

Department of Political Science
Master's Degree in International Relations

Master's Thesis in War and Crisis Management

Statecraft in the DIMEF Framework:
A Comparative Analysis of the Foreign Policy
Strategies of Italy and Türkiye
in Somalia and Kenya

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Academic Year 2024/2025

*To the human desire for knowledge
and the resolve never to stop learning*

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes much to the guidance and support of my advisors, colleagues, friends, and family members. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Professor Ciocca, for the valuable advice and the insightful discussions that shaped this thesis's topic and sustained the writing process. Without his teaching on the DIMEFIL framework, this thesis would not have been possible. I also thank Dr. Pertosa for his steady presence and valuable methodological advice. I am equally thankful to my co-supervisor, Professor Giuseppe Scognamiglio, and his Assistant, Dr. Magnasco, for incisive feedback at every stage and prompt help.

I am grateful to my closest friends for the exchange of ideas that animate our evenings and our friendship. I also thank my colleagues at the NATO Defense College Foundation for being a source of valuable opinions and advice, and for welcoming me immediately as if I had always been part of the team. I thank Sciences Po Professors and LUISS friends who contributed to making my time in Paris a fundamental stage in both my academic and personal growth. I thank my colleagues at "my" university newspaper for making my studies even more inspiring and supporting me during my term as Editor-in-Chief. Thanks as well to all who, over these years, contributed to my growth as an individual.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my parents, Barbara and Corrado, and to my sister, Giada, for their constant support and encouragement. Without their patience and faith in me, this work would not have been possible.

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List of Abbreviations

AICS - Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

AISE - External Intelligence and Security Agency

AISI - Internal Intelligence and Security Agency

AKP - Justice and Development Party

ASI - Italian Space Agency

AU - African Union

CDP - Cassa Depositi e Prestiti

CMC - Combined Maritime Forces

CSD - Supreme Council of Defense

CTF - Combined Task Force

DC - Christian Democracy

DIS - Security Intelligence Department

DoD - Department of Defense

DPP - Multi-Year Defense Planning Document 2024-2026

EEZ - Economic Exclusive Zone

EIB - European Investment Bank

FPA - Foreign Policy Analysis

GCAP - Global Combat Air Programme

GNU - Government of National Unity

IMF - International Monetary Fund

IsDB - Islamic Development Bank

MBT - Main Battle Tank

MEF - Ministry of Economic and Finance

MGK - National Security Council

MIT - National Intelligence Organization

MOA - Military Operations Abroad

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

ODA - Official Development Assistance

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OIC - Organization of the Islamic Conference

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PKK - Kurdistan Workers' Party

PMC - Private Military Company

SAF - Somali Armed Forces

SFPC - Security and Foreign Policy Committee

TAP - Trans-Adriatic Pipeline

TDF - Türkiye Diyanet Foundation

TIKA - Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency

TMF - Turkish Maarif Foundation

TMFA - Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

TPAO - Turkish Petroleum Corporation

TRNC - Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

TSK - Turkish Armed Forces

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WEU - Western European Union

WFP - World Food Programme

WTO - World Trade Organization

YTB - Presidency of the Turks Abroad and Related Communities

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The present international order is experiencing growing instability. There are numerous causes. The emergence of new conflicts, from Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar; coups d'états, such as those witnessed in the Sahel; the actions of non-state actors, from terrorist groups linked to ISIS and Al Qaeda in Africa to the Houthis and Hezbollah in the Middle East; and hybrid warfare activities conducted by state actors such as Russia, China, and Iran represent significant examples. The boundary between war and peace increasingly lies in a gray zone, where cross-domain, hybrid, and deniable instruments blur the distinction between conventional and unconventional domains. Furthermore, the number of democracies is decreasing: according to the Democracy Index, in 2024, the number of countries classified as democracies decreased by three compared with 2023 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2025).

In this context, the actions of middle powers play a significant role in the regional balance of power. Italy and Türkiye exemplify this dynamic. On the one hand, Italy and Türkiye differ in regime type: Italy is a democracy, whereas Türkiye is a hybrid regime. This produces significant differences in governance, risk tolerance, and approach. On the other hand, Italy and Türkiye share relevant commonalities. From a status standpoint, both countries are middle powers, while from a geographic perspective, both are peninsular states with a natural maritime orientation toward the Mediterranean. From an international standpoint, both Italy and Türkiye are members of NATO and the G20, host relevant US bases on their territory, and consider the Middle East and the African continent as priority areas. Indeed, Ankara and Rome are both involved in many common contexts, such as Libya, the Balkans, and the Sahel. At times, there is scope for cooperation between these two states; at others, their interests diverge and compete with each other. Due to this divergence in regime type but similarity in the contexts of their action, whether the regime type influences statecraft (hereafter, the integration of DIMEF instruments) within the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye remains an open question. This leads to the first research question of this study: How does regime type influence middle powers' employment and integration of DIMEF instruments within their foreign and security strategies? Concurrently, the spread of instability across many countries worldwide produces considerably different conditions of engagement for middle powers. Against this backdrop, the second research question is: Under stable versus unstable conditions in the country of

engagement, how does regime type affect the policy effectiveness of middle powers? To address these two research questions, this study advances two hypotheses.

The first hypothesis posits that middle powers with a hybrid regime are expected to exhibit a more centralized integration of DIMEF instruments, characterized by faster decision-making, greater blending of conventional and non-conventional instruments within each DIMEF dimension, less distinct boundaries among state institutions, companies, agencies, and private contractors, and a higher tendency to employ military force in bilateral frameworks. By contrast, democratic middle powers are expected to display a more institutionalized and rules-based integration of DIMEF instruments, characterized by a lower reliance on non-conventional instruments, the involvement of multiple institutional actors (including oversight bodies) in the foreign and security policy decision-making process, and employment of military force mostly under multilateral mandates. The second hypothesis posits that under stable conditions in the country of engagement, democratic middle powers are expected to achieve higher effectiveness than middle powers with a hybrid regime. Conversely, under unstable conditions in the country of engagement, middle powers with a hybrid regime are expected to display higher effectiveness than democratic middle powers. Both the first and the second hypotheses apply to democratic middle powers that are not subject to a continuous, proximate existential threat. Under such conditions, even democratic middle powers are expected to display a more centralized DIMEF integration, also characterized by a cross-domain combination of conventional and non-conventional instruments.

1.2 Literature Review

This study lies at the intersection of three strands of academic literature: studies on middle powers; studies on the influence of regime type on a state's foreign and security policy; and studies on the integration of DIMEFIL instruments. The concept of middle power has been the subject of numerous studies in the field of International Relations. However, a consensus on what a middle power is has not been reached. Building upon the elements outlined by Diodato and Marchetti (2023), this study considers a middle power as a State that sustains an enduring external projection, supported by economic, military, historical, and cultural capacities commensurate with such a projection, yet without the comprehensive global reach of great powers. A broad academic literature classifies Italy and Türkiye as middle powers. Throughout its history, Italy's role has constantly oscillated between categories. This led Bosworth and Romano (1991) to describe it as either the last of the great powers or the first of small powers. However, the definition of Italy as a middle power is now widely accepted, as reflected in Andreatta (2001), Chelotti (2010), Aspenia (2015), Siddi (2018), Dentice

and Donelli (2021), Diodato and Marchetti (2023), with a few exceptions (Fossati, 2008; Giacomello & Verbeek, 2011). Similarly, numerous studies classify Türkiye as a middle power (Dal & Kursun, 2016; Oğuzlu & Han, 2023; Sarı & Sula, 2024; Rascaglia, 2024; Mott, 2024). Confirming this status for Ankara, Kutlay and Öniş (2021a, 1091) also highlight an aspiration-capabilities gap: “a gap has emerged between the actual status of the country as a middle power and Erdogan’s idealized conception of it as a global player.”

Having established Italy and Türkiye as middle powers, the second strand of literature to examine is the one that concerns how regime type influences foreign and security behavior. This strand falls within the broader literature on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), which explores the intersections of domestic and international politics. In this context, numerous studies examine the potential impact of a state’s regime type on its external behavior. “Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy” by Schultz (2001) is particularly relevant for our analysis. In his work, Schultz argues that the competition existing in democratic states determines a more limited employment of threats as a means to settle disputes compared to non-democratic counterparts. Furthermore, he also demonstrates that when democracies make these threats, they are more likely to be successful. This aligns with one of this study’s hypotheses that regime type has an impact on the effectiveness of foreign and security policies. In parallel, Sakstrup and Tolstrup (2022) have found that authoritarian regimes are more likely to intervene in civil wars in other countries and more likely to offer combat-intensive support than democratic regimes. This point is particularly significant for this research as it demonstrates that non-democratic regimes are more prone to adopt certain instruments than democracies. More generally, Tansey (2024) concluded that there are foreign policy areas in which authoritarian regimes exhibit a totally distinct course of action compared to democracies, demonstrating that certain foreign policy choices are strictly linked to the domestic regime type.

Nevertheless, Kneuer (2017) notes that the relationship between regime type and foreign policy remains an under-researched field. In particular, Kneuer emphasizes the need for studies investigating the impact of regime type on foreign policy decision-making and the necessity of including regimes other than democracies and autocracies, such as hybrid regimes. This necessity aligns with the purpose of the present research, which analyzes regime type as an independent variable and compares a democratic and a hybrid regime. Indeed, the majority of studies on the relation between regime type and foreign policy, as mentioned above, focus on the dichotomy between democratic and authoritarian regimes. Additionally, comparative studies have addressed subtypes of authoritarian regimes, as seen in Weeks (2014). Yet, these subtypes do not include hybrid regimes, which mix traits characteristic of democracies and autocracies, and constitute a less-researched field. As a result,

hybrid regimes have been examined almost exclusively as individual cases. Furthermore, these analyses have primarily focused on their democratization process or, conversely, their backsliding, rather than the influence of the regime type on the country's external action.

Having outlined the current state of research on how regime type influences the country's foreign and security policies, the review now turns to analyze the main literature on the integration of DIMEFIL instruments. Statecraft has long centered on the DIME framework, which comprises the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic instruments of national power. However, the evolution of the international landscape and the emergence of new challenges and possibilities led to an evolution of this framework. For this reason, in 2020, Rodriguez et al. (2020) supported the conceptual expansion of the DIME framework to the DIMEFIL framework, which included other instruments, that are the Financial, Intelligence, and Lawfare instruments. In their study, they emphasize the need for the integration of these instruments in the US strategy, and define global integration as “the arrangement of cohesive joint force actions in time, space, and purpose, executed as a whole to address transregional, multifunctional challenges across all domains through the seamless integration of multiple elements of national power—diplomacy, information, economics, finance, intelligence, law enforcement and military” (Rodriguez et al., 2020, 122). Concurrently, without directly mentioning the DIMEFIL framework, a report of the Atlantic Council Combatant Command Task Force (2014) analyzed how the US can restructure their approach to improve “the integration of national instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and others—to advance US interests at the regional level”, recognizing the need for a “whole-of-government approach.” Although focused only on the United States (US), both studies are relevant for the present research as they demonstrate that the integration of DIMEFIL instruments is crucial for effective international engagement. Conversely, Gardner et al. (2025) focus on small states, such as Finland and Ireland, and highlight the necessity for these states to face Gray Zone threats by integrating DIMEFIL instruments and adopting a “whole-of-society” approach through the coordination and cooperation of public, private, and civil society sectors. Their study highlights two significant elements: it focuses on the integration of DIMEFIL instruments and specifically examines how small states approach this integration, a field that is underexplored. However, despite dealing with more than one country, this study does not provide a comprehensive comparison between them and does not investigate each dimension of DIMEFIL in a thorough manner, due to its focus on the overall strategy adopted by these states. There are also studies investigating DIMEFIL in relation to international organizations. Ti (2021) applies the DIMEFIL framework to NATO as a supranational entity. His analysis has the merit of providing a specific analysis of each dimension of DIMEFIL applied to an actor, even if not a state. However, it is an exclusively qualitative and single-case analysis. Indeed, comparative

treatment in this field remains rare. One article conducts a three-country case study analysis and supports the need for an integrated approach involving all DIMEFIL instruments (Kimsey et al., 2020). Yet, the three countries, Thailand, Colombia, and the Philippines, are considered as countries of engagement with the US on the topic of security cooperation and are not investigated from the standpoint of the DIMEFIL instruments at their disposal. Furthermore, the analysis treats each case separately rather than undertaking a cross-case comparison.

In conclusion, it is notable that there is a general lack of studies investigating DIMEFIL integration in a comparative manner. Furthermore, the extant literature on DIMEFIL is based on qualitative analysis and does not include quantitative indicators to measure and operationalize the dimensions within this framework. Concurrently, the literature on regime type primarily focuses on single foreign policy areas, rather than the integration of DIMEFIL instruments into the country's general foreign and security strategy. Furthermore, studies on regime type often do not encompass hybrid regimes, limiting the research to the dichotomy between democratic and authoritarian regimes, or subtypes of the latter category. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature through a comparative analysis that combines qualitative and quantitative data on two middle powers (Italy and Türkiye) across two countries of engagement (Somalia and Kenya), which reflect different stability conditions.

1.3 Conceptualization and Key Definitions

Regime Type:

Based on the definition provided by Morlino (1997), by regime type, this study means the set of norms, informal rules, and procedures that establish different forms and methods through which demands are processed and resources allocated, and which structure relations with society. Concretely, the regime comprises the constitution, the government, the representative bodies (where applicable), the relationships among various institutions, the electoral system, and the political organization of civil society (Morlino, 1997).

The classification of regimes is typically based on the following categories: democratic, totalitarian, authoritarian, hybrid, and traditional regimes. In this research, only democratic and hybrid regimes are examined. This study defines the democratic regime and the hybrid regime as follows. Countries are defined as democracies when meeting the following criteria: (i) universal suffrage for men and women; (ii) free, fair, competitive, regular multiparty elections; (iii) respect for basic civil liberties; (iv) presence of diverse and alternative sources of information.

Countries are defined as hybrid regimes when characterized by a combination of some institutions and procedures proper to democracy and some authoritarian aspects, including government pressure on opposition parties and candidates, limited checks on executive power, limited independence of the judiciary, and limited independence of the press, such that electoral competition is real but substantively unfair.

DIMEF Instruments:

In this study, DIMEF instruments refer to the tools of national power that a state can employ, individually or in combination, to pursue its foreign and security strategy. DIMEF stands for Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, and Financial instruments. Although the broader and more diffuse DIMEFIL formulation also encompasses Intelligence and Lawfare instruments, this study excludes these dimensions to ensure measurable indicators and available data for each dimension.

Stable and Unstable Conditions:

In this research, conditions in the country of engagement are defined as stable when, during the period under consideration (2012-2025), all the following criteria are met: (i) constitutional continuity (i.e., no successful coup d'état or extra-constitutional transfer of executive power); (ii) no intra-state armed conflict is ongoing; (iii) no unconsented, sustained¹ territorial control of national territory by a third party. Failure to meet any of these criteria leads to the classification of conditions in the country of engagement as unstable.

Effectiveness:

In this study, “effectiveness” refers to a state’s capacity to achieve successful activities in and relationships with the country of engagement across the various DIMEF dimensions. An activity or relation is classified as successful when it meets the specified criterion of the relevant indicator, that is, when the indicator is triggered by an observed occurrence. Within the established time frame, if State A records a greater number of such occurrences than State B, State A records a higher score

¹ For sustained, here is intended a continuous control of the territory by the third party for a period equal to or greater than six months.

than State B on that relevant indicator. If State A records a higher score on a majority of indicators within the same dimension, State A is considered more effective than State B in that DIMEF dimension. Criteria for the indicators of each DIMEF dimension are reported in their respective sections in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted by the present study is Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). In its intent to bridge International Relations and comparative politics, FPA has the strength to investigate the intersections of domestic and international politics. Empirical evidence of reciprocal influence between domestic and international affairs is ample, as argued by Putnam (1998) in what he defined as “the two-level games”. Indeed, FPA rests on the premise that a state’s action is best explained by examining two aspects: the interplay between its international position and its domestic context, and the interaction between the problem being faced and the character of the decision-making process employed to address it (Hill, 2003). Consequently, FPA provides the mechanisms that link regime type to the integration of DIMEF instruments and, ultimately, to the country’s effectiveness.

In this framework, the nature of the variables in our two hypotheses should be addressed. In the first hypothesis, the mode of employment and integration of DIMEF instruments represent the dependent variable that this study aims to explain. The conditions in the country of engagement represent the intervening variable, whereas the regime type constitutes the independent variable. In the second hypothesis, the state’s effectiveness in the country of engagement is the dependent variable. The conditions in the country of engagement constitute the moderating variable. The regime type represents the independent variable.

1.5 Methodology

This study combines the comparative method with qualitative and quantitative indicators to test the research hypotheses. In particular, the comparison will be based on a most-similar systems research design. The units of analysis are Italy’s foreign and security strategy and Türkiye’s foreign and security strategy. While a general overview of the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye since the establishment of the Republic in each country is provided, the primary time frame is the period from August 2012 to August 2025. During this time frame, the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye are examined across two countries of engagement: Somalia and Kenya. Somalia and Kenya are both coastal states part of the same subregion, the Greater Horn of Africa. Furthermore,

both represented a significant focus for the engagement of Italy and Türkiye with the continent during the period under consideration. However, they present different domestic conditions: Kenya represents the case under stable conditions, whereas Somalia represents the case under unstable conditions. This divergence allows an analysis of how DIMEF instruments are integrated and an evaluation of the regime type's effectiveness under both stable and unstable conditions in the countries of engagement. Finally, the properties under comparison in Italy's and Türkiye's strategies are the dimensions of the DIMEF spectrum: Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic, and Financial. Measurable indicators have been constructed for each of these dimensions. With the exception of the Information dimension, which relies solely on qualitative indicators, all other dimensions include both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Indicator definitions and criteria for each DIMEF dimension are reported in their respective sections in Chapters 3 and 4.

Furthermore, based on the most similar systems research design, explicit definitions of stable and unstable conditions, and the employment of replicable qualitative and quantitative indicators, this study aims to generalize its comparative findings from the analysis of the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye across two cases as countries of engagement, Somalia and Kenya, through the concept of analytical generalization. Unlike statistical generalization, analytical generalization is based on the notion that the results from case-study analysis are generalizable to theoretical propositions rather than populations and universes (Yin, 2018). As a result, from the perspective of analytical generalization, the findings lead to elaboration of theories related to the theoretically specified class of cases, rather than probabilities.

In terms of data and sources, this research uses primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include ministerial and governmental press releases from Italy and Türkiye, documents of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Senate, official websites and web archives of Italian and Turkish government agencies, website news and documents issued by international operations, and European Union documents. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly monographs, reports from leading think-tanks, and news articles from national press agencies. Finally, quantitative indicators draw on two types of sources: pre-existing datasets from UN Comtrade, OECD Data Explorer, and SIPRI, as well as two original datasets constructed by the author from official government websites of Italy and Türkiye, and reputable national press agencies of the same countries.

1.6 Structure of the Study

The present research is structured as follows. Chapter 1 (Introduction) sets the context for the analysis. After the first Section (1.1), which stated the research questions and hypotheses, Section 1.2 reviewed the relevant literature and identified the gap this study aims to address. Section 1.3 defined the key concepts: regime type, DIMEF instruments, stable and unstable conditions, and effectiveness. Section 1.4 presented FPA as the theoretical framework of the present study and specified the variables for each hypothesis. Section 1.5 detailed the comparative design of this research and its combination with qualitative and quantitative indicators for each DIMEF dimension, as well as the time frame and sources.

Chapter 2 analyzes the main features of the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye, highlighting their historical trajectories and institutional frameworks. More specifically, the Chapter comprises two country sections: Section 2.2 on Italy and Section 2.3 on Türkiye. These sections follow a parallel structure, consisting of three subsections. The first examines continuities and discontinuities in the country's foreign policy, including the long-term traits and approaches that have shaped its historical trajectory. The second analyzes the institutional framework for foreign and security policy decision-making, as well as the primary documents that define the country's national security strategy. The third provides an overview of the concrete elements composing each country's DIMEF dimensions. Finally, Section 2.4 compares the strategies of the two countries and offers preliminary conclusions on the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments.

Building on this background, Chapter 3 examines the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments by Italy and Türkiye under unstable conditions in the country of engagement, using Somalia as a case study. After the usual introductory section (3.1), the chapter is organized into four sections and a conclusion. Each section considers different indicators intended to assess the relations between Italy and Somalia, on the one hand, and Türkiye and Somalia, on the other, in each of the DIMEF dimensions. Section 3.2 on Diplomacy considers three indicators: bilateral meetings; bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding; and the diplomatic networks operating in Somalia. Section 3.3 focuses on the Military dimension and considers four indicators: ongoing Somalia-related missions (in the country and its adjacent maritime areas); deployed military personnel in the country; training provided to Somali military and police personnel; the presence of a military base on Somali territory; and transfers of major weapons to the Federal Government of Somalia. Section 3.4 on the Economic-Financial dimension considers three indicators: bilateral trade (import and export); net ODA disbursements to Somalia; and economic strategic footprint. Section 3.5 examines the Information and Cultural Dimension, focusing on three indicators: each state's cultural strategic

footprint; educational cooperation; and agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations. Section 3.6 synthesizes the findings for each dimension and assesses the effectiveness of the foreign and security strategy of Italy and Türkiye under unstable conditions in the country of engagement.

Chapter 4 mirrors Chapter 3 in its structure but analyzes the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments by Italy and Türkiye under stable conditions in the country of engagement, using Kenya as a case study. The structure and indicators replicate those employed in Chapter 3.

The last chapter (Conclusion and Strategic Implications) presents the overall results of this study on the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments by Italy and Türkiye, as well as on the effectiveness of their foreign and security strategies under stable and unstable conditions in the country of engagement. Concurrently, this concluding chapter answers the two research questions and evaluates the hypotheses formulated in this introductory chapter.

Beyond the Peninsula:

Foreign and Security Strategies of Italy and Türkiye

2.1 Introduction

In the current international landscape characterized by growing instability and multipolarity, the role of middle powers is once again becoming a significant concern. At the same time, the economic rise of new States, as exemplified by the BRICS, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, have called into question the American-led international system. This has produced new fractures among countries and the emergence of anti-Western narratives. Within this chapter, the historical trajectories and current stances of Italy and Türkiye reflect this new dichotomy. Italy maintains a consistent alignment with the Western camp, providing support for its institutions and advocating for a multilateral approach to international affairs. Türkiye aspires to a global role and entertains transactional relations with the West, adopting a multidimensional approach that rejects exclusive allegiance.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the main elements of Italy and Türkiye's foreign and security strategies, breaking them down into their various DIMEF dimensions and analyzing their historical trajectories and institutional structures. It is important to note that this chapter does not attempt an exhaustive examination of every aspect of the foreign and security strategies of these two countries; such a task would require a dedicated analysis. Indeed, the aim in this chapter is to provide the framework within which each State acts. This framework will be useful for understanding the actions of Italy and Türkiye in the context of the two selected case studies, Somalia and Kenya, which are the subjects of the next two chapters. It is evident that an analysis of Italy's foreign and security policy, along with the instruments at its disposal, will facilitate an understanding of the approach employed by Rome in Somalia and Kenya. Conversely, an analysis of Türkiye's foreign and security policy will facilitate a similar examination of Ankara's actions.

This introductory section (2.1) is followed by the section on Italy's foreign and security strategy (2.2). It is divided into three subsections. Subsection 2.2.1 examines the main continuities and discontinuities in Italy's foreign policy, highlighting the long-term traits and approaches that have shaped its historical trajectory. Subsection 2.2.2 provides an overview of the institutional actors involved in the foreign and security policy decision-making process, as well as the primary documents

that define the country's national security strategy. Subsection 2.2.3 analyzes the main aspects of the country's military, economic, financial, cultural, and information power. Then, Section 2.3 focuses on Türkiye's foreign and security strategy. The structure and subsections of Section 2.3 replicate those of Section 2.2. The conclusion of this chapter (2.4) will provide a comparison of the two states' strategies and offer some preliminary conclusions.

2.2 Italy

2.2.1 Historical Foundations of Italian Foreign Policy

The defeat in World War II and the onset of the Cold War produced a profound shift in Italian foreign policy. The country had to relinquish its aspiration to become a great power and faced enormous problems: a damaged international image, a decline in credibility, a severe economic situation, and the loss of its empire. Yet, the new geopolitical landscape, characterized by bipolarism and Italy's proximity to the so-called "Iron Curtain", also presented a novel array of opportunities. In this context, the distinctive elements of Italian foreign policy emerged.

The distinctive elements of Italian foreign policy are typically illustrated by three circles, which represent the key areas of action of the country: the Atlantic, European, and Mediterranean circles (Santoro, 1991; Carbone, 2008; Ruggeri, 2022; Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Between 1949 and 1951, the endeavors of the Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana, DC), and in particular of its leader Alcide De Gasperi, resulted in the establishment of the first two circles: Italy signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington and the Treaty on the European Coal and Steel Community in Paris² (Mammarella & Cacace, 2014). As a result, Italy became part of the Western military structure and took its first step towards European integration in concert with Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Both developments represented the definitive alignment of Rome with the Western field. While the Atlantic dimension guaranteed the country's security and the European dimension facilitated its economic development, it was in the third circle, the Mediterranean, that Italy sought a space for autonomous action.

The Mediterranean region represented a natural focus for Italian foreign policy since its unification, assuming a pivotal role during the colonial expansion and the fascist era (Labbate, 2021). The end of the Empire and the loss of the colonies led the Italian government to adopt a new approach,

² Even more important for the European pillar was the signing in Rome of the Treaties establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC) in March 1957.

subsequently referred to as neo-Atlanticism and embodied by specific personalities³. Two central features characterized this approach. First, a focus on the Arab countries of the Mediterranean due to concerns of traditional and energy security. Second, the involvement of economic actors, particularly Enrico Mattei's ENI, in Italian foreign policy through a system of parallel diplomacy⁴. Both of these aspects remain relevant characteristics in Italy's outward projection, as will be further explained in the chapter.

Despite some criticism labeling Italian foreign policy as schizophrenic or inconsistent, it is worth noting that this independent orientation towards the Mediterranean did not undermine the country's Atlanticism. For Giuseppe Pella, the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister, who coined the term, neo-Atlanticism meant making Italy the privileged ally of the USA in the Mediterranean⁵ (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Italy remained "one of the most loyal members of the Western coalition," and the United States remained the reference point for Italian diplomatic action (Andreatta, 2001, p. 48; Mazziotti di Celso, 2024). This was further demonstrated in the subsequent years by the approval of a nuclear submarine base in the Maddalena archipelago, the deployment of Cruise missiles in Sicily, and the Secretary of the Italian Communist Party's acceptance of the Atlantic field in 1976, creating bipartisan consensus (Mammarella & Cacace, 2014). Nevertheless, this does not mean that Italian foreign policy during the Cold War did not have shortcomings: there was an absence of proactivity in international affairs and a subordination of foreign policy to domestic politics⁶.

Therefore, the emergence of the three circles after the Second World War signified the country's return onto the international stage, a process facilitated by the pivotal support of the United States. These circles have since become the foundations of Italian foreign policy, a characteristic that continues to this day. In addition, particular consideration must be given to Italy's multilateral involvement, especially within the United Nations (UN). After being excluded from the San Francisco conference in 1945, Italy successfully became a member of the UN in December 1955 (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). From that juncture, Italy's strategy has prioritized the UN and multilateral fora in

³ Among the most important figures, it is important to mention the President of ENI, Enrico Mattei, the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronchi, the Prime Minister, Amintore Fanfani, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Pella.

⁴ In a polarized political system like Italy's, the involvement of economic actors has enabled the government to exclude certain foreign policy issues from the ideological dispute. The first case was represented by a series of Italian diplomatic initiatives in Egypt that included Enrico Mattei (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023).

⁵ However, the Italian actions in the Mediterranean were not always perceived in this manner by the USA. For instance, during Nixon's Presidency, the Secretary of State Kissinger strongly criticized Italy's plan to pursue an autonomous policy in the Mediterranean.

⁶ For instance, between 1974 and 1980, the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs was considered merely as a temporary office before moving to more important positions (Mammarella and Cacace, 2014).

handling international controversies, especially those requiring military force⁷. This inclination toward multilateralism is also reflected in Article 11 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic (1947), which states that Italy promotes and encourages international organizations that pursue peace and justice among Nations. For this reason, Marchetti and Diodato (2023) defined Italian foreign policy culture as one of adaptation to the international system - a consistent approach since the post-World War II period that continues today and enjoys bipartisan support.

On many occasions, the distinctive elements of Italian foreign policy overlapped. Two cases are noteworthy as examples. First was the Italian intervention in Lebanon through participation in the UNIFIL mission in 1979, under the auspices of the UN, and in the Multinational Force in Lebanon on request of the USA in 1982 (Pezzolet, 2002; Research Service, 2020). Italian participation in these missions demonstrated a recognition of Italy's role in the Mediterranean. Second was the discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the European Council of Venice in 1980, during Italy's Presidency of the European Economic Community, which prompted a new European attitude towards the Mediterranean⁸ (Labbate, 2021).

The end of the Cold War produced uncertainty for Italian foreign policy. The country lost its significant geopolitical position along the Iron Curtain, and its domestic political system entered a crisis. Nevertheless, the circles of Italian foreign policy remained solid, witnessing new developments but on the same path⁹. The adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 marked the evolution of the European Community. This evolution augmented the impact of the European dimension in Italian foreign policy and made Italy a border country, in the Mediterranean, for the entire Community (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). At the same time, a new conceptualization of the Mediterranean was elaborated at the Maritime War Institute in Livorno in 1993. The Mediterranean has expanded to become the Wider Mediterranean, a larger area encompassing the traditional Mediterranean, as well as the Red Sea, the Gulf, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea, the Balkans, and the Black Sea¹⁰ (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2022; Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). This concept is currently part of the national strategic culture, as De Ninno and Cavo (2024) rightly point out.

⁷ It is noteworthy that of the 132 military missions conducted by Italy from the conclusion of WWII to 2012, 78% are associated with international organizations: 96 missions were conducted by international organizations (UN, NATO, EU, WEU, and OSCE) and 9 were related to the implementation of UN resolutions (Italian Parliament, n.d.).

⁸ According to Labbate (2021), from that moment on, the members of the Community realized the need to intervene directly in the complex issues of the Middle East.

⁹ It is also true that, in general, center-right coalitions have placed greater emphasis on transatlantic relations, while center-left coalitions have focused more on relations with EU partners.

¹⁰ However, regarding the lack of a precise conceptualization and definition of the borders of the Wider Mediterranean, see Ramoino (2020).

Italy's strategic priorities in this region have remained consistent with the trajectories delineated in the 1950s. The country's primary concerns have centered on conventional security and energy security, as well as the emergence of irregular migration. These issues have shaped Italy's approach to the region to date and have been the subject of new agreements after every critical moment. Examples demonstrating this continuity include Minister Dini's visit to Algeria to strengthen economic relations in 1998 (Historical and Documentation Service, 2000) and the "Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation" (2008) between Italy and Libya, which addressed Italy's colonial past, but also focused on energy, illegal immigration, and defense cooperation¹¹. The energy dossier was also central to many other agreements, such as those with Egypt in 2011, Algeria in 2022 (addressing the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine), and recent deals under the Meloni government with Angola, Albania, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Tunisia, to cite a few (Goretti & Simonelli, 2024; Italian Ministry of the Environment, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d). Likewise, ENI's foreign policy role has remained a significant aspect of Italy's strategy, being consistent with the country's priorities. This was evidenced by the involvement of the company's CEO in the activities of the government to face the fall of Gaddafi in Libya¹² in 2011 and to replace Russian gas¹³ in 2022. Migration has also been a central issue: it was the focal point of the agreement with Tunisia's post-Arab Spring government in 2011, of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Libya in 2017, and of the recent initiatives of the Meloni government in North Africa. These initiatives also involved the European Union and led to new agreements with Tunisia and Egypt (European Commission, 2023; Directorate General, 2024; Goretti & Simonelli, 2024).

At the same time, the end of the Cold War was accompanied by a series of new conflicts, which produced an increasing involvement of Italy in Military Operations Abroad (MOA). Italian participation in these operations was characterized by two key trends. First, the employment of Italy's military means has (usually) occurred within the framework of the international organizations to which Italy is a member (UN, NATO, EU). This aligns with and strengthens its multilateral vocation. For instance, Italy has become the top troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping operations among Western countries (United Nations, 2025). Second, the MOA have received bipartisan support from the center-right and center-left parties. This phenomenon was first observed in the case of Operation Alba in 1997 and has been replicated on many other occasions, including the missions Enduring

¹¹ For the complete text of the Treaty, please refer to the following link: https://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/schedela/apritelecomando_wai.asp?codice=16pdI0017390#:~:text=sua%20pubblicazione%20nella-,Gazzetta%20Ufficiale,-Frontespizio

¹² See in this regard the establishment of relations between the then CEO Paolo Scaroni and the Libyan National Transitional Committee (Bocconi, 2011).

¹³ See in this regard the presence of ENI's CEO Claudio Descalzi alongside the then-Italian Prime Minister, Mario Draghi, to sign the agreement with Algeria (Goretti & Simonelli, 2024).

Freedom, UNIFIL II, and the most recent EUNAVFOR Aspides (Mammarella & Cacace, 2014; RAI News, 2024).

In conclusion, Italy's foreign and security policy maintains a robust multilateral orientation built upon the historical pillars of the EU, the Atlantic Alliance, and the Wider Mediterranean region. In this latter area, conventional security, energy security, and irregular migration continue to be historical priorities. Currently, the Meloni government is following the same trajectories outlined in this section. However, the adoption of a comprehensive strategy for Africa (i.e., the Mattei Plan) and the stability of the government have the potential to offer new opportunities within the circles of Italian foreign and security policy.

