 for duration of ten years, aims to significantly strengthen defense and economic cooperation between the two countries. The agreement grants Turkey full authority to control and secure Somalia's territorial waters and enables it to undertake tasks such as monitoring maritime security operations, assisting in rebuilding Somalia's navy, and combating illegal fishing activities. Additionally, the agreement allows Turkish companies to exploit 30% of the resources extracted from Somalia's Blue Water Economic Zone (Yılmaz, 2024).

Under the agreement, Turkish naval forces will contribute to regional security by patrolling the region's

territorial waters and coastline to help Somalia combat terrorism, piracy, and illegal fishing. This comprehensive security assistance seeks to enhance the country's coastal security, develop its maritime resources, and contribute to the protection of Somalia's national independence and border security, as well as support the uninterrupted continuation of the state-building process. Furthermore, the agreement establishes a joint naval force between Somalia and Turkey to protect Somali territorial waters (Kaya, 2024).

Another significant aspect of the agreement is the cooperation in rebuilding and modernizing the Somali navy by the Turkish Naval Forces Command. By strengthening the Somali navy through training and equipment, Turkey is helping Somalia ensure its maritime security. This cooperation enhances Somalia's national security capacity and contributes to regional stability (Görmez, 2023).

Under the Maritime Security Agreement, Turkey and Somalia have agreed to organize joint naval exercises and exchange information and experiences related to maritime security. These joint exercises and training collaborations will not only strengthen Turkey's military presence in the region but also enhance Somalia's maritime capabilities, fostering a strong military partnership based on trust between the two countries (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

This agreement in the field of defense and security reinforces Turkey's role in the region and contributes to its perception as a reliable strategic partner in the international arena. Turkey's cooperation with Somalia serves as a model for other countries in the region and increases its influence on regional security issues as well (Özkan, 2021).

Additionally, the agreement aims to ensure the security of maritime trade routes in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea region while increasing the economic benefits derived from Somalia's marine resources. In this way, Turkey promotes the sustainable use of Somalia's maritime resources and provides technical and logistical support to Somalia in this respect (Yılmaz, 2024).

Economic relations and infrastructure projects

Turkey has strengthened its economic presence in Somalia through development and infrastructure projects, significantly contributing to the country's economic development and stability. These projects provide not only short-term humanitarian aid but also support the long-term sustainable development goals of the Somali population. The modernization of Mogadishu Airport is one of the most tangible examples of Turkey's development initiatives in Somalia. Completed in 2013, this modernization project greatly improved the airport's infrastructure and enhanced Mogadishu's suitability for international flights. As Somalia's gateway to the world,

this project has helped boost the country's economy and increase international trade (Demirtaş, 2020). For Turkey, the modernization of the airport has also improved the positive perception of its presence in Somalia and strengthened its image in the region.

Other significant Turkish development projects in Somalia include the construction of hospitals, schools, and roads. Turkey aims to improve the quality of health services by establishing modern hospitals and health centers in the country.

The Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Training and Research Hospital, which opened in 2015, is one of the most modern healthcare facilities in Somalia and provides quality health services to the region's population. This hospital is a key indicator of Turkey's contribution to Somalia's health infrastructure and is highly appreciated by the Somali people (Kurt, 2023).

In addition to these investments, Turkey has significant initiatives in education. The schools operated by the Turkish Maarif Foundation offer education to thousands of students in Somalia, contributing to the improvement of the population's educational level. For example, the Somali Maarif Schools, regarded as the most successful in the country, provide education in Hargeisa and Mogadishu, serving 1,200 students across three campuses (Maarif Foundation, 2024). These educational projects positively influence the young population's perception of Turkey and strengthen the cultural ties between the two countries (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

As part of developing commercial relations between the two countries, Turkish construction companies are undertaking important infrastructure projects in Somalia, including roads, bridges, ports, and other critical elements.

These investments in the construction sector are fundamental to Somalia's economic development and enhance the country's transport and logistics capacity. Additionally, employing local labor in these projects enables the Somali people to contribute directly to economic development (Demirtaş, 2020).

