

THE LIMITS OF TURKISH SOFT POWER AND MEDIATION CAPABILITY: A  
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF TURKISH INVOLVEMENT IN SYRIA AND  
SOMALIA

by

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IN SYRIA AND SOMALIA**

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## ABSTRACT

### THE LIMITS OF TURKISH SOFT POWER AND MEDIATION CAPABILITY: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF TURKISH INVOLVEMENT IN SYRIA AND SOMALIA

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Turkey's involvement in Somalia is a shining example of its use of soft power, with Somalis themselves providing the strongest endorsement. Meanwhile, Turkey's engagement with Syria started out promising, but hopes for the regime were brutally dashed with the start of the civil war and Turkey's switch to supporting the opposition. Despite the importance of these two conflicts to Turkey's foreign policy and mediation strategy, there is a dearth of academic literature about Turkish involvement in both of these conflicts, much less a direct comparison of both. This comparative case study describes Turkey's ongoing involvement in Somalia and Syria in more detail and takes this description further by comparing these specific cases to gain insight into Turkey's overall intervention strategy, specifically focusing on mediation capabilities. Turkey's involvement in conflicts before they reach the peak of violence or after violence has subsided has been successful, as demonstrated by the Somalia case. On the other hand, when Turkey attempts to become involved during the peak of a violent conflict, as it has in Syria, it cannot utilize the soft power tools it needs for a successful intervention such as educational exchanges, infrastructure development, and economic cooperation. Suggestions for future research indicate that Turkey should more closely track its involvement in various regional conflicts in order to feed this knowledge into its wider mediation strategy.

## ÖZET

### TÜRK YUMUŞAK GÜCÜNÜN LİMİTLERİ VE ARABULUCULUK KAPASİTESİ: SURIYE VE SOMALİ'DE TÜRKİYE'NİN KATILIMININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI SAHA ÇALIŞMASI

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Arabuluculuk, Türk Dış Politikası, Suriye, Somali

Somali'de Türkiye'nin müdahalesi, kendilerine güçlü bir destek sağlayan Somalililer ile birlikte, yumuşak güç kullanımına parlak bir örnektir. Bu sırada Türkiye'nin Suriye'ye karşı olan tavrı umut verici olarak başladı fakat rejime olan umutlar sivil savaşın başlamasıyla birlikte acımasızca kesildi ve Türkiye muhalefeti desteklemeye başladı. Bu iki çatışmanın Türkiye'nin dış politikası ve arabuluculuk stratejisi için önemine rağmen, her iki çatışma hakkında Türkiye'nin katılımı, her iki katılımın direk olarak karşılaştırılması hakkında akademik literatürde bir eksik bulunmaktadır. Bu karşılaştırmalı durum çalışması detaylı olarak Somali ve Suriye'de Türkiye'nin devam eden katılımını açıklar ve bu açıklamaların devamında özellikle arabuluculuk yeteneklerine odaklanarak, Türkiye'nin genel müdahale stratejisi hakkında fikir edinmemizi sağlamaktadır. Somali vakasında görüldüğü gibi Türkiye'nin müdahalelerde olan başarısı çatışmaların şiddeti tam olarak zirveye ulaşmadan veya şiddet sonlandıktan sonra gerçekleşmiştir. Diğer bir taraftan, Suriye örneğinde olduğu gibi, Türkiye, şiddetli bir çatışmanın zirvesinde müdahil olmaya çalıştığında, başarılı bir müdahale için gereken eğitimsel değişim, altyapı gelişimi ve ekonomik işbirliği gibi yumuşak güç araçlarını kullanamamaktadır. Gelecekteki araştırmalar için öneri olarak, Türkiye daha geniş çaplı bir katılım için bu konudaki bilgisini geliştirmek adına çeşitli bölgesel çatışmalarda kullanılan müdahaleleri daha yakından izlemesi gerekmektedir.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Mustafa Tunç, whose support and encouragement keeps me going through all my academic, professional, and personal endeavors.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP- Justice and Development Party

ALM- Arab Liberation Movement

CIA- Central Intelligence Agency

ICG- International Crisis Group

ICU- Islamic Courts Union

LDCs- Least Developed Countries

MB- Muslim Brethren

MHP- National Movement Party

NATO- North-Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGOs- Non- Governmental Organizations

ODA- Turkish Overseas Development Assistance

PLO- Palestinian Liberation Organization

SCIC- Supreme Council of Islamic Courts

TFG- Transitional Federal Government

TIKA- Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency

TNG- Transitional National Government

UAR- United Arab Republic

UN- United Nations

UNITAF- Unified Task Force

US- United States

WWI- World War I

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP government has focused on the regional use of soft power, particularly in countries with which Turkey shares a common historical, cultural, or religious bond. Among the many countries with which Turkey is currently involved, Somalia and Syria stand out as a stunning example of successful partnership, and engagement which could not prevent the onslaught of a violent conflict, respectively. The dearth of academic literature about Turkish involvement in both of these conflicts, much less a direct comparison of Turkish efforts in both, necessitates a close examination. By comparing these two cases, we can begin to answer the question of how Turkey can most effectively use its soft power and humanitarian aid to intervene in regional conflicts. My thesis aims to conduct an exploratory analysis of Turkey's actions in Somalia and Syria to understand a) What Turkey is currently doing in both conflicts in order to work toward peace and stability, b) the effects of Turkish involvement on the conflicts themselves and on Turkey internally, and c) what the comparison of the two cases can tell us about Turkey's larger strategy of conflict intervention and specifically, mediation.

This comparative case study describes Turkey's ongoing intervention efforts in Somalia and Syria in more detail and takes this description further by comparing these specific cases to gain insight into Turkey's overall intervention strategy. My conclusion

is that Turkey's involvement in conflicts before they reach the peak of violence or after has been successful, as demonstrated by the Somalia case. On the other hand, when Turkey attempts to become involved during the peak of a violent conflict, as it has in Syria, it cannot utilize the soft power tools it needs for a successful intervention. Turkey's successful use of soft power and humanitarian aid can serve as a model for other small states and middle power countries interested in using their power and influence to become more involved in regional conflicts.

Chapter Two *Literature Review* contains a literature review of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government, including a discussion on mediation; a review of some recent literature on mediation as it is relevant to the current study, mainly focusing on the definition of mediation which will be compared and contrasted to what Turkey is currently doing in both cases; and a review of literature on humanitarian intervention and how that concept relates to Turkey's actions in the conflicts.

Chapter Three *Methodology* discusses the comparative case study method, explains the reasoning for choosing the particular cases of Syria and Somalia; and discusses how evidence was gathered including interview techniques.

Chapter Four *Somalia* and Chapter Five *Syria* contain an overview of the history, issues, and actors of the conflicts; a discussion of Turkish involvement; and the repercussions of that involvement. The chapters are organized according to Wehr's conflict map, which is a common method for analyzing conflict dynamics in the Conflict Analysis and Resolution field.

Chapter Six *Conclusions* contrasts Turkey's rhetoric and action in Somalia and Syria, discusses how this contrast can shed light on Turkey's overall mediation and intervention philosophy, and contains suggestions for future research. It also discusses how these findings may be applied to other conflict interventions; namely, the intervention of small states into protracted social conflicts.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY**

#### **2.1. Overview of the AKP Government's Foreign Policy**

The AKP's foreign policy may be new, especially in its emphasis on soft power, but it is not a radical departure from Turkey's past foreign policy and humanitarian endeavors. As Onis (2010) explained:

It would be wrong to equate foreign policy activism exclusively with the AKP government. Elements of an active foreign policy approach in Turkey could be discerned throughout the post-Cold War era starting with Turgut Özal's Presidency in the early part of the 1990s. The Foreign Minister of the Coalition Government of 1999-2002, Ismail Cem, also favoured a multidimensional, proactive foreign policy, yet with a firm Western axis. The early foreign policy of the AKP clearly represented a continuation of the pattern... Indeed, relations with the Middle East had already started to improve from 1999 onwards and

important initiatives designed to build economic and diplomatic links with Russia and the post-Soviet world can be traced to the early 1990s<sup>1</sup>.