2.2.2 Italy's Institutional Framework

The institutional architecture of Italy's foreign and security policy is not organically regulated by the Constitution, but rather is the result of the dispositions governing various State organs. The system revolves mainly around the Government, which is composed of the President of the Council and the Ministers. Even if the Constitution simply states that "The President of the Council conducts [...] the general policy of the Government" (Italian Constitution, 1947, Art. 95), Law 400/1998 clarifies that guidelines on international and Community policy agreements of political or military nature are subject to deliberation by the Council of Ministers. As confirmed by Diodato and Marchetti (2023), the Government is in charge of all major aspects of foreign action, from diplomatic representation to MOA. Law 124/2007 has also given the President of the Council overall responsibility and exclusive authority over the direction of security information policy, that is the intelligence services, and established the Security Intelligence Department (Dipartimento delle Informazioni per la Sicurezza, DIS). The DIS acts as a liaison between the activities of the two intelligence agencies, External Intelligence and Security Agency (Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna, AISE) and Internal Intelligence and Security Agency (Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna, AISI), and the President of the Council. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Interior are all relevant in the formulation of the foreign and security policies, as well as, to a different degree, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and the Ministry of Economic Development. At the same time, ministerial bureaucracies have a significant influence on decision-making processes, with personalities present during governments of opposing political alignments (De Ninno & Cavo, 2024).

In recent years, the role of the President of the Council has become stronger. However, this strength is dependent directly on the stability of the governing coalition. Indeed, the Parliament indirectly

influences the formulation of Italy's foreign and security policy. The reason is that government decisions must retain the support of the parliamentary majority that grants it confidence in the legislative assembly. On the other hand, the Parliament plays a more direct role in financing MOA. Through its competence in budgetary matters, the Parliament has begun to discuss the conduct of operations as a practice. According to Article 78 of the Constitution, Parliament has the power to deliberate on the state of war, but this deliberation is not required for participation in the aforementioned missions. However, Law 145/2016 (revised by Law 168/2024) consolidated this role: the Council of Ministers deliberates on participation in MOA, which then requires discussion and approval by Parliament, also in relation to its financing. Moreover, Parliament is responsible for approving the budgets of the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and for increasing the budget for development cooperation (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Finally, it also exercises oversight on the activity of the Government through its III and IV Commissions, on Foreign Affairs and Defense respectively, and the Parliamentary Committee for the Security of the Republic (Comitato parlamentare per la sicurezza della Repubblica, COPASIR), which monitors the work of the intelligence services.

According to the Constitution, the President of the Republic performs mainly procedural functions and a role of guarantor. The President of the Republic accredits and receives diplomatic representatives, ratifies international treaties, and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Italian Constitution, 1947, Art. 87), but does not determine the political line on national security. However, in times of political crisis and unstable governments, and contingent on their personalities, Presidents of the Republic have adopted an active role in the formulation of foreign policy (Bellandi & Bull, 2013).

This plurality of actors leads to the question of where foreign and security policy decisions are made. As highlighted, in Italy, these policies are elaborated at the level of the Council of Ministers. Unlike the other G7 countries, Italy lacks a National Security Council. Indeed, the Supreme Council of Defense (Consiglio Supremo di Difesa, CSD), established by Law 624/1950 in accordance with the Constitution, constitutes a permanent institutional forum for discussing foreign and defense policies, and it also informs the President of the Republic on the Government's stance on these subjects. The CSD is chaired by the President of the Republic, and the other members are the President of the Council, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Economy and Finance, Defense, and Economic Development, and the Chief of the Defense Staff (Presidenza della Repubblica, n.d.). However, unlike a National Security Council, the CSD has a strict focus on the military dimensions, does not provide

policy recommendations for the Government, and is not structured to constantly involve technical and expert personnel (Ellero, 2025).

Italy not only lacks a National Security Council, but it is also the only G7 country without a national security strategy (Carrer, 2025). Still, it is possible to identify some significant strategic documents that together can offer an overview of the Italian approach to national security. The White Paper for International Security and Defense (*Libro Bianco per la Sicurezza Internazionale e la Difesa*), elaborated for the first time in 1977¹⁴, outlines a strategic perspective for the military apparatus. Already in its first version, Italy was defined as a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean, considering land and maritime defense as complementary and highlighting the necessity of ensuring the military's intervention capabilities in crisis scenarios (De Ninno & Cavo, 2024). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA, the new White Paper of 2002 pointed out the need to improve and innovate the Italian Air Force and Navy, as well as the importance (already at that time) to increase the budget of the Ministry of Defense, with particular attention to the percentage for the defense function¹⁵ (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2001). At the same time, the asymmetrical nature of emerging threats, which are no longer limited to the traditional security sphere, was emphasized. The latest version of 2015 represents a crucial document, as it differs from the 2002 White Paper in that it provides the Italian Armed Forces with a new strategic vision. Likewise, this document exhibits two other innovative aspects. First, its drafting process involved not only the Ministry of Defense but also included stakeholders, experts, and other institutions (Gilli et al., 2015). Second, the 2015 White Paper presents a pragmatic viewpoint, often absent in the Italian process, by defining clear priorities and acknowledging the opportunity for the use of force (Gilli et al., 2015). From a content standpoint, the White Paper reaffirmed that NATO and the EU are key to national security. Notably, it emphasized Italy's intention to play a role that is geographically more limited, i.e., focusing on an area corresponding to Europe and the Wider Mediterranean¹⁶, but more militarily decisive (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2015). At the same time, the document emphasizes the need for an autonomous, qualified, and innovative industrial defense apparatus, as well as for the identification of technologies and systems that must be pursued through partnerships, particularly European ones, to maintain and strengthen national capabilities (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2015).

¹⁴ Following the first edition in 1977, updated versions of the White Paper were published in 1985, 2002, and 2015.

¹⁵ The defense function includes all expenditures associated with the tasks of the army, navy, and air force, as well as the joint component and the technical and administrative personnel of the Ministry of Defense. This distinction is relevant because the Ministry of Defense's overall budget also includes funds for the Carabinieri.

¹⁶ The 2015 White Paper does not explicitly employ the expression "Wider Mediterranean," but it affirms that the military should be able to manage situations that have effects on the Mediterranean and that the dynamics of the Mashreq, Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Gulf strongly influence the Mediterranean region.

The strategic relevance of the Wider Mediterranean for Italian foreign and security policy is confirmed by the publication of the Security and Defense Strategy for the Mediterranean (*Strategia di sicurezza e di difesa per il Mediterraneo*) by the Ministry of Defense under the Draghi Government in 2022. In addition to reaffirming the Wider nature of the Mediterranean, the document sets two main objectives. First, to acquire a more relevant role in the stabilization of the region by enhancing the Italian operative capabilities and capitalizing on our military diplomacy and well-established training, formation, and industrial capacities. Second, to promote an increased attention towards the region in the strategic decisions of NATO and the EU (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2022).

The same stance is evident in the Multi-Year Defense Planning Document 2024-2026 (*Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa 2024-2026, DPP*), which outlines three functions of the military means: the defense of the State; the protection of strategic priority national interests, wherever they are threatened; and the encouragement of research, technological development and national industry sector (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a). At the same time, the DPP acknowledges the hybrid nature of conflicts and puts particular emphasis on the strategic role of the African continent for Italy and Europe. According to the document, Italy should support the African countries, contribute to their development, and limit the effects of the presence of other States with predatory interests (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a).

Africa is also at the center of the Mattei Plan (*Piano Mattei*), which was launched in January 2024. While not a strategic document in the strict sense of the term, the Mattei Plan is a key document for understanding Italy's strategy and long-term orientation towards Africa, especially in relation to the present analysis. Furthermore, the Mattei Plan is the first document to offer a comprehensive, coherent, and structured approach for Italy's relations with the continent. Building on the historical economic, cultural, and social ties with the continent, the Mattei Plan proposes an equal relationship with the African countries, producing mutual gains and benefits¹⁷. The Plan identifies six areas of cooperation, namely instruction, health, water, agriculture, energy, and infrastructure, which at first will involve nine countries through pilot projects: Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, and Tunisia (Presidency of the Council, 2024). Currently, analysts have highlighted the lack of a pillar on defense and security, as well as the limited resources allocated to the Plan, as the two main limitations (Simonelli, 2025). Nevertheless, the direct involvement of the President of the Council, who has defined the Plan as “the most significant strategic project in the geopolitical sphere” for Italy, marks a significant step in the Italian strategic

¹⁷ This attitude has frequently been observed in the Italian approach. For instance, as early as fifteen years ago, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frattini, called for Africa to be considered an equal partner and interact with the continent in a new way, without paternalism (Bonvicini & Colombo, 2011).

action, which will probably result in Rome devoting an ever-increasing amount of attention to the continent and becoming more deeply involved in it (Magnani, 2023).

2.2.3 Italy's Instruments of National Power

Italy's foreign and security strategy aims to strengthen its position as a middle power and enhance its role in Europe and the Wider Mediterranean area through military, economic, financial, and cultural instruments, as well as through the support of multilateral organizations in which Rome is a member. Alongside the defense of the state, Italy's outward projection has four objectives. These are: (1) ensuring the stability of Europe and the Mediterranean neighborhood, by promoting democratic development and directly addressing crisis situations; (2) strengthening the EU and NATO, by playing an active role and fostering cooperation and cohesion as the key guarantees of Italy's defense and national interests; (3) establishing the country as a logistical energy hub for Europe; and (4) regulating migratory flows. The following account examines Italy's military, economic, financial, cultural, and information instruments of power. It also analyzes how these DIMEF instruments are utilized and whether unconventional dimensions are actively employed in the country's strategy.

Italy's Military Power:

The military instrument is a classic component of foreign policy, along with the diplomatic one. However, due to the outcome of WWII, there is a significant sense of mistrust within Italian public opinion regarding the use of force. Despite the substantial employment of the Italian Armed Forces in MOA, the military aspect of these missions remained absent from the political discourse, emphasizing the pacific, multilateral, and humanitarian components (Ignazi et al., 2012). To borrow an expression effectively employed by Ignazi, Giacomello, and Coticchia (2012), the important thing is not to call it war. A part of the country continues to show opposition to the employment of military means due to a historical pacifist stance, which has its roots in the positions of the Communist Party and part of the Catholic circles. At the same time, this part of the population often advances a constitutional objection referring to a strict interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution. However, as highlighted by experts, Article 11 does not restrict the area of employment of the military means to the national territory, but rather the objectives of using force (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). In this sense, as discussed in section 2.2.2, the 2015 White Paper on International Security and Defense

showed a positive development in Italian strategic culture, adopting a more pragmatic approach to the use of force and better aligning with the current scenario of instability facing the country¹⁸.

The 2015 White Paper also addresses the operational readiness of the Italian Armed Forces, distinguishing between the Euro-Mediterranean¹⁹ region and the rest of the world. In the former case, the Armed Forces should be able to perform interventions for pacification and crisis management, with the possibility of assuming the leadership of the operation. In the latter case, the Italian participation should be limited in terms of capabilities deployed, duration, and goals (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2015). At the same time, the Document explicitly affirms the four missions of the Armed Forces: the Defense of the State; the Defense of the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Mediterranean regions; the contribution to the achievement of international peace and security; and specific tasks, as the protection of free institutions and activities in circumstances of public disaster (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2015).

The percentage of the GDP allocated to Defense in the Italian budget for the 2024 fiscal exercise is 1.49%, corresponding to \$34,461.7 million (Taylor & Schneider, 2025). Considering the defense function, it can be observed from the breakdown of the budget into the three sectors of personnel, operations, and investment that personnel account for 53.35% of the total budget, followed by investment at 35.99% and operations at 10.66% (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a). These figures already reflect an improvement in relation to a long-standing issue, namely excessive spending on personnel. This matter was addressed in 2012 by the reform promoted by the then Minister of Defense Giampaolo Di Paola (Gilli et al., 2015). Concurrently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the recent NATO Summit in the Hague have led Italy to a new proclivity for investment in the defense sector, with the commitment to augment spending to 5% of GDP. This commitment aligns with the government's stance, as articulated by Prime Minister Meloni, which affirms that security encompasses a wide range of domains, extending beyond the conventional military aspect to encompass critical infrastructures, irregular migration, and emerging technologies, among others (Perrone, 2025). Indeed, the 5% target will be divided into two channels. 3.5% will consist of traditional military spending. The remaining 1.5% will cover the security sector more broadly, including critical infrastructure and cybersecurity. Notwithstanding the challenges associated with attaining such a target within a limited time frame, these investments position Italy as a reliable partner that is committed to fulfilling its defense responsibilities and contributing to NATO and European defense. Furthermore, this commitment enables Rome to promote its interests within these

¹⁸ However, domestic opposition to military interventions by a part of the population remains, as evidenced by the most recent case of the EUNAVFOR Aspides mission.

¹⁹ The Mediterranean is understood in this context in the broad sense as outlined in the previous sections of this chapter.

two organizations, as was evident at the NATO Summit, where Meloni brought the southern flank of the Alliance to the attention of the Allies (Euronews, 2025).

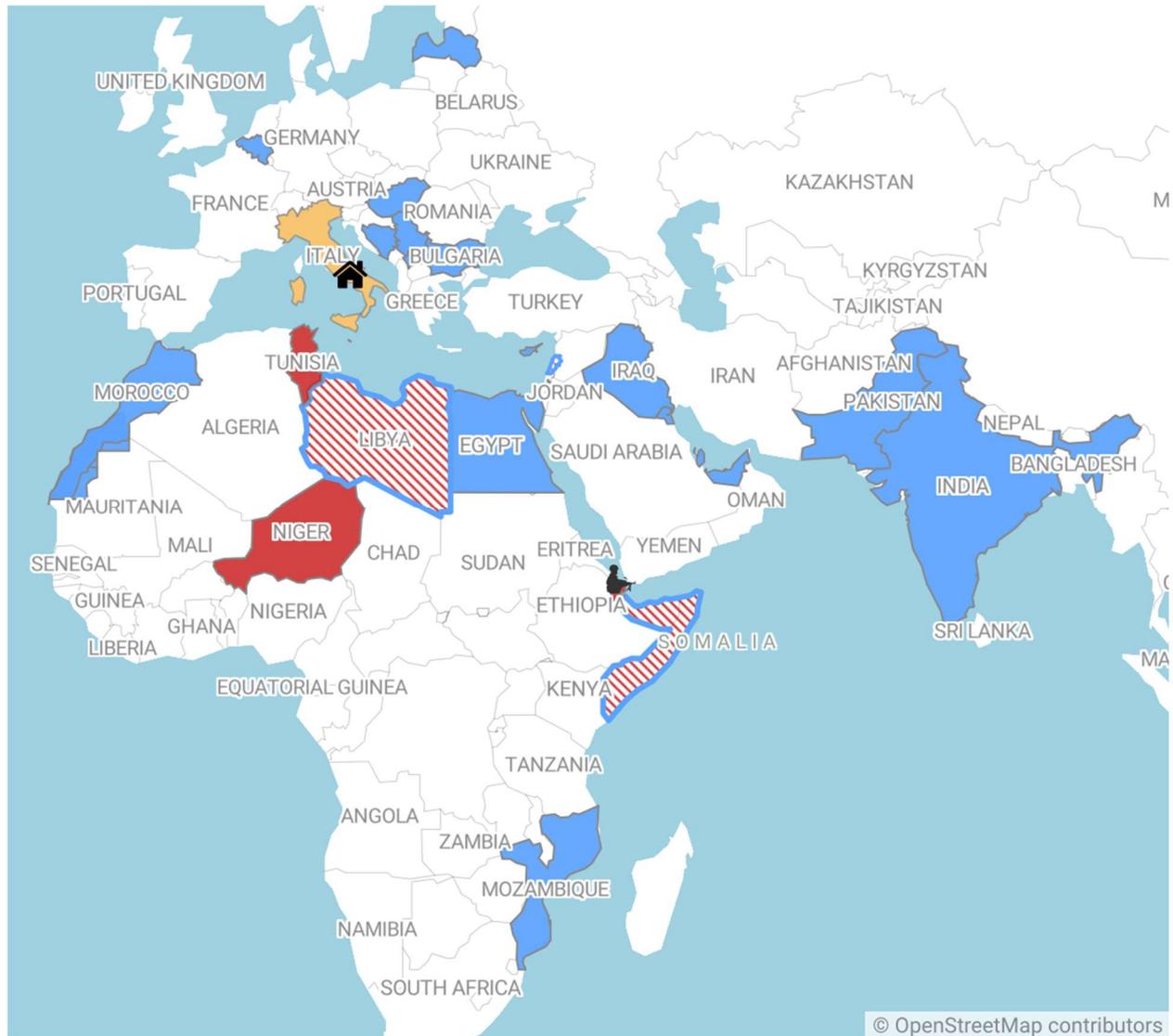
Italy hosts multiple NATO and US military bases across the country, with a total of approximately 12,900 American military personnel stationed in the country (Redazione, 2025). Analyzing the weaponry, Italy has the Italian-French SAMP-T surface-to-air missile system, the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), MRLS and PZH-2000 artillery systems, which, however, require modernization, NH90, CH-47, and AW129 “Mangusta” helicopters, and a fleet of F-35s, Eurofighter Typhoon F2000-A, and PA-200 Tornado (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a). Among the most prominent land vehicles in the Italian Army’s arsenal are the Ariete tank, the VCC Dardo, the armored vehicle Centauro, and light multi-role tactical vehicles such as the Lince and the Freccia (Esercito Italiano, 2025). The Navy operates U212 and SAURO submarines, FREMM frigates, Thaon di Revel-class offshore patrol vessels, and, notably, the Cavour aircraft carrier and the Trieste multi-purpose landing helicopter dock, which enables Italy to project power in its neighborhood (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a). But Italy is also innovating. In concert with the United Kingdom and Japan, Italy is participating in the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), based on an equal partnership, to develop a sixth-generation fighter (Calcagno et al., 2025). Similarly, the words of the Italian Chief of Naval Staff, Credendino, raised the possibility (still uncertain) of constructing a future nuclear aircraft carrier for the country (Cremonesi, 2025). The Armed Forces are then working on implementing an evolved cyber capability, encompassing both in its defensive and active components.

In the defense industry, a key role is played by Leonardo, formerly known as Finmeccanica, an Italian multinational company operating in the defense, aerospace, and security sectors. The Italian MEF is its largest shareholder. In addition to playing a pivotal function in the production of several of the aforementioned military vehicles, in 2024 Leonardo and Rheinmetall signed a partnership for industrial development of the new Main Battle Tank (MBT) and the new Lynx Platform for the Armoured Infantry Combat System to substitute the Ariete and the Dardo, respectively (Leonardo, 2024; Murgia & Marrone, 2025). Following Leonardo, Fincantieri was the second largest Italian exporter in the sector in 2024 (Camera dei Deputati & Senato della Repubblica, 2025). Fincantieri is one of the world’s leading shipbuilding groups. It operates on three continents and is the leading Western shipbuilder (Fincantieri, n.d.). In addition to its role as the supplier of the Italian Navy, the group participates in numerous international partnerships. Significant examples of this include the Italian-French partnership for FREMM frigates, the partnership with France, Spain, and Greece for

the European Patrol Corvette, and the establishment of the MAESTRAL joint venture with the Emirati EDGE Group (Fincantieri, 2024a, 2024b, 2025).

Italy has approximately 160,000 active military personnel (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024a). According to Legislative Decree 185/2023, the distribution of military personnel will be as follows: 93,100 units for the Army, 30,050 units for the Navy, and 36,850 units for the Air Force. These personnel are also involved in numerous MOA, which play a key role in Italy's foreign strategy, strengthening its alliances and international image, and allowing the country to contribute to the stability of its neighborhood. Italy currently participates in 38 MOA, as summarized by Figure 1 on the page below. At first glance, the multilateral dimension of Italy's military projection at the international level is evident. Italy is strengthening its contribution to security and deterrence on NATO's eastern flank by maintaining its military presence in Latvia, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as well as by carrying out air policing operations. At the same time, the Wider Mediterranean represents the other strategic focus of the Italian activities. The Italian military operations in this area aim to enhance the stability of the region and address key issues for Rome, including maritime and energy security (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). This commitment covers numerous regions, namely the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Balkans.

Italian Military Operations Abroad 2025



-  Italy
-  Italian Military Base
-  Multilateral Operation
-  Bilateral Operation
-  Bilateral and Multilateral Operations

Figure 1: Italian Military Operations Abroad. Source: Data developed by the author.
Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1: Italian Military Operations Abroad.

It is now essential to highlight the most important cases. In the Middle East, the UNIFIL mission stands out due to the enduring role played by Italian soldiers, who often also serve as Head of

Mission²⁰. Likewise, the same applies to the NATO KFOR mission in Kosovo, for which Italy has taken over command again since 2024 and is the first troop contributing nation (KFOR, 2025). In North Africa, Libya's stability is a key priority for the Italian government, driven by concerns over security, energy, and migration. Rome is actively engaged in the country, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, thanks to the missions MIASIT and UNSMIL. In this context, Italy trains and supports the security forces and institutions of the Government of National Unity (GNU) and sustains the transition process towards democratic elections (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). In the Sahel, thanks to the bilateral mission MISIN, Italy is the only Western country with a presence and a base in Niger. In the Horn of Africa, Italy maintains a base in Djibouti and is actively involved in training the Somali police and armed forces through the bilateral mission MIADIT and the EU mission EUTM Somalia, in which Rome holds the position of Mission Commander since 2014 (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). Finally, the missions carried out in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea demonstrate the importance of freedom of maritime traffic for Rome. The Italian operation Mediterraneo Sicuro (Safe Mediterranean), the NATO Sea Guardian, and the European EUNAVFOR MED Irini are pivotal for Italian security, as well as the most recent EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, in which Italy holds tactical command, to protect the maritime traffic from the Houthis' attacks (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b).

Italy's Economic and Financial Power:

Italy's relevance in the international landscape is in a great part attributable to its substantial economic weight. Italy has a GDP of \$2.37 trillion, a GDP growth of 0.7 percent, and is one of the world's ten largest economies, i.e., the number 8. In 2024, Italy had an FDI inflow of \$21.78 billion and an outflow of \$34.07 billion (World Bank, 2025a). Furthermore, it is the sixth-largest exporter in the world, and the European countries and the US are its main trade partners²¹. According to data from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy's top exports in 2025 are Machinery and equipment, Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations, Food products, Metallurgical products, and Chemical products (Osservatorio Economico, 2025). Meanwhile, the top imports are Chemical products, Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations, Motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers, and Crude oil and natural gas (Osservatorio Economico, 2025).

²⁰ On 24 June 2025, Major General Diodato Abagnara of the Italian Army took Command of the Mission.

²¹ In terms of imports, China should also be mentioned. However, analyzing the trade balance, it shows a significant deficit for Italy.

Italy is also a member of the G7 and the G20, as well as a part of numerous international organizations dealing with economic and financial matters. Indeed, Italy is a member of the WTO and is a founding member of the OECD. In the OECD, Rome is the sixth largest contributor and has also assumed a significant role in the field of training, hosting three of the Organization's centers within its borders (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Italy is also a member of the IMF, with a voting share of 3.02% of the total, and of the World Bank, where it is represented on the Board of 25 Executive Directors by Mr. Matteo Bugamelli²². Moreover, as a member of the EU, Italy is also involved in the activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group. Rome is its largest shareholder, alongside Germany and France²³, and also one of the main recipients of its funding, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability and energy security (European Investment Bank, n.d.; European Investment Bank, 2024). The EIB Group also plays a crucial role in the EU's Southern Neighborhood. For instance, since 2004, its Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) Trust Fund has supported the economic and social development of the EU's Mediterranean partner countries. Similarly, the EIB invests in crucial projects that involve Italy and its Neighborhood, such as the InfraMed Infrastructure for long-term investments in infrastructures in the Mediterranean area and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) through Greece, Albania, and Italy (European Investment Bank, 2018; InfraMed 2024).

Beltrame and Marchetti (2022) have emphasized the importance of the dimension of "hybrid diplomacy" or "parallel diplomacy" carried out by multinational companies alongside the government of their country of origin. This characteristic is particularly relevant for the Italian foreign and security policy. As already highlighted during this chapter, from the 1950s onwards, the Italian state-owned energy company ENI, under the presidency of Enrico Mattei, engaged in substantial diplomatic activities. During the 1990s, ENI underwent a process of privatization. However, as has happened with other companies in strategic sectors, the State has retained a portion of the capital shares, thereby maintaining its control in practice (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Consistent with this approach, ENI continues to play a diplomatic role, as evidenced by the involvement of ENI's CEO on State visits abroad and the relevance of the agreements signed by the company for Italy's energy security. Just to take some cases in point, the CEO Descalzi first joined former Prime Minister Draghi in his visit to Algeria and then current Prime Minister Meloni to Algeria, Mozambique, and the Republic of the Congo (Frignani, 2022; Maugeri, 2023; De Palo, 2023). It is also noteworthy that

²² Mr. Bugamelli, an Italian national, is the Executive Director for Albania, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, and Timor-Leste.

²³ The share in the EIB's capital is based on the member state's economic weight within the EU (expressed in GDP) at the time of its accession.

ENI's CEO also engages in bilateral discussions with African Heads of State to evaluate ongoing activities in their respective nations, as indicated by his recent meetings with the President of the Republic of the Congo, the President of Algeria, the President of the Republic of Mozambique, and the Prime Minister of the Libyan GNU. Consequently, ENI's involvement in the countries of the Wider Mediterranean is important not only to enhance Italian energy security, but also to strengthen the Italian relationship with partner governments and contribute to both specific projects and the global strategy of the Mattei Plan.

Alongside ENI, there are at least two other Italian multinational companies to consider: the aforementioned Leonardo (see page 12) and Enel, which were, respectively, the seventh and the second largest Italian companies by revenue in 2023 (Redazione FIRSTonline, 2024). Their international dynamism and role in the country's diplomatic projection are historical, as well (Renda & Ricciuti, 2010). Leonardo is the leading Italian company in the defense, security, and aerospace industries. Through its involvement in agreements and joint ventures with other companies, European cooperation initiatives, and significant export operations, Leonardo fosters Italy's military innovation and enhances its relations with partners countries. Similarly, Enel, in which the Italian MEF is the largest shareholder, represents a valuable multinational company in the sectors of electric energy and renewable sources. Enel has become a global leader in this latter field, and through its presence in approximately 30 countries and the acquisition of the Spanish company Endesa, has strengthened Italy's economic influence abroad (Enel, n.d.-a). Finally, Snam, a multinational company operating in the energy infrastructure sector, is also noteworthy due to its presence in the Mediterranean area. The company's activities are primarily concentrated on gas transport, storage, and regasification. These include notable engagements in the Middle East and North Africa, as evidenced by the purchase of 49% of ADNOC Gas Pipelines in 2020 and 25% of the East Mediterranean Gas Company, which owns the Arish-Ashkelon gas pipeline, in 2021 (Snam, 2025).

On the financial side, the main actor is Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP). Established in November 1850, CDP is a publicly controlled joint-stock company, in which the Italian MEF holds the majority share. CDP is Italy's National Promotional Institution, supporting initiatives to develop local areas, reduce dependence on foreign countries, and strengthen the country's security and resilience. At the same time, CPD is the Italian Financial Institution for Development Cooperation. In this role, it fosters Italy's international relations and promotes sustainable development in partner countries. This role is assigned to CDP by Law 125/2014, which regulates the field of international development cooperation.

Law 125/2014 assigns the direction of international development cooperation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of the Parliament and non-institutional actors. This Law established the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, AICS). It undertakes the relevant activities of formulation, financing, management, and control of Italian development cooperation initiatives, while the Joint committee for Development Cooperation (Comitato congiunto per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines the annual schedule. The Director of AICS is required to report on the results achieved to the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of each calendar year. This Law also established the Interministerial Committee for Development Cooperation (Comitato Interministeriale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo), to coordinate all activities of cooperation, and the National Council for Development Cooperation (Consiglio Nazionale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, CNCS), as a permanent venue for consultation and proposals for the main public and private, profit and non-profit entities involved in this field (Legge 11 agosto 2014, n. 125).

Italy has allocated a total of \$6.7 billion in official development assistance (ODA) for 2024, an increase from the previous year (OECD, 2025a). According to OECD data, in 2024, Italy ranked eighth among the countries of the Development Assistance Committee of the organization in terms of ODA, following the USA, Germany, Japan, the UK, France, Canada, and the Netherlands (OECD, n.d.). Among the various areas of intervention, the Three-Year Policy Document for Development Cooperation 2024-2026 considers Africa the primary priority, emphasizing the necessity for a mutually beneficial partnership in line with the Mattei Plan. Indeed, of the 38 countries considered priorities in the document, 23 are located in Africa (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025a).

Italy's Cultural Diplomacy and Information Power:

According to 2024 figures, the Italian Foreign Affairs Administration abroad is constituted by 130 Embassies, 85 Consular Offices, 88 Cultural Institutes, 9 Permanent Representations to International Organizations, and one Special Diplomatic Delegation. The geographical distribution of the Embassies is as follows: 26 in the EU, 25 in sub-Saharan Africa, 24 in Asia and Oceania, 20 in the Americas, 18 in the Mediterranean and Middle East, and 17 in Europe (excluding the EU) (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025a).

Looking specifically to cultural diplomacy and Italy's external influence based on culture, it is important to note the distribution of the Italian Cultural Institutes: 31 in the EU, 19 in America, 11 in the Mediterranean and Middle East, 13 in Asia and Oceania, 10 in Europe (extra-EU), and 4 in sub-

Saharan Africa (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025a). The promotion of the Italian language is an instrument of Italian foreign policy. Italian is the twentieth most spoken language in the world. It is spoken as a first language by 63 million people and as a second language by a further three million (Centro Linguistico Italiano, 2020). Furthermore, in 2024, there were 309 educational institutions abroad teaching the Italian language, of which 150 were Italian sections in international, foreign, and European schools (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). However, when comparing the number of Italian cultural institutes with those of other major European countries, Italy ranks fifth, just above Türkiye, but behind the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Spain. Despite being considered a “cultural superpower”, Italy ranked ninth in the Global Soft Power Index, which is based on how well a country is known, how positively it is regarded, and how much it is perceived to influence other countries, in addition to eight other pillars (Emiliozzi, 2022; Brand Finance, 2025).

Nevertheless, Italy ranked fourth globally in international tourist arrivals in 2024 and is the country with the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world (61) (Fleck, 2025). For this reason, the country has considerable potential for developing relations and partnerships in this field. Italian archaeological, anthropological, and ethnographic missions abroad, supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are particularly relevant. In addition to conventional excavation missions, the projects also encompass training experts on-site, knowledge transfer, and the dissemination of advanced techniques for the protection of cultural heritage. Against this backdrop, a particular initiative was represented by the agreement between the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO to create the Task Force “Unite for Heritage” in 2016. This task force, composed of civil personnel and Carabinieri, has been set to evaluate risks, train local forces in crisis areas, and strengthen the fight against illegal trafficking of cultural artifacts (Rappresentanza Permanente, 2016). Following its establishment, the task force operated in Iraq, Mexico, Croatia, Albania, and Lebanon (Carabinieri, n.d.). However, the national and international promotion of its role, a factor which could enhance Italy’s image at the international level, was concomitantly reduced.

The last element to mention in cultural diplomacy is the Italian diaspora. This strategic topic has long been underestimated by Italy, despite the fact that it could constitute an asset in its foreign policy. Considering its diaspora, Italy has a widespread presence on a global scale, like few other countries in the world. Indeed, due to the legal principle of *ius sanguinis*, in 2023, diaspora communities were estimated to number more than 80 million people of Italian descent worldwide (The European House – Ambrosetti & NIAF, 2023). However, many of these individuals have yet to acquire citizenship due to administrative inefficiency (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). It has been posited by some experts that the strategic exploitation of this element would result in a multitude of benefits across various

domains (Marchetti, 2023; European House – Ambrosetti & NIAF, 2023). For instance, the security domain would benefit from the augmentation of influence and information points, while the economic dimension would benefit from the promotion of the “Made in Italy” by the Italian descendants (Marchetti, 2023). Nonetheless, this figure has been reduced by the recent decree-law 36/2025, which limits the transmission of Italian citizenship *iure sanguinis* for Italian descendants abroad. For this reason, Marchetti defined the decree-law as a “national strategic mistake” (Peron, 2025). As a result, unlike other countries, it seems that Italy is not strengthening diaspora relations and involving Italian descendants through a strategic vision. Indeed, it is continuing to underestimate their role.

At the same time, the international environment poses new threats stemming from propaganda, information manipulation, and narrative shaping. The Italian National Strategy for Cybersecurity 2022-2026 recognizes these challenges and identifies the measures to be taken to address them in coordination with the Agency for National Cybersecurity (Agenzia per la Cybersicurezza Nazionale, 2022). In parallel, the Report on Security Information Policy 2025 highlights the risks arising from the disinformation and cyberwarfare activities of Russia and China, which are the two main actors capable to exploiting the weaknesses of Western countries in this field (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2025). Disinformation is described as “a particularly insidious threat”, particularly through the diffusion of alternative narratives, fake news, and deepfakes. Moreover, the Report confirms the employment of two narrative flows: top-down, from declarations of official media and government officers, which are then disseminated by other vehicles; and bottom-up, with information created by users that is then disseminated by official media (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2025). Italy, as also Germany and France, was targeted by the Russian campaign named “Doppelganger” which distributed disinformative content through fake clones of authentic famous media, content then amplified by fake users on different social networks (Sessa & Miguel, 2024). In Italy, dissemination of false information is a crime only when there is a causal link to other offences, complicating the picture (Sessa & Miguel, 2024). However, Italy is cooperating at the multilateral and bilateral levels to face information challenges. Rome is one of the founding members of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia, which focuses on enhancing strategic communications capabilities within the Alliance, including through the analysis of information influence. In the EU, Regulation 2022/2065, commonly known as the Digital Services Act, came into force in 2024 to counter disinformation. Finally, in the same year, Italy and the USA signed an MoU to strengthen cooperation on countering foreign state information manipulation (US Embassy in Italy, 2024). In conclusion, Italy displays the same structural vulnerabilities to hostile information operations as most liberal democracies, while its approach is primarily defensive and rules-based, with a particular emphasis on NATO and EU mechanisms of cooperation.