Simultaneously, Turkish energy companies are carrying out various projects to develop Somalia's energy infrastructure. These initiatives increase energy supply and ensure energy security in Somalia (Özkan, 2021:236-254).

Investments in renewable energy sources help Somalia achieve its sustainable development goals and reinforce Turkey's environmental responsibility in the region. This cooperation in the energy sector contributes to the deepening of economic relations between the two countries (Kurt, 2023).

In addition to business investment, flights organized by Turkish Airlines (THY) to Mogadishu, the region's main transport artery, significantly contribute to opening Somalia to the world. THY was the first international airline to launch regular flights to Mogadishu in 2012, facilitating Somalia's integration into the global economy

and increasing the country's foreign trade volume. THY's flights not only support economic coordination but also enhance humanitarian aid and development activities as elements of soft power, thereby increasing Turkey's influence in Somalia (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

The volume of trade between Turkey and Somalia has been steadily increasing in recent years, thanks to both private sector investment and the diplomatic efforts associated with flights that integrate Somalia into the global economy. Turkish companies export various products to Somalia, meeting the country's needs and providing the Somali market with high-quality goods. At the same time, imports from Somalia to Turkey contribute to the balanced development of economic relations between the two countries. These trade relations increase interdependence between the economies and promote long-term economic cooperation (Demirtaş, 2020).

Turkey and Somalia have signed several agreements to enhance mutual economic cooperation. The first initiative was the Turkey-Somalia Business Forum organized by Deik within the framework of the "Friends of Somalia Conference," which has fostered mutual economic relations since that period (Deik, 2024). These agreements facilitate the flow of trade and investment between the two countries and ensure the development of economic relations within an institutional framework. The trade agreements provide opportunities for Turkish companies to invest in Somalia and support economic development projects, thereby strengthening economic ties and helping Somalia achieve its sustainable development goals (Kaya, 2024).

Undoubtedly, the activities of Turkish companies in Somalia contribute directly to the local economy. To this end, the Deik/Turkey-Somalia Business Council was established on September 18, 2015, through an agreement signed between Deik and the Somali Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). The Council has conducted a series of activities, including business forums, delegation visits, meetings, and seminars, to enhance Turkey's economic relations with Somalia (Deik, 2024). In this context, the employment of local labor by Turkish companies in their projects has contributed to revitalizing the local economy, actively engaging the community in economic development, and improving the welfare of the Somali people, whose economy largely relies on agriculture and livestock. This aligns with Turkey's approach to sustainable development in Somalia and is welcomed by local communities (Özkan, 2021).

UAE RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA

Analyzing the relations between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Somalia is crucial for understanding regional security dynamics and economic strategies.

Recently, the UAE's investments and humanitarian assistance in Somalia have contributed to the deepening of economic relations between the two countries. The UAE's strategic investments in infrastructure projects support Somalia's economic development while reinforcing efforts to ensure regional security. In this context, examining the relations between the two countries provides a critical perspective for understanding the balance of power and strategic interactions within the Horn of Africa region.

Political relations

Identity and perceptions

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeks to create a unique perception in Somalia by emphasizing its modern Arab identity and economic power projection (Smith and Ahmed, 2021). The UAE's economic investments and security cooperation in Somalia reinforce this perception and strengthen its strategic position in the country. In this context, the UAE's activities in Somalia are seen as part of its strategy to project its modern Arab identity and economic influence.

The UAE's efforts to build a modern Arab identity in Somalia also strengthen its relations with other Arab countries in the region and enhance Somalia's visibility as part of the Arab world. By emphasizing Arab solidarity and unity in its economic and political projects in Somalia, the UAE aims to create a positive perception among the Somali people (Cherkas and Novytska, 2023).