In fact, Aras and Gorener (2010) credited Turgut Özal with pushing Turkey to become a regional leader and bridge, moving away from an exclusively Western-focused orientation and towards 'establishing itself as the political and economic centre of a region covering the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus, the Balkans and the Black Sea rim.'<sup>2</sup> However, Turkey's foreign policy and specifically involvement in regional conflicts has become more high-profile since the AKP came into power in 2002, when, according to Yalvaç, the party began to fully develop the 'New Ottomanism' begun under Ozal.<sup>3</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu became Foreign Minister in 2009, and is credited with the shift in Turkish foreign policy from an insular, Western-leaning focus to the "zero problems with neighbors approach" that sees Turkey supporting various former Ottoman countries and becoming actively involved in regional peacekeeping efforts.<sup>4</sup> Davutoğlu is also deemed an 'intellectual of statecraft' who plays a significant role in shaping new foreign policy on a theoretical as well as practical level.<sup>5</sup> His doctrine of strategic depth is intent on seeing Turkey create a new sphere of influence for itself in the region. In addition, the AKP's public support and creation of economic and social stability domestically has enabled it to become more involved in NATO, move forward on European Union membership negotiations, and become more involved in the

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<sup>1</sup> Onis, Z. (2010). Multiple Faces of the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics And A Critique. *Istanbul GLODEM Working Paper Series* p.4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Aras, B. and Gorener A. (2010) National role conceptions and foreign policy orientation: the ideational bases of the Justice and Development Party's foreign policy activism in the Middle East. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, p.80

<sup>3</sup> Yalvaç, Faruk. (2012). Strategic Depth or Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analysis of Turkey's Position in the World System. *International Relations* 26, p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> The Economist. (2010). *The Davutoğlu effect*. Retrieved on 11 May 2013. See also Aras, B. (2009). The Davutoğlu era in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Today's Zaman*. Retrieved on 15 May 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Yalvaç, Faruk. (2012). Strategic Depth or Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analysis of Turkey's Position in the World System. *International Relations* 26, p. 165.

surrounding region than previous administrations.<sup>6</sup> Several scholars have proposed explanations for Turkey's emergence. Çandar in 2009 succinctly identified the explanation as fivefold: the decline of American influence in the region, the ineffectiveness of EU policy, the destruction of Sunni dominance following the Iraq war, Turkey's growing economic power and Turkey's political modernization, making it a role model for Muslim countries.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'New economic dynamics and an increasing sense of responsibility for promoting global peace through contributing to global sustainable development have enabled Turkey to emerge as a new and dynamic player in the international development cooperation architecture.'<sup>8</sup> Turkey uses "a wide range of soft power instruments such as assuming a mediator role in regional conflicts" to promote peace in its surrounding region.<sup>9</sup> Turkey's foreign aid program began in June 1985 with a 10 million USD aid package distributed to Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan. Later in the 1980's Turkey began to focus its attention on newly independent states in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In 1992, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) was established to implement Turkey's development cooperation policy: coordinate with national actors, international organizations and bilateral donors. According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, an important aspect of Turkey's development policy is its demand-driven nature: Turkey delivers aid based on recipient country requests, often in sectors 'such as education, health, water and sanitation, administrative and civil infrastructures which represent basic needs of people.'<sup>10</sup> Another key component is the Turkish Overseas Development Assistance policy that

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<sup>6</sup> Davutoğlu, Ahmet. (2010). Turkey's zero problems foreign policy. *Foreign Policy magazine*. Retrieved on 10 January 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Candar, C. (2009). Turkey's 'Soft Power' Strategy: A New Vision for a Multi-Polar World. *Ankara SETA Policy Brief* p.9-10

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). *Turkey's Development Cooperation: General Characteristics And The Least Developed Countries (LDC) Aspect*. Retrieved on 20 July 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

focuses on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to which Turkey plans to give a total of 200 million USD annually starting in 2012.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Turkey gave 337 million USD to LDCs in 2012.<sup>12</sup> In 2013, Turkey increased its aid to developing countries by 29.7%, which also reflects aid to Syria.<sup>13</sup>

In the 2000s Turkey began to focusing increasingly on Africa: it was admitted to the African Union as an ‘observer’ in 2002 and TIKA opened its first offices on the continent in 2005. By 2006 Turkey’s official development assistance flows to Africa reached 51.73 million USD and in 2008, the African Union declared Turkey a ‘Strategic Partner’. However as of 2009 the bulk of ODA was still going to countries in South and Central Asia (almost 45%), the Balkan and Eastern European countries (nearly 27%), and lastly, African and Middle Eastern countries (nearly 25%).<sup>14</sup> Among the African countries, Egypt received the most aid in 2012 with a little over one billion dollars, followed by Somalia with 86.6 million, and Sudan and Tunisia with slightly over 60 million each.<sup>15</sup> No other African country broke the top 18 countries receiving Turkish aid; Comoros is the next-largest African aid recipient with only 4.08 million.<sup>16</sup> In addition to development aid, trade with Africa has become increasingly important. Bilateral trade volume with Africa reached 23.4 billion USD in 2013; 7.5 billion of which is with Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>17</sup> Turkey also provides around 500 educational scholarships for African students to study in Turkey every year; has trained 200 African junior diplomats through the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). *Turkey fourth largest donor of foreign aid..* Retrieved on 3 January 2014.

<sup>13</sup> OECD. (2014). *Aid to developing countries rebounds in 2013 to reach an all-time high.* Retrieved 1 September 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). (2013). *Turkish Development Assistance 2012.*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). *Turkey-Africa Relations.* Retrieved on 23 July 2014.



since 1992; and provided 21,953 people in Africa with health checks, treatment, or medicine in 2013 alone.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 Differing views on Turkish Foreign Policy Orientation

Scholars differ on some key characteristics of Turkish Foreign Policy, especially when specifically discussing humanitarian aid. In 2012 Bayer and Keyman offered an overall glowing view of Turkish humanitarian development capacity and motives, and claimed that Turkey was deeply committed to multilateralism in its approach.<sup>19</sup> They, along with Çandar, counteracted the common criticism that Turkey was moving away from the West and focusing more on the Middle East by pointing to the shifting balance of global power away from the West, thus explaining the increasing importance of the Middle East and Asia to many global actors. Bayer and Keyman (2012) identified Turkey's increasing importance as a source of global humanitarian aid as a consequence of shifting hegemonies, and 'massive shifts in the balance of North and South, East and West.'<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Onis claimed that there was merit in the criticism that the orientation of Turkish foreign policy had undergone some subtle shifts in the last decade, while Turkey started to operate less multilaterally and more independently.<sup>21</sup> However, even he does not accept the stereotype that Turkey has experienced a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bayer, R. & Keyman E.F. (2012). Turkey: An Emerging Hub of Globalization and Internationalist Humanitarian Actor? *Globalizations*, p. 37-41

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p.75

<sup>21</sup> Onis, Z. (2010). Multiple Faces of the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics And A Critique. *Istanbul GLODEM Working Paper Series* p.1-20.

complete rupture with its previous policy course: it is still more in line with the West than not.<sup>22</sup>

Now, we must conceptualize what Turkey is doing in Somalia and Syria with conflict resolution literature. Since Turkey's actions are so broad, it is difficult to fit them under a label such as "development aid" or "humanitarian intervention". However, some concepts are important to contextualize Turkey's efforts. After reviewing the concepts of "humanitarian intervention" and "mediation" we may gain a better understanding of how Turkey's efforts fit into or challenge international norms of conflict resolution.