2.3 Türkiye

2.3.1 Historical Foundations of Turkish Foreign Policy

The history of the Turkish Republic dates back to 1923. Since then, its international strategy has been marked by permanent factors, but especially by discontinuities at some historical turning points. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Republic emerged from the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922) and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). From the outset, Türkiye's foreign policy followed Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's statement: "Peace at home, peace in the world," a principle that endured until the end of the Cold War (Özkeçeci-Taner & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2023). The victory in the War of Independence led the country to adopt a non-revisionist, western-oriented stance in the international landscape, also reflected in the internal adoption of secular and western models. Relations with Greece, set to become a main issue in Turkish foreign policy, also saw a phase of reconciliation in 1930 (Hale, 2012).

This cautious approach to foreign policy remained unchanged after Atatürk's death in 1938, when his Prime Minister, İsmet İnönü, succeeded him as President. This was demonstrated by the country's decision to remain neutral at the outbreak of World War II. With the German defeat and the beginning of the Cold War, Ankara had to face the threat posed by its new powerful neighbor, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This threat led to Türkiye's formal entry into the Western camp. Ankara received Marshall Aid in 1948, became part of the Council of Europe in 1949, sent a brigade to join the UN forces in the Korean War, and, of primary importance, was admitted to NATO in February 1952 (Hale, 2012). Consequently, NATO and US facilities were built and nuclear weapons were deployed in the country. After more than 70 years, Türkiye remains a member of NATO, making its presence in the Alliance a constant feature of its foreign and security policy.

At the same time, Ankara's long relationship with the US has been more volatile. It was the main element defining its foreign relations during the Cold War, in combination with the Cyprus question and the fluctuating relations with Greece. When the Cuban Missile Crisis between the US and USSR erupted following the deployment of the Jupiter intermediate-range missiles in the Anatolian country, their removal raised serious suspicions in the Turkish government that a trade had been reached, at the expense of Turkish interests (Seydi, 2010; Hale, 2012). The relationship between the two countries deteriorated further with the resurgence of the crisis in Cyprus after the 1959 agreements²⁴.

²⁴ The London and Zurich agreements led to the independence of Cyprus from the United Kingdom and to the enactment of a Constitution allocating powers in respect of the Greek majority and the Turkish minority (Hale, 2012).

Tensions commenced in 1964 with the anti-American protests that occurred in the country. These protests were a consequence of Türkiye's perception of a more favorable attitude towards Greece in the dispute, which led to a rapprochement with the USSR. Tensions culminated in the US arms embargo on Türkiye in 1975, following the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus the previous year (Özkeçeci-Taner & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2023). Only in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 did a new convergence between Washington and Ankara emerge²⁵. Concurrently, during the 1970s, Ankara-Athens relations escalated not only for the Cyprus question but also for offshore mineral rights in the Aegean, a dispute still relevant today (Hale, 2012).

The end of the Cold War brought changes in Türkiye's foreign policy, displaying the first signs of a new approach. Departing from past caution and non-involvement, Türkiye, under the presidency of Turgut Özal, started to implement a multidimensional and proactive foreign policy (Murinson, 2006). While maintaining strong ties with the West, Ankara began to explore the other two dimensions of its identity: the Muslim identity in the Middle East and the Balkans²⁶, as well as the Pan-Turkic identity²⁷ in Central Asia²⁸. Yet, the domestic political instability of the 1990s weakened these foreign policy initiatives (Hale, 2012).

This situation ended in 2002 with the decisive victory of the newly formed Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Despite its Ottoman heritage, Türkiye's involvement in the Middle East during the Cold War was limited. Besides its recognition of the State of Israel in 1949, the only noteworthy initiative was the establishment and subsequent failure of the Baghdad Pact²⁹ (Hale, 2012). On the contrary, with the AKP government, the country inaugurated a foreign policy marked by a "neo-Ottomanist" orientation³⁰, whose foundations can be traced in the approach previously adopted by Özal. This expression was introduced by the Turkish columnist and academic Cengiz Çandar but found a defined elaboration in the work of Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, who first served as Erdoğan's chief advisor on foreign policy (2003-2009), then as Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009-2014), and finally as Prime Minister (2014-2016) (Murinson, 2006; Özkeçeci-Taner & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2023). Indeed, neo-Ottomanism served as the foundation and was then integrated into his "strategic depth" doctrine. According to Davutoğlu, strategic depth, which is also the title of his eponymous book, is composed of the concepts of

²⁵ This was reflected by the signature of a new Defense and Cooperation Agreement between the two countries in 1980.

²⁶ During the 1990s, Türkiye actively participated in the NATO activities in Bosnia and Kosovo.

²⁷ Pan-Turkism is a movement aimed at unifying the Turks of the Caucasus and Central Asia with the Anatolian Turks.

²⁸ In 1992, the first Summit of the Heads of Turkic Speaking States was held in Ankara, gathering the leaders of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Türkiye.

²⁹ The Baghdad Pact was a structure established in 1955, involving Türkiye, Iraq, Pakistan, the UK, and Iran to cooperate in military matters.

³⁰ An active foreign policy in the Turkish neighborhood based on the Ottoman historical and cultural heritage.

historical depth and geographical depth. Türkiye has historical depth due to the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, and it also possesses geographical depth due to its unique position with multiple regional identities³¹ (Murinson, 2006; Davutoğlu, 2008). Therefore, strategic depth should induce Ankara to adopt a more proactive stance, providing stability in all its neighboring regions. Then, Davutoğlu identified five principles for Ankara's foreign policy: a balance between security and democracy within the country, zero problems with Türkiye's neighbors, proactive and preemptive diplomacy, a multidimensional foreign policy, and rhythmic diplomacy, the latter referring to an active Turkish presence in various international organizations and fora. (Davutoğlu, 2008). These principles have strongly characterized Türkiye's foreign policy until at least 2011, as evident in the numerous instances that follow. Indeed, Türkiye improved relations with Syria (visit of Bashar al-Assad to Türkiye in 2004, the first of a Syrian head of state in 57 years), Iran (Erdoğan's visit to Tehran and signature of several agreements), and Georgia (Murinson, 2006; Davutoğlu, 2008; Benli Altunişik & Martin, 2023). Furthermore, Ankara acted as mediator between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (Murinson, 2006; Groc, 2012). Likewise, on the Cyprus question, Türkiye supported the UN Annan Plan to reunify the island (Akgül Açıkmeşe & Triantaphyllou, 2012). On the international organization dimension, Turkish activism was proved by its participation to the NATO summit and the Organization of the Islamic Conference³² (OIC) summit, its acquisition of the observer status in the African Union (AU), its invitation to the Arab League, and especially by the victory of a non-permanent member position at the UN Security Council in 2009 (Davutoğlu, 2008; Akkoyunlu, 2021). This strong activism on the part of the AKP also involved sub-Saharan Africa, leading to the first visit of a Turkish Prime Minister to the region in 2005, when Erdoğan visited Ethiopia and South Africa (Özkan, 2011). Similarly, in 2008, Türkiye hosted its first Turkish-African Summit with the participation of top officials from over 50 African countries and decided to open 15 new embassies on the continent (Özkan, 2011). Meanwhile, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) supported new economic development projects and augmented its involvement in the region. On the other hand, while the relations with the EU benefited from the opening of the accession negotiations in 2005, the relationship with the US deteriorated again as a result of the Iraq war in 2003. At the end of the decade, the relations between Türkiye and Israel also experienced a significant decline³³ (Öniş, 2011).

³¹ Davutoğlu affirms that "in terms of its area of influence, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country." (Davutoğlu, 2008, 79).

³² Türkiye supported the successful election of Professor Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu as OIC Secretary General in 2005 (Hale, 2012).

³³ Erdoğan's public criticism towards Israel at the Davos World Economic Forum in 2009 and the storm of the Mavi Marmara, a boat carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, by Israeli soldiers in 2010, are two important examples of this deterioration of bilateral relations (Öniş, 2011).

The outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring provided the first indications of a new paradigm shift in the country's foreign policy, which became definitive in 2016. In this context, Ankara renounced its role as mediator to actively support movements linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, with the objective of becoming the leading regional power (Akkoyunlu, 2021; Benli Altunişik & Martin, 2023). Domestically, the AKP government's approach during the 2013 protests of Gezi Park marked a departure from the first principle of balance between security and democracy (Özkeçeci-Taner & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2023).

The replacement of Davutoğlu with Binali Yıldırım, as Erdoğan's prime minister, concluded the shift in Turkish international strategy, inaugurating the current quest for "strategic autonomy". This new stance is characterized by military interventionism as evidenced by involvement in conflicts in Libya (2019) and Nagorno-Karabakh (2020), the establishment of military bases in Qatar and Somalia, and several military operations in Syria (Akkoyunlu, 2021; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021a). Türkiye's relations with the West have further deteriorated, while Ankara has increased cooperation with Moscow³⁴. In the case of the EU, in 2018, the Council stated that "Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union. Turkey's accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill, and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing" (Council of the European Union, 2018, 13). In the case of the US, the 2017 purchase of Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missiles by Türkiye led Washington to exclude Ankara from the F-35 program and impose sanctions on Türkiye's defense sector³⁵ (Akkoyunlu, 2021; Rascaglia, 2024). Before this key event, there were already intense tensions between the two countries due to the US refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim preacher who is considered the mind behind the 2016 failed coup in Türkiye, and the US support to the Kurds PYD-YPG (the Democratic Union Party and the Kurdish People's Protection Units) in the Syrian civil war, which are part of the same umbrella organization of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and are perceived as a direct threat to the Turkish national interests (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021a; Rascaglia, 2024).

Since the emergence of the PKK in 1984, the Kurdish question and the PKK's separatist aims have been a primary source of concern for Ankara in terms of national security. This issue has affected both the country's domestic and foreign policy. A thorough examination of Ankara's stance on the matter is beyond the scope of this section. Here, it is important to note two developments. First, the PKK's insurgency has impacted Türkiye's stance in the international arena and its relations with other countries, as evidenced by the aforementioned case of the US, past diplomatic tensions with Syria,

³⁴ Putin and Erdoğan met a total of eight times in 2017 (Akkoyunlu, 2021).

³⁵ These sanctions are still active today.

negotiations for the accession of Sweden and Finland into NATO, and cooperation with Iraq. Second, since 12 May, the situation could be at a turning point: after holding its 12th Congress in northern Iraq, the group formally announced its disbandment and the conclusion of its armed struggle³⁶ (International Crisis Group, 2025). This evolution has the potential to have important consequences. Domestically, Erdoğan would strengthen its position, becoming the Turkish leader capable of halting the insurgency. In foreign policy, Ankara could allocate resources to other areas, thereby facilitating its objective of increasing its influence. However, uncertainties remain, in particular with regard to the disarmament process.

In a similar manner, after 2016, the dynamics related to Hizmet, the movement founded by the aforementioned Fethullah Gülen, have affected Türkiye's foreign policy. Hizmet ran a large system of schools, charities, and media organizations in Türkiye and abroad. After the 2016 coup attempt, the movement was declared a terrorist organization in the country as FETÖ (the Fetullah Terrorist Organization, Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü). Many individuals linked to the group have been arrested, and its institutions in Türkiye have been shut down (UK Government, 2025). At the international level, these circumstances influenced Türkiye's foreign relations: Ankara had to exert pressure on other countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe to close the movement's schools and face the US denial of Gülen's extradition from the country (Alexander, 2017). Following the death of Hizmet's founder in 2024, Türkiye continues to consider the movement a threat and pursue legal proceedings and extradition requests against Gülenists (MENA Research Center, 2024).

The discussion now returns to the central topic of Türkiye's new stance in foreign policy. Türkiye's quest for strategic autonomy is also characterized by a transactional and interest-driven approach in its partnerships with the EU and the activities related to NATO, as proved by its recent posture towards Sweden and Finland in the negotiations for their accession to the Atlantic Alliance (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021a; Pamuk & Kauranen, 2022). Finally, another element accompanies this new stance, constituting an autonomous doctrine that reflects part of Ankara's new international strategy: the Mavi Vatan (Blue Homeland) doctrine. Mavi Vatan was theorized by Admiral Cem Gürdeniz in 2006 as a doctrine to reject Greek and Cypriot claims in the Eastern Mediterranean and as a legal vision to solve the maritime disputes that involve Ankara and its neighboring countries, as also presented by Admiral Cihat Yayıcı, another advocate of the doctrine (Denizeau, 2021). The Blue Homeland would correspond to a vast exclusive economic zone (EEZ), extending on the current Turkish EEZ in the Black Sea but also on parts of the EEZs claimed by Cyprus and Greece in the Aegean and the

³⁶ This decision comes after a call from PKK's historic leader Abdullah Öcalan from prison and was followed by a first symbolic ceremony in July in which some PKK fighters destroyed their weapons.

Mediterranean Seas, bordering in this latter the Libyan and Egyptian EEZs (Denizeau, 2021). According to its theorists, Mavi Vatan requires the modernization of the Turkish fleet, as well as the establishment of new naval bases for power projection. Indeed, in accordance with the new Turkish stance, this doctrine does not exclude the use of force to reach its aims (Denizeau, 2021). Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that the approach of Mavi Vatan is not comprehensive due to the lack of a strategic vision for other key regions for Türkiye, such as Sub-Saharan Africa. This doctrine and its theorists do not propose principles for action in this area; they merely state that control of the Eastern Mediterranean is crucial for Akara's involvement in the Horn of Africa (Denizeau, 2021). Since 2016, Mavi Vatan has been embraced by President Erdoğan, who also perceived it as providing further strategic justification for Türkiye's involvement in Libya (Denizeau, 2021). As a consequence, in 2019, a vast naval exercise named "Mavi Vatan 2019" was organized in the Black, Aegean, and Mediterranean Seas.

2.3.2 Türkiye's Institutional Framework

The victory of the AKP in the 2002 elections not only influenced the strategy of foreign policy but also affected the institutional system responsible for decision-making. Until 2002, the armed forces, especially through the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK), determined the main elements of Türkiye's foreign policy. This situation changed with the reforms promoted by the AKP, which reduced the powers of the MGK and, more generally, of the military (Akkoyunlu, 2021).

Today, after the constitutional amendment of 2017, the Turkish system of foreign and defense policy has assumed a highly centralized character. The President is the primary authority, and policy formulations occur and decisions are made within the Presidency³⁷ (Kirişçi & Toygür, 2019; Neset et al., 2019; Yeşilyurt, 2024). The formation of the cabinet and the organization of ministries are under the authority of the President, who regulates these matters by presidential decrees and does not require parliamentary approval (Turkish Constitution, 2019, Artt. 104 and 106). In parallel, the power of the other actors in the foreign policy decision-making process has decreased. These other actors are the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMFA), the Security and Foreign Policy Committee (SFPC), the aforementioned MGK, the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the Turkish military, and the formal advisors to the President. According to Neset et al. (2019), these actors provide information directly to the President, but their decision-making power is limited or absent.

³⁷ Article 104 of the Constitution also stipulates that the President "[...] shall determine national security policies and take necessary measures".

Emblematic is the case of the TMFA. Following the constitutional amendments, the TMFA no longer has a role in policy planning but has become a policy implementation body. This trend is reflected by several instances. First, the budget for the TMFA has been reduced to a lower level than that of 2009 (Yeşilyurt, 2024). Second, TMFA officials have often been excluded from the President's bilateral meetings with foreign leaders (Yeşilyurt, 2024). Third, the Directorate General of Political Planning (Siyaset Planlama Genel Müdürlüğü), in charge of coordinating between departments' long-term policy planning, was first closed and then transformed into a part of another Directorate General (Yeşilyurt, 2024). Fourth, it is now possible for the President to appoint individuals external to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather than professional diplomats, to the position of Director General in the Ministry (Ergin, 2018). Incidentally, according to Kirişçi and Toygür (2019), the same process has also affected the military apparatus, with the President directly controlling the appointments to higher ranks. Fifth and last point, the number of non-career ambassadors appointed has substantially risen³⁸ (Yeşilyurt, 2024). On the other hand, the SFPC, chaired by the President, is responsible for proposing new policies and also addressing current foreign policy issues. Furthermore, it appears that its members do not come from the military, the MIT, or the diplomatic apparatus (Neset et al., 2019).

Examining the legislature, the constitutional amendments did not alter the prerogatives of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT). The GNAT still has the power to declare war, approve the ratification of international treaties, approve the deployment of the Turkish Armed Forces in foreign countries and grant the presence of foreign armed forces in the country (Turkish Constitution, 2019, Art. 92). However, under the new presidential system, the GNAT lacks authority over the President, so its role in foreign and defense policy remains extremely restricted.

Finally, the MGK has also been restructured by Presidential Decree no.6 (2018), issued in accordance with Article 118 (Secretariat-General of the NSC, 2018). As before 2017, the President of the Republic continues to chair the MGK and to draw up its agenda (Turkish Constitution, 2019, Art. 118). On the other hand, the General Commander of Gendarmerie was removed from the MGK, while the Vice Presidents have been included. Thus, the advisory decisions are no longer submitted to the Council of Ministers but to the President of the Republic. Furthermore, the appointment of the Secretary-General of the MGK, who is accountable to the President, is currently at the discretion of the President (Secretariat-General of the NSC, 2018). This last point is of great significance given that the Secretary General is responsible for carrying out the preparatory work for the National Security Policy Document.

³⁸ It is essential to note that, under the previous parliamentary system, the appointment of ambassadors was conducted by the Council of Ministers, with the President providing only the final approval (Yeşilyurt, 2024).

The National Security Policy Document, also commonly defined as the “Red Book”, is classified. For this reason and for its significance for Türkiye’s security strategy, it has also been referred to in the past as the “secret constitution”. What is known is that it deals with internal and external threats and policies to counter them, and its contents are periodically updated based on the evolution of the security landscape (Daily Sabah, 2024; Newsroom, 2025a). According to Türkiye Today, its last update was carried out at the beginning of 2025 (Newsroom, 2025a). Consequently, the most significant available document providing information on Türkiye’s national security approach is represented by the 2024-2028 Defense Industry Sectoral Strategy Document (2024-2028 Savunma Sanayii Sektörel Strateji Dokümanı). This Document highlights the importance of developing the defense industry, modernizing the armed forces, and the necessity for the country not to be dependent on foreign states for strategic products and components (Secretariat of Defence Industries, 2024). This point is also listed among the guiding principles of this Strategy alongside increasing the technological depth of the national defense industry and ensuring the sustainability of the defense industry ecosystem (Secretariat of Defence Industries, 2024). In conclusion, these elements are consistent with Türkiye’s broader approach to achieving strategic autonomy, as outlined in the previous section.

2.3.3 Türkiye’s Instruments of National Power

Türkiye’s international strategy aims to position the country as a global leader in the international arena. Alongside the classical defense of the state and its borders, the Turkish outward projection has three objectives: (1) achieve strategic autonomy; (2) affirm regional power status in its wider neighborhood; and (3) gain strategic leverage against adversaries by increasing its military power. The following is an account of Türkiye’s military, economic, financial, cultural, and information instruments of power, which analyzes how Türkiye employs these DIMEF instruments and identifies whether unconventional dimensions are actively employed in the country’s strategy.

Türkiye’s Military Power:

Military power has assumed a renewed central role in Türkiye’s foreign and security strategy over the last decade. Türkiye’s military and defense strategy is based on enhancing military readiness, pre-emptive posture, and deterrence capability (Yeşiltaş, 2020). Türkiye’s defense spending as a percentage of GDP in the 2024 fiscal exercise was 2.09%, corresponding to \$22,776.4 million (Taylor & Schneider, 2025). Considering the distribution of this expenditure by category, it can be observed

that personnel account for 43.56% of the total budget, followed by equipment at 34.18%, infrastructure at 9.35%, and other expenditure at 12.91%, which includes operations, Research and Development, and maintenance expenditure (NATO, 2024). While personnel spending has decreased significantly from 2014 to date, in line with other NATO countries, the infrastructure category shows a considerably higher value than that of the majority of other Atlantic allies (NATO, 2024).

Türkiye hosts several NATO structures and US military bases throughout the country, including the NATO Allied Land Command in Izmir and the Incirlik Air Base. According to the US Department of Defense (DoD), a total of approximately 1.700 American military personnel are stationed in the country (DMDC, 2025). Analyzing the weaponry, Türkiye has the Russian S-400 and the Turkish SİPER and Hisar defense systems, as well as T129 Atak attack helicopters and a fleet of F-16, Anka and Bayraktar UAVs (Özlu, 2022; Newsroom, 2025c). Among the most prominent land vehicles in the Turkish Army's arsenal are the Altay-T1, Leopard 2A4, and M60TM tanks (Kokcu, 2025a). The Navy has MİLGEM corvettes, Preveze-class and Gür-class submarines, and one new Reis-class submarine, as well as the TCG Anadolu multi-purpose amphibious assault ship (LHD), inaugurated in 2023 and considered the first UCAV ship in the world. In light of its new muscular approach, the near-future obsolescence of some of these weapon systems, and the significant lack of an aircraft carrier, Türkiye is undertaking a substantial effort to modernize and acquire new systems. For instance, while trying to acquire the F-35 from the US, Ankara has signed a preliminary agreement with the UK for the sale of 40 Eurofighter Typhoon (Daily Sabah, 2025c). In parallel, Türkiye is developing numerous systems indigenously, including the MILDEN (National Submarine), ISTIF class frigates, the fighter jet KAAN, Bayraktar KIZILELMA (Türkiye's first indigenous unmanned fighter aircraft stealth), as well as its first aircraft carrier named MUGEM (Şahin, 2025; Ergocun, 2025; Kokcu, 2025b). Furthermore, Ankara is also planning to develop nuclear-powered submarines, called NUKDEN (Kokcu, 2025b). This move is highly coherent with the current Turkish international strategy. On the one hand, the modernization and expansion of the naval fleet is clearly in line with the Mavi Vatan doctrine. On the other hand, the indigenous development of weapons systems by Ankara demonstrates the country's commitment to pursuing strategic autonomy, also through the pivotal sector of the defense industry.

In the defense industry, Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), Aselsan, and Baykar play significant roles. TAI, which is jointly owned by the Turkish Armed Forces Foundation and the government, is among the top 100 global players in the aviation and space industry. Aselsan is a leading international defense electronics company and the largest in the country in this field. The Turkish Armed Forces

Foundation is its main shareholder. Finally, Baykar³⁹ is a Turkish private company that has become increasingly relevant in recent years due to its production of UAVs, also known as drones. These three companies produce some of the aforementioned systems and thus contribute to Türkiye's military modernization and strategic autonomy aspirations. In parallel, they have signed several agreements for the export of weapons systems with countries on different continents, as proved by deals with the Philippines, Kenya, and Poland (Bekdil, 2021; Ozberk, 2024a; Ozberk, 2024b).

The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) are the second-largest army in NATO, with approximately 355,200 active military personnel and 378,700 reserve personnel (Global Fire Power, 2025). Furthermore, 1,4 million Turkish citizens reach military age annually (Global Firepower, 2025). Given the new military activism of the government in the last decade, the TSK is involved in numerous MOA and have established several military bases in partner countries. Türkiye has military bases in Qatar and Somalia, which hosts the largest Turkish military base overseas, as well as in the internationally unrecognized "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC) (Robinson, 2023; European Commission, 2024; Alhas, 2025). Likewise, in Libya, which is a pivotal country in Ankara's strategy for the Mediterranean, Türkiye extended its military deployment until January 2026, continuing its support to the GNU (European Commission, 2024). According to several sources, Türkiye also maintains a military presence in the northern part of Iraq and Syria (Robinson, 2023; Alhas, 2025). In this latter country, which has recently experienced the fall of Bashar al-Assad, some sources claim that Türkiye is also establishing its armed forces at Tiyas Air Base (Newsroom, 2025b). However, the Turkish Minister of Defense has denied this statement. Similarly, according to Military Africa, the TSK is set to take control of the Abéché military base in Chad, which previously hosted the French troops in the country (Abdul, 2025a). This commitment, which constitutes the backbone of Türkiye's military presence, is at the bilateral level. However, Ankara is also active in some MOA carried out at the multilateral level, albeit with a lesser impact than the bilateral ones. At the NATO level, KFOR is particularly relevant because Türkiye represents the third largest troop contributor to the mission, after Italy and the US (KFOR, 2025). Furthermore, in cooperation with the EU, Ankara participates in the Multinational Battalion of the operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea, 2025). At the UN level, Ankara participates in seven UN missions: UNTMIS, UNMIK, MINUSCA, UNISFA, MONUSCO, UNMISS, and UNIFIL. However, it is worth noting that Türkiye's contribution to these missions is extremely limited in terms of personnel, with the exception of UNIFIL, for which 90 Turkish soldiers and two staff officers are deployed (United Nations, 2025).

³⁹ In the following section, the role of Baykar will be analyzed in greater detail, also focusing on how it contributes to Türkiye's foreign and security strategy.

Turkish Military Presence Abroad 2025

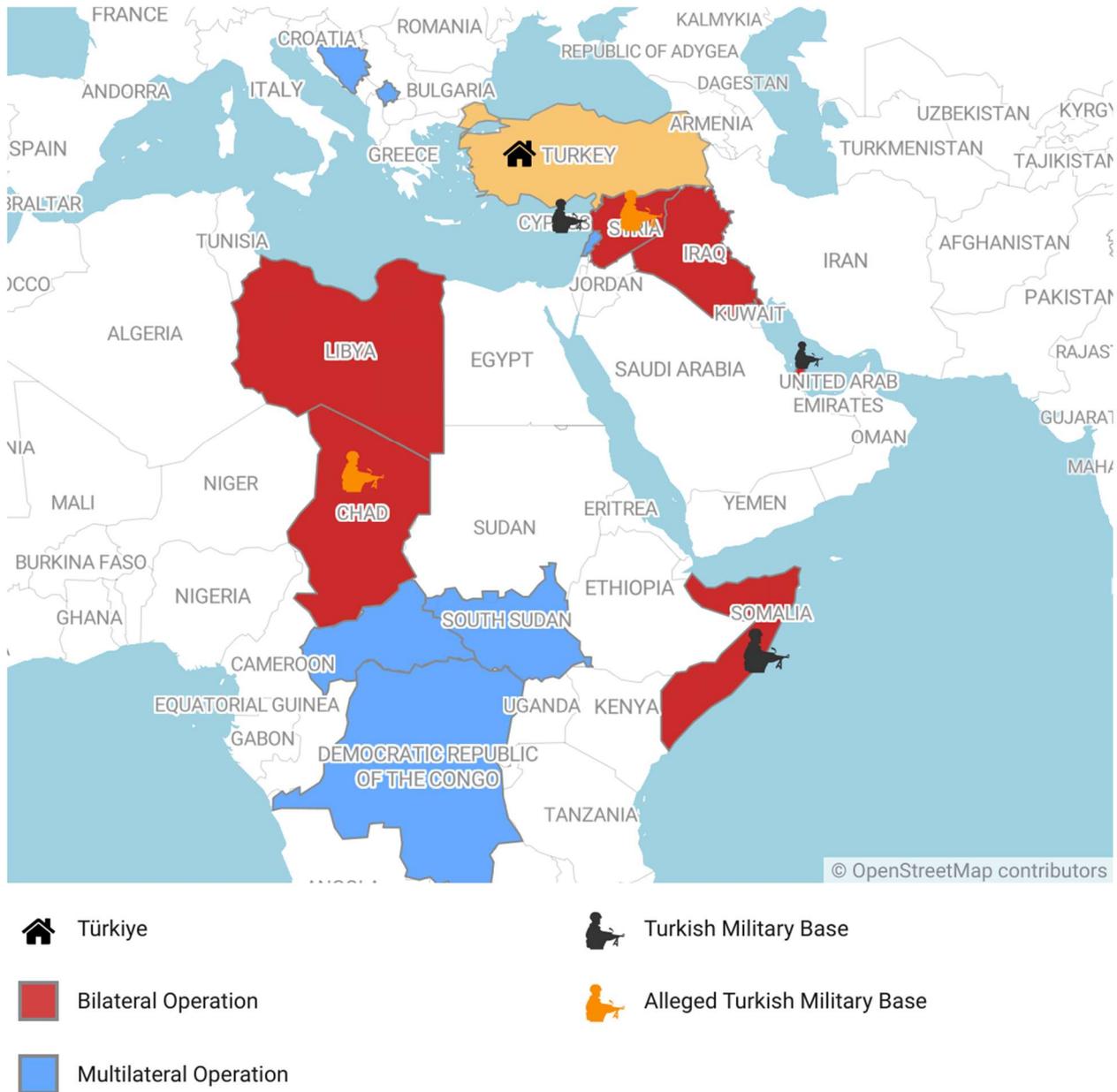


Figure 2: Turkish Military Presence Abroad. Source: Data developed by the author. Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2: Turkish Military Presence Abroad.

Türkiye is also implementing a non-conventional aspect of military power by employing mercenaries. This was confirmed by the US DoD inspector general in 2020, who concluded that Türkiye sent between 3,500 and 3,800 paid Syrian fighters to Libya (Debre, 2020). More controversial is the role of the first Private Military Company (PMC) in Türkiye: SADAT Defense (International Defence Consultancy Construction Industry and Trade Inc.). According to different sources (Powers, 2021; Middle East Eye, 2024; Africa Defence Forum, 2024), SADAT has been deployed in many African

countries to protect and support Turkish interests. However, the company and the Turkish Ministry of National Defense refuted these allegations (Yochai, 2025).

Türkiye's Economic and Financial Power:

In the last decade, Türkiye has experienced significant economic growth and demonstrated new activism in the economic and financial sectors, both at the multilateral and bilateral levels. Türkiye has a GDP of \$1.32 trillion, a GDP growth rate of 3.2 percent, and is among the world's top 20 largest economies, ranking 17th. In 2024, Türkiye had an FDI inflow of \$11.26 billion and an outflow of \$6.6 billion (World Bank, 2025b). Germany, the USA, and Italy are significant trade partners for both imports and exports, whereas Ankara's bilateral trade with Russia and China is characterized by a substantial deficit (Turkstat, 2025). According to data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), Türkiye's top exports in 2023 were Cars, Gold, Refined Petroleum, Motor Vehicles and their parts, and Jewelry (OEC, 2023). Meanwhile, the top imports were Gold, Refined Petroleum, Cars, Petroleum gas, and Scrap Iron (OEC, 2023).

Türkiye is a member of the G20 and the MIKTA, a cross-regional group comprising Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Türkiye, and Australia (all G20 member nations), as well as a member of numerous international organizations focused on economic and financial matters. Türkiye is a member of the WTO, the World Bank, and is a founding member of the OECD. Ankara is the 13th largest contributor to the OECD and hosts two centers of the organization on its soil: the OECD Ankara Multilateral Tax Center and the OECD Istanbul Center⁴⁰ (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022a). Türkiye is also a member of the IMF, with a voting share of 0.95% of the total, and of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Importantly, Türkiye has also shown considerable interest in accessing the BRICS. However, at present, Ankara has only been offered the status of a partner country, for which the Anatolian country has yet to make a decision (Daily Sabah, 2025b). As a Muslim country, Türkiye is also a founding member of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). In the organization, Türkiye holds a share of subscribed capital equal to 6.45% of the total and hosts one of the organization's ten regional hubs in Ankara (IsDB, n.d.; IsDB, 2024).

Among the most significant economic actors in the field of parallel diplomacy, Turkish Airlines plays a central role⁴¹. Founded in 1933, the company adopted its current name in 1955 and, today, is the

⁴⁰ The OECD Istanbul Center was established with Türkiye's voluntary financial contribution to support the implementation of the OECD's regional programs in its neighborhood.

⁴¹ The Turkish Wealth Fund, investment arm of the Republic of Türkiye, owns 49.12% of the company.

airline that flies to most countries in the world, making the Istanbul Airport an international transit point (Turkish Airlines, 2025). Consequently, the company represents a strategic foreign policy tool to affect in a positive manner Türkiye's diplomatic relations in the fields of connectivity, culture, trade, and crisis response (Koç, 2025). More generally, Turkish Airlines facilitates connections between Turkish officials, entrepreneurs, religious representatives, aid workers, students and tourists with partner countries, and vice versa (Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). This is evident in the case of Africa, where Turkish Airlines has increased its flight destinations from 4 to 58 (Selçuk, 2021). Indeed, the introduction of direct flights to Somalia, Mauritania, and Benin was also intended to directly support Ankara's diplomatic and commercial engagement in these countries, as demonstrated by the opening of Turkish embassies in these countries in the same years (Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). From a crisis response standpoint, the company was also involved in humanitarian efforts during the Arab uprising in Libya, famine in Somalia, and the coronavirus outbreak in China (Selçuk, 2021).

Alongside Turkish Airlines, two other Turkish companies are worth considering: the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and the aforementioned Baykar. TPAO, founded in 1954, is the national oil company of the Republic of Türkiye and contributes to Türkiye's efforts in the energy sector. Indeed, in Türkiye's 2025 Investment Program, TPAO has secured the largest investment budget among all the state-owned enterprises (TPAO, 2025). Furthermore, the company operates in key countries for Türkiye's foreign and defense policy, such as Azerbaijan, Iraq, Somalia, and the Russian Federation, as well as in the self-proclaimed and internationally not recognized TRNC, which is recognized only by Türkiye (TPAO, 2025). On the other hand, Baykar is a Turkish private company and Türkiye's top defense exporter, but it acts in strict cooperation with the government⁴², as evidenced by the deployment of the company's drones in the war theatres in which Ankara has interests (Gosselin-Malo, 2021; Daily Sabah, 2025a). At the same time, the boom in exports of the Bayraktar TB2 and Bayraktar AKINCI UCAVs, acquired by 35 different States in the world, has proved to be an efficient foreign policy tool that some authors have referred to as "drone diplomacy" (Gosselin-Malo, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2023; BAYKAR, 2025).