Undoubtedly, the UAE's economic investments in Somalia play an important role in the development of the country's infrastructure and economy. In particular, the Berbera Port Modernization and Expansion Project is one of the UAE's most notable investments in Somalia. This port project will increase Somalia's maritime trade capacity and contribute to the country's economic development. Such large-scale investments support Somalia's economic growth and strengthen the UAE's economic power projection in the region (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

Security cooperation is another important tool for the UAE in consolidating its strategic presence and modern Arab identity in Somalia. To this end, the UAE provides training and equipment support to Somali security forces, enhancing the country's security capacity. The UAE's support in this area significantly contributes to stability and security in Somalia and enhances the UAE's influence in the region as a whole. Notably, the newly elected President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mahmud, made his first foreign visit to the UAE in 2022, which serves as an indicator of the UAE's political influence in Somalia (mofa.gov.ae, 2022).

The UAE's social projects in Somalia, such as those in education and health, also play an important role in

building a modern Arab identity. By opening schools and health centers, the UAE is increasing access to education and health services for the Somali people. One concrete example is the UAE government's donation of \$50 million to the Somali central government in 2013 to improve schools and health services throughout the country (Wardheernews.com, 2013). These projects support social development in Somalia and reinforce the positive perception of the UAE in humanitarian aid and development fields (Cherkas and Novytska, 2023).

The UAE's activities in Somalia extend beyond its modern Arab identity and economic power projection; they also encompass strategic and geopolitical objectives in the region. In this context, the UAE aims to control and secure maritime trade routes in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean by leveraging Somalia's strategic location. These strategic objectives further strengthen the UAE's military and economic presence in Somalia and shape the geopolitical dynamics of the region (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

Norms and values

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been promoting political stability and security norms in the Somalia region (Sahin, 2019). It is argued that the UAE's political support and security cooperation contribute significantly to maintaining and enhancing stability in Somalia (Abdullahi and Hassan, 2020). The UAE has taken important steps to ensure the political stability of the country through direct political engagement with the Somali government. In this context, the UAE's support for electoral processes and political reforms contributes to Somalia's democratization. Additionally, the opening of the UAE Embassy in Mogadishu institutionalizes diplomatic relations with Somalia and allows for a more systematic approach to cooperation between the two countries. This diplomatic presence serves the UAE's strategic objectives in Somalia and increases its influence in the region (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

The UAE is implementing various projects and programs aimed at promoting stability and security norms in Somalia. These projects include capacity-building activities that contribute to Somalia's internal security and counter-terrorism operations. By providing training and logistical support to Somali security forces, the UAE strengthened the country's security infrastructure and increased its effectiveness in combating terrorism until its military base was closed in 2018.

Furthermore, the UAE's security cooperation is coordinated with other international actors in the region, contributing to peace and stability (Şahin, 2019). Until the closure of its base, the UAE met the training and equipment needs of the Somali security forces, further enhancing Somalia's security capacity (Abdullahi and Hassan, 2020).

In addition to counter-terrorism efforts, the UAE supports stability and security norms through economic and social development projects. Economic development is considered one of the key elements of social stability; therefore, the UAE contributes to economic development through infrastructure projects and investments in health and education in Somalia. These projects promote Somalia's economic growth and improve the welfare of various segments of society.

Moreover, the UAE's social projects aim to enhance the quality of life for the Somali people and ensure long-term social stability (Cherkas and Novytska, 2023). Undoubtedly, the UAE's activities in Somalia also play a vital role in regional security dynamics. In line with its objective of securing maritime trade routes in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the UAE is strengthening security and stability in the region by leveraging Somalia's strategic location. The UAE's focus on maritime security projects and port investments in Somalia is seen as part of these regional security strategies (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

Military relations

Security cooperation

The UAE has a significant military presence in Somalia, and its military training facility in Mogadishu, which operated until 2018, played an important role in training and equipping Somali security forces (Middle East Monitor, 2024). The facility was established to help modernize and professionalize the Somali army and improve Somalia's counter-terrorism capabilities. By providing comprehensive training, the facility enhanced the operational capabilities of security forces and enabled them to operate in a more effective and coordinated manner through instruction in modern military tactics, strategic planning, and logistical support (Smith and Ahmed, 2021). However, political tensions between the two countries in 2018 led to the closure of the military training facility due to the Somali government's confiscation of funds belonging to the UAE government. This development reflects the dynamics of the military relationship between the two countries. Consequently, the confiscation of funds and the closure of the military facility weakened security cooperation between the UAE and Somalia and increased tensions in their military relations. This situation highlights the challenges facing the sustainability of the UAE's military presence and security cooperation within Somali territory (Middle East Monitor, 2024).