### **2.3 Humanitarian intervention**

To determine whether Turkey's actions in Somalia and Syria constitute humanitarian intervention, we must first define the term. This task is more difficult than it seems since scholars have been debating the definition since the concept was first considered in the 1980's. Holzgrefe and Keohane define it as

the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied.<sup>23</sup>

Holzgrefe and Keohane also acknowledge that the definition in a legal sense (as cited in law reviews) may also include the threat or use of economic, diplomatic, and other sanctions; in other words, non-forcible or non-military interventions. On the other hand,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Holzgrefe, J.L. and Keohane, R. (2003). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*. Cambridge University Press: UK. P. 18.

Ramsbotham and Woodhouse reformulate the definition to distinguish between forcible and non-forcible intervention:

humanitarian intervention means cross-border action by the international community in response to human suffering, made up of (i) 'forcible humanitarian intervention', an expanded version of the classic concept to include collective action as well as self-help and no longer confined to human rights abuse by governments, and (ii) 'non-forcible humanitarian intervention'.<sup>24</sup>

This definition acknowledges the reality that increasingly, forcible military intervention is only used to secure the conditions for other types of aid, and avoids approaching intervention from an 'all or nothing' mentality of requiring the use of military force before being able to label an action 'humanitarian intervention'. Yet other authors such as Teson describe a continuum of international response to conflict, whereas, "most of the reasons that justify humanitarian intervention are extensions of the general reasons that justify interference with agents in order to help victims of their unjust behavior."<sup>25</sup>

Humanitarian intervention rose to the forefront of scholars', practitioners', and diplomats' concerns around 1999, when Kofi Annan called on the international community to ensure that massive violations of human rights would never again be tolerated.<sup>26</sup> However, the United Nations has repeatedly been stymied in its attempts to intervene in such conflicts due to the voting structure of the Security Council, which must authorize such interventions and is shackled by the veto power that the five permanent members wield. Furthermore, intervention efforts have historically needed two things: backing of the United States and legitimization of the UN Security Council.<sup>27</sup> Somalia is an example of a conflict where both requirements were present,

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<sup>24</sup> Ramsbotham, O. and Woodhouse, T. (1996). *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict: A reconceptualization*. Polity Press: UK. p. 114.

<sup>25</sup> Teson, F. (2003). The liberal case for humanitarian intervention. In Holzgrefe, J.L. and Keohane, R. (2003). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*. (p. 93-129). Cambridge University Press: UK.

<sup>26</sup> Annan, K. (1999). Address to the 54th session of the UN General Assembly. in Holzgrefe, J.L. and Keohane, R. (2003). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*. (p. 233). Cambridge University Press: UK

<sup>27</sup> Ramsbotham, O. and Woodhouse, T. (1996). *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict: A reconceptualization*. (p. 158). Polity Press: UK.

while Syria is an example of one essentially lacking in US support or Security Council authorization for intervention. How concerned countries such as Turkey have reacted to the Syrian conflict despite the lack of international support for intervention will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Turkey's efforts in Somalia and Syria cannot be labeled humanitarian intervention in the classic sense, since the Turkish military has so far not become involved in the conflicts other than to protect the border with Syria or protect the Turkish embassy in Somalia. However, Turkey's efforts in Syria may be called 'interference' as Teson describes it, or may fall under the catch-all of 'non-forcible intervention' that Ramsbotham and Woodhouse advocate; while in Somalia, Turkey's actions are further away from humanitarian intervention and more akin to development aid. Some of the Prime Minister's statements about the Syrian conflict which will be discussed later are interesting because they point to the desire for humanitarian intervention, which Turkey has so far been unwilling or unable to do alone, and unable to convince either the U.S. or Security Council to support. In both situations, Turkey has added another element to its engagement with parties in the conflict: mediation. Turkey has used mediation in interesting ways in Syria, as it mediates between the opposition groups and the international community, and among the opposition groups themselves. In Somalia, Turkey has parlayed its growing relationship with the Somali government to mediate between it and Somaliland. In both contexts, Turkey has maintained that mediation is only a small part of its broader strategy of engagement, development, and relationship-building efforts.

## **2.4 Mediation: definition and practice**

Mediation is a practice of resolving disputes that dates from ancient times. Recently, it has been one of the key pillars of conflict resolution theory and practice. Despite mediation's importance, scholars and practitioners were historically hesitant to

study its variables in detail or even acknowledge that it was susceptible to systematic analysis.<sup>28</sup> Today, mediation is more carefully studied and defined. Bercovitch and Rubin state that a characteristic of mediation is that it "is a voluntary form of intervention. This means the parties retain their control over the outcome (if not always the process) of their dispute, as well as their freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediator's proposals."<sup>29</sup> The same authors define mediation as

a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own efforts, where the disputing parties or their representatives seek the assistance, or accept an offer of help, from an individual, group, state or organization to change, affect or influence their perceptions or behavior, without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law.<sup>30</sup>

This definition is broad but still focuses on the negotiation process, while other definitions encompass other "interactions", such as James Laue's definition of a mediator as assisting "*the parties in their negotiations or other problem-solving interaction*"<sup>31</sup> or Christopher Mitchell's definition of mediation as "*intermediary activity...undertaken by a third party with the primary intention of achieving some compromise settlement of the issues at stake between the parties, or at least ending disruptive conflict behavior*".<sup>32</sup> In their edited volume on multiparty mediation, Crocker, Hampson, and Aall acknowledge that settling upon one definition of mediation

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<sup>28</sup> Bercovitch, J. and Rubin, Z. (1992). *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple approaches to conflict management*. Macmillan Press: Great Britain.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p. 5

<sup>30</sup> Ibid p. 7

<sup>31</sup> Laue, James. (1999). Contributions of the emerging field of Conflict Resolution, in *Approaches to Peace*. As cited in Crocker, Chester; Hampson, Fen Ozler; and Aall, Pamela (eds.). 'Herding cats: Multiparty mediation in a complex world.' United States Institute of Peace: Washington, D.C.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, C.R. (1981). 'The Structure of International Conflict' as cited in Crocker, Chester; Hampson, Fen Ozler; and Aall, Pamela (eds.) (1999). *Herding cats: Multiparty mediation in a complex world*. United States Institute of Peace: Washington, D.C.

is difficult since the practice continually evolves due to changing circumstances.<sup>33</sup> They cite an example of an NGO which uses education, persuasion, and resources to "play a pivotal role in inducing local agencies to implement portions of a peace treaty."<sup>34</sup> Here, we see a range of definitions for mediation focusing on the involvement of a third party but encompassing either actual negotiation processes or simply the interaction or "intermediary activity" of the third party; most importantly, we see the acknowledgment by scholars that mediation is an evolving concept, with the possibility of its definition evolving too. The idea of evolving mediation definitions and strategies is important since, as we will see, Turkey's actions in Somalia and Syria indicate the possibility of a new form of mediation, or at the least, a new way of incorporating mediating activities into a broader strategy of interference in violent conflicts.

Another aspect of mediation that must be considered is its ethics. When a mediator intervenes, it is in the interest of achieving a particular outcome. Depending on the level of involvement, ranging from simply providing good offices to choosing the parties and issues up for mediation, the mediator may have significant influence on the conflict dynamics. In some cases, mediation may prolong a conflict or focus the parties on achieving a certain outcome when another outcome may actually be in their best interests.<sup>35</sup> In his seminal paper on Turkey's mediation efforts, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu identifies impartiality as an ethical duty of a mediator, who should be the "defender of shared values" in the process.<sup>36</sup> He further identifies honesty in dealings with both parties, neutrality, and objectivity as important ethical considerations in mediation.