Development cooperation is another considerable aspect of Türkiye's economic and financial power. The TİKA, established in 1992, is responsible for implementing Türkiye's development cooperation policy. TİKA has 63 Programme Coordination Offices in 61 partner countries, which allows the Agency to be active in more than 170 countries (TİKA, 2024). Africa has witnessed an increased

⁴² Selçuk Bayraktar, the architect of Türkiye's first indigenous UAV/UCAV systems and Chairman of the Board of the company since 2021, is also the son-in-law of President Erdoğan.

involvement of TİKA, which now has 19 Programme Coordination Offices on the continent. The main areas of cooperation with the African partners include agriculture, health, education, water and sanitation, vocational training, institutional capacity development, and humanitarian assistance.

In 2024, Türkiye's total ODA has reached \$7.4 billion, representing 0.56% of gross national income (GNI) and showing a decrease compared to 2023 (OECD, 2025). However, according to OECD figures, Türkiye's ODA was ranked among the top ten bilateral providers of development cooperation (OECD, 2025). Looking at the countries that benefited the most from Türkiye's bilateral ODA in 2023, the top ten were: Syria, Kazakhstan, Palestine, Kyrgyz Republic, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sudan (Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023).

Türkiye's Cultural Diplomacy and Information Power:

According to the most recent data, Türkiye has the third-largest diplomatic network in the world, comprising 145 Embassies, 96 Consular Offices, 14 Permanent Representations to International Organizations, and two Special Diplomatic Delegations (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025). The geographical distribution of the Embassies is as follows: 45 in Europe, 27 in sub-Saharan Africa, 38 in Asia and Oceania, 19 in America, and 16 in the Middle East and North Africa (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025).

Looking specifically at cultural diplomacy and Türkiye's influence abroad through culture, it is important to consider the distribution of the Yunus Emre Institutes, which has the task of promoting the Turkish language and Türkiye's history, culture, and art, through language courses, festivals, and exhibitions (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.; Donelli, 2019). Currently, the Institute has more than 63 cultural centers abroad (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.). The other key element of Turkish cultural diplomacy is represented by educational institutions. The Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) plays a key role in this field. Working in coordination with the Ministry of National Education, TMF is the only organization authorized to provide educational services abroad, from pre-school to higher education (TMF, n.d.). TMF operates in 55 countries through 517 educational institutions, with the highest concentration in sub-Saharan Africa (TMF, n.d.). In total, TMF has more than 70.000 students in its educational institutions. Furthermore, TMF also provides financial support, scholarships, and educational materials (TMF, n.d.). In parallel, the Directorate for Religious Affairs is also active in the field of education through the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDF) (Donelli, 2019). TDF supports religious education in Türkiye and abroad. At the international level, TDF has students from 114

countries with programs in theology and Quranic studies (TDF, 2025). Currently, TDF has educational institutions in 14 different countries abroad (TDF, 2025).

Another distinctive element of Ankara's cultural diplomacy has been represented by Turkish TV dramas. They now broadcast in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Latin America, Western Europe, and Africa, making Türkiye the third-largest exporter of television (Donelli, 2019; *The Economist*, 2024). Additionally, Turkish Airlines is another instrument of cultural power through its advertisements and communication strategy, promoting the country's image worldwide (Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). Furthermore, Türkiye ranked fifth in 2024 for international tourist arrivals and occupies the fifteenth position globally in terms of UNESCO World Heritage sites. However, despite these results, the country ranked 26th in the Global Soft Power Index (Brand Finance, 2025).

The last element to consider in cultural diplomacy is the Turkish diaspora. According to 2022 data from the TMFA, Turkish people residing abroad are more than 7.5 million, with approximately six million residing in Western European countries (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022b). The employment of the Turkish diaspora as a foreign policy instrument can be traced back to the 1990s. During that period, Türkiye demonstrated a commitment to preserving and promoting its national values and culture among its diaspora communities. In this manner, it was easier to mobilize the diaspora in support of Turkish national interests. As reported by Şenay (2021), this attitude was well summarized by the words of a Turkish ambassador, who stated that every Turkish community outside of Türkiye constitutes an extension of the nation, insofar as they serve as representatives of Türkiye. Yet, it was with the victory of the AKP in 2002 and the establishment in 2010 of the Presidency of the Turks Abroad and Related Communities (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı, YTB) that a real "diaspora policy" has emerged (Başer, 2019). Building on the approach of the 1990s, the YTB constitutes a formal organization to coordinate Türkiye's diaspora in order to maintain its loyalty to the homeland and mobilize it to support Turkish national interests⁴³ (Şenay, 2021). The relevance of the diaspora for the Turkish foreign policy agenda was also demonstrated by the statement of the current President of YTB, who defined the development of the diaspora, one of the main axes of the country's foreign policy, and by Erdoğan's speech in Germany in 2008, affirming that he expected Turks in Europe to act as Türkiye's ambassadors (Arkilic, 2022). So, Türkiye pragmatically considers its diaspora networks as an effective foreign policy asset to be employed alongside traditional instruments to achieve its aims.

⁴³ The mobilization of Turkish diaspora communities against the recognition of the Armenian genocide in public discourse in their country of residence represents an important example.

Turning to Türkiye's role in the information domain, the country undertakes various initiatives to counter and prevent disinformation, while also promoting its narrative. Indeed, according to the Stanford Internet Observatory, in June 2020, Twitter removed 7,340 accounts attributed to the youth wing of the AKP. The various reasons for the removal included English-language tweets aimed at bolstering the external legitimacy of Türkiye's offensive in northeastern Syria in October 2019 (Stanford Internet Observatory, 2020). On the other hand, regarding Ankara's efforts in countering and preventing disinformation, since 2022, the Center for Countering Disinformation, part of the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, has released an online "Disinformation Bulletin" to inform the population about disinformation and fake news (Directorate of Communications, 2022). Furthermore, in 2022, Türkiye adopted a law to criminalize the dissemination of false information intended to mislead the public, providing for imprisonment for offenders. However, this law has raised concerns about freedom of speech and has garnered a negative opinion from the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe on its enactment (Venice Commission, 2022).

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the main elements of the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye. In particular, the analysis focused on their historical trajectories and institutional structures, as well as on the instruments of national power composing each DIMEF dimension. Italy and Türkiye were both strategic countries during the Cold War, members of NATO, and allies of the US. Today, they continue to be central middle powers in the international dynamics, especially in the Mediterranean and in Africa. The renewed attention for the continent by these two States is one of the considerable reasons to study their trajectories. Nevertheless, Rome and Ankara are currently pursuing different paths.

Despite their common involvement in numerous international organizations, their shared status as middle powers, and their activism in the same regions, there are significant differences in their stance. Despite frequent criticism regarding its lack of consistency, Italy has consistently pursued the same key dimensions of foreign policy since the end of World War II. Likewise, Italy's core priorities have remained largely unchanged in its foreign and security strategy over time. Türkiye's international strategy has also exhibited certain elements of continuity since the advent of the Republic. Yet, it has been mainly characterized by significant discontinuities. These developments were evident in the adoption of Neo-Ottomanism and strategic depth with the advent of the AKP, as well as the embracing of assertive militarism and the quest for strategic autonomy following the removal of Davutoğlu. In

this context, Ankara's historical Western orientation has been replaced by a multidimensional diplomacy that eschews total allegiance to any single field.

The institutional frameworks of the two countries also present considerable differences. The Italian foreign policy decision-making system is characterized by the involvement of many institutional actors. For instance, the contribution of Ministers to the decision-making process is significant, even if the Prime Minister plays the primary role. Furthermore, during periods of government instability, the President of the Republic can be active at the international level. Remarkably, Italy lacks a National Security Council and is the only G7 country without a National Security Strategy. This lack has a detrimental effect on coordination and cooperation, failing to provide an integrated framework for the country's external action. In contrast, after the 2017 constitutional amendment, Türkiye is characterized by a hyper-centralized system in which the President of the Republic is almost the sole decision-maker, whereas the other actors are responsible for providing information or advice. In parallel, the 2017 reform significantly reduced the powers of the TMFA and strengthened the President's influence on the MGK. Furthermore, Türkiye has a National Security Strategy, also known as the "Red Book". The Red Book deals with internal and external threats, includes policies to counter them, and is periodically updated. Indeed, it constitutes a further element of integration for Türkiye's foreign and security strategy.

The subsequent analysis of the DIMEF spectrum provided initial evidence that Italy and Türkiye integrate the instruments of national powers through different approaches. In the military dimension, Ankara favors a bilateral approach and military intervention in conflicts related to third countries. Indeed, in accordance with the Mavi Vatan doctrine, military force is not excluded as a means of pursuing interests that Türkiye considers legitimate. Moreover, Ankara has employed mercenaries, as was the case in Libya, and can also rely on the PMC SADAT, which provides plausible deniability. These two elements evidence the relevance of the non-conventional instruments for Ankara. In contrast, Italy mostly employs a multilateral approach to the use of force through its involvement in NATO, EU, and UN missions in significant areas that impact its national security. Indeed, Italy is also the top troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping operations among Western countries. Yet, Italy sometimes fails to draw the attention of these organizations to its regions of priority interest. Furthermore, Rome does not employ any non-conventional instruments in the military dimension. At the same time, Italy spends more than Türkiye on defense in absolute terms (\$34,461.7 million vs \$22,766.4 million). However, an examination of defense spending relative to GDP reveals a higher figure for Türkiye, reflecting Ankara's robust commitment to defense spending in recent years to support its assertive foreign policy and militarism.

The economic and financial dimension is where the two countries' approaches are least divergent. In terms of macroeconomic values, Italy displays significantly higher figures, both in terms of GDP (\$2.37 trillion vs. \$1.32 trillion in 2024) and FDI (see Figure 3). This is despite Türkiye's GDP growth rate of 3.2 percent compared to Italy's 0.7 %. In contrast, in the field of development cooperation, on which both states place great emphasis, Türkiye's ODA is higher than Italy's, as evidenced by Figure 3.

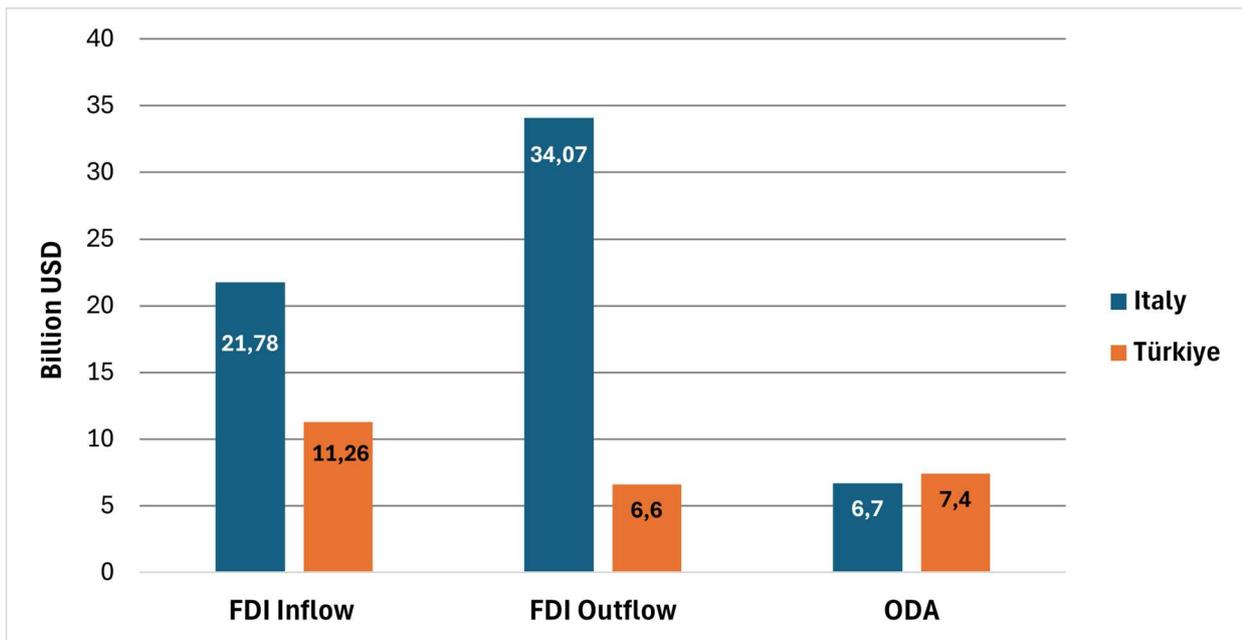


Figure 3: Italy and Türkiye FDI and ODA comparison according to 2024 data.

Source: World Bank and OECD. Data developed by the author.

Likewise, both Italy and Türkiye have companies that can play a role in the field of parallel diplomacy. Regarding Italy, ENI, Enel, and Leonardo have played a fundamental role in the history of Italian foreign policy, contributing to the strengthening of Rome's relations with partner countries and addressing some of the country's security priorities. Generally, ENI and Leonardo have a stronger international influence than their Turkish counterparts. However, from the Turkish perspective, Baykar's drone diplomacy has become an effective foreign policy tool. Indeed, despite its private status, Baykar maintains strict cooperation with the Turkish government, likely also due to the family ties with the President. In parallel, Turkish Airlines appears as a particularly effective instrument of influence for Türkiye, providing connectivity and promoting the country's image.

Finally, in the cultural diplomacy and information dimension, Türkiye displays a particularly significant activism. As shown in Figure 4, Ankara not only has a larger diplomatic presence than Italy but also boasts the third-largest diplomatic network in the world.

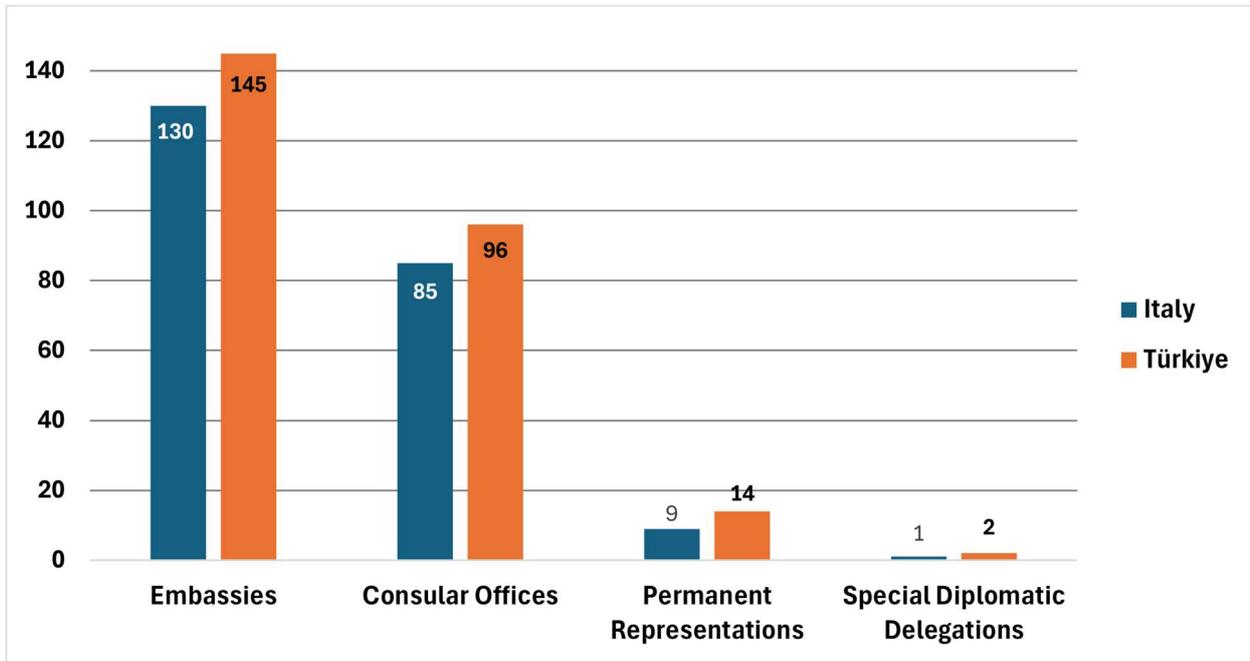


Figure 4: *Diplomatic Networks of Italy and Türkiye: Composition and Comparison.*

Source: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Data developed by the author.

Since the AKP's victory in 2002, Türkiye has worked to enhance its international image by opening numerous embassies throughout the world, particularly on the African continent. In parallel, the Yunus Emre Institute and the TMF contribute to these efforts in the fields of culture and education, respectively. In recent years, Turkish TV dramas have also emerged as an instrument of soft power. On the other hand, Italy plays a leading role in the realm of cultural diplomacy, thanks to its rich heritage and its significant role in the fields of history and archaeology, as also evidenced by its ranking in international tourist arrivals. Despite this significant potential, in certain areas, Italy lags behind other major European countries, such as in the number of cultural institutes worldwide. Ankara also has some non-conventional instruments in the cultural dimension. First, the TDF enables Türkiye to use religion as an element of soft power in its relations with partner countries. Second, the Turkish diaspora, coordinated through the YTB, constitutes a valuable asset of foreign policy, which can support Turkish national interests abroad. In contrast, the role of the diaspora is often underestimated by Italy, despite its significant numbers and potential influence.

Finally, in the information dimension, Italy and Türkiye present relevant differences. Italy's approach is primarily defensive, rules-based, and centered on the NATO and EU mechanisms of cooperation, in line with Rome's multilateral inclination. On the other hand, Türkiye undertakes counter-disinformation activities while actively promoting its narrative through the information sphere.

As a result, in this preliminary conclusion, it is possible to make one main observation. Coherently with the first hypothesis, Italy, as a democratic middle power, appears to mainly use traditional tools of the DIMEF spectrum and to adopt the military instrument mostly under multilateral mandates. In contrast, Türkiye, as a middle power with a hybrid regime, displays a higher reliance on a combination of conventional and non-conventional instruments, including mercenaries, religion, diaspora, and information campaigns. Concurrently, Ankara also exhibits a more centralized institutional system and an inclination to employ military force in bilateral frameworks. Yet, these preliminary conclusions should be further tested under different conditions and in relation to specific cases. This is the purpose of the next two chapters.

DIMEF Integration Under Unstable Conditions:

The case of Somalia

3.1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, Somalia has suffered from a persistent state of civil war, resulting in chronic instability. The current situation is complex and shows no signs of improvement. The nation is currently facing two jihadist groups. Al-Shabaab, which was formed in 2006 and is affiliated with Al Qaeda, represents the primary threat to the country. The group's stated objectives are the overthrow of the central government and the establishment of a state based on Islamic principles. In February 2025, Al-Shabaab initiated a major offensive, resulting in the capture of new territory in the southern and central regions of the country (Jackson, 2025; Soufan Center, 2025a). In addition to posing a threat to Somali territory, the group also poses a threat to maritime traffic, a problem amplified by its recent collaboration with the Yemeni Houthis group, also known as Ansarullah (Security Council, 2025; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2025). In parallel, the country has also witnessed in 2015 the emergence of a branch of the Islamic State, named IS-Somalia. Although numerically less significant than Al-Shabaab, IS-Somalia operates mainly in the Puntland region in the north of the country and plays a key role in financing the Islamic State in Africa (International Crisis Group, 2024). As a result of the activities of these groups, in the past year alone, Somalia suffered nearly 4.500 fatalities associated with militant Islamist violence (Bradford, 2025). At the same time, the situation is further complicated by divisions within the Federal State itself, particularly between the central federal government and the federal member states of Puntland and Jubaland (Jackson, 2025; The Economist, 2025b).

In this context of instability, Italy and Türkiye have been two countries committed to supporting the Somali central government. The relations of both countries with Mogadishu have their roots in history. For this reason, experts in the field have employed the same expression, “special relationship”, to describe each country's relations with Somalia (Michelin, 2023; Türkiye Virtual Office, 2024). Regarding Italy, Somalia was an Italian colony and, following World War II, remained under Italian trusteeship until achieving independence and unification with the British protectorate of Somaliland in 1960 (Tripodi, 1999). After the independence, the Italian Republic continued to engage in cooperation with the new State and was the first country to recognize the government of Siad Barre in 1969 (Tripodi, 1999). Moreover, Rome significantly contributed to the UN's Restore Hope

operation in 1992, which was initiated in response to the outbreak of civil war in the country⁴⁴. On the other hand, the first relations between Türkiye and Somalia date back to the 16th century during the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, formal diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1979 with the opening of the Turkish embassy in Mogadishu (Ahmed, 2025). With the outbreak of the civil war and the closure of the embassy in 1991, relations weakened, only to gain new momentum in 2011 with then Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to the country⁴⁵. Its visit, which was the first by a non-African leader in Somalia in almost 20 years, is still described as “a watershed moment” for Mogadishu and marked the beginning of a solid strategic cooperation (BBC, 2011; Abubashal & Demir, 2025).

The objective of this chapter is twofold. First, the analysis will demonstrate how Italy and Türkiye integrate DIMEF spectrum instruments in a context of instability, and whether they employ hybrid instruments. Second, the analysis will enable the verification or falsification of the hypothesis that a middle power characterized by a non-democratic regime exhibits higher effectiveness under unstable conditions in the country of engagement than a democratic middle power. It should also be noted that Italy and Türkiye are not the sole external actors involved in Somalia. The US, the AU, the United Kingdom (UK), the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia are the other main actors involved in the country. However, for the purposes of this analysis, they will not be considered in order to ensure comparability within the DIMEF framework and maintain analytical consistency.

This introductory section (3.1) provided a brief description of the crisis context in contemporary Somalia. Following this section, the chapter comprises four main sections on the DIMEF dimensions and a concluding section. Each section considers different indicators intended to evaluate the relations between Italy and Somalia, on the one hand, and Türkiye and Somalia, on the other. Each section follows the same pattern for both countries. Section 3.2 addresses the Diplomatic Dimension, examining three indicators: bilateral meetings, bilateral agreements and MoUs, and the diplomatic networks of Italy and Türkiye on the Somali territory. Section 3.3 analyzes the Military Dimension, considering four different indicators: active military missions Somalia-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area, Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country, Somali military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye, the presence of a military base on Somali territory, and the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to the Federal Government of Somalia. Section 3.4 examines the Economic-Financial dimension, taking into

⁴⁴ In the context of the UN intervention in Somalia, a tragic moment for Italy was the battle for Checkpoint Pasta in Mogadishu in 1993, which resulted in the loss of Italian soldiers' lives. Today, in Italy, those who died or were wounded during that battle are still commemorated.

⁴⁵ Türkiye was also part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia in 1993.

account three indicators: bilateral trade (import and export), ODA disbursements to Somalia, and the economic strategic footprint of Italy and Türkiye. Section 3.5 examines the Information and Cultural Dimension, focusing on three indicators: cultural strategic footprint, educational cooperation, and agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations. The methodology for calculating each indicator will be specified in its respective section. The conclusion of this chapter (3.6) will summarize the main elements of the analysis, evaluating the results of the two countries in each dimension and offering some preliminary conclusions.

3.2 The Diplomatic Dimension

The conclusion of the transition period and the passage from the Transitional Government of Somalia to the Federal Republic of Somalia in August 2012 seemed to represent a pivotal moment in the country's historical trajectory. However, thirteen years later, many problems remain. In this period, Italy and Türkiye have collaborated with Mogadishu in multiple sectors. Examining the diplomatic dimension, an analysis of the time frame from August 2012 to August 2025 reveals a high level of diplomatic engagement between each country and Somalia. This section considers three indicators of this engagement with Somalia in a comparative manner.

The first indicator is represented by the number of bilateral meetings between Italy and Somalia, as well as Türkiye and Somalia. The count is based on a comprehensive analysis of official press releases and news concerning Italy and Somalia, on the one hand, and Türkiye and Somalia, on the other, within the considered time frame. The websites of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Ministry of Defense, the Italian Embassy in Mogadishu, the Italian Government, and the Quirinale, in Italian language, and the websites of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Ministry of Defense, the Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu, and the Directorate of Communications of the Turkish Presidency, in English language, have been the source of the press releases. The website of the Turkish Ministry of Defense, however, did not provide any relevant information for this research. The Italian news Agency ANSA and the Turkish news Agency Anadolu have been the sources of the news articles. Moreover, articles from the Somali National News Agency SONNA, the news website Garowe Online, and the private media outlet Goobjoog were also employed as control sources. The count was based on meetings between high-level officials from Italy and Somali representatives, on the one hand, and those from Türkiye and Somali representatives, on the other. The typology of officials considered for Italy and Türkiye was as follows: President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, Deputy Prime Minister, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Meetings involving the Italian/Turkish President of the Republic and/or Prime

Minister are defined as Core. Meetings involving only the Italian/Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs or Defense are defined as Ministerial. Should the presence of the Italian or Turkish President or Prime Minister be observed in addition to that of the Minister, the meeting is designated as Core. Meetings involving the Deputy Prime Minister or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs are categorized as Deputy. It is essential to note that this analysis exclusively focuses on face-to-face meetings, excluding telephone calls and video meetings. Concurrently, meetings at multilateral fora were considered solely in instances where there was significant engagement between the aforementioned high-level officials from Italy or Türkiye and the Somali representative beyond the primary event.

This methodology reveals that, during the period under consideration, there were 28 bilateral meetings between Italy and Somalia, and 44 between Türkiye and Somalia (full dataset available from the author upon reasonable request)⁴⁶. Figure 5 shows the evolution in time of these bilateral engagements. With the exception of the two-year period from 2019 to 2020 and the year 2023, Türkiye has demonstrated a level of engagement with Somalia that is equal to or greater than that of Italy. The absence of meetings in 2020 for Türkiye is likely attributable to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. Concurrently, Italy’s limited engagement with Somalia during the initial eight months of 2025 may be attributable to Rome’s prioritization of more pressing issues, such as the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as the tariff dispute with the USA.

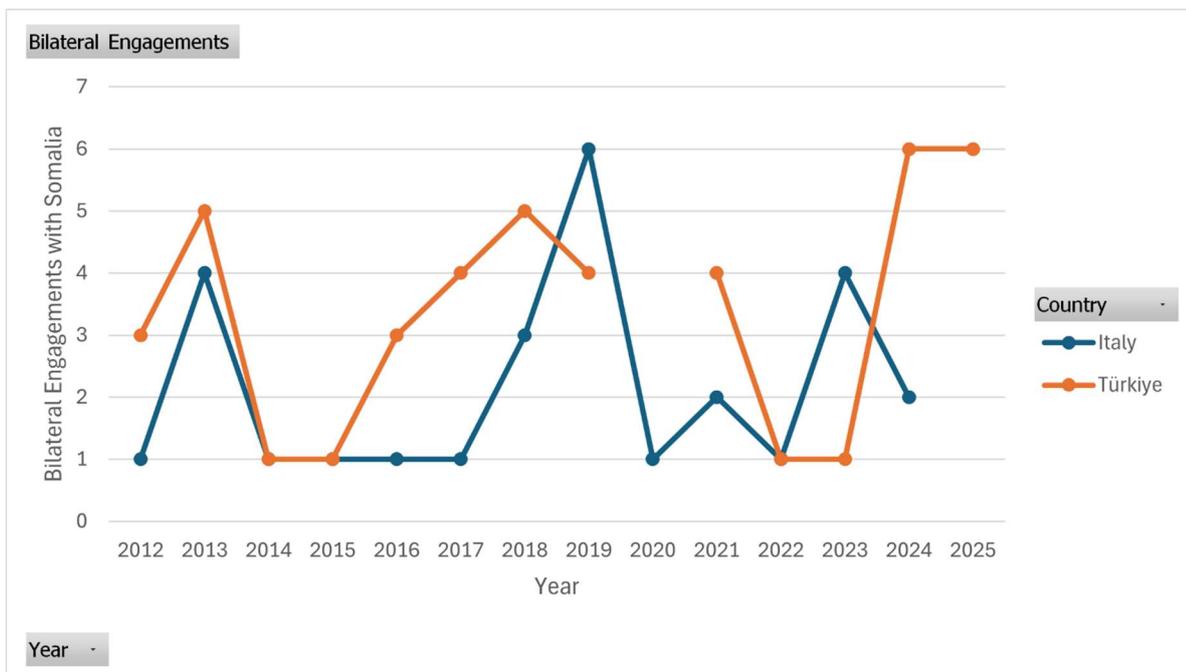


Figure 5: Somalia Bilateral Engagements Evolution in the Time Frame August 2012-August 2025 (Italy - Somalia; Türkiye - Somalia).

⁴⁶ The count relies exclusively on publicly available records from the sources specified. If other meetings had taken place, they were not recorded by the aforementioned sources and are therefore absent from the dataset.

Source: Author's dataset constructed from multiple sources. Data developed by the author.

The typology of engagement is another interesting aspect. As evidenced by Figure 6, while the number of meetings involving Deputy figures is the same for the two countries, Türkiye displays a higher number of Ministerial and Core Meetings. In particular, core meetings are double that of those recorded for Italy. This is due to the high number of bilateral meetings between President Erdoğan and his Somali counterparts (President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo and President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud) over time, but especially in the last two years.

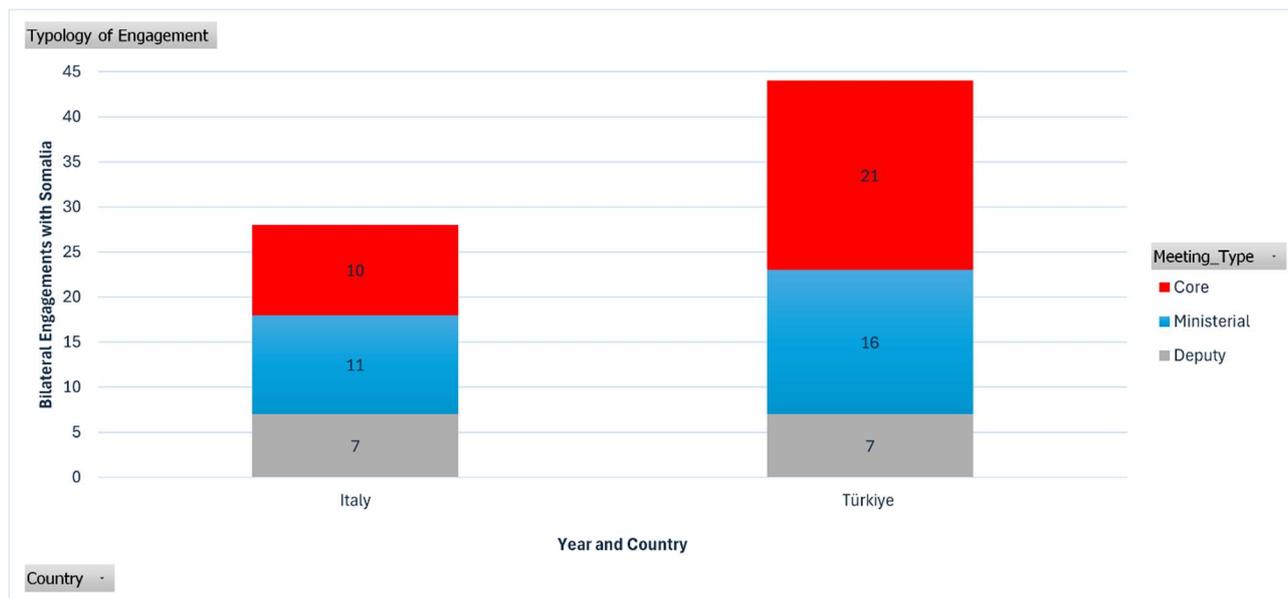


Figure 6: *Typology of Bilateral Engagements with Somalia in the Time Frame August 2012-August 2025 (Italy - Somalia; Türkiye -Somalia).*

Source: Author's dataset constructed from multiple sources. Data developed by the author.

From a descriptive perspective, certain aspects of the diplomatic relations between the two countries and Somalia should also be discussed. In October 2012, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Terzi conducted a visit to Somalia. This was the first visit of an Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs to the country since 1992 and the first of a European one after the end of the transitional period (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012a). Conversely, the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs Di Maio to Mogadishu in 2022, which focused on cooperation in military and humanitarian fields, represented the last visit of an Italian civil official to the country (Redazione ANSA, 2022a). Furthermore, it is worth noting that in January 2024, Somali President Sheik Mohamud participated in the Italy-Africa Summit, during which the Mattei Plan was presented, and held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Meloni (Italian Government, 2024a). However, no visit by Italian Presidents or Prime Ministers to Somalia is recorded during the considered time frame.

On the other hand, from Türkiye's standpoint, after his first visit as Prime Minister in 2011, President Erdoğan travelled to Somalia twice, in 2015 and 2016. Notably, Türkiye has also demonstrated considerable diplomatic mediation capability. Indeed, Ankara has frequently engaged Mogadishu in meetings to support the country in resolving disputes with other actors, as was the case in the past with Somaliland⁴⁷ and more recently with Ethiopia. In this instance, Ankara hosted a series of meetings with high-level officials from Somalia and Ethiopia to resolve tensions between the two countries. These tensions arose from the signing of an MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland, an act that Mogadishu considered a violation of its sovereignty (Yibeltal & Rukanga, 2024). As a result of the Turkish mediation, the two countries signed a joint declaration, defined as the "Ankara Declaration" (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). In line with this strong activism, regarding the first indicator, Türkiye shows a higher number of meetings in absolute terms, a higher number in relative terms related to typology, and a higher proportion in relative terms compared to Italy for each year.