The UAE's security cooperation in Somalia is not limited to military training and hardware support; it also includes areas such as intelligence sharing and logistical assistance. For example, through the intelligence support it provides to Somali security forces, the UAE plays an

active role in planning and executing counter-terrorism operations. Additionally, by offering logistical support, the UAE enhances the operational capacity of Somali security forces and strengthens their effectiveness in the field (Middle East Monitor, 2024). Undoubtedly, the UAE's military presence in Somalia aims to achieve its geopolitical objectives in the region and ensure the security of maritime trade routes in the Indian Ocean. These strategic objectives increase the significance of the UAE's military presence in Somalia and emphasize the need to consolidate its influence in the region (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

In conclusion, while the UAE's military presence and security cooperation in Somalia play an important role in enhancing the country's security capacity and counter-terrorism efforts, the closure of the military training facility in Mogadishu in 2018 is a significant development that reflects the dynamics of the military relationship between the two countries. This situation underscores the challenges to the sustainability of the UAE's military presence in Somalia and highlights the necessity of ensuring the continuity of security cooperation.

Defense and security agreements

The UAE's security agreements with the Somali government cover several areas aimed at ensuring Somalia's internal security. Under these agreements, the UAE provides training, equipment, and logistical support to Somali security forces. These training programs help the forces become proficient in modern warfare techniques and strategic planning, improving their operational capabilities. The UAE's support enhances Somalia's effectiveness in combating terrorism and ensuring its internal security (Abdullahi and Hassan, 2020). Overall, these security agreements contribute to Somalia's internal stability and increase the counter-terrorism capacity of the security forces.

However, the fact that the same security arrangements are also in place with other local governments affiliated with the Somali central government deserves attention for its impact on regional dynamics. The UAE extends these security agreements not only to Mogadishu but also to autonomous regions such as Somaliland, which significantly affects the security dynamics in the region and creates dissatisfaction in the eyes of the Somali central government. In this context, the security agreements with the autonomous Somaliland region meet the training and equipment needs of Somaliland's security forces and enhance the internal security of the region. Furthermore, the UAE's port and maritime security project in Somaliland is an important step toward ensuring the security of maritime trade routes (Reliefweb, 2018).

The UAE's Berbera Port project with Somaliland is one of the most prominent examples of these security

agreements. The project involves the modernization and expansion of the port and the provision of port security. Through this port project, the UAE aims to enhance the security of maritime trade routes in the Indian Ocean and promote economic development in the region. However, this situation has provoked negative reactions from the Somali central government, which perceives it as a threat to its national sovereignty, leading to a crisis of trust between the two countries.

It is crucial that this study addresses these issues within the context of the rivalry between Turkey and the UAE, as the main theme of the article is to highlight the implications of this rivalry by examining the positive and negative aspects of the involvement of two significant regional actors, Turkey and the UAE, in Somalia.

Economic relations and infrastructure projects

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is seeking to strengthen its economic presence in Somalia through development and infrastructure projects. By investing in this area, the UAE is not only promoting economic growth in Somalia but also increasing its strategic influence in the region. One of the most tangible examples of the UAE's economic engagements in Somalia is the transfer of the operating rights of the Berbera port to the UAE-owned company DP World (Cherkas and Novytska, 2023). This project involves the modernization and expansion of the port, significantly increasing Somalia's maritime trade capacity. Additionally, the modernization of the port has elevated Somalia's strategic importance and facilitated the country's integration into global trade networks (Smith and Ahmed, 2021).