Another important factor is the type of mediator. Mediators may be biased, which is to say that they have a stake in the conflict and are closer to one side than the

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<sup>33</sup> Crocker, Chester; Hampson, Fen Ozler; and Aall, Pamela (eds.) (1999). *Herding cats: Multiparty mediation in a complex world*. United States Institute of Peace: Washington, D.C.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* p. 9

<sup>35</sup> Webb, K. (1988). 'The morality of mediation' in Mitchell, C.R. and Webb, K. (eds.) *New approaches to International Mediation*. Greenword Press: New York.

<sup>36</sup> Davutoğlu, A. (2013). *Turkey's Mediation: Critical reflections from the field*. *Center for Strategic Studies vision paper*. Retrieved on 20 July 2014

other, or they may be impartial, which means they are neutral parties in the conflict and can provide a balanced perspective.<sup>37</sup> A slew of research indicates that mediators must be impartial or neutral in order to mediate effectively; one of the most well-known researchers to espouse this idea is Bercovitch, who reiterated it once again recently.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, some researchers acknowledge that interested or biased mediators can also be effective under the right circumstances.<sup>39</sup> This perspective has been gaining traction in recent research; for example, Wing claims that mediator bias is a natural characteristic which should not be discredited, while several other researchers emphasize that biased mediators have the capacity to bring about successful agreements.<sup>40</sup> Beardsley qualifies that biased mediators can be effective under certain conditions, such as when one party faces resistance from their constituents and can show the biased mediator as someone more likely to help them reach a favorable agreement.<sup>41</sup> One other quality of the mediator should be mentioned, which is the type

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<sup>37</sup> Carnevale, Peter and Arad, Sharon. (1996). Bias and impartiality in international mediation in *Resolving International Conflicts: The theory and practice of mediation*. Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.). Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder.

<sup>38</sup> Stulberg, J.B. (1987). *Taking Charge: Managing Conflict* Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath.; see also Carnevale, P.J. and Pruitt, D.G. (1992). *Negotiation and Mediation Annual Review of Psychology* 43 (p. 531-582) see also Bercovitch, J. and Gartner, S. (2009). Is there method in the madness of mediation? Some lessons for mediators from quantitative studies of mediation in Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds.) *International conflict management: New approaches and findings*. London: Routledge.

<sup>39</sup> Touval, S. (1975). Biased intermediaries: Theoretical and historical considerations. *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1 (p.51-69).

Zartman, W.I. and Touval, S. (1985). International Mediation: Conflict Resolution and Power Politics. *Journal of Social Issues* 41 (p.27-45).

Wehr, P. and Lederach, J.P. (1991). Mediating Conflict in Central America. *Journal of Peace Research* 28 (p.85-98).

<sup>40</sup> Svensson, I. (2009). Guaranteeing Peace: The Credibility of Third-Party Mediators in Civil Wars in Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds) *International Conflict Management: New Approaches and Findings* (p. 115–134). London: Routledge.

Wing, L. (2009). Mediation and Inequality Reconsidered: Bringing the Discussion to the Table. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 26(4) (p. 383-404)

<sup>41</sup> Beardsley, (2010). Pain, pressure, and political cover: Explaining mediation incidence. *Journal of peace research*, 47(4) (p.395-406)

of actor who mediates. Mediation may be undertaken by a variety of actors such as private individuals, scholar/practitioners, formal individuals, regional organizations, transnational organizations, international organizations, small states, or superpowers.<sup>42</sup> Turkey may be considered a small state mediator, in contrast to a superpower mediator. Randa Slim demonstrates that small states' power in the mediation process stems from their good relations with all parties involved, and the fact that they appear sympathetic to the weaker party and non-threatening to the stronger.<sup>43</sup> The ability of small states to mediate in large conflicts has interesting implications for how this research on Turkey's mediation efforts in Syria and Somalia may be more broadly applicable to small state mediation efforts in general.

## **2.5 Turkey's vision of Mediation**

Looking at mediation specifically, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu defined the "fundamental parameters of a mediation process as being (1) confidence building among parties, (2) sustaining a value-based process, (3) laying out a clear vision for the future and (4) providing the necessary diplomatic instruments."<sup>44</sup> During the same speech at a 2011 high-level retreat for members of the UN Security Council held in Istanbul, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu referred to 'diplomacy and mediation as ultimate instruments for peace' and the UN Security Council as the 'backbone' of such instruments along with regional

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<sup>42</sup> Rubin, Jeffrey. (1992). International mediation in context in *Mediation in International Relations*. Bercovitch, J. and Rubin, J. (eds). Macmillan Press: London.

<sup>43</sup> Slim, R. (1992). Small-state mediation in international relations: The Algerian mediation of the Iranian hostage crisis. In *Mediation in International Relations*. Bercovitch, J. and Rubin, J. (eds). Macmillan Press: London.

<sup>44</sup> Boutellis A. and Mikulaschek C. Rapporteurs. (2012). *Strengthening Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation: Istanbul Retreat of the UN Security Council*. New York: International Peace Institute (p. 1)



organizations such as the African Union and the Arab League.<sup>45</sup> These statements clearly lay out Turkey's conception of mediation as a process along with Turkey's vision for those who should engage it: the UN along with the appropriate regional organization.

The Directorate General for Policy Planning of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ufuk Gezer, outlined four important points about Turkey's mediation strategy and why Turkey believes itself to be a good mediator:

1. Turkey considers itself as an 'insider mediator' because it is generally directly or indirectly affected by the conflicts in which it attempts to mediate.
2. The human ties between Turkey and the countries in which it mediates give it an innate understanding of the conflict.
3. Conflicts today are increasingly within rather than between states, making them even more difficult to understand for outsiders (and consequently, making Turkey's 'insider' position even more valuable).
4. Mediation is not a one-off event. It takes long-term commitment, which Turkey can afford.<sup>46</sup>

Importantly, Turkey's vision of mediation includes much more than just traditional, high-level mediation techniques. Aras (2012) called the concept of foreign policy championed by Ahmet Davutoğlu 'total performance' and stated that 'it aimed to mobilize civil society, universities, NGOs and others behind foreign policy...[ and] had found its most substantial manifestation in Turkey's growing mediation efforts outside its borders.'<sup>47</sup> In other words, a variety of civil society actors is responsible for, and contributes to, Turkey's foreign policy efforts, especially in the area of mediation. Turkey's mediation efforts often benefit from NGOs' activities for humanitarian help and business involvement in infrastructural development in the conflicts in which

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ufuk Gezer, 22 May 2013

<sup>47</sup> Aras, B. (2012). Turkey's Mediation and Friends of Mediation Initiative, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, TEPAV Turkey Policy Brief Series. (p. 2)

Turkey seeks to mediate.<sup>48</sup> Fidan (2013) called these humanitarian and business actors the new instruments of Turkish Foreign Policy makers, stating that ‘Turkey’s soft power comprised among other things, cultural diplomacy, development assistance and mediation services.’<sup>49</sup> Rather than attempting to simply mediate a conflict among top-level leaders, Turkish NGOs and business activity create goodwill which paves the way for the Turkish Foreign Ministry to be perceived as a legitimate actor by many segments of society.