The second indicator is constituted by the number of bilateral agreements and MoUs signed between Italy and Somalia, on the one hand, and Türkiye and Somalia, on the other. The same sources were employed for the count as for the first indicator, with the addition of the news website Hiiraan Online. This method revealed five agreements and MoUs between Italy and Somalia compared to ten between Türkiye and Somalia in the time frame under consideration (full dataset available from the author upon reasonable request). In both cases, the agreements encompass the domains of defense, economy, and development cooperation. However, in the case of the agreements between Türkiye and Somalia, a greater number of areas are involved, such as energy and information domains, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The third and final indicator is represented by the diplomatic network of Italy and Türkiye in the country of engagement. The Italian Embassy in Mogadishu reopened in 2014 and remains the only EU Embassy active in Somalia (Ambasciata d'Italia Mogadiscio, n.d.). On the other hand, the Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu was reopened in November 2011 following the historic visit of President Erdoğan (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a). Furthermore, it is worth noting that in 2016, in conjunction with the last visit of the Turkish president, the new Embassy of Türkiye was inaugurated. It is the largest Turkish Embassy complex in the world (Maruf, 2016; Aden, 2025). Prior to this inauguration, the previous Embassy had been the target of two terrorist attacks due to increased cooperation between Ankara and Mogadishu. The first attack, in July 2013, was a suicide car bomb

⁴⁷ Somaliland is a federal member state of Somalia, which proclaimed its independence in 1991 without attaining any international recognition.

attack against one of the main buildings of the Embassy, while the second attack, in April 2014, was carried out through a shoulder-fired RPG (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, 2014). Finally, Türkiye also has a Consulate General in the country, in Hargeisa (Somaliland), which was opened in June 2014 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a). Consequently, given the greater extent of Türkiye's diplomatic network and the higher number of years that its diplomatic mission has been open during the considered time frame, Türkiye presents a higher score than Italy for this indicator.

In conclusion, considering the indicators of bilateral meetings, bilateral agreements and MoUs, and the diplomatic network, Türkiye displays a higher score than Italy in all three indicators within the considered time frame and, thus in the diplomatic dimension. This is despite the historical ties between Italy and Mogadishu, as well as Italy's position as one of the leading European countries in terms of support for the country.

3.3 The Military Dimension

The military relations between Italy and Somalia, as well as those between Türkiye and Somalia, are centered on defense cooperation agreements signed by the parties. The agreement between Rome and Mogadishu, known as the General Cooperation Agreement on Defense between Italy and Somalia, was signed in September 2013. It is unlimited in duration and includes, but is not limited to, the following areas of cooperation: defense policies, participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, combating piracy, and military training (Camera dei Deputati, 2016). On the other hand, Türkiye signed its first military agreement with Somalia in February 2014, focusing on the training of the Somali Armed Forces (SAF) and the construction of military infrastructures (Mohyaddin, 2014). However, last year, the two countries signed a new, more comprehensive MoU for military cooperation. According to several sources, the agreement stipulates that Türkiye will undertake the training, development, and provision of equipment to the Somali Navy for a period of ten years (The New Arab, 2024). Furthermore, the Turkish Navy will assume responsibility for protecting Somali territorial waters, as well as combating piracy and illegal fishing. In return, it has been reported that Ankara will receive 30% of revenues generated from Somalia's EEZ (Garowe Online, 2024; Tepeciklioğlu, 2024).

In analyzing the military engagement of each country with Somalia in a comparative manner, this section employs five different indicators. The first indicator is represented by the number of ongoing military missions Somalia-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area. Italy participates in three land operations and one maritime mission related to Somalia. First,

Italy participates in the European Union Training Mission to contribute to the training of Somali security forces, known as EUTM-Somalia. The mission was initiated in April 2010 and was deployed in Uganda. However, since 2014, all of the Mission's activities have been conducted exclusively in Somali territory (EUTM-Somalia, n.d.). Furthermore, since that same year, the position of Mission Force Commander has always been held by Italy (Italian Ministry of Defense, n.d.-a). The Mission has been extended until February 2027, and its Command is based in Mogadishu (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). Besides the training activities, EUTM-Somalia personnel are also involved in advising the Somali Defense Authorities, supporting the planning of operations, and mentoring the Somali trainers (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b).

Second, Italy participates in the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia, known as EUCAP Somalia. The Mission was launched in July 2012 as EUCAP Nestor, focusing on a broader region covering the Horn of Africa and Western Indian Ocean. Since the end of 2016, the Mission has been renamed EUCAP Somalia, limiting its geographical scope to this country (EUCAP Somalia, 2022). Currently, the Mission Headquarters is based in Mogadishu with field offices also located in Somaliland and Puntland, and has been extended until February 2027. Despite being labeled a civilian Mission, EUCAP Somalia also involves military personnel, including the Italian ones (Italian Ministry of Defense, n.d.-b; Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). For this reason, EUCAP Somalia is taken into account for the count related to the first indicator. Indeed, the Mission undertakes the following tasks: advising, training, and equipping the Federal Somali Police Force, strengthening Maritime Police Forces, including the Somaliland and Puntland Maritime Police Forces, and promoting the rule of law by fostering accountability of Somali authorities (EUCAP Somalia, 2025; Council of the EU, 2024).

Since 2013, Italy has also been conducting the Bilateral Training Mission for Somali and Djiboutian Police Forces and the Djiboutian Armed Forces, known as MIADIT Somalia. The training is conducted by the Italian Carabinieri and covers areas such as ballistics, terrorism, investigative techniques, and urban combat. From the Italian perspective, the mission is designed to contribute to the stability of the area and enhance Italy's regional presence (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b). However, training activities are carried out in Djibouti and not on Somali territory (Italian Ministry of Defense, n.d. a). For this reason, MIADIT Somalia is not considered for the count related to this first indicator.

In the maritime domain, Italy participates in the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation. The mission commenced in late 2008 to deter, prevent, and repress acts of piracy and armed robbery along the Somali coast, with a particular focus on World Food Programme (WFP) vessels delivering aid to

Somalia. Currently, the Mission operates in a broader region, encompassing the Gulf of Aden and neighboring countries, the Somali Basin, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez, and the Gulf of Aqaba (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, n.d.). Given the inclusion of the Somali Basin, EUNAVFOR Atalanta is relevant for this analysis. Besides the aforementioned primary task of contrasting acts of piracy and protecting WFP vessels, the Mission also contributes to implementing an arms embargo on Al-Shabaab and combating narcotic drug trafficking (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, n.d.). Furthermore, Italy has also held the position of Force Commander in the past, a position now held by the Spanish Rear Admiral Vázquez Sanz (Italian Ministry of Defense, 2024b, 2025). Until March 2, 2022, the Mission was also able to operate within Somali territorial waters under a mandate from the UN Security Council. However, since that date, the mandate has not been renewed due to opposition from the Somali government, which has declared its intention to take direct responsibility for maritime security in its territorial waters (Italian Senate & Chamber of Deputies, 2025b).

On the other hand, Türkiye carries out land activities and one maritime operation. According to various sources, Ankara's training of the Somali Police Forces dates back to 2012; however, in the first years, it took place outside Somali territory, specifically in Türkiye (Özkan, 2014; Achilles et al., 2015). In contrast, activities related to military training of the Somali Army in Somali territory have been reported since 2014 (Mohyaddin, 2014). The turning point of the Turkish bilateral military cooperation with Somalia is represented by the inauguration of Camp TURKSOM, Türkiye's largest overseas military base, in Mogadishu in 2017⁴⁸ (Hussein & Coskun, 2017; Burak & Tutek, 2024). Furthermore, among the activities carried out by Türkiye in its bilateral assistance to Somalia, there has been drone support. According to data collected by FDD's Long War Journal, Türkiye has conducted at least 19 drone strikes between 2022 and 2024; however, the actual number could be significantly higher (Roggio & Weiss, 2024).

At the multilateral level, Türkiye contributes to the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a US-led multinational maritime partnership that promotes maritime security and counters illicit non-state actors (Combined Maritime Forces, n.d.-a). CMF is composed of five Combined Task Forces. Türkiye operates in the Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, which focuses on anti-piracy activities in the International Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden. Due to its proximity to the Somali coast and the relevance of anti-piracy activities for Somalia, CTF 151 is pertinent to this analysis. Türkiye has also held the command of CTF 151 seven times in the past, with the most recent instance from July 24, 2024, to January 22, 2025 (Combined Maritime Forces, n.d.-b). Italy also participates in the CMF.

⁴⁸ Türkiye also provides training to all members of the special commando unit, the Gorgor Brigade. However, this training is conducted in Türkiye.

However, Rome currently leads CTF 154, which focuses on multinational maritime training across the Middle East (Combined Maritime Forces, 2025). So, its activities are not directly related to the area near the Somali coasts; rather, they are of a more extensive nature. For this reason, the Mission is not considered in the count for this first indicator.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the past, both Italy and Türkiye have participated in NATO's Operation Ocean Shield. Ocean Shield, which was conducted from August 2009 to December 2016, was part of international efforts to combat piracy in the Horn of Africa region. The entire maritime zone along Somalia's coasts was part of the area of operation, including the country's territorial waters (MARCOM, n.d.). However, considering that the Mission concluded nine years ago, it is excluded from the calculation used in this analysis. In conclusion, the first indicator shows a higher score for Italy than Türkiye due to Italy's current participation in three different missions (excluding MIADIT Somalia from the count) compared to Türkiye's two.

In contrast, the second indicator considers the number of Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country based on the most recent figures. It is essential to note that the data employed do not reflect a multi-year average but rather serve as an indicator of the strength of each state in the country of engagement based on the most recent data available for each mission. Following the reasoning expressed for the first indicator, the Missions considered for this count are EUTM-Somalia, EUCAP Somalia, and EUNAVFOR Atalanta for Italy, as well as the Bilateral Mission and CTF 151 for Türkiye. The sources employed are the following. For Italy, the data was collected from the Dossier of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic on the "Document extending current International Missions and authorizing further Missions for the year 2025" for the EUTM-Somalia mission and from the Italian Ministry of Defense website for the EUCAP Somalia and EUNAVFOR Atalanta missions under the heading "national contribution" in each mission page. For Türkiye, due to the lack of official data, multiple reliable sources have been employed. In particular, for the numbers related to the Bilateral Mission, the sources are the Africa Defense Forum, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and the Emirates Policy Center. On the other hand, there are no data available on the Turkish personnel participating in the CTF 151. Consequently, an estimate has been adopted. The estimate is based on verified information regarding the participation of the corvette TCG Kinaliada and Turkish Navy special operations forces in CTF 151 in 2024 (Öncel, 2024). As an Ada-class corvette, TCG Kinaliada carries a complement of approximately 93 personnel, including aviation crew, while, for the teams of special operations forces, an estimated 15 operators have been calculated (Seaforces-online, n.d.).

Figure 7 shows the results of the analysis. The comparison reveals that there are currently more than twice as many Turkish military personnel in Somalia as there are Italian personnel. In particular, the majority of the Turkish soldiers are part of the bilateral mission, which has recently seen an increase in units deployed in response to the new Al-Shabaab offensive in 2025.

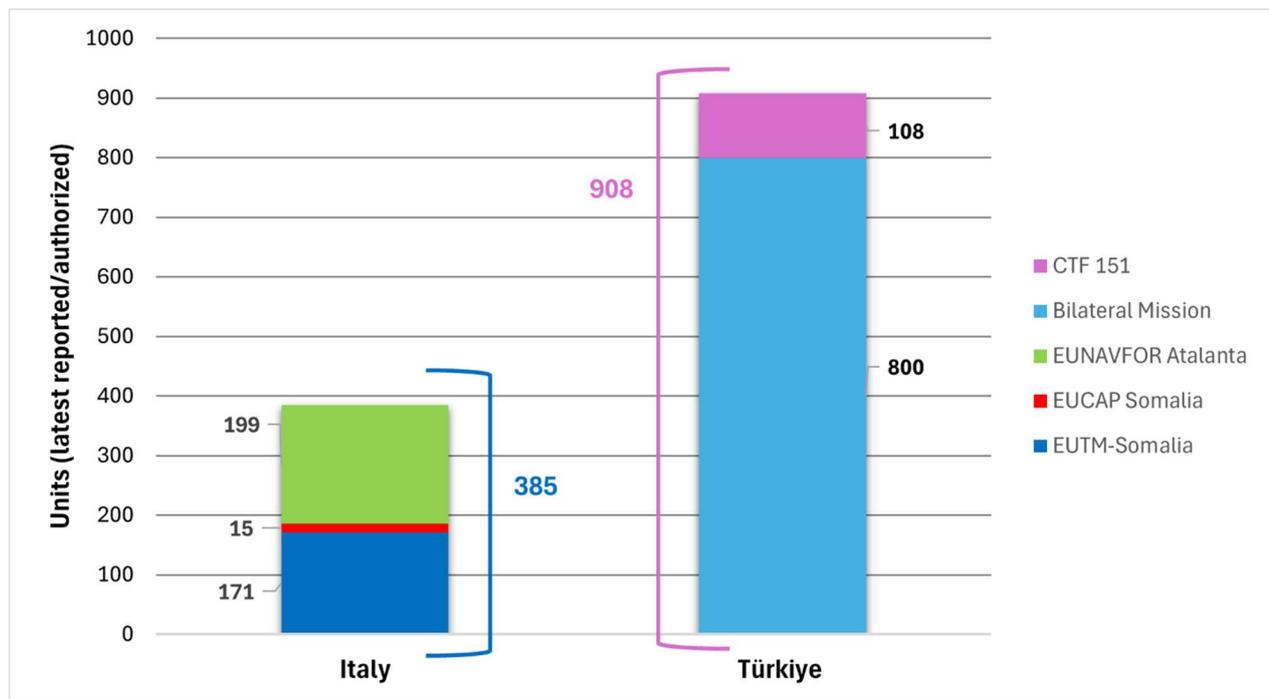


Figure 7: Deployed personnel in Somalia – Italy and Türkiye (stacked by Mission).

Source: Author’s dataset constructed from multiple official documents. Data developed by the author.

Türkiye is also allegedly active in the hybrid dimension of the military domain, which allows plausible deniability. According to several sources, the Turkish PMC SADAT has operatives in Somalia, and Ankara would be ready to send more of them to counter the recent advance of Al-Shabaab (Bashir, 2020; Somali Guardian, 2025; Horn Review, 2025; Soufan Center, 2025b; Parens & Plichta, 2025). However, in a recent press release, the PMC affirmed that SADAT does not provide paramilitary services and that the claim that it provided training to the Somali Armed Forces is also baseless (SADAT, 2025). In conclusion, the second indicator displays a higher score for Türkiye and also presents an aspect related to the domain of hybrid and unconventional warfare.

The third indicator examines the number of Somali military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye. The figures employed consist of the most recent data available on the total number of Somali Police and military personnel trained since the commencement of each Mission. The Missions considered for this count are EUTM-Somalia, EUCAP Somalia, and MIADIT Somalia for Italy, as well as the Bilateral Mission for Türkiye, which also includes the training carried out in the Anatolian country. EUNAVFOR Atalanta and CTF 151 are not considered for this indicator, given that they are

not training missions. The sources employed are the aforementioned Dossier of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic, as well as the website of the Italian Ministry of Defense, for data related to Italy. For Türkiye, as for the previous indicator, a multi-source approach has been employed. Specifically, the sources for data on this third indicator are the Africa Defense Forum, the Soufan Center, and the Atlantic Council. It should be noted that for the mission EUCAP Somalia no cumulative data are publicly available. The latest news on the EUCAP Somalia website reports the conclusion of a training period for 100 members of the Somali Police Force in April 2025 (EUCAP Somalia, 2025b). However, prior to this news, press releases available on the Mission’s website provided data only sporadically and exhibited gaps for extended periods, which did not allow for reliable estimates. The same lack of information pertains to the Türkiye’s training of the Somali Police Forces. Reliable data are available only for the period 2012-2015, during which Türkiye trained 144 members of the Somali Police Forces (Directorate General for Africa, 2016). Training activities have resumed since at least 2021, also involving personnel from the Special Unit of Somali Police Haramcad (Garowe Online, 2021). According to Daily Sabah (2020), the objective for 2020 was to train at least 1.000 special police officers. Presumably, this objective has been achieved; however, there is a lack of reliable data to corroborate this claim.

Table 1 summarizes the official data for each country.

Country	Mission	Military Trainees	Police Trainees	Year
Italy	EUTM-Somalia	9000 units	0	2025
Italy	EUCAP Somalia	0	n.d.	n.d.
Italy	MIADIT Somalia	0	3378 units	2025
Türkiye	Bilateral Mission	16000 units	n.d.	2025

Table 1: *Somali Military and Police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye.*

Source: Author’s dataset constructed from multiple official documents.

The comparative analysis reveals that the total number of Somali Police Officers trained by Italy is higher than that of Türkiye. The author argues that even in the case of adopting estimates based on the aforementioned news regarding EUCAP Somalia and Türkiye’s bilateral police training, this result would remain unchanged. In contrast, Türkiye displays a significantly higher number of Somali military personnel trained than Italy. Considering the total number of trained police and military personnel, Türkiye still presents a higher figure due to the training of approximately 16,000 military personnel. As a result, it is possible to state that Türkiye displays a higher score for the third indicator.

The fourth indicator is constituted by the presence of a military base on Somali territory. Italy does not possess a military base in Somalia. On the other hand, Ankara has the aforementioned Camp

TURKSOM, Türkiye's largest overseas military base. Camp TURKSOM was opened in 2017 and has the capacity to train between 1,000 and 1,500 soldiers at a time, according to Turkish and Somali officials (Hussein & Coskun, 2017; Al Jazeera, 2017). It reportedly cost \$50 million (Hussein & Coskun, 2017; Al Jazeera, 2017). Furthermore, Türkiye is also working on the construction of a spaceport in the country. It represents a particularly relevant project due to its dual-use nature: besides launching satellites, which play an important role in the security domain, the spaceport should also become a place to test long-range ballistic missiles (The Economist, 2025a; Turkish Minute, 2025b). In conclusion, due to the presence of Camp TURKSOM and the absence of an Italian military base in the country, Türkiye presents a higher score in the fourth indicator.

The fifth and last indicator is represented by the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to the Federal Government of Somalia. The data employed are sourced from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database and cover the period from 2012 to 2024. In particular, for the comparison, a sum of the trend-indicator value (TIV)⁴⁹ elaborated by SIPRI is employed. It is essential to note that there have been arms deliveries of weapons to Somalia by both Italy and Türkiye in 2025. Important instances include the delivery of three T-129 Atak attack helicopters and two Bayraktar Akinci drones from Türkiye and the free transfer of 30 VBL Puma 4x4 and six tactical vehicle VM-90P from Italy (Senato della Repubblica & Camera dei Deputati, 2025a, 2025b; Soylu, 2025; Abdul, 2025b; Turkish Minute, 2025a; Newsroom, 2025d). However, as the year is still ongoing, these data are not reported by SIPRI and will therefore not be taken into account for this fifth indicator. Furthermore, another aspect to consider is the following. Somalia was subject to an arms embargo, imposed by the Security Council resolution 733 (1992), from 1992 to 2013. In 2013, a one-year partial suspension of the embargo was decided upon by the Security Council Resolution 2093 (2013), specifically for the development of the Somali National Security Forces. This partial suspension was renewed several times until 2023. In 2023, Security Council Resolution 2714 definitively lifted the embargo on the Federal Government, while maintaining a general and complete arms embargo on Al-Shabaab.

Figure 8 and Table 2 summarize the results of the comparison.

⁴⁹ As explained by SIPRI, the TIV is a common unit that enables comparison between data on different types of weapons. It is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer (SIPRI, n.d.).

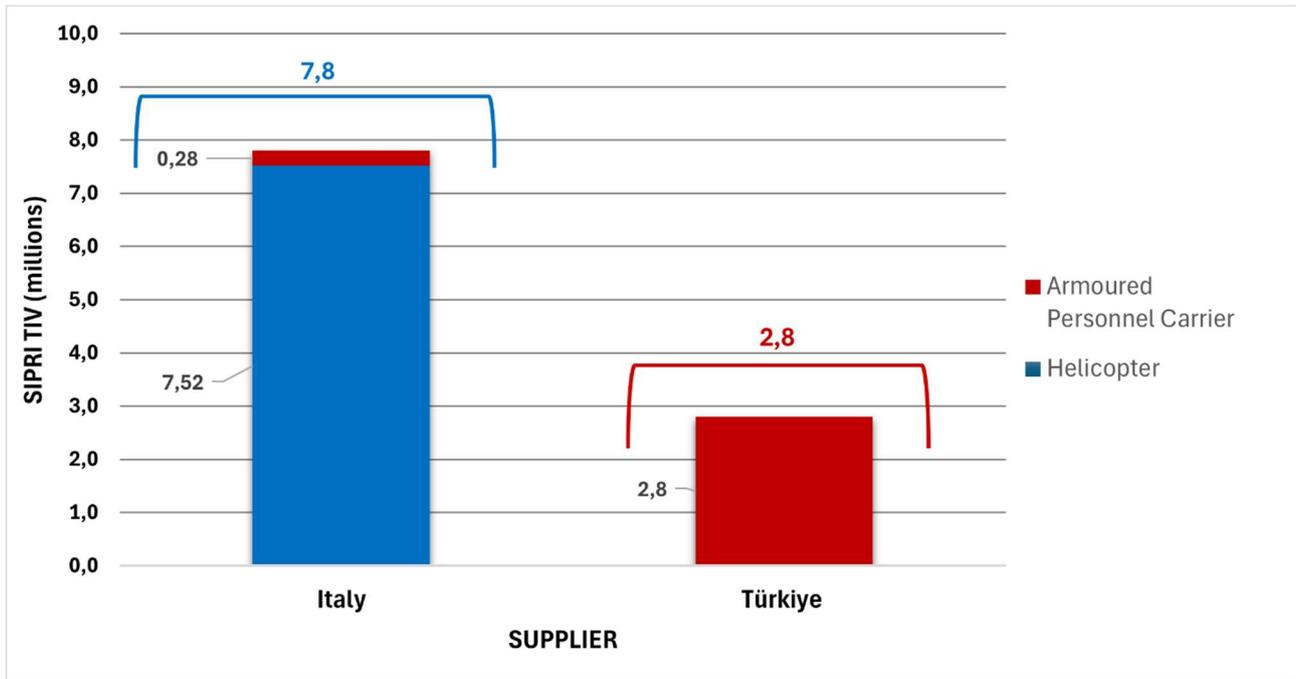


Figure 8: Total SIPRI TIV of delivered weapons to Somalia by Italy and Türkiye during the time frame 2012-2024 (stacked by category of weapons).

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Data developed by the author.

Supplier	Recipient	Weapon	Description	Year of delivery	Units	Status	SIPRI TIV
Italy	Somalia	Terrier LAU	Armoured Personnel Carrier	2015	5	Second Hand	0,28
Italy	Somalia	Bell-412	Helicopter	2023	2	Second Hand	4
Italy	Somalia	Bell-205A	Helicopter	2024	4	Second Hand	3,52
Türkiye	Somalia	Kirpi	Armoured Personnel Carrier	2020	12	Second Hand	1,68
Türkiye	Somalia	Kirpi	Armoured Personnel Carrier	2021	8	Second Hand	1,12

Table 2: Weapons supplied by Italy and Türkiye to Somalia during the time frame 2012-2024 and SIPRI TIV values.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

According to SIPRI data, Italy displays a higher total SIPRI TIV of delivered weapons to Somalia than Türkiye in the time frame 2012-2024. As a result, Italy scores higher than Türkiye in the fifth and last indicator.

In conclusion, considering the indicators of total number of active military missions Somalia-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area, number of Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country according to the most recent figures (not a multi-year average), the amount of Somali military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye, the presence of a military base on Somali territory, and the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to the Federal Government of Somalia, Italy displays a higher score than Türkiye in the first and last indicators, while Türkiye has a higher score than Italy in the other three indicators. Consequently, Türkiye presents a higher score in the general military dimension. Türkiye's approach

is mainly based on bilateral engagement with Mogadishu and also displays activities in the unconventional and hybrid dimensions of the military domain, due to the alleged involvement of the Turkish PMC SADAT. On the other hand, Italy's higher scores in the first and last indicators align with its historical commitment to Somalia and the prevalent multilateral character of its approach. However, especially the number of soldiers deployed by Italy is significantly lower than that of Türkiye.

3.4 The Economic-Financial Dimension

In analyzing the economic and financial relations between Italy and Somalia, and Türkiye and Somalia, in a comparative manner, this section utilizes three different indicators. The first indicator is represented by bilateral trade (import and export) between Rome and Mogadishu, on the one hand, and Ankara and Mogadishu, on the other, within the time frame of 2012-2024. The data source is the UN Comtrade Database, and all values are in US dollars. Figures 9 and 10 display the trends of Italy's and Türkiye's exports to and imports from Somalia.

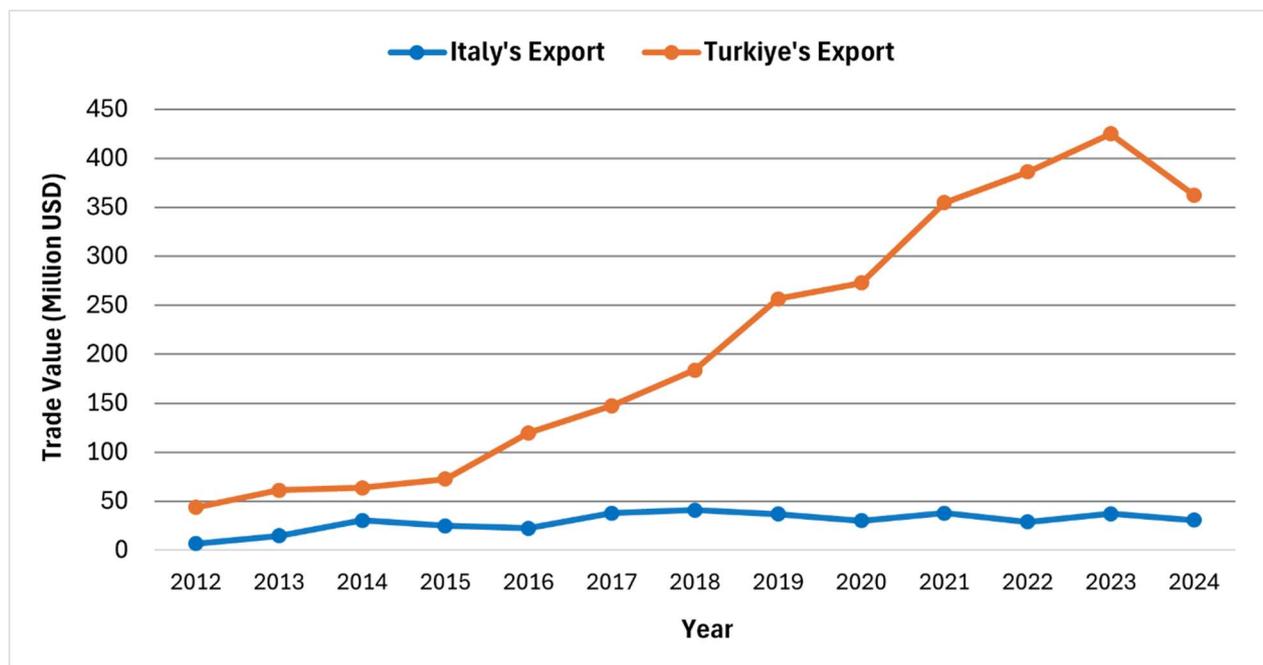


Figure 9: *Bilateral Trade – Italy's and Türkiye's Exports to Somalia per year during the time frame 2012-2024.*

Source: UN Comtrade Database. Data Developed by the author.

Considering export to Somalia, Figure 9 reveals that Türkiye exported more than Italy each year within the time frame under consideration. Furthermore, Turkish exports to the country have constantly increased until 2023. After 2023, Turkish export displays a decrease, reaching almost the

same level as in 2022. On the other hand, Italy's exports show minor fluctuations throughout the entire period, but with values significantly lower than Türkiye's, especially from 2016 onwards.

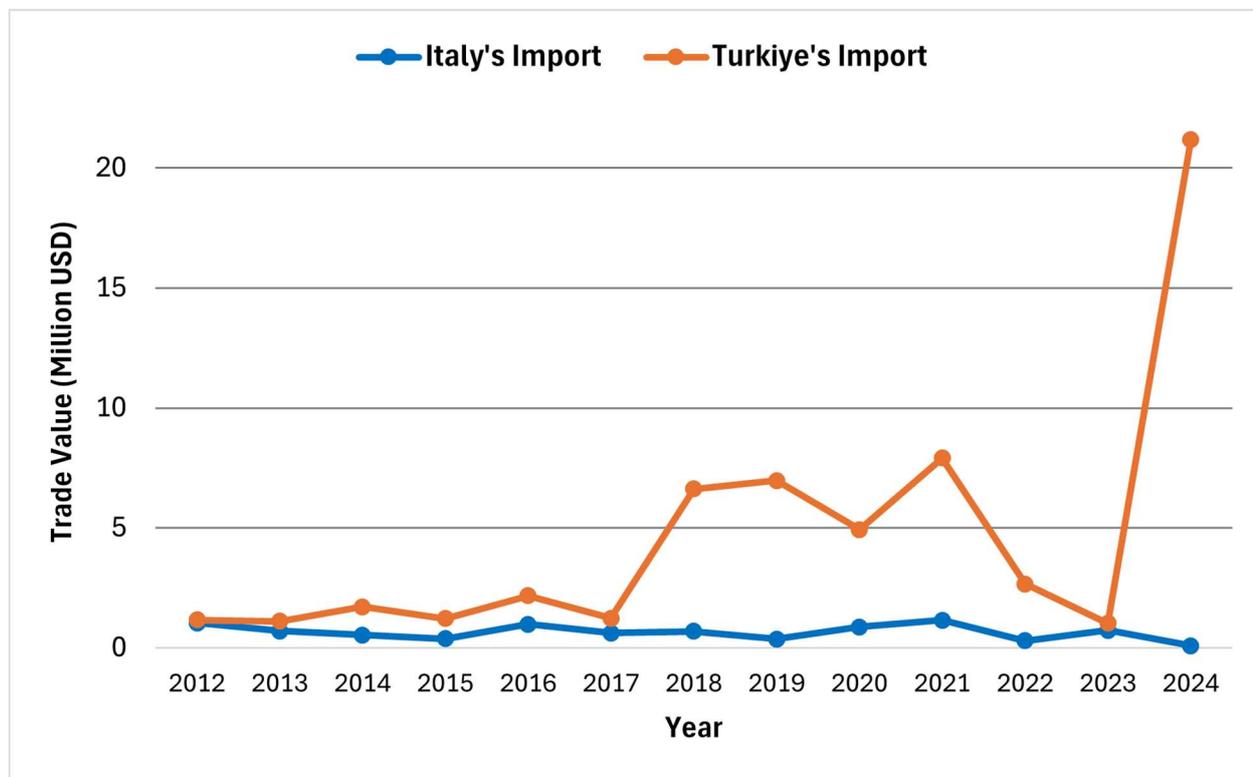


Figure 10: *Bilateral Trade – Italy's and Türkiye's Imports from Somalia per year during the time frame 2012-2024.*

Source: UN Comtrade Database. Data developed by the author.

Analyzing imports from Somalia, Figure 10 illustrates that Türkiye imported more from Somalia than Italy every year during the considered time frame. However, in this case, Türkiye's trend is more inconstant. In 2012, imports from Somalia to Türkiye and Italy had a very similar value. Then, Italy's imports started to decrease. Between 2013 and 2020, Italy's imports constantly remained under the value of one million dollars. Conversely, imports to Türkiye significantly increased from 2018 to 2021, with only minor fluctuations. Furthermore, imports to Italy reached their lowest point in 2024, while imports to Türkiye reached their highest point in the same year. Türkiye displays higher imports and exports than Italy per each year. Therefore, the data demonstrate a stronger bilateral trade relationship between Ankara and Mogadishu in comparison to Rome and Mogadishu. As a result, the first indicator presents a higher score for Türkiye than Italy.

Development cooperation constitutes another key aspect of both Italy's and Türkiye's foreign policy. Development projects and humanitarian aid have formed the cornerstone of Ankara's first approach to the country following Erdoğan's visit in 2011. TIKA has been the official coordinator of Türkiye's aid activities in the country and has established an Office in Mogadishu in 2011 (TIKA, n.d.-a). In

parallel, Italy has designated Somalia as a priority country for its development cooperation in its Three-Year Programming and Policy Document for Development Cooperation. However, AICS does not have an office in Somalia, but activities in the country are coordinated through the AICS office in Nairobi (AICS, n.d.). To analyze development cooperation, the second indicator is represented by ODA disbursements from Italy and Türkiye to Somalia. The data source for the comparison is the OECD Data Explorer, and all values are expressed in US dollars, adjusted for constant prices. The time frame is 2012-2023 due to the lack of data on 2024 in the OECD database. Figure 11 displays the result of the comparison.

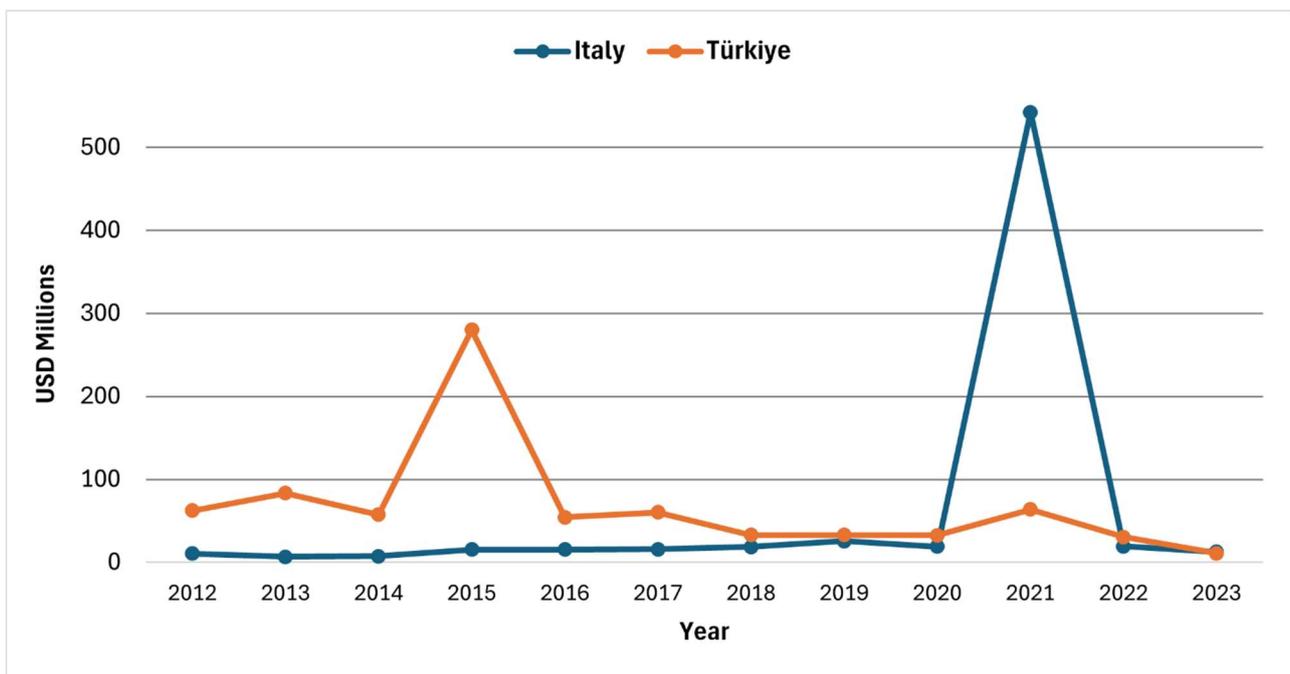


Figure 11: ODA Disbursements – Italy’s and Türkiye’s ODA Disbursements to Somalia per year during the time frame 2012-2023.