Within the framework of its health investments in the region, the UAE has built two hospitals in Somalia: the Sheikh

Zayed Hospital in Mogadishu and a specialist women's hospital in Berbera (Reliefweb, 2021). These hospitals are part of the UAE's initiatives to support Somalia's health sector and are among the most tangible examples of this support. In addition to health sector projects, the UAE invests heavily in Somalia's education sector. UAE aid agencies have played a crucial role in building several schools and promoting education in the country. These initiatives aim to address the infrastructural deficiencies of existing schools, improve the quality of education, and enhance educational opportunities for children in the region. UAE philanthropic organizations work to increase educational access by building schools in various villages and towns in Somalia. These projects are designed to meet the needs of the local population and include providing financial support for educational materials and necessary resources.

A concrete example of the UAE's health diplomacy in Somalia is the Digital School Project in East Africa, a hybrid education initiative conducted in partnership with

the World Food Programme (WFP) (WFP.org, 2023). The UAE is also implementing projects to develop Somalia's energy infrastructure. These projects include upgrading Somalia's power grid, establishing power generation facilities, investing in renewable energy solar projects, and improving energy distribution networks. These energy initiatives aim to ensure Somalia's energy security and reduce energy costs, enabling the development of the industrial and agricultural sectors to meet urgent energy needs and promote overall economic growth (Cherkas and Novytska, 2023).

Somalia's energy sector is completely decentralized, consisting largely of small privately-owned power companies that have developed in an unregulated government environment, each operating mini-grids to meet the electricity needs of their communities (Chen and Aynte, 2022). The lack of electricity infrastructure in rural areas, coupled with the reliance on small-scale diesel and generator-based operations, disrupts the social needs of the local population, such as education and shelter. The UAE's investment in this field and its efforts to develop the alternative energy sector are vital for Somali society in meeting basic needs and improving infrastructure. In this regard, the joint agreement between the UAE and Somalia to develop the energy and mining sectors, implemented in 2024, exemplifies this commitment. The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) has made significant strides in developing Somalia's energy infrastructure with the inauguration of a newly funded solar power project, which has delivered an impressive 3.5 megawatts of generation capacity focused on meeting the power needs of Bosaso, the vibrant commercial center of Puntland State (Africa Energy Council, 2024).

DISCUSSION

The conceptual framework of this study, based on constructivist theory, is clearly linked to the practical aspects of Turkey and the UAE's policies in Somalia. Constructivism emphasizes that state behavior is shaped by social identities, norms, and perceptions rather than material interests. In this regard, this theoretical framework can be directly applied to compare Turkey and the UAE's engagement in the political, security, and normative domains. For example, Turkey's emphasis on humanitarian aid, development projects, and military training in Somalia is deeply connected to its identity as a Muslim-majority nation with historical ties to the region, which is a central element of the constructivist approach.

These considerations stem from Turkey's normative goal of promoting peace and development, which it leverages to shape its image as a cooperative regional power.

On the other hand, the UAE's focus on security cooperation and direct economic investment, such as

port management agreements, reflects its strategic goal of maintaining a modern Arab identity and ensuring regional stability. This form of engagement aligns with the constructivist approach, where norms such as security and stability drive state behavior and influence international relations accordingly. In other words, the link between theory and practice becomes clearer as these actions are explicitly tied to the social and normative structures outlined in the constructivist framework. The parameters used to theoretically compare the two countries' engagement in the region—such as political influence, security cooperation, and normative values—are derived from an exploration of how both states project their identities and pursue their normative goals in Somalia. Thus, the findings provide a coherent and well-integrated analysis of the competition between Turkey and the UAE in the region.

The evaluation in the previous paragraphs demonstrates that the findings from this study reveal a multidimensional understanding of the Turkey-UAE rivalry in Somalia and its broader implications for regional dynamics. By applying constructivist theory, it becomes evident that the rivalry between these two regional powers is not solely about material interests or strategic dominance; it also has deep bilateral roots in the region's identity, norms, and social perceptions.