Some observers have questioned whether Turkey is seeking to develop a new form of mediation, perhaps one less beholden to the traditional Western definition and expectations. These observers point to the fact that Turkey rarely conducts traditional mediation in isolation of other efforts such as development and humanitarian aid, as we will see in the discussion about Somalia. The insistence on combining mediation with these other development activities might be a sign that Turkey is moving away from the traditional Western conception of an impartial mediator towards its own definition, one that includes direct assistance to the parties in need throughout and even before, the mediation process. However, Bülent Aras rejects the idea that Turkey is ‘departing from the Western course of mediation’. As he explains "There is this notion of ‘Western’ liberal values and democracy in the genesis of Turkish policy. India may do it (move away from Western influence) since they have a legacy of anti-colonialism. They do not have any long-term alliance with the West. Brazil, South Africa and China may all be in a similar position, but Turkey has not placed itself historically, culturally or ideologically, as anti-Western. There is an intrinsic West in Turkey’s policy framework."<sup>50</sup> At the same time, he acknowledges that:

The UN Guidelines for Effective Mediation is not in of itself sufficient in dealing with the new challenges of an era of global turmoil. There is a need for a wider plurality of perspectives. The broad international acceptance of Turkey’s mediation framework and the transformation of the current mediation practices

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid p.3

<sup>49</sup> Fidan, H. (2013). *A Work in Progress: The New Turkish Foreign Policy*, The Middle East Policy Council. (p. 92)

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Bulent Aras May 24, 2013

and structures of the UN will be a long and difficult process. Turkey's main challenge in this regard will be in dealing with resistance from entrenched mediation mechanisms, structures and actors.<sup>51</sup>

Turkey has had some issues to resolve in order to be perceived as a more effective mediator. Internal problems, such as the lack of resolution regarding the Kurdish conflict and poor relations with neighbors, such as with Israel and Armenia, threatened Turkey's legitimacy as a mediator.<sup>52</sup> However, Turkey has made mediation a central platform of its foreign policy agenda, founding the Mediation and Friends of Mediation initiative with the government of Finland; hosting the first, second, and third Istanbul Conferences on Mediation, and pushing for the United Nations and regional organizations to use mediation more effectively for intervention in violent conflicts. Turkey takes the opportunity to mediate when it can, but as its actions in Somalia and Syria demonstrate, mediation is not a one-off process but part of a broader effort at engagement, humanitarian and development aid, political dialogue, economic investment, and other methods that engage all levels of society.

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<sup>51</sup> Aras, B. (2012). Turkey's Mediation and Friends of Mediation Initiative, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, TEPAV Turkey Policy Brief Series (p.6)

<sup>52</sup> Bayer, R and Keyman E.F. (2012). Turkey: An Emerging Hub of Globalization and Internationalist Humanitarian Actor?' Globalizations (p.37-41)

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Comparative case study**

Since my goal is to describe Turkey's actions in Somalia and Syria, and specifically, instances of mediation, then compare the two cases to discover some indications of Turkish mediation capability and soft power, my research method is the comparative case study. I define the case study according to Yin as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."<sup>53</sup> I approach both cases holistically, examining them in depth but not breaking up my analysis into smaller embedded units. Several scholars have argued that comparative case studies, sometimes called multiple case studies, can allow for stronger analysis and make a start toward replicating the results of the case study for wider

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<sup>53</sup> Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (p. 13) Sage: London.

validity.<sup>54</sup> Rather than simply focusing on one of the two cases, I have chosen both in order to see Turkish actions in two contrasting conflicts.

I selected the cases of Turkish involvement in Syria and Somalia in order to examine contrasting cases, sometimes called least similar cases. According to Yin, deliberately selecting contrasting cases and analyzing how the contrasts lead to different results in a predictable manner strengthens the external validity of the study and is a start toward theoretical replication.<sup>55</sup> Though there are some similarities to the two conflicts; most importantly, the fact that both are protracted social conflicts, there are far more differences which will become clear in the subsequent analysis of each conflict through Wehr's conflict map. One key difference is the motivation for Turkey's involvement in the conflicts: while Turkey purposefully became active in Somalia in order to establish a foothold in Africa for economic development and trade, and display the success of Turkish soft power in the region, Turkey was practically forced to become involved in the Syrian conflict due to its 900 kilometer border and the shared cultural, familial, and economic connections between the border cities. Notably, in both conflicts Turkey was also motivated to prevent civilian deaths. Another important difference is that violence in the Syrian conflict is escalating while it is de-escalating in Somalia, meaning that Turkish involvement in Somalia can be more robust and involve a wider variety of actors than in Syria, where Turkey is necessarily limited due to the violence. Turkey's history with the two countries is also different; while Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire until after World War I, Somalia was never part of the Ottoman Empire, though it did receive assistance from the Ottomans as will be described in detail in the subsequent chapter.

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<sup>54</sup> Verschuren P.J.M. (2003). Case Study as a research strategy: some ambiguities and opportunities, *Int. J. Social Research Methodology* Vol.6 No.2 Routledge Taylors Francis Group (p.121-139) and Yin, Robert. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Sage: London.

<sup>55</sup> Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Sage: London.

### 3.2 The case study's unique suitability for researching contemporary conflict

A case study is primarily (but not always exclusively) concerned with qualitative methods. The strength of qualitative methods is their ability to take the researcher on a search for meaning and allow for greater flexibility in pursuing evidence. For case study researchers in particular, all evidence is of value, but determining its worth and trustworthiness is of utmost importance. Gillham identifies five types of research that qualitative methods allow for; several of them are particularly relevant to this thesis:

1. To carry out an investigation where other methods- such as experiments- are either not practicable or not ethically justifiable.
2. To investigate situations where little is known about what is there or what is going on. More formal research may come later.
3. To explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more 'controlled' approaches.
4. To 'get under the skin' of a group or organization to find out what really happens - the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside.
5. To carry out research into the processes leading to results... rather than into the 'significance' of the results themselves.<sup>56</sup>

This method is particularly salient to investigation of an ongoing conflict, when the facts change from day-to-day and the cast of actors is constantly in flux. In this case, conducting an experiment or approaching the conflict with a more 'controlled' method in order to illuminate Turkey's intervention strategy would be impossible due to the confidential nature of the ongoing intervention efforts. Gillham's second point is especially relevant, since very little is currently known about the Syrian conflict beyond what is reported in the mainstream and social media networks. More formal research can be conducted in the future after the conflict de-escalates and researchers have access to more reliable data. Yin agrees that the case study methodology is "preferred in

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<sup>56</sup> Gillham B. (2000) Case Study Research Methods. Continuum International Publishing: London.

examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated."<sup>57</sup>

According to Gillham 'the case study researcher, working inductively from what's there in the research setting develops grounded theory: theory that is grounded in the evidence that is turned up.' In other words, case study research necessitates gathering evidence and examining it closely before attempting to impose a theory or draw conclusions. Even after the researcher reaches a theory, she should be constantly willing to revise or rethink the theory based on new evidence. Thus, I first conducted research on the Syria and Somalia conflicts and resulting Turkish intervention before attempting to look at Turkish Foreign Policy more broadly and draw conclusions about Turkey's general intervention strategy from the two cases. Throughout the research and writing process I constantly questioned my conclusions, which was especially important given the evolving nature of the conflict and new evidence that continually comes to light. In 2003 Verschuren specified that this type of research followed an iterative-parallel research strategy whereby the researcher "carries out many different research activities in an unplanned, whimsical order" and where "what is found in a later stage of the research is used to reshape earlier stages of the research project."<sup>58</sup> For example the information I gained from my elite interviews was used to formulate my research questions and led me to gather additional evidence.

### **3.3 Evidence**

I gathered evidence from a variety of sources, including primary sources such as news articles, first-hand accounts, speeches, press releases and conference discussions;

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<sup>57</sup> Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (p.9). Sage: London.