Source: OECD Data Explorer. Data developed by the author.

Figure 11 reveals that Türkiye’s ODA disbursements to Somalia are larger than Italy’s in all years, except for 2021 and 2023. Türkiye’s ODA reached its peak in 2015, the year of the inauguration of a 200-bed Somalia-Türkiye Training and Research Hospital in Mogadishu, which was undertaken by TİKA and named after President Erdoğan (Anadolu, 2015). Indeed, according to OECD data, the peak is due to the high value displayed by the category “technical cooperation”, which includes technical assistance and the transfer of know-how and competencies, likely also linked to the training of new personnel at the Hospital. On the other hand, Italy’s ODA peak in 2021 is attributable to the debt relief provided for in the agreement signed by Italy and Somalia in the same year (Somali Ministry of Finance, 2021). Finally, Türkiye’s ODA significant reduction in 2023 could be possibly attributable to a prioritization of the domestic field in response to the devastating earthquake that hit

Türkiye and Syria in 2023. In sum, since Türkiye's ODA to Somalia is larger than Italy's in most years, the second indicator presents a higher score for Ankara than Rome. This result aligns with the fact that Somalia has been the second main recipient of Türkiye's ODA in the period 2021-22, evidencing its relevance for Ankara's foreign policy.

The third and final indicator is what this study defines as the "economic strategic footprint," which encompasses concessions obtained, actions, and projects undertaken by the main Turkish and Italian companies in the fields of Energy, Critical Infrastructures, Strategic Connectivity, and Aerospace & Strategic Tech. For this last sector, the only elements considered will be meetings between managers of the company under consideration and Somali public officials, the establishment of a stable in-country presence (office/representation), and the provision of civil aviation technology. In this manner, the analysis avoids double-counting and overlaps with the Military Dimension. In the energy sector, in October 2024, Türkiye's state-owned energy company TPAO and Somalia's Petroleum Authority signed a deal for joint onshore hydrocarbon exploration in Somalia (Directorate of Communications, 2024; Reuters, 2024). This deal follows an agreement signed by the Turkish Minister of Energy and the Somali Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources in March of the same year to jointly develop oil and gas resources in onshore and offshore blocks (Kabakci, 2024; Somali Petroleum Authority, n.d.). As a consequence, the Turkish Oruc Reis vessel was sent to Somali waters to conduct seismic exploration research. In contrast, the Italian multinational company ENI does not undertake any project in the country. This is despite the fact that in 2013, the then-ENI CEO, Scaroni, expressed ENI's interest in evaluating the hydrocarbon exploration potential in Somalia to the Somali President, Sheik Mohamud, during his visit to Rome (ENI, 2013). Likewise, ENEL is not present in the country.

In the sector of critical infrastructures, since 2013, Turkish companies Albayrak Group and Favori LLC have been responsible, respectively, for operating the port of Mogadishu and Aden Adde International Airport. It is worth noting that in 2016, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea highlighted the opacity of the public contracts between the Federal Government and these two companies (Security Council, 2016). On the other hand, Italy's involvement in this sector is limited to the financing of some infrastructural projects through development cooperation. Similarly, in the sector of strategic connectivity, Türkiye has assumed a leading position through Turkish Airlines, which in 2012 was the only international airline company operating commercial flights to Mogadishu (Smith, 2012). As of February 2024, the company operated seven connections per week from Istanbul to Mogadishu (Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). Currently, Mogadishu has only two direct flight connections outside the African continent, namely Istanbul and Jeddah (Flight Connections, 2025).

This element demonstrates the relevance of Somalia for Türkiye, maintaining a direct connection that is also valuable for tourism and educational cooperation. Conversely, Italy lacks a presence in this field. Finally, in the field of Aerospace & Strategic Tech, the role of Baykar is noteworthy. In 2024, Baykar's CEO, Haluk Bayraktar, met with the President of Somalia, Sheik Mohamud, in Mogadishu. In 2025, Sheik Mohamud visited the Özdemir Bayraktar Technology Center, the hub of Baykar Technologies, in Türkiye (Somali Guardian, 2024; Abdullahi, 2025b). Both visits prove the involvement of the Horn of Africa country in the so-called Turkish "drone diplomacy". Regarding Italy, although there are no reports of meetings between Leonardo's managers and Somali public officials, Leonardo is supporting Mogadishu in the field of civilian Air Traffic Control. This was evidenced by its agreement with the Somali International Civil Aviation Organization in 2017 and the Class A reclassification of Somali airspace thanks to LeadInSky, Leonardo's comprehensive traffic management solution (Leonardo, 2017, 2023).

For the economic strategic footprint indicator, Türkiye achieves a higher score than Italy due to its stronger multisectoral presence. In particular, Ankara directly manages projects in the energy and critical infrastructures sectors, while assuming a leading role in the strategic connectivity sector through Turkish Airlines. In contrast, despite the Mattei Plan and Italy's effort to relaunch cooperation through development projects, Rome has a more modest role in these fields compared to Ankara, especially in terms of visibility. On the other hand, in the sector of Aerospace & Strategic Tech, both countries are involved: Türkiye through Baykar's drone diplomacy and Italy through Leonardo's contribution to civilian Air Traffic Control.

In conclusion, considering the three indicators of bilateral trade (import and export), ODA disbursements, and economic strategic footprint, Türkiye records a higher score than Italy in all three indicators. Consequently, Türkiye presents a higher score in the general economic-financial dimension. This is likely attributable to several factors. First, Türkiye was the first country to be involved in Somalia since the outbreak of the civil war. Second, the Turkish system, especially in recent years, is more centralized than Italy's due to a high degree of integration between the State, agencies, and companies. Third, Türkiye seems to display a higher risk tolerance than Italy, continuing its operations in the country despite Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks against Turkish companies and aid workers (Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2021; Maruf, 2024; Burak & Tutek, 2024).

3.5 The Information and Cultural Dimension

Italy and Türkiye share historical ties with Somalia, and many initiatives carried out by both countries relate to cultural aspects, also involving the common heritage, especially in the case of Italy, or the common religion, in the case of Türkiye. In analyzing the engagement of each country with Somalia in a comparative manner in the information and cultural dimension, this section employs three indicators: two related to culture and one core information domain.

The first indicator is constituted by what this study defines as the “cultural strategic footprint,” which evaluates the stable in-country presence of the organization under consideration (cultural institutes and foundations) as well as its documented actions (MoU and projects). First, cultural institutes should be taken into account. While Italy does not have its Italian Institute of Culture in the Somali territory, the Turkish Yunus Emre Institute has a cultural center in Mogadishu to promote Turkish culture and teach Turkish language (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025b; Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.). Second, the foundations’ activities should be taken into consideration. The Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) operates schools in the cities of Hargeisa and Mogadishu on three campuses, with a total of approximately one thousand students (Daily Sabah, 2024b). It is essential to note that, prior to the attempted coup in 2016, these schools, like others on the African continent, were operated by the Gülen movement. The Somali government was the first to respond to Türkiye’s call to change administration, which ultimately was assigned to the TMF in 2018 (TRT Global, 2018; Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). This exemplifies the solid relationship between the two countries. In parallel, the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDF), affiliated with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, has been increasingly utilized as Ankara’s instrument to deploy religion as a form of soft power. In Mogadishu, the TDF restored the Sheikh Sufi Imam Hatip High School, which currently hosts 500 students, and the Mosque of Islamic Solidarity, the largest mosque in the Horn of Africa (Tepeciklioğlu, 2021; Telci & Yimer, 2024). Furthermore, TDF provides Somalis with scholarships for religious studies at the high school and university levels and carries out several other initiatives in the country, such as distributing Qurans (TDF, 2024). On the Italian side, Med-Or Italian Foundation, created by Leonardo’s initiative to strengthen Italy’s relationships and ties with the countries of the Wider Mediterranean, has carried out several initiatives involving Mogadishu. In 2021, Med-Or Foundation and the Federal Republic of Somalia signed an MoU which included the promotion of the Italian language in Somalia and cooperation in the field of higher education (Med-Or, 2021). Then, in February 2023, Somali President Sheik Mohamud visited the headquarters of the Foundation in Rome and signed a second MoU meant to expand cooperation to health security and formation in the fields of justice and public administration (Med-Or, 2023). Finally, following Somalia’s election to a non-

permanent seat on the Security Council, the Med-Or Italian Foundation, in collaboration with UNITAR and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, initiated a specialized training program for Somali diplomatic personnel (Med-Or, 2025a). The initiative has been articulated in two phases, one in Rome and one in Mogadishu, and has received the sincere appreciation of the Somali President (Redazione ANSA, 2024). In conclusion, the analysis for this first indicator presents a stronger cultural strategic footprint for Türkiye than Italy. However, for Italy, Med-Or Italian Foundation initiatives appear particularly significant, allowing Rome to maintain high-quality ties with Mogadishu. Nevertheless, Türkiye has a cultural presence that involves all sectors of the Somali population and extends beyond the institutional domain. Furthermore, due to its physical presence on the Somali territory, Ankara achieves a high level of widespread visibility.

The second indicator is represented by educational cooperation. In addition to the scholarships provided by the aforementioned TDF and Med-Or Italian Foundation, programs of the Turkish and Italian governments also aim to offer scholarships to Somali students. However, a quantitative comparison between the two countries is not possible due to the absence of data for certain years or the presence of only aggregate scholarship data for the entire African continent for other years. The following qualitative description aims to provide an indication of the efforts made by Italy and Türkiye in this field and an order of magnitude of the number of scholarships based on the limited available data.

Türkiye Scholarships, a government-funded higher education scholarship program run by the Republic of Türkiye for international students, has involved numerous Somalis. According to Anadolu Ajansı, thousands of Somalis have benefited from the program and, reportedly, Somalia is the greatest beneficiary of Turkish scholarships in Africa (Dhaysane, 2022b). In parallel, the website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that 1,092 Somali students have received Turkish higher education scholarships since 1992. During the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of 98 scholarships were allocated to Somalia (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a). Notably, among the students who attended a University in Türkiye, there is also the former Somali Minister of Defense, Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur (Dhaysane, 2022b). At the same time, TIKA supports education in the country through infrastructure works and the provision of educational materials, such as computers, projectors, and printers (TIKA, 2020). Moreover, TIKA also created a social space, including a cafeteria, a basketball court, and public restrooms, at the Somali National University (TIKA, 2023).

On the other hand, according to the Italian Embassy in Mogadishu, 21 scholarships were awarded to Somali students for the academic year 2024-2025 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study

in Italy (Ambasciata d'Italia Mogadiscio, 2024). So, it is possible to suppose a similar number for the previous years. In parallel, AICS provided Somali students with scholarships through its program "Italian support for university education in Somalia" (Sostegno italiano alla formazione universitaria in Somalia), a project initiated in 2016 (AICS, 2019a). In 2019, 17 scholarships were awarded by AICS to Somali Students (AICS, 2019b; UNIBO, 2019). Moreover, Italy is involved in supporting and developing the Somali National University through various initiatives (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). The history of the University is closely tied to Italy due to its collaboration with Italian authorities in its foundation and the teaching of the Italian language prior to the outbreak of the civil war (AICS, 2019b). In this context, partnerships between Italian Universities and the Somali National University have been promoted, as in the cases of the Universities of Trieste and Palermo (Università degli Studi di Trieste, 2025; AICS - Nairobi, 2025).

In conclusion, it is possible to state that both Italy and Türkiye are significantly involved in educational cooperation in Somalia, with a solid continuity of commitment over the years. However, Türkiye's action is more extensive, encompassing also schools in remote areas of the country, and, according to available data, Ankara seems to provide a higher number of scholarships per year.

The third indicator is constituted by the number of agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations. Türkiye's initial steps in this regard were taken as early as 2013. That year, the Turkish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs signed an MoU on Cooperation in Information Technologies (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013b). In this manner, Ankara has strengthened its position, emerging as a key partner of Mogadishu in this hybrid domain. Conversely, despite a meeting between the Italian Undersecretary to the Prime Minister with responsibility for information and publishing, Barachini, and the Somali Minister of Information, Tourism, and Culture, Aweis, in 2023, there is no official MoU signed between the two parties in this field (Redazione ANSA, 2023). Instead, both Italy and Türkiye display agreements between their press agencies and the Somali National News Agency, SONNA. In particular, following the aforementioned meeting, Italian Press Agency Agenzia ANSA and SONNA signed a cooperation agreement, which included the possibility of developing collaborative commercial proposals to support the communication of institutions and companies in their respective countries (Agenzia ANSA, 2023). In his statement commenting on the agreement, the Somali Minister of Information declared that "the free flow of accurate and impartial news is essential for society as a whole" (Agenzia ANSA, 2023). On the other hand, the Turkish Press Agency Anadolu had already signed a cooperation agreement with SONNA in 2016 during President Erdoğan's visit to the country (Anadolu, 2016a). More recently, SONNA's Editor-in-Chief

participated in the Türkiye-Africa Media Forum held in Istanbul in February 2025 (Hussein, 2025). In May of the same year, a delegation from the Federal Government, led by the Deputy Minister of Information, visited the headquarters of Anadolu and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate of Communications and Media (Abdullahi, 2025a).

This indicator demonstrates that press cooperation is at an equal level between the two countries and Somalia. However, Türkiye has a structural advantage thanks to the 2013 agreement. Furthermore, Ankara entered the Somali information domain earlier than Italy, implementing initiatives a decade before Rome. This is likely attributable to divergent perceptions of the information domain between hybrid regimes and democracies, with the latter having only recently begun to treat it as a hybrid conflict field. Consequently, Türkiye registers a higher score for this third indicator.

In line with this result, it is essential to note that other Turkish entities have been involved in activities in the information domain. For instance, in 2017, the hashtag #TurkishAirlinesHelpSomalia went viral on Twitter as part of a campaign to deliver humanitarian aid to Somalia via a Turkish Airlines flight (Uras, 2017). It is also noteworthy that Anadolu was one of the very few agencies to cover a Somali protest against an Italian-language radio program and compare it instead to the popularity of the Turkish language (Dhaysane, 2022a). The tone of Anadolu's article aligns with Türkiye's broader positioning in Somalia as a non-colonial partner. To provide a comparison, even describing the negative aspects of this Italian initiative, The New Arab employed a different tone (Ali, 2021).

In conclusion, considering the three indicators (cultural strategic footprint, educational cooperation, and agreements in the information domain, both between governments and press agencies), Türkiye registers a higher score than Italy in all three indicators. Consequently, Türkiye presents a higher score in the general information and cultural dimension. This result aligns with the Somali Minister of Information's declaration that "Turkey really has won the hearts and minds of Somali people" (Hussein & Cosku, 2017). This result is primarily due to the pervasive Turkish presence in all sectors of society, as also evidenced by the more extensive geographical reach of Turkish educational cooperation and the higher number of initiatives in the information domain. On the other hand, Italy offers high-quality activities, which, however, are mainly directed towards the institutional dimension. At the same time, the solid commitment to educational cooperation reflects Italy's historical and cultural ties with the country, while the analysis of the information domain demonstrates that Türkiye considered this dimension a priority already a decade ago. While Italy remains one of the main European countries involved in Somalia, Türkiye's higher results align with Ankara's historical consideration of Mogadishu as its gateway to Africa.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to demonstrate how Italy and Türkiye integrate DIMEF spectrum instruments in a context of instability and whether they employ hybrid instruments. Concurrently, the chapter aimed to verify or falsify the hypothesis that a middle power characterized by a non-democratic regime is more effective under unstable conditions than a democratic middle power.

Both Italy and Türkiye have demonstrated a significant degree of engagement in Somalia, thus emerging as pivotal actors in the country's geopolitical landscape. Nevertheless, their strategies and the character of their involvement differ. This analysis has demonstrated that Türkiye's involvement in the country is broader both geographically and socially, reaching remote areas and all social sectors. On the other hand, Italy is also very active, but not in all fields, as evidenced by the absence of relevant Italian companies operating in the country.

The analysis of the Diplomatic Dimension revealed that Türkiye has had more bilateral meetings with Somali public officials, has signed more bilateral agreements and MoUs, and has a larger diplomatic network than Italy. Furthermore, the Turkish Embassy has been operating in Somalia for a longer period than the Italian Embassy. This result is linked to two cross-domain elements of Ankara's action in the country. First, Türkiye's engagement has been positively influenced by the fact that Türkiye was the first non-African country to cooperate with Mogadishu since the outbreak of the civil war. This has had a beneficial impact on Ankara, both in terms of time and image. Second, Ankara has demonstrated a high-risk tolerance, accepting to operate in very unstable areas and investing human capital there despite the threat of terrorist attacks. This is exemplified by the re-opening of the Embassy in 2011, which was targeted twice by Al-Shabaab militants, and the three visits of President Erdogan in the country, whereas the Italian Prime Ministers have not made any visits. However, Italy is the only EU country with an open embassy in Somalia, has signed several agreements with the Federal Government in different fields, and has involved the President of Somalia in the Mattei Plan and in numerous bilateral meetings. However, the volume of Ankara's actions is definitely higher.

The analysis of the Military Dimension revealed the different approaches employed by the two countries in the military domain. Considering the indicators of total number of active military missions Somalia-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area, number of Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country according to the most recent figures (not a multi-year average), the amount of Somali military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye, the presence of a military base on Somali territory, and the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to the Federal Government of Somalia, Italy records a higher score than Türkiye in the first and last indicators, while Türkiye displays a higher score than Italy in the other

three indicators. As the result of the first indicator demonstrates, Italy's engagement in Somalia is characterized by a marked multilateral approach. Indeed, Italy's contribution to Somali security on land and sea is mainly granted through three EU missions. On the other hand, Türkiye's action is predominantly attributable to the bilateral security agreements between Ankara and Mogadishu, as evidenced by Figure 7 in relation to the third indicator and by the presence of the military base Camp TURKSOM. At the same time, Türkiye presents a non-conventional element in the military domain, namely the alleged presence of soldiers from the PMC SADAT on Somali ground. Despite the denial from the PMC, several sources concur on the presence of Turkish contractors in support of Mogadishu. In contrast, Italy does not present any non-conventional element in the military domain. Nevertheless, Italy records a higher score for transfers of weapons than Türkiye. This finding suggests that, despite the increased focus on Turkish armaments in articles about the country's security situation, Italy has played a significant role in supporting Somalia during the period from 2012 to 2024. However, when considering the number of military personnel on the ground and the number of Somali soldiers trained, Türkiye exhibits a substantially higher value than Italy.

In the Economic-Financial Dimension, there is a wide gap between Italy and Türkiye. For the duration of the period under review (2012-2024), Türkiye's trade relations with Somalia exhibited higher levels in terms of exports and imports when compared with Italy. Likewise, Türkiye's ODA disbursements to Somalia are larger than Italy's in all years, except for 2021 and 2023. Additionally, comparing the economic strategic footprint of Turkish and Italian companies, Türkiye's companies hold a leading position in the sectors of energy, critical infrastructure, and strategic connectivity. The field of Aerospace & Strategic Tech is characterized by Leonardo's support for Mogadishu's civilian Air Traffic Control and Baykar's drone diplomacy. In particular, Baykar's actions have proven to be a relevant form of soft power and parallel diplomacy for Türkiye in the world. Also, the results in this dimension are linked to the aforementioned high-risk tolerance of Ankara due to Al-Shabaab attacks on Turkish companies and aid workers in the country. Furthermore, another essential factor is that Türkiye, as a hybrid regime, is characterized by a more centralized system with deeper integration between the State, companies, and NGOs. This can facilitate strategy-making, accelerate the decision-making process, and allow the employment of non-state actors as state instruments.

The fourth and last dimension of Information and Culture is characterized by a solid commitment by both Italy and Türkiye. However, Ankara has in-country offices of its Institute and Foundation, which provide a higher degree of visibility throughout the country. In this context, religion is also employed as an instrument of soft power thanks to the action of the TDF, which provides scholarships for religious studies and Qurans, and funds the restoration of Mosques. Italy lacks presence on the

territory but maintains solid institutional ties with Mogadishu and the public administration through the work of the Med-Or Italian Foundation. A similar discourse applies to educational cooperation. Italy cooperates with the Somali National University and offers scholarships through AICS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, Türkiye's action is more extensive, encompassing also schools in remote areas of the country, and providing a higher number of scholarships per year. Finally, in the information domain, Ankara has promoted agreements with Mogadishu at both the government and press agency levels, whereas Italy has only done so in the latter field. It is also noteworthy that Ankara started cooperation in this domain a decade earlier than Italy, probably reflecting a different perception of its strategic relevance. Furthermore, other entities seem to be involved in promoting Türkiye's image and shaping Somali discourse. Relevant examples include Turkish Airlines' social media campaign, #TurkishAirlinesHelpSomalia, and Anadolu's articles aimed at promoting Ankara's initiatives. Both entities play a role in Türkiye's strategy to present itself as a non-colonial and beneficial partner in Somalia and, more broadly, on the African continent. As a result, both can be considered part of the hybrid dimension of information competition.

In conclusion, this analysis has proved our hypothesis. Displaying a higher total score in all four dimensions (summarized on the following page), it is possible to state that Türkiye, a middle power characterized by a hybrid regime, is more effective than Italy, a democratic regime, under unstable conditions in the country of engagement, specifically in the case of Somalia. Indeed, it is this context of instability that enables Türkiye, unlike other actors such as Italy, to become a pivotal player. Through a higher risk tolerance, the capacity to integrate different actors within the State and society, and the possibility of a faster and more centralized decision-making system, Türkiye has been able to capitalize on a situation in which democratic middle powers are more constrained.

This leads us to our second finding. In accordance with the hypothesis, Italy adopts a more institutionalized and less pervasive approach, which does not directly target entire sectors of the population from childhood to government bodies. Concurrently, the EU can serve as a catalyst for Italian action, enabling Rome to allocate more resources and achieve a greater impact. Similarly, Italian companies play a significant role in Italy's foreign and security strategy; however, with the exception of Leonardo, their presence in Somalia is limited due to the high level of instability and associated risks. It is probably no coincidence that the pilot projects of the Mattei Plan are in stable or relatively stable countries. In contrast, Türkiye's foreign and security strategy integrates conventional and non-conventional elements, operating in a hybrid and more integrated manner. The unconventional military dimension of PMCs, the religious dimension, the parallel diplomacy of

private companies, and information campaigns through other state-related entities are all part of Türkiye's strategy. This is how Ankara won the hearts and minds of the Somali population.

Table 3: Summary of Chapter 3 Findings (Panels A-D)

DIPLOMATIC DIMENSION (Panel A)

Country	Bilateral Meetings	Bilateral Agreements	Diplomatic Network
Italy	28	5	Embassy (11y)
Türkiye	44	10	Embassy (14y) + Consulate

MILITARY DIMENSION (Panel B)

Country	Active Missions	Military Personnel Deployed	Personnel Trained	Military Base	Weapons Transfers (TIV)
Italy	3	385	9000 (Army) +3378 (Police)	NO	7,8
Türkiye	2	908**	16000 (Army)	YES	2,8

ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL DIMENSION (Panel C)

Bilateral Trade	ODA Disbursements	Economic Strategic Footprint
Export: Türkiye > Italy	Türkiye > Italy	E: Türkiye > Italy, CI: Türkiye > Italy
Import: Türkiye > Italy		SC: Türkiye > Italy, AST: Italy = Türkiye

INFORMATION AND CULTURAL DIMENSION (Panel D)

Educational Cooperation	Cultural Strategic Footprint	Information Agreements
Türkiye > Italy	Institutes: Türkiye > Italy	Government: Türkiye > Italy
	Foundations: Türkiye** > Italy	Media Organizations: Italy=Türkiye**

****Employment of instruments of the hybrid/non-conventional domain.**

E: Energy; CI: Critical Infrastructures; SC: Strategic Connectivity; AST: Aerospace & Strategic Tech.

DIMEF Integration Under Stable Conditions:

The case of Kenya

4.1 Introduction

In Kenya, in 2010, the adoption of a new Constitution, largely approved by the voters in a referendum, reduced the power of the executive and devolved authority to subnational units, addressing the causes of violent confrontations which followed the 2007 general election (Kramon & Posner, 2011). Since that moment, Kenya has experienced a period of relative political stability. Unlike other countries on the continent, this period was characterized by the absence of military coups and civil war. Competitive elections have been held regularly (2013, 2017, 2022), and institutional mechanisms have worked efficiently, granting the possibility of petition, as evidenced by the Supreme Court's decision to nullify the 2017 presidential election and repeat the vote (Pommerolle, 2020). Furthermore, according to the latest scores from Freedom House, Kenya is the country with the highest level of freedom in the Greater Horn of Africa region⁵⁰ (Freedom House, 2025). Due to its military contribution to the fight against Al-Shabaab in neighboring Somalia, Kenya has been a victim of terrorist attacks by the Al-Qaeda-linked group. However, this has not resulted in state collapse or Al-Shabaab exercising control over portions of Kenyan territory. Additionally, last year, Kenya became the first Sub-Saharan African country to be designated as a major non-NATO ally by the US, thereby enhancing its military stance (International Trade Administration, 2024). Nevertheless, this year, the country has witnessed a wave of anti-government protests led by Kenyan youths, which resulted in several people being killed in clashes with the police (Wafula, Rukanga & Booty, 2025; Princewill, 2025). However, at the time of writing, these events have not led to constitutional breakdowns or events that alter the definition of Kenya as a stable context as defined in this study.

In this context of relative stability, Italy and Türkiye have developed long-standing relationships with Nairobi. Italy was among the first ten countries to establish diplomatic representation in Kenya after its independence, and in 2024, the two countries celebrated 60 years of diplomatic relations (Frau, 2024). Against this background, the two countries have, over time, strengthened their cooperation in numerous fields. In the space sector, the “Luigi Broglio” Space Center was established near Malindi in the 1960s and has been the subject of a bilateral agreement between Italy and Kenya since 1995

⁵⁰ The Greater Horn of Africa region includes the following countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda.

(Ambasciata d'Italia Nairobi, n.d.-a). Likewise, development cooperation relations have historical roots. Their formalization can be traced back to 1985, when the first agreement in this field between the two countries was signed (Ambasciata d'Italia Nairobi, n.d.-b). More recently, in 2010, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Kenya to discuss bilateral cooperation and the Somali crisis (IAI, 2011). On the other hand, Türkiye established diplomatic ties with the country in late 1967 and opened its embassy in 1968 (Isilow, 2020). Cooperation began to increase in the context of Türkiye's growing commitment to Africa following the AKP's victory in the 2002 elections. This was confirmed by the signing of an agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the two countries in 2004 (Cannon, 2016). Then, President Gül visited Kenya in 2009, which represented the first bilateral Presidential visit between the two countries (Turkish Embassy Nairobi, 2019). That visit also marked the commencement of Turkish Airlines' operations in the country.

The objective of this chapter is twofold. First, the analysis will demonstrate how Italy and Türkiye integrate DIMEF spectrum instruments in a context of stability, and whether they employ hybrid instruments. Second, the analysis will enable the verification or falsification of the hypothesis that the action of a democratic middle power is more effective than the action of a middle power characterized by a non-democratic regime in a context of stability. It should also be noted that Italy and Türkiye are not the only external actors involved in Kenya. The US, China, the UK, India, and the UAE are among the other main actors involved in the country. However, for the purposes of this analysis, these actors will not be considered in order to ensure comparability within the DIMEF framework and maintain analytical consistency.

This introductory section (4.1) has described the elements of relative stability that characterize the Kenyan context. Following this section, the chapter comprises four main sections on the DIMEF dimensions, as well as a concluding section. Each section considers different indicators intended to evaluate the relations between Italy and Kenya, on the one hand, and Kenya and Türkiye, on the other. Each section follows the same pattern for both countries. Section 4.2 addresses the Diplomatic Dimension, examining three indicators: bilateral meetings, bilateral agreements and MoUs, and the diplomatic networks of Italy and Türkiye on the Kenyan territory. Section 4.3 analyzes the Military Dimension, considering four different indicators: active military missions Kenya-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area, Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country, Kenyan military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye, the presence of a military base on Kenyan territory, and the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to Kenya. Section 4.4 examines the Economic-Financial dimension, taking into account three indicators: bilateral trade (import and export), ODA disbursements to Kenya, and the economic

strategic footprint of Italy and Türkiye. Section 4.5 examines the Information and Cultural Dimension, focusing on three indicators: cultural strategic footprint, educational cooperation, and agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations. The methodology for calculating each indicator will be specified in its respective section. The conclusion of this chapter (4.6) will summarize the main elements of the analysis, evaluating the results of the two countries in each dimension and offering some preliminary conclusions.

4.2 The Diplomatic Dimension

Following the adoption of the new constitution in 2010, the 2013 presidential election resulted in the victory of Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta. Benefiting from stability, the country has experienced robust economic growth over the past decade. Furthermore, Nairobi has also contributed to global stability through mediation, as seen in the case of the war between Ethiopia and Tigray, and through military contributions, as demonstrated by the deployment of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support Mission under UN auspices in Haiti (Demissie, 2023; DW News, 2025). During this period, both Italy and Türkiye have engaged in cooperation with Nairobi in numerous fields. Investigating the diplomatic dimension, an analysis of the time frame from August 2012 to August 2025 reveals a solid diplomatic engagement by each country with Kenya, although this engagement was more discontinuous in the case of Türkiye. This section considers three indicators of engagement with Kenya, proceeding in a comparative manner.

The first indicator is constituted by the number of bilateral meetings between Italy and Kenya and Türkiye and Kenya. Like the previous chapter on Somalia, the count is based on a comprehensive analysis of press releases and news concerning Italy and Kenya, on the one hand, and Türkiye and Kenya, on the other, within the considered time frame. The websites of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Ministry of Defense, the Italian Embassy in Nairobi, the Italian Government, and the Quirinale, in Italian language, and the websites of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Ministry of Defense, the Turkish Embassy in Nairobi, and the Directorate of Communications of the Turkish Presidency, in English language, have been the source of the press releases. The website of the Turkish Ministry of Defense, however, did not provide any relevant information for this research. The Italian news Agency ANSA and the Turkish news Agency Anadolu have been the source of the news articles. The count was based on meetings between key officials from Italy and Kenyan representatives, on the one hand, and key officials from Türkiye and Kenyan representatives, on the other. The typology of high-level officials considered for Italy and Türkiye was as follows: President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of

Defense, Deputy Prime Minister, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is essential to note that the present research exclusively focuses on meetings involving one of these figures from Italy or Türkiye with a representative from Kenya. Meetings involving the Italian/Turkish President of the Republic and/or Prime Minister are hereafter defined as Core. Meetings involving only the Italian/Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs or Defense are hereafter defined as Ministerial. Meetings involving only the Deputy Prime Minister or the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs are hereafter categorized as Deputy. Should the presence of the Italian or Turkish President or Prime Minister be observed in addition to that of Ministerial or Deputy figures, the meeting is designated as Core. It is worth noting that this analysis exclusively focuses on face-to-face meetings, excluding telephone calls and video meetings. Concurrently, meetings at multilateral fora were given consideration solely in instances where there was significant engagement between the two parties beyond the primary event.

This methodology reveals that, during the period under consideration, there were 17 bilateral meetings between Italy and Kenya, and 5 between Türkiye and Kenya (full dataset available from the author upon reasonable request)⁵¹. Figure 12 exhibits the evolution in time of these bilateral meetings. With the exception of the years 2014 and 2016, Italy has demonstrated a level of engagement with Kenya that is equal to or greater than that of Türkiye. The lack of meetings involving the considered typology of Italian officials in 2014 and 2016 does not mean a lack of cooperation during those years. Indeed, this is probably attributable to the conduct of more technical meetings involving sectors beyond the purview of the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, as considered here. As will be described during the analysis, this is evidenced by the existence of an agreement between the two countries signed in 2016. Concurrently, the peak in meetings between Italian and Kenyan officials in 2023 is most likely due to the strong commitment of the Meloni government towards the African continent and the elaboration of the Mattei Plan. On the other hand, Türkiye presents a more episodic engagement. This is likely due to reliance on other channels for cooperation, mainly business and government agencies⁵². Nevertheless, the meetings considered are high-level ones that constitute key moments of the cooperation between Ankara and Nairobi.

⁵¹ The count relies exclusively on publicly available records from the sources specified. If other meetings had taken place, they were not recorded by the aforementioned sources and are therefore absent from the dataset.

⁵² Indeed, this aspect of Türkiye's relation with Kenya is also highlighted by Cannon (2021).