As noted earlier, the competition between Turkey and the UAE in Somalia exemplifies how international relations are shaped by factors beyond mere power politics. Another significant aspect of this example is that it encompasses cultural, historical, and ideological factors that influence the behavior and decision-making of the actors involved, within the framework of the conceptual approach presented above.

One of the key findings is the identification of how Turkey's engagement in Somalia, rooted in its historical ties to the Ottoman Empire and its Muslim identity, has evolved into strong mutual relations through humanitarian aid, infrastructure projects, and soft power diplomacy. These findings align with constructivist theory, which posits that the identities and values projected by nations shape their interactions on the global stage. Turkey's self-presentation as a benevolent actor promoting peace and cooperation in the region exemplifies a strategic soft power approach that has effectively garnered the favor of local actors in Somalia. This supports Wendt's (1999) assertion that international politics is socially constructed. Accordingly, Turkey's role in Somalia is closely linked not only to the material aid it provides but also to how it is perceived by local communities.

In contrast, the UAE's emphasis on stability and security, combined with its modern Arab identity and economic strength, reflects a different set of norms and values. The UAE has concentrated on port development, security cooperation, and investment, underscoring its identity as a modern and stable regional power. This divergence in the two countries' approaches to the region

is significant, as it highlights how norms can shape foreign policy strategies differently, even when the ultimate goal—regional influence—remains the same. According to Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) model of norm dynamics, the UAE seeks to reshape the regional order by embedding norms of security and stability that align with its broader geopolitical objectives. However, the UAE's support for the independence of the disputed autonomous region of Somaliland through port agreements has created tensions with Somalia's central government in Mogadishu. This situation underscores how foreign interventions based on economic and security norms can sometimes fragment local political structures.

The findings also challenge the assumption that regional power dynamics are driven solely by economic or military competition. As demonstrated in this study, identity politics and normative influence play crucial roles in shaping local perceptions and alliances, thereby affecting regional politics and international relations. While Turkey positions itself as a long-term partner through development assistance and cultural ties, some critics point to its close relationships with certain political groups, which could potentially undermine its neutrality in Somalia in the long run (Barnes, 2016). These criticisms echo the arguments of scholars such as Hopf (2002), who emphasize the complex interplay between identity and foreign policy in shaping international relations. These considerations raise questions about the sustainability of Turkey's long-term influence in Somalia, especially if its identity as a neutral actor is jeopardized.

The study also found that local actors in Somalia played an active role in interpreting and responding to the norms and identity projections implemented by Turkey and the UAE in the region. These findings highlight the importance of constructivist perspectives in understanding not only the hierarchical, top-down imposition of norms by powerful states but also how these norms are perceived and internalized by local actors. Ultimately, the findings suggest that local elites in Somalia consider Turkey a more reliable partner due to its emphasis on humanitarian aid and religious solidarity, while the UAE is perceived as more pragmatic and security-oriented, particularly because of its focus on strategic investments, especially port infrastructure endeavors in various parts of Somalia.

In the final analysis, it can be seen that both Turkey and the UAE are competing to increase their influence in the region through their respective normative engagements, while also shaping the regional order by incorporating different sets of norms and values into their foreign policy strategies. A detailed examination from a constructivist perspective helps explain what these normative engagements are and why they have such a significant impact on local perceptions and political outcomes in Somalia. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the competition between Turkey and the UAE is not

solely a conflict over resources or power projection in the region but also a competition to define the social structures and identities that will shape the future of Somalia.

CONCLUSION

Due to its geopolitical and geostrategic importance, the Horn of Africa has recently become a focal point for international actors and a field of competition. Somalia is undoubtedly one of the regional countries most affected by this international competition. The main reason for this situation is that Somalia has not yet completed its social recovery and state-building processes due to the disintegration and civil war that began in 1991. Geographically located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia occupies a strategic position controlling the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, boasting an approximately 3,000 km coastline. Given its geographical location and strategic characteristics, it is one of the primary countries in the region where regional and international actors seek to establish partnerships.