<sup>58</sup> Verschuren P.J.M. (2003) *Case Study as a research strategy: some ambiguities and opportunities*, *Int. J. Social Research Methodology* Vol.6 No.2 Routledge Taylors Francis Group (p.121-139)

secondary sources such as books, published academic articles, unpublished reports and second-hand accounts and interviews. Interviews can be a difficult source of information because people can be sincere and willing to help, but mistaken, or they can actively seek to deceive the interviewer. For this reason, triangulation or gathering evidence from a variety of different sources and finding different perspectives was an important part of my research process. I utilized four open-ended, face-to-face, elite interviews to gather data from key informants. Woodside (2010) defined key informants as "persons with special knowledge or are members of a specific sub-population of immense interest to the researcher or strategist."<sup>59</sup> A strength of face-to-face interviews is the ability to clarify questions, ask follow-up questions and gain a richness and depth to the information. According to Gillham, elite interviews are those conducted with people in a position of authority and have a few special characteristics, several of which are relevant to this research:

1. They will know more about the topic and the setting than you do: to a large extent they can tell you what questions you should be asking, what you need to know.
2. By virtue of their authority and experience they will have their own structuring of their knowledge. They will not tamely submit to being interviewed where you direct a series of questions at them.
3. The best you can hope for is that you will raise topics that they will respond to.
4. They will expect to have some control over what you do, and will usually demand a level of accountability and reporting back. If you can accept that, they, in return, can be important 'facilitators'.<sup>60</sup>

Other sources term this type of interview a 'long interview'. Woodside (2010) listed several characteristics of long interviews, which include interviewing the respondent in his/her life space for a period of several hours, asking open-ended

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<sup>59</sup> Woodside, A. (2010). Case study research: theory, methods, and practice. Emerald Group Publishing Limited; UK.

<sup>60</sup> Gillham B. (2000) Case Study Research Methods. Continuum International Publishing: London.



questions, recording responses, verifying responses by triangulation of research methods, and developing thick descriptions of individual cases.<sup>61</sup>

Most of these specifications were followed in my interviews, although all but one interview was less than two hours. The interviews occurred in the 'life space' of my interviewees. Bülent Aras was interviewed in the Istanbul Policy Center where he frequently works and lectures, Hugh Pope was interviewed in his office at the International Crisis Group, Ufuk Gezer was interviewed in his office at the Turkish Foreign Ministry and Ertuğral Apakan was interviewed in his office at Yaşar University. Most questions were open-ended and allowed the interviewees to explain their answers in detail. All interviews were tape recorded. Since interviews were only a small fraction of my research I was able to find data from a variety of sources, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. In particular, Hugh Pope from International Crisis Group provided a much different perspective than Bülent Aras and Ufuk Gezer, who both work for the Turkish Government, while Ertuğral Apakan was the most reluctant to speak, perhaps reflecting his background as a diplomat.

### **3.4 Benefits and Criticisms**

Many researchers have catalogued the criticisms of the case study method in an effort to disprove them. Verschuren (2003) pointed out that the most frequent criticisms of the case study method are the following: a) its ability to easily lead to researcher bias due to the researcher's close involvement with the research methods (such as open interviews), b) its internal validity and c) its low generalizability since only one or two

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<sup>61</sup> Woodside, A. (2010). Case study research: theory, methods, and practice. Emerald Group Publishing Limited; UK.

cases are studied.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps the most adamant criticism comes from Tight when he stated that the case study is "a convenient label for our research-when we can't think of anything 'better'- in an attempt to give it some added respectability."<sup>63</sup> However these criticisms are from a reductionist viewpoint and do not allow for the unique contributions that case studies, when properly performed, can bring to the subject under study.

Verschuren (2003) also dissected these criticisms by pointing out that a) bias and potential for manipulation of data or results is more dependent on the researcher than the research method b) each method carries the risk of being manipulated by a skilled researcher, c) internal validity can be strengthened in the case study method by using triangulation or gathering evidence from multiple perspectives and a variety of sources, d) a case study is by nature a holistic look at a single case or comparison of multiple cases which does not seek to reduce research units into observation units.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, larger units of complexity lend themselves more easily to comparison than smaller units and variables. For example, I examine Turkish intervention efforts in Syria and Somalia not by breaking up each intervention into a separate observation unit and attempting to quantitatively analyze each move made by the Turkish interveners, but by approaching the entire case of the conflict in each country and subsequent Turkish interventions as a whole. This approach allows me to investigate the relationship between Turkish moves and subsequent changes in the conflict environment: it emphasizes the process of intervention as whole rather than discreet occurrences.

Ultimately, this comparative case study serves two aims. It describes Turkey's ongoing involvement in Somalia and Syria in more detail and takes this description further by comparing these specific cases to gain insight into Turkey's overall intervention strategy, specifically mediation. Tight's (2010) criticism mentioned above

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<sup>62</sup> Verschuren P.J.M. (2003) Case Study as a research strategy: some ambiguities and opportunities, *Int. J. Social Research Methodology* Vol.6 No.2 Routledge Taylors Francis Group (p.121-139)

<sup>63</sup> Verschuren P.J.M. (2003) Case Study as a research strategy: some ambiguities and opportunities, *Int. J. Social Research Methodology* Vol.6 No.2 Routledge Taylors Francis Group (p.121-139)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*

does not leave room for the possibility that a case study is sometimes the only way to describe situations of significance to the academic community (by providing an outlet for initial research into ongoing conflicts, for example) and gives the researcher the opportunity to explore one or at most, a few cases in depth and holistically, without being bound by smaller units of analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SOMALIA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Somalia was among the African countries to receive Turkey's first aid package in 1985, and is now a centerpiece of Turkey's foreign aid program and a demonstration of the effectiveness of its soft power. Providing aid to Somalia fits neatly within Turkey's stated policy of focusing aid on countries that have requested it, and in sectors that meet the basic needs of people, such as water, health, sanitation, and infrastructure. The following sections will discuss the conflict in Somalia and provide a comprehensive overview of Turkey's involvement in the country. After this discussion, we are better placed to analyze how Turkey's work in Somalia fits into its broader strategy of humanitarian intervention and mediation, and why Somalia provides a

particularly good example of how Turkey can use its soft power, development aid, and mediation capacity to positively influence regional conflicts.

## 4.2 Conflict history

Somalia's problems are generally traced only as far back as 1991, when General Mohammed Siyad Barre, who led Somalia since 1969, was overthrown by rebels. This does mark an important turning point for the nation, but is not sufficient to understand Somalia's background of chaos and conflict. To gain a clearer picture of the country and people, we should look at its colonization and the origins of its many factions. The people of Somalia were historically divided into pastoralist clans, which were further subdivided into small divisions and scattered throughout the country in nomadic groups.<sup>65</sup> The two main ethnic groups were the Samale and Sab: the former divided further into the large clan-families Dir, Isaq, Hawiye and Darod which were all primarily pastoral nomads.<sup>66</sup> The Sab people were less numerous and had two main divisions, the Digil and Rahanweyn, both cultivators rather than nomads.<sup>67</sup> In addition to those groups there were smaller ethnic communities such as Arab and Asian immigrants.