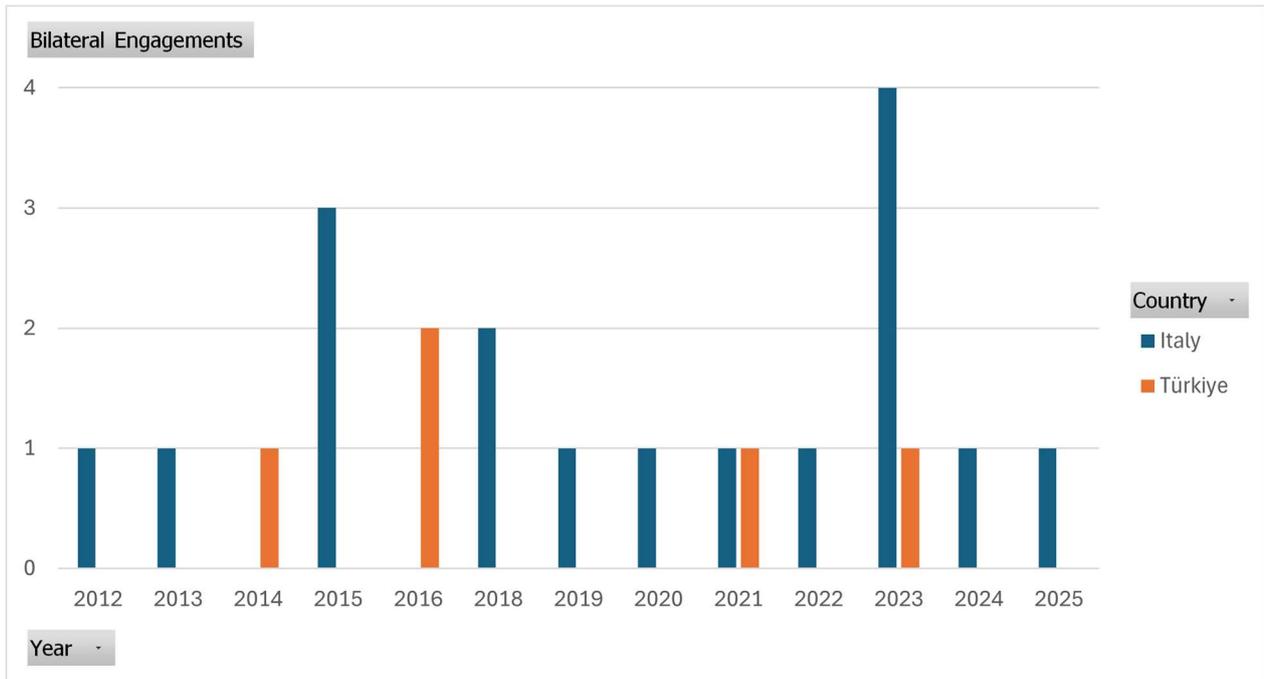


Figure 12: Kenya Bilateral Engagements Evolution in the Time Frame August 2012-August 2025 (Italy - Kenya; Türkiye - Kenya).

Source: Author's dataset constructed from multiple sources. Data collected by the author.

The typology of engagement is another important element to consider. As shown in Figure 13, Italy presents a higher number of meetings than Türkiye in all three typologies: Deputy, Ministerial, and Core meetings. In particular, there is a significant gap between the two countries regarding Ministerial meetings. This is due to the high number of bilateral meetings involving the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs with its Kenyan counterparts in various locations, i.e., Nairobi, Rome, and at the margins of United Nations sessions.

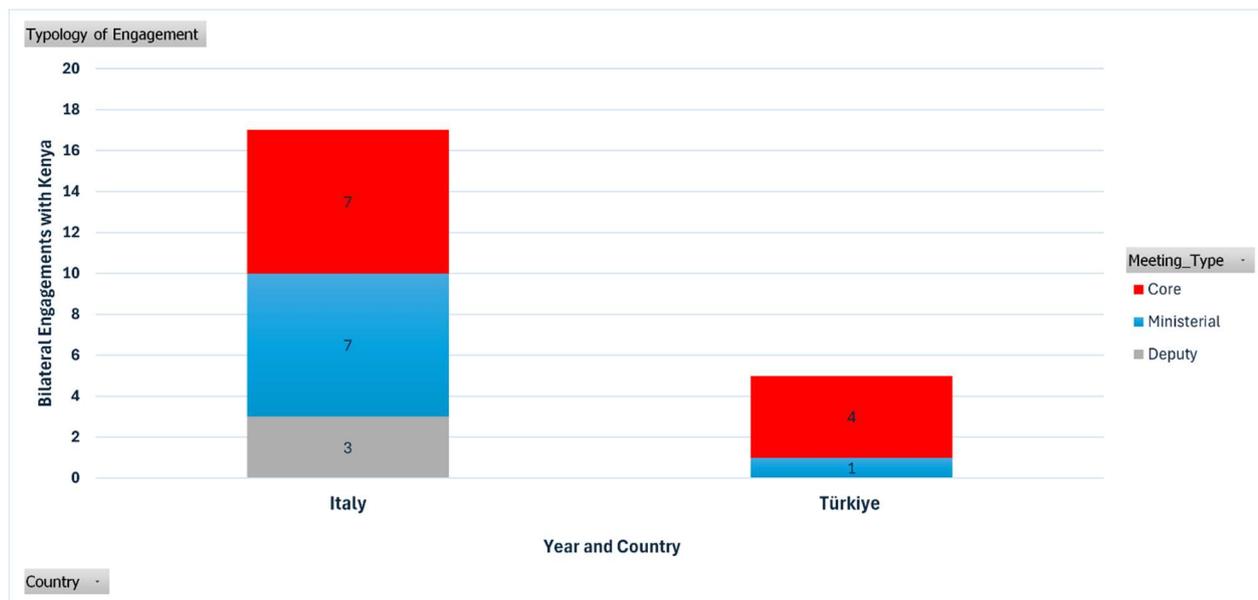


Figure 13: *Typology of Bilateral Engagements with Kenya in the Time frame August 2012-August 2025 (Italy - Kenya; Türkiye -Kenya).*

Source: Author’s dataset constructed by multiple sources. Data developed by the author.

From a descriptive standpoint, some pivotal moments of the diplomatic relationships between each country and Kenya should also be highlighted. The visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs Gentiloni in April 2015 was the first of an Italian Minister in Kenya in the period under consideration and followed the deadly attack at the University of Garissa carried out by Al-Shabaab (RAI News, 2015). Three months later, also Prime Minister Renzi visited the country and met with President Kenyatta (Redazione ANSA, 2015). More recently, in March 2023, Italian President Mattarella travelled to Kenya and met with President Ruto, signing several agreements to strengthen cooperation between the two countries (Presidenza della Repubblica, 2023). Conversely, President Ruto visited Rome at the end of January 2024 to participate in the Italy-Africa Summit, in which the Mattei Plan was presented (Italian Government, 2024b). Indeed, Kenya is regarded by Italy as a pivotal partner in implementing the Plan, and for this reason, it is one of the nine countries where pilot projects are currently being realized. So, unlike the previous case of Somalia, both the Italian President and Prime Minister visited the country during the time frame considered.

On the other hand, two main events of Türkiye-Kenya relations should be mentioned. First is the opening of the Kenyan embassy in Türkiye during President Kenyatta’s visit to the country in 2014, which represented the first-ever presidential visit from Kenya to Türkiye (Anadolu, 2014; Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-b). Second is the visit of President Erdoğan to Nairobi in 2016, which resulted in the signing of several agreements (Anadolu, 2016b). As in the case of Somalia, it is evident that Türkiye’s leaders are committed to maintaining direct relations with the partner

country. This commitment is manifest in the personal engagement of the President or Prime Minister with their counterpart, as well as their direct travel to the counterpart's country. However, in contrast to the Somali case, the number of meetings is considerably lower. Indeed, there have been no recorded visits in Kenya by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense outside of the delegation accompanying the President. Consequently, regarding the first indicator, Italy records a higher number of meetings in absolute terms, a higher number in relative terms by typology, and a higher proportion in relative terms compared to Türkiye for each year.

The second indicator is represented by the number of bilateral agreements and MoUs signed by Italy and Kenya on the one hand, and Türkiye and Kenya on the other. The same sources were employed for the count as for the first indicator. To avoid artificially inflating the count, exchanges of letters concerning the extension of an agreement's validity are grouped together with the reference initiative. The same principle applies to different acts belonging to the same initiative. Likewise, agreements or MoUs signed on the same day, even when belonging to different fields, are grouped together. The reason is the following. In the case of many agreements signed during the same diplomatic initiative, some sources do not itemize the specific agreements but simply state that "agreements were signed" and, on occasion, specify the field of these agreements. As a result, this method has revealed seven agreements and MoUs between Italy and Kenya compared to three between Türkiye and Kenya in the time frame under consideration (full Table available from the author upon reasonable request). In both cases, the agreements encompass several areas. However, agreements between Italy and Kenya are mainly centered on the fields of development cooperation, energy, and cultural and scientific cooperation. Conversely, agreements between Türkiye and Kenya focus especially on economic and security cooperation.

The third and last indicator is constituted by the diplomatic network of each country in Kenya. Italy opened its embassy in Nairobi in 1964, while the Turkish embassy was opened in 1968 (President of the Republic, 1964; Turkish Embassy Nairobi, 2019). So, the diplomatic missions of the two countries have been open for the same number of years during the time frame under consideration. Concurrently, as of August 2025, neither country has a Consulate in Kenya. Italy has two honorary consulates in the Kenyan cities of Mombasa and Malindi, respectively. However, honorary consulates are excluded from the count for this indicator. Consequently, Italy and Türkiye have equivalent scores for this third indicator.

In conclusion, considering the indicators (bilateral meetings, bilateral agreements and MoUs, and the diplomatic network), Italy scores higher than Türkiye in the first and second indicators, while the two

countries achieve an equivalent score for the third indicator. Consequently, Italy presents a higher score than Türkiye in the diplomatic dimension.

4.3 The Military Dimension

In analyzing the military engagement of each country with Kenya in a comparative manner, as in the previous chapter on Somalia, this section employs five different indicators. The first indicator is represented by the number of ongoing military missions Kenya-related conducted by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area. Due to its stability, there are currently no ongoing military missions involving Italy or Türkiye in Kenya or its maritime area. In the past, the EUCAP Nestor mission, which preceded the EUCAP Somalia mission described in the previous chapter, included Kenya in its theatre of operations. The mission, conducted from 2012 to 2016, aimed to provide support for the development of maritime security in Somalia, Djibouti, the Seychelles, Kenya, and Tanzania by advising and training their coast guards, navies, and coastal police (EEAS, 2014). Italy was one of the European member states contributing to the mission, also through a small number of military personnel. However, Kenya's involvement has been limited due to divergent visions on the mission's objective. Kenya sought to receive heavy equipment for its coast guard, whereas the mission was intended to provide training (House of Commons, 2014). In December 2016, the Mission narrowed its focus to Somalia alone and changed its name to EUCAP Somalia in March 2017. Considering the fact that the mission concluded eight years ago, it is excluded from the count for the first indicator.

Despite the absence of ongoing military missions involving Italy or Türkiye in Kenya and its maritime area, it is possible to analyze the operational engagement of each country with Nairobi by examining the conduct of joint or combined military exercises with Kenyan counterparts. In the context of the EU maritime mission EUNAVFOR Atalanta (for a detailed description of this mission, see Chapter 3, Section 3.3), Italy participated in the joint multi-agency exercise Usalama Baharini with the Kenyan Navy and the Kenyan Coast Guard Service in 2024 (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, 2024). Italy participated through its frigate ITS Martinengo, which at that time was the flagship of EUNAVFOR Atalanta, in a simulation of transferring materials and personnel suspected of engaging in illicit drug and arms trafficking to various Kenyan security agencies (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, 2024). Back in 2018, again in the context of EUNAVFOR Atalanta, the frigate Martinengo had already conducted two combined exercises with the Kenyan Navy. The first one, in August 2018, focused on firefighting, first aid, and countering IED, while the second combined exercise, in November of the same year,

centered on firefighting, basic first aid, and anti-flooding procedures (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, 2018a, 2018b).

On the other hand, Türkiye has shown some engagement with Kenya through its participation in the multilateral Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), and particularly with CTF 151 (for a detailed description of this mission, see Chapter 3, Section 3.3). In November 2015, during a visit to Mombasa by the Turkish frigate TCG Gemlik, which at that time was the flagship of CTF 151, an Amphibious Attack Team exercise display was carried out on board, and twelve Kenyan Navy Personnel received a ship tour and a presentation on counter-piracy (Combined Maritime Forces, 2015). However, these activities do not constitute a joint or combined exercise; they amount to no more than a demonstration and a presentation. Consequently, they are not classified as exercises. In addition to the aforementioned activities, no bilateral joint exercises involving Italy and Türkiye are documented to have taken place on Kenyan territory or in the Kenyan maritime area during the period from August 2012 to August 2025. As a result, the only operational engagement based on joint or combined military exercises with Kenya is represented by the joint and combined exercises carried out by Italy in the multilateral context of EUNAVFOR Atalanta. Consequently, despite the absence of ongoing military missions involving Italy or Türkiye in Kenya and its maritime area, Italy displays a higher score than Türkiye for this first indicator due to a greater operational engagement with the Kenyan military than Türkiye.

The second indicator considers the number of Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country based on the most recent figures. However, according to official sources, there are no records of a stable deployment of Turkish or Italian troops in Kenya within the time frame from August 2012 to August 2025. Concurrently, examining the non-conventional side of warfare, as of August 2025, there is no publicly documented presence of the PMC SADAT in the country. Consequently, both countries record an equivalent score of zero for the second indicator.

The third indicator analyzes the number of Kenyan military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye. However, in this case, a quantitative comparison between the two countries is not possible. This is due to the absence of specific missions, which usually provide the total number of trained personnel, the absence of data for certain years, or the presence of only aggregated data for training programs involving Kenya and other countries. The following qualitative description aims to provide an overview of the two countries' activities in this field, as well as an order of magnitude for the number of Kenyan military and police personnel trained, based on publicly available data.

Regarding military training, there is no evidence of any significant training programs conducted by Italy for Kenyan military units. In contrast, since 2013, the Italian Carabinieri have conducted training

sessions for the Kenyan Police Forces. In 2013, 385 operators from the Police Forces of different countries, including Kenya, participated in the training program conducted by the Carabinieri in Nairobi in the context of the EU project “European Union Police Service Training 2011 - 2013” (Ambasciata d’Italia Nairobi, 2013). In 2018, the Carabinieri conducted further training sessions for the Kenyan Police Forces, this time in a bilateral context (RAI News, 2018). Furthermore, in 2023, the Kenyan Police participated in mentoring and capacity-building activities within the context of the “Southern Route” project carried out by Italy’s Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services (Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga, 2023). Indeed, in the same year, an agreement was signed between the Italian Police and Kenya’s Directorate for Criminal Investigation. The agreement provides for training from Italy to the Kenyan police and the sharing of information on the fields of collaboration, including the fight against drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, and terrorism (Agenzia Nova, 2023).

In parallel, Türkiye’s training of Kenyan military forces has also been modest. Ankara recently provided a training program for Kenyan Army personnel on the operation of Baykar’s UCAVs, which the country has purchased (Kenyette, 2024). This event constitutes the only recorded training initiative for the Kenyan military by Türkiye. Conversely, Türkiye has been significantly involved in training the Kenyan Police Forces. This is the result of an MoU on Security Cooperation between the Kenya Police and the Turkish National Police signed by the two countries in 2014 (Adan, 2014). According to Tanrıverdi Yaşar (2022), since 2020, dozens of Kenyan Police officers have been trained by Türkiye, especially in the fields of counterterrorism and counter-narcotics. Against this backdrop, TIKA has played a primary role, organizing training programs in cooperation with the Turkish Police in both Ankara and Nairobi. Two examples should be mentioned. First, the 2020 training program in Nairobi involved dozens of Kenyan police officers, focusing on terrorism, organized crime, and armed smuggling (Wasike, 2020b). Second, a recent training program in Ankara in 2025 trained 10 Kenyan police officers on the same topics (TIKA, 2025). In conclusion, for this third indicator, while both countries display a robust involvement in training the Kenyan Police through several initiatives, Türkiye is the only country that records training for the Kenyan military, albeit on an episodic and modest scale. Consequently, Ankara achieves a marginally higher score than Rome on this third indicator.

The fourth indicator is represented by the presence of a military base on Kenyan territory. As of August 2025, neither Italy nor Türkiye has established a military base in the country. On the other hand, Italy has a Space Center in the country, near Malindi. It is the “Luigi Broglio” Space Center, previously known as Base San Marco. It was established in 1964 and has been the subject of a new

agreement between the Italian and the Kenyan governments in 2016 (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). The functions and the relevance of the Space Center in the relations between the two countries will be analyzed in the next section. However, here it is important to note that, despite some dual-use functions, there are no reports of ballistic missile launches during the period under consideration. Consequently, the Space Center is not included in the count for this indicator but will be considered in the field of Aerospace & Strategic Tech in the next section. Consequently, both Italy and Türkiye record a score of zero for the fourth indicator.

The fifth indicator is constituted by the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to Kenya. The data used are sourced from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database and cover the period from 2012 to 2024. For the comparison, a sum of the trend-indicator value (TIV)⁵³ elaborated by SIPRI is employed. It is essential to note that, in 2021, many sources reported that Kenya ordered 118 Hizir armored personnel carriers from the Turkish company Katmerciler (Bekdil, 2021; Wasike, 2021; Martin, 2021). However, this order does not appear in the SIPRI database for the period 2012-2024. This is likely because no evidence of deliveries or documents related to the service entry of Hizir in Kenya could be found. Furthermore, one year after the contract, the news website Africa Intelligence reported that the order “appears to have hit a dead end” (Africa Intelligence, 2022). Regardless, since this order was not reported by SIPRI, it will not be considered for the fifth indicator. Figure 14 and Table 4 summarize the results of the comparison.

⁵³ As explained by SIPRI, the TIV is a common unit that enables comparison between data on different types of weapons. It is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer (SIPRI, n.d.).

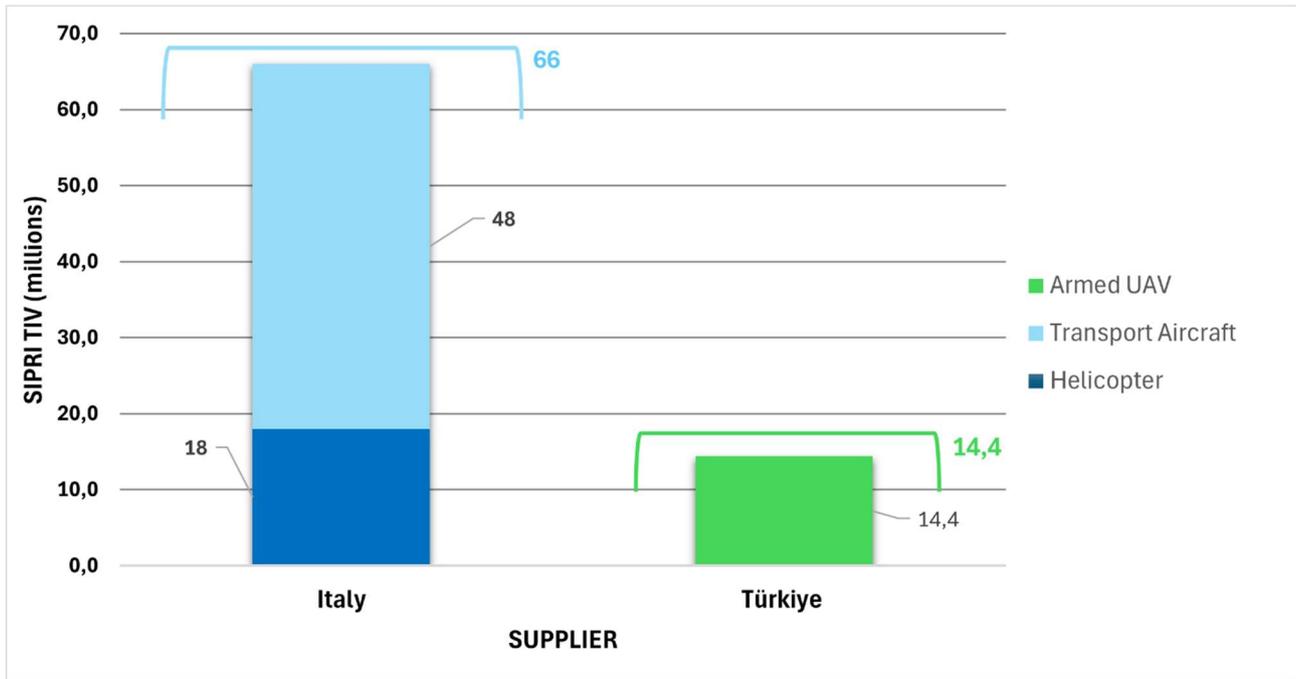


Figure 14: Total SIPRI TIV of delivered weapons to Kenya by Italy and Türkiye during the time frame 2012-2024 (stacked by category of weapons).

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Data developed by the author.

Supplier	Recipient	Weapon	Description	Year of delivery	Units	Status	SIPRI TIV
Italy	Kenya	AW139	Helicopter	2019-2020	3	New	18
Italy	Kenya	C-27J Spartan	Transport Aircraft	2020	3	New	48
Türkiye	Kenya	Bayraktar TB2	Armed UAV	2024	6	New	14.4

Table 4: Weapons supplied by Italy and Türkiye to Kenya in the time frame 2012-2024 and SIPRI TIV values (millions).

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Data developed by the author.

According to SIPRI data, Italy displays a higher total SIPRI TIV of delivered weapons to Somalia than Türkiye in the time frame 2012-2024. As a result, Italy scores higher than Türkiye in the fifth and last indicator. This result is consistent with the fact that Italy was the second-largest provider of arms to Kenya during the period 2010-2021 (Statista, 2025). In contrast, this result is despite the fact that Türkiye's President of Defense Industries, Görgün, and Kenya's Defense Minister, Duale, signed a Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement in July 2023 (Daily Sabah, 2023).

In conclusion, taking into account the indicators of total number of ongoing military missions Kenya-related led by Italy and Türkiye in the country and its maritime area and the operational engagement of the two countries, number of Italy's and Türkiye's military personnel deployed in the country according to the most recent figures, the amount of Kenyan military and police personnel trained by Italy and Türkiye, the presence of a military base on Kenyan territory, and the transfers of major weapons from Italy and Türkiye to Kenya, Italy presents a higher score than Türkiye in the first and

last indicators, Türkiye displays a marginally higher score than Italy in the third indicator, while both countries record an equivalent score of zero for the second and fourth indicators. Consequently, Italy records a higher score than Türkiye in the general military dimension.

4.4 The Economic-Financial Dimension

In investigating the economic and financial relations between Italy and Kenya, as well as Türkiye and Kenya, in a comparative manner, this section employs three different indicators. The first indicator is represented by bilateral trade (import and export) between Rome and Nairobi on the one hand, and Ankara and Nairobi on the other, in the time frame 2012-2024. The UN Comtrade Database served as the data source. All values are expressed in US dollars. Figures 15 and 16 exhibit the trends of Italy’s and Türkiye’s exports to and imports from Kenya.

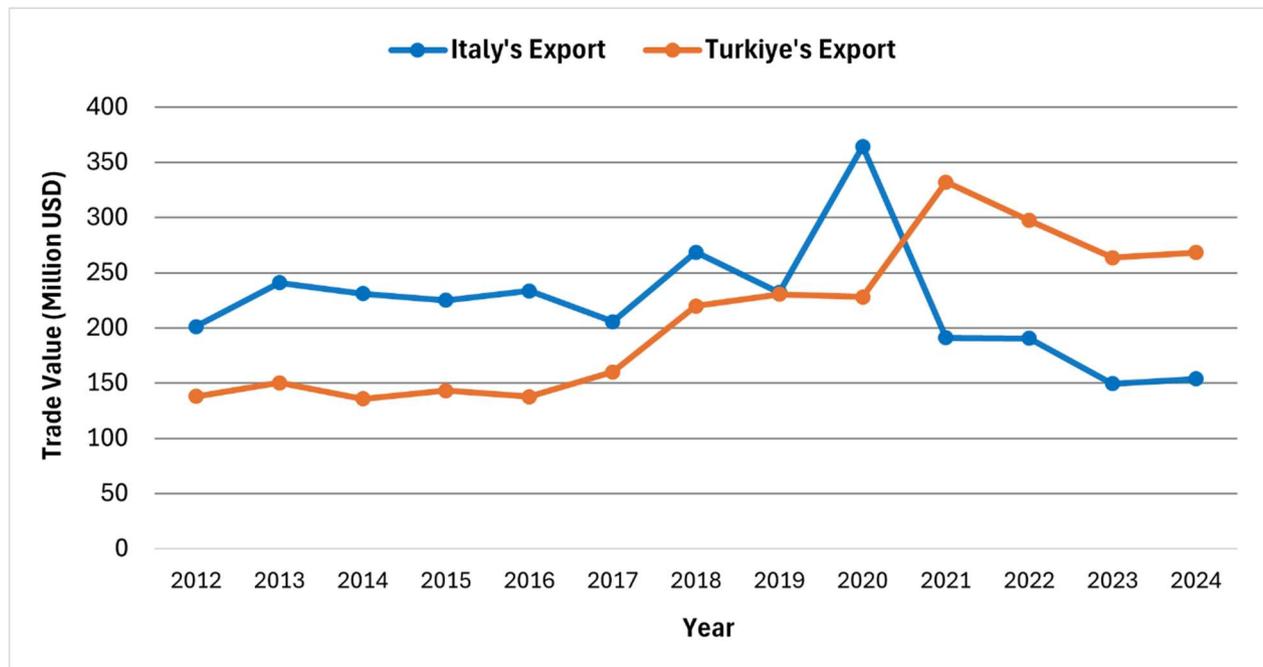


Figure 15: Bilateral Trade – Italy’s and Türkiye’s Export to Kenya per year during the time frame 2012-2024. Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Source: UN Comtrade Database. Data developed by the author.

Examining exports to Kenya, Figure 15 reveals that Italy exported more than Türkiye every year from 2012 to 2020, while Türkiye exported more than Italy in the last four years, from 2021 to 2024. Italy’s exports reached their highest point in 2020, primarily due to the military exports analyzed in the previous section, and subsequently experienced a significant decline. This is likely attributable to a decrease in the export of machinery and pharmaceutical products, as well as to intense competition from the products of competing nations, primarily Türkiye and China, which frequently offer their

goods at lower prices. Indeed, Türkiye’s exports started to increase in 2017 and reached their highest point in 2021. This peak coincided with a general economic boom of Türkiye’s exports, which reached a record level after the decline caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

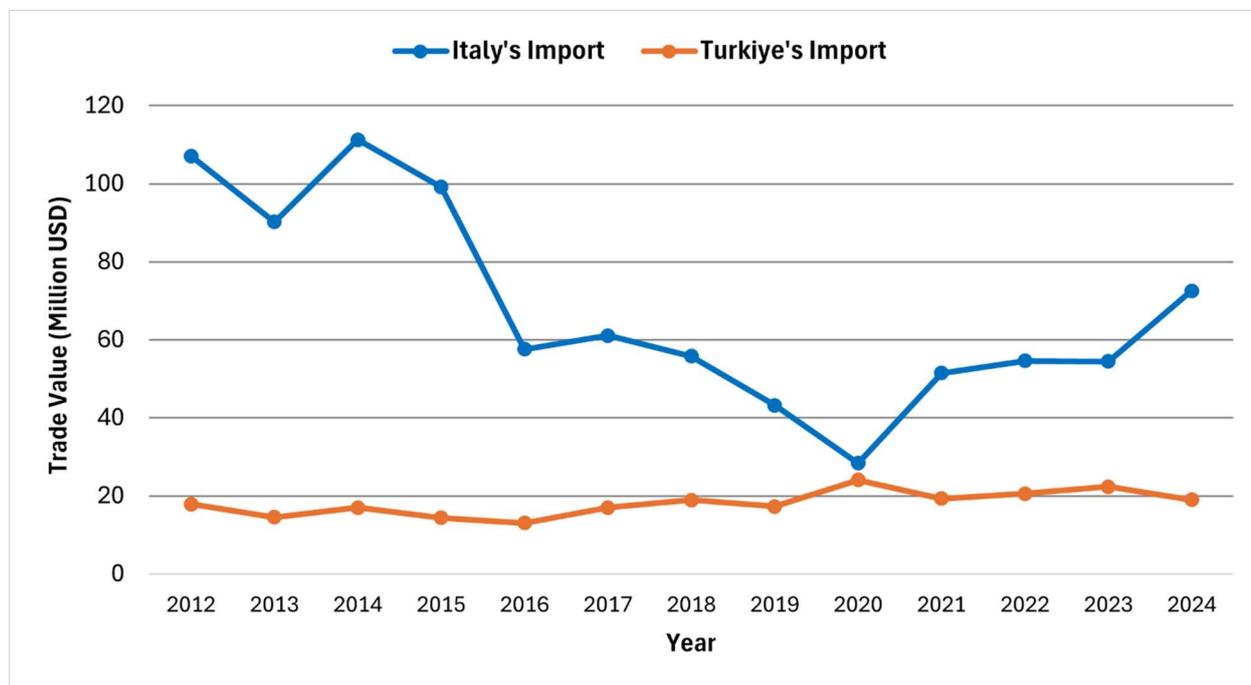


Figure 16: *Bilateral Trade – Italy’s and Türkiye’s Import from Kenya per year during the time frame 2012-2024.*

Source: UN Comtrade Database. Data developed by the author.

Analyzing imports from Kenya, Figure 16 displays that in each year in the considered time frame, Italy imported more from Kenya than Türkiye did. This is the result of significant imports of food and leather products. Following high levels of imports in the period from 2012 to 2015, Italy’s imports experienced a decrease, reaching their lowest point in 2020, likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, since 2021, Italy’s imports have experienced a new increase. On the other hand, Türkiye displays a flatter curve, but with volumes significantly lower. Showing higher exports from Italy than Türkiye for most of the years considered and higher imports to Italy than Türkiye for all years, the data indicate a stronger bilateral trade relationship between Rome and Nairobi compared to Ankara and Nairobi. As a result, Italy records a higher score than Türkiye for this first indicator.

Development cooperation represents another central element of the relationship of each state with Kenya. The relationships in development cooperation between Italy and Kenya have historical roots that can be traced back to the signing of an agreement between the two countries in 1985 (Ambasciata d’Italia Nairobi, n.d.-b). Kenya has been listed among the priority countries of Italian development cooperation for years, and AICS has established its office in Nairobi (AICS, n.d.). For the period 2023-2027, Italy’s initiatives in this field are guided by the priorities set out in the “Kenya-Italy

Sustainable Development Partnership” agreement, which was signed by the two countries in 2023 (AICS-Nairobi, n.d.). On the other hand, Türkiye’s development cooperation efforts in Kenya are channeled through TIKA. TIKA commenced operations in the country in 2012 and opened its Office in Nairobi in the same year (TIKA, n.d.-b). Since then, its projects have primarily focused on the domains of education, health, access to clean water, and agriculture. To analyze development cooperation, the second indicator is constituted by ODA disbursements from Italy and Türkiye to Kenya. The OECD Data Explorer is the data source for the comparison, and all values are expressed in US dollars, adjusted for constant prices. The time frame is 2012-2023 due to the lack of data on 2024 in the OECD database. Figure 17 exposes the result of the comparison.

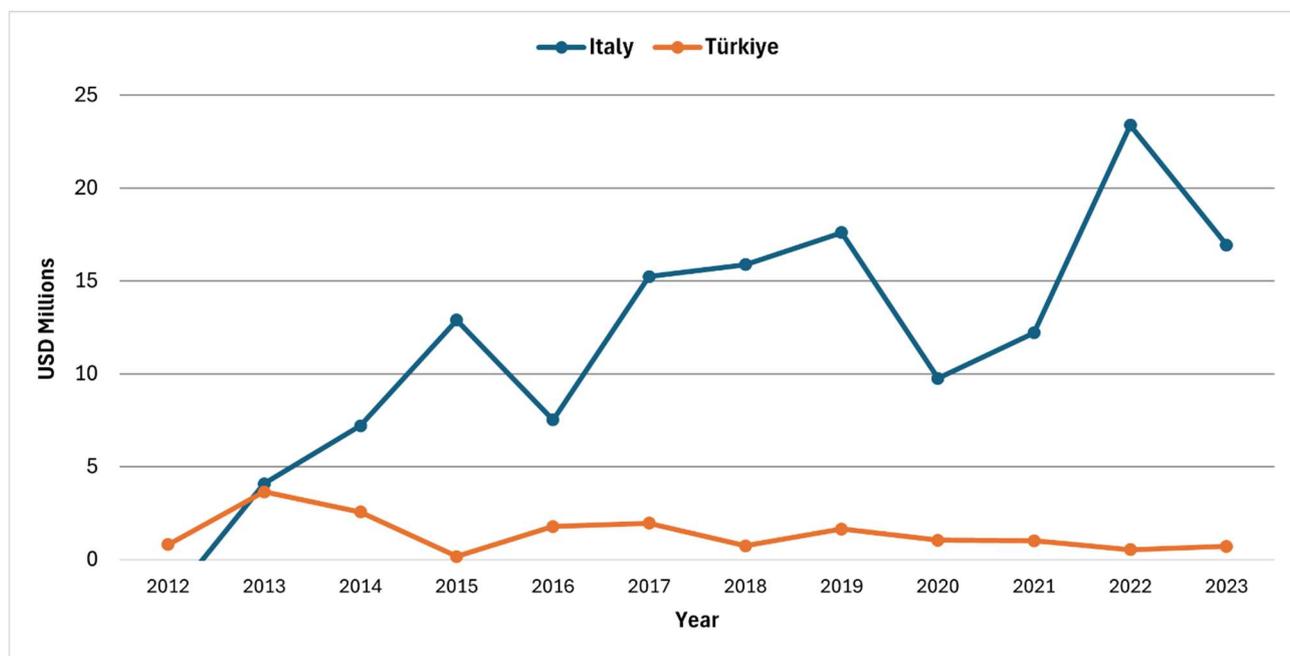


Figure 17: ODA Disbursements – Italy’s and Türkiye’s ODA Disbursements to Kenya per year during the time frame 2012-2023.

Source: OECD Data Explorer. Data developed by the author.