As countries with historical and cultural ties to the Somali people, Turkey and the UAE are two regional actors that develop partnership relations by leveraging these ties. In this context, they are engaged in intense competition in the region, which has repercussions on regional dynamics and Somalia's domestic and foreign politics. A key component of these dynamics is the norms and values that influence and shape international relations.

The main objective of this study was to examine the rivalry between the two countries in Somalia through the lens of the norms and values that shape international relations, while also analyzing its effects on regional dynamics. Additionally, understanding the perception of the UAE-Turkey rivalry in the eyes of local actors and assessing the position of both countries within the scope of their influence in the region was another priority of the research.

As highlighted previously, the main aim of this study was not only to analyze the rivalry between the two countries in Somalia within a *realpolitik* framework. Instead, it sought to explore this rivalry in a multidimensional and conceptual context, providing a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. In this regard, the analysis of the UAE-Turkey rivalry serves as an important example for understanding how international relations are shaped by social structures, identities, and norms, as emphasized in constructivist theory. This approach contributes to the theoretical conceptualization that stresses the importance of evaluating international relations not only through material interests and power balances but also within the framework of historical, cultural, and religious ties, norms, and perceptions.

In this context, the *realpolitik* approach and the

conceptual framework complements each other throughout the study. The research examines the effects of the economic, political, and military rivalry between these two regional actors on regional dynamics and the norms and values that this rivalry reveals. Additionally, it explores how these aspects are reflected in the perceptions and approaches of local actors toward Turkey and the UAE.

The focus of the research questions examined within the theoretical framework of the study was to investigate the norms and values shaping the political, military, and economic relations that Turkey and the UAE have implemented in Somalia. Additionally, the study analyzed how local actors perceive Turkey and the UAE and how these perceptions affect political processes in Somalia. Finally, the impact of the rivalry between Turkey and the UAE on Somalia's internal dynamics and regional balances was also examined. As a result, it has been observed that the engagements of both countries in the region influence local dynamics, norms, and values, which, in turn, affect the international relations of the involved actors. Furthermore, it has been noted that local actors and policymakers are also impacted by this rivalry, shaping Somalia's domestic and foreign politics. In other words, these norms and values shape the perceptions of local actors and determine the influence of these two countries in the Somali region.

The study's hypothesis—that the engagement of Turkey and the UAE in Somalia should be assessed not solely through material interests and balance of power considerations, but also through historical, cultural, and religious ties, as well as norms and perceptions—has been substantiated by the analyses and empirical data presented. As an intriguing example of international rivalry in a specific region, the findings of the study confirm that the proposed perspective significantly enhances the theoretical understanding of how social structures and norms influence the shaping of international relations. Moreover, the study has enabled a more in-depth analysis of the Turkey-UAE rivalry in Somalia and its effects on regional dynamics within a conceptual framework.

However, this study is not without limitations, with the most significant challenge being the reliance on secondary sources and publicly available data to capture recent developments in Somalia. Access to real-time data, particularly on local perceptions and the changing nature of international agreements, remains constrained by the complex security situation and political instability in Somalia. Future research could benefit from more extensive fieldwork or access to insider sources within Somalia to provide a more detailed and up-to-date understanding of the competition. Furthermore, studies that track the evolving nature of both countries' engagements and competition in Somalia over time will offer valuable analyses of the sustainability of these policies and how local actors adapt to these new

dynamics.

Admittedly, future research will have the opportunity to examine in greater depth how the Turkey-UAE rivalry may develop as new global actors expand their influence in Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa region. This potential shift may reshape the dynamics of regional power competition, introduce new balances, and potentially intensify the competition between Turkey and the UAE over the Somali region and its surroundings. Accordingly, these new external interactions may compel Turkey and the UAE to reconsider their strategies for engaging with the region in light of the new balance of power projections. Furthermore, the role of other emerging powers in the region has not yet been sufficiently explored and requires further research to provide a detailed analysis.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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