Within those clan-families, smaller clans formed political units loosely led by elders who had very little power: the Somali people were extremely democratic almost to the point of anarchy.<sup>68</sup> Within clans there were even smaller groups called diya-

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<sup>65</sup> Lewis, I.M. (2002) *Modern History of the Somali: Revised Edition* (p.27). Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid* p.6

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid* pp.5-6

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid* p.10

paying groups, whose members willingly entered into alliance with each other to pay and receive compensation for any wrongs committed by or against the group.<sup>69</sup>

Somalia's historic background of warring clans with very little internal governance contributed to the brutality of the 1990's and 2000's, when rival militias consisting of clan members would vie for control of the country. The foreign nature of centralized government would also contribute to the difficulty that the international community faced when attempting to install a transitional national government in 2000. The region has a history of violence. In the mid-1500's Somali nomads attacked Christian Abyssinians living in the same region and received help from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>70</sup> This marks the starting point of Turkish presence in the region: in 1557 the Ottomans briefly occupied what is now Eritrea but were unable to extend their territory.<sup>71</sup> The Ottomans re-appeared in the region again in 1866 when Egypt attempted to revive claims to the Red Sea Coast, including the Somali Coast.<sup>72</sup> At same time, Britain, France and Italy began to compete for colonization of the region including Somalia. Britain formally entered Somalia in 1884 in an attempt to establish order in the country to ensure safe trade routes, since Somalis were seen as incapable of establishing order themselves.<sup>73</sup> Ethiopia also claimed Somali-inhabited territories and ruled over Western Somalia from 1887-1897. The Ethiopians were unable to administer their territory as effectively as the Europeans and thus the first Somali resistance to colonization was against them. The resulting 'Dervish Wars' which lasted from 1900-1920 against Ethiopian, British and Italian colonizers left the country with depleted foreign funds and crumbling infrastructure.<sup>74</sup> The Dervish Wars did not result in Somali independence and the region remained colonized or 'administrated' in some form until

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid pp.10-11

<sup>70</sup> Ibid pp.25-26

<sup>71</sup> Ibid p.27

<sup>72</sup> Ibid pp.41-42

<sup>73</sup> Ibid p.45

<sup>74</sup> Lewis, I.M. (2002) *Modern History of the Somali: Revised Edition*. Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press

1960, when the British and Italian administrated regions combined to form independent Somalia.

Now that the Northern and Southern parts of Somalia were united the government was faced with how to address the other Somali territories which were occupied by Kenya and Ethiopia. Fighting broke out between Somalia and the two neighboring countries in 1960 but relations began to improve by 1969, which was also the year when fraud and a poorly structured voting system left Somalia with a one-party government.

The military, becoming increasingly irrelevant due to the emerging peace, along with intellectuals and the police, was dissatisfied with the election results and the increasing authoritarianism and corruption of the government led by President Igal. Catalyzed by the President's murder, a group of army officers staged a coup during talks to appoint a new President in October 1969.<sup>75</sup> The military established a Supreme Revolutionary Council and renamed the state the Somali Democratic Republic, promising to work toward unification with the other ethnic Somali territories. Its President was General Muhammad Siyad Barre. War eventually erupted with Somalia and Ethiopian-controlled Somali territory, which led to the Barre Government issuing large amounts of arms to the civilian population.<sup>76</sup> It also brought roughly 700,000 refugees to the small country, causing friction with some of the clans and destabilizing the Northern region.<sup>77</sup>

The Barre Regime manipulated kinship relations for its own benefit and randomly imprisoned government officials if the President believed that they were gaining too much power.<sup>78</sup> The regime eventually ceased to function effectively while the economy never improved from its reliance on foreign aid and paltry livestock exports. Clans began to fight one another while the Barre Regime distributed money

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp.205-206.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid p.239

<sup>77</sup> Ibid pp.247-248

<sup>78</sup> Ibid pp. 249-250

and arms to mobilize clan groups that still remained friendly to the government.<sup>79</sup> By 1990 foreign aid had dried up due to pressure from human rights groups monitoring the oppression in Somalia and the economy was ruined: opposition to the Barre Regime was at its peak. President Barre was finally driven from Mogadishu in January 1991 by a coalition called the United Somali Congress led by a former army officer.<sup>80</sup> Somalia descended into civil war as clans vied for control of the country, facilitated by the weapons that Barre had distributed and those provided by Ethiopia. In the South, peaceful cultivators were forced to flee the violent militias, leading to waves of migration and starvation.<sup>81</sup> The North was more peaceful than the South: in 1991 Somaliland officially declared its independence from Somalia though it remains unrecognized internationally. The International Community began to show interest in Somalia in 1992 but could not deliver aid without dealing with hostile militias. Therefore, the United Nations authorized the deployment of 50 observers to Mogadishu in April 1992.<sup>82</sup>

The U.N. needed U.S. support to intervene effectively. President George H.W. Bush agreed and subsequently in December 1992, UN Resolution 794 authorized a humanitarian operation in Somalia without receiving an invitation to intervene from any of the parties in the conflict. 33,000 UNITAF personnel participated in ‘Operation Restore Hope’ which combined with the previous UNISOM force. The UN attempted to form a Transitional National Council but it was not accepted by all the factions in Mogadishu and the surrounding areas.<sup>83</sup> By June 1993 UN forces in Mogadishu commanded by Admiral Howe were in all-out war with a militia led by the war lord ‘Aideed’.<sup>84</sup> The resulting violence has been forever etched on Western minds and in history due to the fateful ‘Black Hawk Down’ mission which culminated in the deaths

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid p.261

<sup>80</sup> Ibid pp.262-263

<sup>81</sup> Ibid p.264

<sup>82</sup> Ibid p.267

<sup>83</sup> Ibid p.271

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

of 18 American soldiers and effectively crushed international will for intervention. Thanks to the significant media attention the deaths garnered and the sense of outrage that ensued, Western nations who were already anxious to cut and run from the continent and its seemingly intractable problems were given the perfect opportunity to reduce their commitment in Somalia and the entire continent until they were an almost non-existent presence, which remained the case for over two decades.

In the aftermath of "Black Hawk Down," the UN hastily attempted to create any kind of government that they could but withdrew without success in March 1995.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the collapse of the government and its failure to provide basic social services encouraged the growth of Islamic facilities and strengthened the fundamentalist trends in society.<sup>86</sup> In 2000 the UN again attempted to establish a Transitional National Government (TNG) by hosting a conference in Arta but it was not very successful. The newly established government could barely control Mogadishu, much less the rest of the country. Many of its leaders were illiterate and after two years its main achievement was forming a clan-based militia.<sup>87</sup> Education lost its value in Somali society because the only way to get ahead was the use of force. However, the UN continued to claim the TNG as a legitimate government internationally in order to bolster its own state building credentials.<sup>88</sup>

In 2004 another Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established in Nairobi but once again failed to gain widespread support. Instead, it generated fierce opposition in Mogadishu where the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and its militant youth wing, the Al-Shabaab began to carry out acts of violence against the TFG and its supporters in 2006. In response to the prospect of Islamic terrorist groups gaining further momentum in Somalia, the United States mobilized Somali militias to counteract the extremists, with CIA backing. Perceived foreign intervention enraged various parties in the conflict such as clan leaders, the business community, and the ICU. This resulted in the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts (SCIC) gaining control of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid p.275

<sup>86</sup> Ibid p.299

<sup>87</sup> Ibid p.301

<sup>88</sup> Ibid p.301



Mogadishu. The SCIC ruled with an increasingly authoritarian and extremist nature, eventually banning things such as music, political gatherings, and foreign films. It became clear that the Shabaab were the ones in power in the organization, and their hostile rhetoric toward Kenya and Ethiopia began to threaten regional stability. Thus, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006 and gained control of Mogadishu, returning it to the TFG. However, the Shabaab mounted resistance with support from foreign jihadists, including al-Qaeda. They were able to capture most of Southern Somalia but not the capital. Ethiopia's occupation of Mogadishu for over two years also coincided with a dark period of human rights violations including arrests, torture, rape, and general violence. Finally Ethiopia withdrew its troops in January 2009 after having failed to secure popular support for the TFG. After Ethiopia's withdrawal the Djibouti branch of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia joined with the TFG to form a unity government which elected a former SCIC leader, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, to the presidency and was dependent on AMISOM forces to maintain security.