Figure 17 highlights that Italy’s ODA Disbursements to Kenya are larger than Türkiye’s in all years with the exception of 2012. This was due to a negative value for Italy’s ODA in 2012, indicating that capital repayments from Nairobi exceeded new Italian disbursements for that year. Nevertheless, Italy displays a solid commitment to development cooperation in Kenya, whereas Türkiye’s disbursements are stable but of modest value. Disbursements of Türkiye and Italy reached their peak in 2013 and 2022, respectively. In both cases, according to OECD data, the peak is attributable to a surge in technical cooperation, which in 2022 for Italy reached a record value of 10 USD millions. In sum, since Italy’s ODA disbursements are larger than Türkiye’s in all years except for 2012, Rome records a higher score than Ankara for this second indicator.

The third and last indicator of the economic-financial dimension is the “economic strategic footprint”. This indicator examines the concessions obtained, as well as the actions and projects undertaken by the main Turkish and Italian companies in Kenya in the fields of Energy, Critical Infrastructure, Strategic Connectivity, and Aerospace & Strategic Tech. For this last field, meetings between managers of the company under consideration and Kenyan public officials, the establishment of a stable in-country presence (office/representation), and the provision of civil aviation technology will be the sole aspects considered. This limitation will prevent double-counting and overlaps with the Military Dimension. In the energy sector, Italian companies conduct significant activities in Kenya. ENI plays a primary role in the country by operating in the exploration and agro-industrial fields. Indeed, the Italian company is currently involved in offshore exploration activities in six blocks. In parallel, ENI produces biofuels and has established its first agri-hub on the continent in Makueni County, contributing to the production of sustainable fuels (ENI, 2025). This activity has achieved significant results, as evidenced by the fact that in 2023, Kenya Airways employed ENI’s sustainable aviation fuel for the first time on the long-haul flight from Nairobi to Amsterdam (ENI, 2023b). The relevance of ENI’s activities is also underscored by its relationships with the Kenyan government: ENI’s CEO Descalzi met with President Kenyatta and President Ruto in 2023 (ENI, 2020, 2023a). Moreover, in 2021, the Italian company and the Ministry of Petroleum and Mining of Kenya signed an MoU to promote the decarbonization process (ENI, 2021a). Finally, ENI has also signed an MoU with the AICS office in Nairobi in 2021 to cooperate in key sectors for the development of Kenya (ENI, 2021b; Redazione ANSA, 2022b). This partnership demonstrates a joint and coordinated effort by two pillars of the economic dimension of Italian foreign policy. Concurrently, Enel also carries out activities in Kenya. In particular, Enel is developing wind, solar, and hydroelectric projects in the country and funding the Micro-Grid Academy of Nairobi (Enel, n.d.-b; Enel 2015). This academy is training young Kenyans in managing microgrids to ensure energy for local communities, promoting the electrification of rural areas, and supporting education (Fondazione AVSI, 2019). In contrast, regarding Türkiye, no activities of TPAO are recorded in Kenya. According to some sources, the Turkish company Karpowership, which provides floating electricity plants, was in negotiations with several African governments, including Kenya (Akwagyiram, 2023; Kimani, 2024). However, as of August 2025, there is no public evidence of contracts between the company and the Kenyan government.

In the sector of critical infrastructures, despite a meeting in 2024 between the Italian Ambassador in Kenya and the Minister of Roads and Transport of Kenya on the potential development of the Malindi International Airport, no major infrastructure projects or concessions have been reported for Italian companies. Similarly, despite the robust involvement of Turkish companies in infrastructure projects

in neighboring countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, and Somalia, there is no evidence of significant infrastructure projects or concessions in Kenya. Conversely, in the sector of strategic connectivity, Turkish Airlines plays a leading role. Since President Gül's visit to the country in 2009, the company has begun operating flights from Istanbul to Mombasa and Nairobi, flying daily to the Kenyan capital, and also offering cargo services (Turkish Airlines, n.d.). In this manner, Turkish Airlines connects Kenyans with its vast global network and facilitates visits for Turkish businessmen and tourists to the country. On the other hand, ITA Airways does not operate flights to Kenyan cities. Finally, in the field of Aerospace & Strategic Tech, Italy's presence is particularly relevant due to two key factors. First, Leonardo has a subsidiary in Kenya, Leonardo Technologies and Services Ltd (LTS), which is headquartered in Nairobi. Through this subsidiary, Leonardo has provided the country with Air Traffic Management, Communications, Navigation and Surveillance, Technical and Engineering Services, ICT & Security Systems for Critical Infrastructure (Leonardo, n.d.; Defence Web, 2017). Furthermore, a delegation from Kenya, led by Defense Minister Duale, visited Leonardo's facilities in Rome in November 2023 (ASI, 2023). The purpose of this visit, which included additional meetings, such as that with the Italian Space Agency (ASI), was to discuss space cooperation between Italy and Kenya. Indeed, the second factor is constituted by the aforementioned presence of the "Luigi Broglio" Space Center near Malindi. After its establishment in 1964, the inaugural satellite, named San Marco-2, was launched from the base in 1967. Currently, the Space Center conducts activities of satellite data reception, telemetry, and tracking of space objects (ASI, n.d.). The Space Center also undertakes research and training projects that include personnel from Kenya. In October 2024, the Italian Minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy, Urso, the President of ASI, Valente, and a delegation of Italian space companies, including Leonardo, visited the Space Center and met with the Kenyan Defense Minister, Tuya (Italian Ministry of Enterprises, 2024b). This visit is consistent with the objective, linked to the Mattei Plan, to make the Space Center a training hub for space operators from African countries (Italian Ministry of Enterprises, 2024b). On the other hand, Türkiye has involved Kenya in its drone diplomacy through the sale of Bayraktar TB2 UAVs. However, no meetings have been recorded between Baykar's CEO or high-level managers and Kenyan high officials. Likewise, there is no public evidence of space cooperation between Ankara and Nairobi.

As a result, Italy records a higher score than Türkiye for the economic strategic footprint indicator due to its solid presence in the fields of Energy and Aerospace & Strategic Tech. In particular, ENI, Enel, and Leonardo play a critical role in carrying out activities in the country, directly cooperating with Kenyan institutions. These companies grant Italy the possibility of conducting parallel diplomacy, strengthening economic ties with Nairobi, and achieving the objectives set in the Mattei Plan through a "win-win" approach. Furthermore, the Luigi Broglio Space Center constitutes a unique

asset in the country, which could serve as a base for enhanced scientific and space cooperation between Rome and Nairobi. In contrast, the analysis reveals a modest engagement of Türkiye with Kenya if compared with the activities carried out in neighboring countries. However, Ankara is working to strengthen its position on the entire continent, as evidenced by the significant presence of Turkish Airlines and the sale of Baykar's drones. This could lead to a growing presence of the Anatolian country in Kenya in the future.

In conclusion, considering the three indicators of bilateral trade (import and export), ODA disbursements, and economic strategic footprint, Italy records a higher score than Türkiye in all three indicators. Consequently, Italy displays a higher score in the general economic-financial dimension. This is likely attributable to Italy's more structured approach to the country, which involves economic, financial, and institutional actors collaborating with each other, as evidenced by the agreement between ENI and AICS and by the joint involvement of the Ministry of Enterprises, ASI, and Leonardo in the Aerospace domain⁵⁴. This aligns with the fact that Kenya is one of the countries with pilot projects for the Mattei Plan, which provides a certain degree of institutional framework for coordinating and cooperating among the different Italian actors.

4.5 The Information and Cultural Dimension

In analyzing the engagement of each country with Kenya in a comparative manner in the information and cultural dimension, this section considers three indicators: two related to culture and one to the core information domain.

The first indicator is represented by the cultural strategic footprint. This indicator examines the following factors: the stable in-country presence of the institution under consideration (cultural institutes or foundations), as well as its documented actions (MoU and projects). With regard to cultural institutes, while the Turkish Yunus Emre Institute does not have an office in Kenya, the Italian Institute of Culture has an office in Nairobi, which contributes to the promotion of the Italian language and organizes cultural events in different fields (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.; Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025b). In parallel, the activities of the foundations should be examined. As of August 2025, the Turkish Maarif Foundation does not operate any schools in the country. Indeed, unlike the case of Somalia, in 2016, Kenya's Ministry of Education excluded the possibility of closing the Gülen-associated schools, as recommended by Ankara (Jalloh, 2016; Tepeciklioğlu &

⁵⁴ In line with this approach, in March 2025, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti announced the upcoming opening of an office in Nairobi (Redazione ANSA, 2025b).

Tepeciklioğlu, 2021). Conversely, the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDF), affiliated with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, undertakes several initiatives in Kenya. TDF provides educational support and is involved in various types of aid, including the distribution of Qurans (TDF, 2022; TDF, 2024). However, unlike in other African countries, TDF in Kenya has not engaged in the construction of mosques. On the other hand, the Med-Or Italian Foundation has involved Kenyan high officials in discussions in Italy. An important example was constituted by the seminar “Kenya’s Renewable Energy and Green Industrialization Opportunities,” which involved President Ruto’s Special Envoy for Climate Change, Ali Mohamed, as well as two Kenyan Principal Secretaries, and was intended to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between Italian and Kenyan stakeholders (Med-Or, 2025b). However, unlike in Somalia, Med-Or did not sign an MoU with the Kenyan government and, as of August 2025, did not carry out activities directly on Kenyan territory. In conclusion, the analysis for this first indicator reveals a marginally stronger cultural strategic footprint for Italy than for Türkiye. In particular, Italy benefits from the establishment of a cultural institute that plays a pivotal role in cultural diplomacy. In parallel, the absence of the Yunus Emre Institute and the more limited activities of the TDF in comparison to those observed in other countries may be attributable to the fact that Kenya is a predominantly Christian country. This element limits the religious soft power and Ottoman cultural heritage that are part of Ankara’s strategy.

The second indicator is represented by educational cooperation. In line with the previous chapter on Somalia, and given the fragmented data on scholarships provided by Italy and Türkiye to Kenyan students, this indicator will be based on a qualitative analysis. The following qualitative analysis aims to provide an overview of the efforts in the field of education and the scholarship programs implemented by Türkiye and Italy for Kenyan students.

Italy has demonstrated a solid commitment to promoting and supporting education. According to data from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012a), approximately 50 Kenyans studied in Italian Universities in 2011 and 60 in 2012. Subsequently, in 2016, after the terrorist attack at the University of Garissa, 11 students at that University received the opportunity to study at the University of Perugia (Redazione ANSA, 2016). This Italian commitment has been consistent over time: new scholarships to study in Italy, provided by the Italian Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been available for various programs (Master, PhD, language) in 2019, 2024, and 2025 (Istituto Italiano di Cultura Nairobi, 2025). In parallel, AICS finances numerous scholarships to Kenyans to study in Kenya, as evidenced by the project TOGETHER realized in cooperation with the Italian University of Pavia and the Kenyan Kenyatta University and Tangaza University College (Università di Pavia,

n.d.). The master part of this project involved 175 students, with 53 scholarships funded by AICS to support disadvantaged students and civil servants (Redazione ANSA, 2025a).

Regarding Türkiye, the government-funded Türkiye Scholarships program, coordinated by the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), has attracted numerous Kenyans. In particular, according to Anadolu, in February 2020, hundreds of Kenyans participated in a promotional meeting in Nairobi to discuss scholarships for studying in Turkish Universities (Wasike, 2020a). However, according to a statement by the Turkish Ambassador to Kenya reported by the University of Nairobi (2020), only 208 Kenyan students participated in the program between 2012 and 2020. Furthermore, Türkiye's Ambassador also affirmed his interest in strengthening cooperation between Turkish and Kenyan universities to promote faculty exchange. Meanwhile, the website of the Turkish Embassy in Nairobi reports that 60 Kenyan students have been funded by Türkiye Scholarships for the academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19 (Turkish Embassy Nairobi, 2019). Concurrently, TIKA also provides educational support. The Turkish Agency has contributed to renovating the schools' infrastructure of Primary and Secondary schools in the country and has provided educational materials (TIKA, 2021a, 2021b).

In conclusion, both Italy and Türkiye display a substantial involvement in the field of educational cooperation in Kenya. According to available data, both countries provide a significant number of scholarships for Kenyans to study at Italian and Turkish Universities. Then, while AICS supports disadvantaged students in studying at Kenyan Universities, TIKA carries out infrastructure projects to renovate primary and secondary schools. For this reason, it is fair to say that Italy and Türkiye record an equivalent score for this second indicator.

The third and final indicator is represented by the number of agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations. As of August 2025, there is no record of agreements or MoUs in the information domain, neither between Italy and Kenya nor between Türkiye and Kenya. This is despite a meeting between the Italian Minister of Enterprises, Urso, and the Kenyan Minister of Information, Communications, and the Digital Economy, Ndung'u, in September 2024 on opportunities of cooperation between the two countries in the AI and digital fields⁵⁵ (Italian Ministry of Enterprises, 2024a). Likewise, Italy's press agencies and media organizations did not sign any agreements with their Kenyan counterparts. Similarly, there is no evidence of agreements between Anadolu and the Kenya News Agency. In contrast, in the

⁵⁵ Italy, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has launched the "AI Hub for Sustainable Development" project, which aims to strengthen AI initiatives in African countries. This initiative aims to involve both the Kenyan government and Kenyan startups, as Kytabu (Italian Ministry of Enterprises, 2024c; AI Hub for Sustainable Development, 2025).

broadcasting sector, the Turkish TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), the national public broadcaster in Türkiye, and its Kenyan counterpart, KBC (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation), signed a collaboration protocol in 2016 (Authority of the Republic of Kenya, 2017). Furthermore, despite the lack of an MoU, in 2016, twelve employees from Kenyan media organizations visited the headquarters of Anadolu in Türkiye, while in 2019, four Kenyan journalists were trained by TRT (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2021). The Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications has also created the "Stratcom platform", which, according to its website, aims "to deepen cooperation with numerous countries and enhance Türkiye's influence in global communication" (STRATCOM, n.d.-a). This platform has led to the organization of STRATCOM Summits. In July 2022, the STRATCOM Summit held its first overseas event in Nairobi, involving 60 journalists from around Kenya (STRATCOM, n.d.-b). This initiative is indicative of the importance that Ankara attaches to the information and communication sectors in the context of its foreign policy. More recently, in July 2025, the International Media Coordination Office of the Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications organized a comprehensive media program which involved journalists from 41 countries, including Kenya (Directorate of Communications, 2025). In line with Ankara's foreign policy objectives, the program also addressed all aspects of the fight against the Gülen movement. Finally, it should be noted that in 2023, TRT launched its Africa edition, featuring news in English, French, Swahili, and Hausa languages⁵⁶. This initiative aligns with the broader context of Turkish narrative as a partner country without a colonial past, in contrast to Western countries. This point was emphasized by the Director General of TRT during the launch of TRT Afrika, who affirmed that the Western media had provided "one-sided coverage of Africa" for years (Sevencan, 2023). Finally, regarding Italy, one point is noteworthy. As of January 2023, the Italian community in Kenya represented the second-largest European community in the country and the second-largest Italian community in sub-Saharan Africa (Info Mercati Esteri, 2023). This has led to the creation of a news website, named "Malindi Kenya – Il Portale degli Italiani in Kenya", which is managed by Italians in Kenya and produces content in Italian and English, also describing Italy's initiatives in the country.

This indicator displayed the absence of agreement and MoU in the information domain between Italy and Kenya on the one hand, and Türkiye and Kenya on the other. However, while there is no evidence of significant activities carried out by Italian media organizations and their Kenyan counterparts, Turkish media organizations exhibit intense activism. The cooperation protocol signed by TRT and KBC in 2016, along with the numerous initiatives organized by the Directorate of Communications, Anadolu, and TRT involving Kenyan journalists, demonstrates the significance Ankara attaches to

⁵⁶ Swahili and English are the two official languages in Kenya.

the information domain. Italy's approach to this field in Kenya is more related to Kenya's technological development, as evidenced by the meeting between Italian and Kenyan Ministers in 2024. In contrast, Ankara's activities pertain to the core aspects of the information domain and are intended to shape the narrative in the country and, more generally, in Africa. As a result, it is safe to state that Türkiye records a higher score than Italy for this third indicator.

In conclusion, considering the three indicators (cultural strategic footprint, educational cooperation, and number of agreements in the information domain, both between governments and media organizations), Italy records a higher score than Türkiye in the first indicator, Türkiye has a higher score than Italy in the third indicator, while both countries display an equivalent score for the second indicator. As a result, the two countries present an equivalent score in the overall Information and Cultural Dimension. This result is due to the stronger presence of Italy in the cultural domain and the greater activism of Türkiye in the information domain, while both countries have demonstrated a strong commitment to the Kenyan education sector.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to demonstrate how Italy and Türkiye integrate DIMEF spectrum instruments in a context of stability and whether they employ hybrid instruments. Concurrently, the chapter aimed to verify or falsify the hypothesis that a middle power characterized by a democratic regime is more effective in a stable context than a non-democratic regime.

Both Italy and Türkiye have demonstrated a solid degree of cooperation with Kenya in different fields, emerging as significant partners of Nairobi. Nevertheless, their approaches and their operational mechanisms differ. This analysis has demonstrated that Rome's cooperation with Kenya has been characterized by a multilevel approach that enables the involvement of different Italian actors and institutions in structured partnerships, multiyear programs, and projects. On the other hand, Türkiye had adopted an approach mainly based on business and the actions of its agencies. Due to its strong executive system, Ankara is able to act rapidly, utilizing its agencies and foundations as instruments to respond to the needs of local communities.

The analysis of the Diplomatic Dimension demonstrated that Italy has had more bilateral meetings with Kenyan high officials and has signed more bilateral agreements with Nairobi than Türkiye. Concurrently, both countries have long-standing Embassies, while lacking Consulates, thus displaying diplomatic networks of the same dimension. This result is linked to two cross-domain aspects of Italy's involvement in the country. First, the historical character of the relationship between

Kenya and Italy, which instituted a Space Center in Malindi and was one of the first countries to establish an Embassy in Nairobi. Second, Kenya shares with Italy a commitment to promoting a multilateral approach in the international landscape, with the objective of supporting stability on the African continent and globally. This assertion is supported by three distinct elements. First, the presence of several UN institutions in Nairobi. Second, the country's involvement in peacekeeping operations and the pursuit of global solutions for the issue of climate change. Third, the statements made by President Ruto's Special Envoy for Climate Change, Ali Mohamed, in Rome, who affirmed that Kenya appreciates the effective role played by Italy in multilateral contexts (Rossi, 2025). On the other hand, since the victory of the AKP, Türkiye strengthened its ties with Kenya, especially through Presidential visits. However, Türkiye's number of meetings with Kenya has been significantly lower than Italy's.

The analysis of the Military Dimension confirmed the different approaches employed by the two countries in the military domain. While there are no ongoing military missions on Kenyan territory or in its maritime area, the operational engagement of the two countries has been examined through the analysis of joint or combined exercises with Kenya. The results revealed a stronger operational engagement of Italy than Türkiye. At the same time, Italy scored higher than Türkiye for the indicator of transfers of major weapons to Kenya, while Türkiye exhibited a higher score in the indicator of Kenyan military and police personnel trained. Both countries recorded a score of zero in the indicators of military personnel deployed in the country and of the presence of a military base on Kenyan territory. Italy's operational engagement with Kenya's military, as well as its participation in training programs for the police, is connected to Rome's multilateral approach. This is because they fall within the context of EU missions or UN initiatives. Concurrently, the fifth indicator confirms the relevance of Leonardo's military products to strengthen Italy's security and defense ties with other countries. On the other hand, Baykar confirms its position as a pivotal actor in Türkiye's foreign policy strategy, notably through its export of drones to Kenya and through the training it provided to Kenyan military units. Unlike the case of Somalia, Türkiye did not deploy any military units in Kenya, and there is no evidence of the presence of the PMC SADAT. This is likely attributable to the prioritization by Ankara of deployment in contexts of instability and predominantly Muslim countries. Likewise, Italy does not exhibit any non-conventional element in its military activities in Kenya.

Unlike the case of Somalia, where the military domain was a priority due to the unstable context, in Kenya, the economic-financial dimension represents the main arena of competition. During the period under consideration, Italy displayed a higher level of imports from and exports to Kenya than Türkiye. However, in the last four years (2020-2024), Ankara's exports surpassed those of Italy. This is due

to the high competition resulting from the competitive prices offered by Turkish companies. However, there is also a structural element that Italy should consider. The Italian bureaucracy needs a reform to act in a faster and simpler manner, granting Italian companies competitiveness vis à vis their competitors. On the other hand, Italy's exports and imports could benefit in the future from the agreement signed by the EU and Kenya in 2023. Regarding the second indicator, ODA Disbursements, Italy showed larger disbursements than Türkiye for all years, except in 2012. For the third and final indicator, the energy sector demonstrated a prominent presence of ENI, with projects spanning various fields and direct meetings with the Kenyan authorities. Furthermore, ENI has also signed an MoU with AICS, creating a partnership able to produce a more comprehensive approach and multiply positive results. ENI's activism constitutes a valuable instrument of parallel diplomacy for Rome in the country. Concurrently, Enel plays a relevant role in Kenya due to its engagement in renewable energy. In the field of critical infrastructure, no significant initiatives were recorded by Italian or Turkish companies. Conversely, Turkish Airlines confirms its role as a soft power instrument for Ankara, connecting Nairobi and Mombasa with Istanbul and fostering both human and economic ties. Finally, Leonardo's activities through its subsidiary in Nairobi, as well as the presence of the Luigi Broglio Space Center, constitute pivotal aspects for cooperation with Kenya in the Aerospace and scientific domains. The stronger Italian strategic footprint can be attributed to three main elements. First, the context of stability that characterizes Kenya has facilitated the economic relationships for the Italian companies. Second, there has been a convergence between the priorities of the Italian government, the activities of the Italian companies, and the agenda supported by the Kenyan government. Third, the Mattei Plan has recently provided an institutional framework to enhance cooperation between the different Italian actors and institutions, resulting in a more comprehensive approach, as evidenced by the aforementioned agreement between ENI and AICS as well as by the joint initiatives of the Ministry of Enterprises, ASI, and Leonardo in the Aerospace field. However, Turkish involvement in the Kenyan economy is growing, and its centralized decision-making system, competitive pricing, and cooperation between the private and public sectors can make Ankara a major competitor.

The fourth and last dimension of Information and Culture is characterized by important activities carried out by both Italy and Türkiye. However, their approaches differ as reflected by the indicators. Italy displays a marginally higher cultural strategic footprint due to the presence of the Italian Institute of Culture in Kenya, in contrast to the absence of the Yunus Emre Institute. Concurrently, despite Kenya being a predominantly Christian country, the TDF represents Ankara's religious soft power in the country through its activities, including the distribution of Qurans. In the field of educational cooperation, both countries provide a significant number of scholarships for Kenyan students and

involve their respective agencies, AICS and TIKA, in activities aimed at fostering educational support. In contrast to Italy's approach, which is more centered on supporting Kenya's technological development, Türkiye plays a prominent role in the core information domain. Despite the absence of government-to-government agreements in this field, a cooperation protocol was signed by the national broadcasters of Türkiye and Kenya. Moreover, the establishment of TRT Africa, which broadcasts news in Swahili, and the involvement of Kenyan journalists in Turkish training programs represent initiatives intended to reinforce Ankara's narrative as a non-colonial partner in Africa, as well as its foreign policy objectives, including countering the Gülen Movement on the continent. In line with the case of Somalia, Türkiye adopts a more assertive approach than Italy in the information domain. Considering it a hybrid domain, Ankara employs information instruments to acquire a competitive advantage over competitors and shape a favorable narrative in the country of operations, something that Italy does not seem to do.

In conclusion, this analysis has proved our hypothesis. Italy achieved a higher total score in three out of four dimensions (as summarized on the following page), specifically in all dimensions except the cultural and information dimension. Consequently, it is possible to state that Italy, a middle democratic power, is more effective than Türkiye, a middle power characterized by a hybrid regime, in a context of stability, specifically in the case of Kenya. Indeed, the context of stability grants Italy opportunities otherwise absent. Stability facilitates economic relations and a long-term institutional approach typical of Italian institutions and companies, also due to the slow pace of decision-making and bureaucracy. At the same time, stability enhances the employment of a multilateral approach, which is a defining element of Italy's foreign policy strategy. On the other hand, Türkiye's higher score in the overall cultural and information dimension is due to this latter aspect. As a hybrid regime, Türkiye appears more inclined to actively promote narratives and regard information as a domain of competition.

This leads to the second finding of this research. The DIMEF integration remains unchanged compared to the Somalia case. The capacity for these instruments to achieve results is contingent on their suitability for a stable context. Similar to what is observed in Somalia, Italy appears not to utilize unconventional or hybrid instruments, with the exception of parallel diplomacy carried out by major companies. The Italian approach is still characterized by a very institutional approach. Despite the general framework provided by the Mattei Plan, the Italian approach is not as systematic and integrated as the Turkish one, which, under Presidential direction, constitutes a unique ecosystem characterized by rapid decision-making. Nevertheless, dialogue and pluralism inherent in a democratic process are the elements that have brought innovation and progress to Italy and the West.

In Kenya-Italy relations, these same elements can form the basis for transforming cooperation into a strong partnership and investments into long-term progress.

Table 5: Summary of Chapter 4 Findings (Panels A-D)

DIPLOMATIC DIMENSION (Panel A)

Country	Bilateral Meetings	Bilateral Agreements	Diplomatic Network
Italy	17	7	Embassy (14y)
Türkiye	5	3	Embassy (14y)

MILITARY DIMENSION (Panel B)

Country	Active Missions (Operational Engagement)	Military Personnel Deployed	Personnel Trained	Military Base	Weapons Transfers (TIV)
Italy	0 (2)	0	Army: NO + Police: YES	NO	66,0
Türkiye	0 (0)	0	Army: YES (episodic) + Police: YES	NO	14,4

ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL DIMENSION (Panel C)

Bilateral Trade	ODA Disbursements	Economic Strategic Footprint
Export: Italy > Türkiye	Italy > Türkiye	E: Italy** > Türkiye, CI: Italy = Türkiye
Import: Italy > Türkiye		SC: Türkiye > Italy, AST: Italy > Türkiye

INFORMATION AND CULTURAL DIMENSION (Panel D)

Educational Cooperation	Cultural Strategic Footprint	Information Agreements
Italy = Türkiye	Institutes: Italy > Türkiye	Government: Italy = Türkiye
	Foundations: Türkiye** ≥ Italy	Media Organizations: Türkiye** > Italy

****Employment of instruments of the hybrid/non-conventional domain.**

E: Energy; CI: Critical Infrastructures; SC: Strategic Connectivity; AST: Aerospace & Strategic Tech.

Conclusion and Strategic Implications

The purpose of this study was to explain how regime type influences the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments within a state's foreign and security strategy and how regime type affects the effectiveness of middle powers under stable versus unstable conditions in the country of engagement. To this end, FPA provided the theoretical framework. From a methodological standpoint, the research employed a most-similar systems research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative indicators for each DIMEF dimension. In particular, the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments were examined across two countries of engagement, Somalia and Kenya, which display different conditions of stability (unstable versus stable conditions), over the time frame from August 2012 to August 2025.

The study advanced two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that middle powers with a hybrid regime were expected to exhibit a more centralized integration of DIMEF instruments, which is characterized by faster decision-making, greater blending of conventional and non-conventional instruments within each DIMEF dimension, less distinct boundaries among state institutions, companies, agencies, and private contractors, and a higher tendency to employ military force in bilateral frameworks. By contrast, democratic middle powers were expected to display a more institutionalized and rules-based integration, characterized by a lower reliance on non-conventional instruments, the involvement of multiple institutional actors (including oversight bodies) in the foreign and security policy decision-making process, and employment of military force mostly under multilateral mandates. The second hypothesis was that under stable conditions in the country of engagement, democratic middle powers were expected to achieve higher policy effectiveness than middle powers with a hybrid regime. Conversely, under unstable conditions in the country of engagement, middle powers with a hybrid regime were expected to display higher policy effectiveness than democratic middle powers. Furthermore, both hypotheses were stated to apply to democratic middle powers that are not subject to a continuous, proximate existential threat.

To address the abovementioned research questions, the analysis examined Italy and Türkiye, and tested their strategies across different conditions. Chapter 2 presented the main elements of the foreign and security strategies of Italy and Türkiye. In analyzing their institutional frameworks for foreign and security policy decision-making, this chapter highlighted clear differences between the two countries. In Italy, multiple institutional actors, including oversight bodies, are involved in the

process. In Türkiye, the system is highly centralized with a dominant role for the presidency, particularly after the 2017 constitutional amendment. The chapter also showed that Türkiye employs a wider range of non-conventional instruments than Italy. Chapters 3 and 4 assessed the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments by Italy and Türkiye under different conditions in the country of engagement. Chapter 3 analyzed the outcomes under unstable conditions in the country of engagement, using Somalia as a case study. Chapter 4 replicated the same structure for stable conditions in the country of engagement, using Kenya as the case study. In both chapters, qualitative and quantitative indicators were employed to evaluate the results of the two states in each DIMEF dimension and, in aggregate, their effectiveness.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the evidence demonstrates that regime type has a systemic influence on the employment and integration of DIMEF instruments. Democratic middle powers display a more institutionalized and rules-based approach. As illustrated by Italy, democratic middle powers exhibit a strong multilateral vocation in the employment of the DIMEF instruments, particularly in the use of the military instrument, and appear to display a lower reliance on non-conventional instruments, with the partial exception of parallel diplomacy conducted by national companies. Furthermore, the integration of the different instruments is also characterized by a preference for traditional instruments. Furthermore, decision-making in foreign and security policy is characterized by the involvement of multiple institutional actors, including those with oversight functions. By contrast, middle powers with a hybrid regime exhibit a more centralized integration of DIMEF instruments. The case of Türkiye demonstrated that hybrid regimes heavily rely on both conventional and non-conventional instruments across the different DIMEF dimensions, including PMCs, religion, information operations, and narrative shaping. Hybrid regimes also display a preference for employing military instruments in bilateral frameworks. Companies are integrated into the hybrid regime's strategy, sometimes through family ties to top government officials, not only in parallel diplomacy but also in promoting the national image. Turkish Airlines offers a paradigmatic example of cross-dimensional integration: beyond being a strategic economic actor, it enables connectivity for politicians, businesspeople, religious representatives, aid workers, students, and tourists between Türkiye and the country of engagement. Then, decision-making is, overall, heavily centralized. These different patterns of integration are visible in relation to both countries of engagement, which are characterized by different stability conditions. As a result, these findings verify the first hypothesis.

Regarding the second hypothesis, based on the qualitative and quantitative indicators employed, the results demonstrate that the regime type affects the state's effectiveness in the country of engagement. Under stable conditions, democratic middle powers exhibit higher effectiveness than middle powers

with a hybrid regime. Indeed, in the case of Kenya as a country of engagement, Italy recorded higher effectiveness in three of the four dimensions. The exception was represented by the Information and Cultural dimension, which is usually more affected by the employment of non-conventional activities. Under unstable conditions, hybrid middle powers display higher effectiveness than democratic middle powers. In the case of Somalia as a country of engagement, Türkiye recorded higher effectiveness in all four dimensions. These results are consistent with the study's expectations; as a result, these findings verify the second hypothesis.

These findings contribute to the broader field of Foreign Policy Analysis by offering testable propositions for middle powers and by aiming at analytic generalization under the conditions outlined in this research. Generally, this study suggests that analyses on regime type should not focus only on traditional dimensions of foreign and security policy, such as coercive diplomacy or intervention in civil wars in third countries, but also consider the impact of regime type on the employment and integration of hybrid and non-conventional instruments. In parallel, this research highlights the relevance of investigating the under-explored dimension of hybrid regimes, whose mix of democratic and authoritarian features produces distinct modes of statecraft. However, two limits of this research should be noted. First, the analysis of the Information dimension does not include quantitative indicators, but relies only on qualitative indicators; however, these were applied symmetrically. Second, the indicator on agreements and MoUs in the Diplomacy dimension is partially constrained by the methodology of enumeration employed, due to the frequent ambiguity of data in cases where multiple agreements were signed during the same meeting. Nonetheless, this indicator was applied symmetrically across cases and contexts.

Nevertheless, the findings in this study also have a series of important strategic implications for democratic middle powers, like Italy. To maintain an effective foreign and security strategy, democratic middle powers must invest in the stability of already stable countries, actively contribute to the prevention of armed conflicts in these countries, and partner with such countries so that they can, in turn, act as providers of security and stability in their regions. At the same time, democratic middle powers should incorporate non-conventional instruments in their strategy to counter the actions of non-democratic actors with divergent interests and prevent those actors from dominating certain dimensions, such as information. Finally, democratic middle powers must be able to involve the international or supranational organizations in which they are members in the relations with the country of engagement in order to increase the effectiveness of their policies and mobilize a higher number of resources. This aspect can bring a competitive advantage to democratic middle powers vis

à vis middle powers with a hybrid regime that usually rely more on bilateral solutions or adopt transactional approaches to international organizations.

Future studies can further develop these insights by exploring additional case studies. Adopting the same indicators and methodological framework, the integration of an authoritarian regime into the analysis could provide important insights into the differences and similarities of its action compared to those of democratic and hybrid regimes, both in terms of DIMEF integration and effectiveness in countries of engagement. In parallel, it would be important to extend the research on the influence of regime type on effectiveness to other pairs of countries of engagement, considering both stable and unstable conditions. Furthermore, the research could be repeated for additional middle powers.

In conclusion, understanding when democratic middle powers are more effective than hybrid middle powers can help policymakers in elaborating their country's foreign and security strategy and setting the related priorities. Likewise, understanding how hybrid middle powers integrate their DIMEF instruments can provide policymakers with valuable insights and support them in assessing which instruments their states should adopt and develop to counter the non-democratic competitors' influence. In an increasingly unstable international landscape, democratic middle powers must recognize their significant weight in the balance of power and actively cooperate with partner countries to safeguard stability and advance their vital interests. This is how democratic middle powers can retain strategic relevance on the international stage.

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