### **4.3 Conflict context**

The period between 2009 and 2011 really set the stage for Turkey's involvement in Somalia today. The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in 2009 meant that Somali insurgents who were once united against Ethiopia now turned on themselves, creating chaos. By May 2009, the TFG controlled only a small slice of Mogadishu and were struggling to maintain their tenuous hold on it. The mindset of the population and TFG was completely opposed, as politicians and elders in central Somalia called on the international community to stop meddling in Somalia's internal problems, and the Islamic Council accused the West of fueling hostility to prevent the formation of a stable country. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of the TFG wrote an op-ed asking for more international support. The U.S. and UK agreed to intervene in 2010 due to the presence of Al-Qaeda in Somalia, and called the African Union's efforts there a failure when they failed to send the 8,000 peacekeepers they had originally pledged. Turkey's involvement

with Somalia really began in 2009 when it pledged to support Somalia security forces. Then, in 2010 it hosted an international conference on Somalia to discuss aid.

Meanwhile, the UN attempted to move back to Mogadishu in August 2010, but could not do it due to the ongoing violence. Later in April 2011, the Somali Prime Minister asked the UN to move back, but they still refused. During the same month, 90 Ugandan soldiers were killed in Mogadishu. However, by July 2011 the UN had resumed food aid to Somalia due to the famine crisis. At the height of the famine, 3.2 million Somalis were desperate for food, but insurgents prevented it from reaching them. In August 2011 the TFG partnered with moderate Islamic militias and AMISOM troops to rid the capital of Al-Shabaab insurgents. During the same month, Prime Minister Erdoğan made his seminal trip to Mogadishu and jump-started Turkey's involvement in the country. Just one month later, Turkey announced that it had collected \$26 million in aid for Somalia. In November 2011, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia all agreed to combine forces in an effort to fight Al-Shabaab.

## **4.4 Conflict parties**

### **4.4.1 Primary**

The Al-Shabaab radical Islamist militia (aligned to al-Qaeda) is a consequence of Somalia's brutal history and failing of traditional political institutions. The SCIC destroyed organizations and processes in Somalia that traditionally maintained the last shred of social order, such as civil society organizations and neighborhood watch programs, leaving the Shabaab to take their place. They evolved out of the youth wing of the Union of Islamic Courts which was active in 2006 in Mogadishu and are mainly composed of youth who grew up during the turbulent 1990's when violence and force overtook education as the means of achieving success in society. When Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2009 and drove the ICU out of Mogadishu, the international

community convinced several of its leaders to switch alliances and join the TFG. The second president of the Transitional Federal Government, Sharif Ahmed, was once connected to the ICU and his election seems to have catalyzed the Shabaab into fierce opposition against the government.<sup>89</sup> This period was really the peak of Al-Shabaab's power; internal divisions, a backlash against its brutality, and the poor handling of the 2011 famine all contributed to its waning influence.<sup>90</sup> Today, Al-Shabaab is losing territory due to an AMISOM push in Spring 2014 to liberate wider areas of Somalia from their grasp, but they are by no means defeated. According to International Crisis Group, the most likely scenario for the group's future is that

its armed units will retreat to smaller, remote and rural enclaves, exploiting entrenched and ever-changing clan-based competition; at the same time, other groups of radicalised and well-trained individuals will continue to carry out assassinations and terrorist attacks in urban areas, including increasingly in neighbouring countries, especially Kenya.<sup>91</sup>

Al-Shabaab is still very much a threat to Somalia and the region. The group's ability to adapt and change tactics along with the Somali people's inclination toward a very conservative interpretation of Sunni Islam are other factors in the group's favor. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab have thrived thus far thanks to a combination of the same core leadership group virtually since its founding, consistent declared objectives, and the ability its local presence has given it to become adept at grassroots political governance, especially at harnessing the clan rivalries to its advantage.<sup>92</sup> It has been led since 2005 by an emir, Ahmed Abdi "Godane," who managed to hold onto power despite internal divisions and who made the decision to formally declare alliance with Al-Qaeda in 2012 (Godane was killed by a U.S. airstrike in September 2014). Despite Al-Shabaab's decade of attacks in Somalia, it was perhaps the September 2013 attack on the Westgate

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<sup>89</sup> Al Jazeera. (2011). Who are Al-Shabaab.

<sup>90</sup> Menkhaus, K. (2014). Al-Shabaab's capabilities post-Westgate. CTC Sentinel Special Issue.

<sup>91</sup> International Crisis Group Policy Briefing. (2014). Somalia: Al-Shabaab - it will be a long war.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Mall in Nairobi which killed nearly 70 people that brought them the most international attention. Also since 2013, the group has acted more as a spoiler, utilizing tactics such as suicide bombings and grenades to prevent stability from taking hold in Somalia while endangering fewer fighters.<sup>93</sup> The Crisis Group points out that Al-Shabaab taps into a more long-term trend toward conservatism in Somali society that will be hard to reverse, and though it is considered a problem by parts of Somali society, it is considered the solution by others. The benefits it offers certain segments of society include "mediating local clan disputes, improving religious education, providing basic services and institutionalising consultative bodies for local governance arrangements."<sup>94</sup> In order to counter these advantages, the Somali Federal Government and its supporters will have to work on the grassroots level too.

The Federal Government of Somalia was established in August 2012 and is the first non-transitional government in Somalia since 1991. It continues to suffer from the same problems as the former Transitional Federal Government; some of its largest problems in addition to a lack of widespread legitimacy are how to structure parliament and how federalism will take root in Somalia, as reflected in the Transitional Federal Charter. The government is led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon. The TFG was originally led by President Abdullahi Yusuf who established the government in Mogadishu and paved the way for the second president, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to complete the constitution and begin to transition the country to a federalist system. When the TFG's charter ran out in 2012 and their second request for an extension was denied, the Federal Government was established. According to a Somali news source, despite widespread belief that the elections for the new government were corrupt, people were ready for leadership:

‘President Hassan Mohamoud was brought to power in a dubious and corrupt parliamentary election. It was an open secret that parliament members were bribed into electing the candidates for Somali presidency. Professor Ahmed Samatar (2013) of Minnesota, a parliament member and a presidential candidate

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<sup>93</sup> Menkhaus, K. (2014). Al-Shabaab's capabilities post-Westgate. CTC Sentinel Special Issue.

<sup>94</sup> International Crisis Group Policy Briefing. (2014). Somalia: Al-Shabaab - it will be a long war. (p. 20).

repeatedly testified that the MPs were given cash to vote for the candidates. It just so happened that President Mohamoud had deeper pockets. In spite of the corruption and the open dishonesty of the election process, Somalis were ready and desperate for a change. Everywhere, Somalis were jubilant and celebrated for this supposed “new era.”<sup>95</sup>

President Mohamoud's administration has faced swift criticism of exacerbating tribal divisions and tensions between the regions surrounding Somalia. A Somali think tank states that the government's intentions seem good, but its first 100 days shows a "mixed record characterized by a jarring imbalance between foreign and domestic policy priorities, slow response to economic and political crises, immodesty in rhetoric and, above all, an unhealthy imbalance between the presidency and the cabinet."<sup>96</sup> It is still too early to determine whether the Federal Government will succeed in gathering support and continuing the country's path to stability. Somalia's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jamal Mohamed Barrow, identified six areas of Somalia's development policy:

1. Establish effective government structures and facilitate disarmament. The Judiciary is reviewing existing laws, training judges to respond to contemporary needs while utilizing mechanisms of traditional justice including Sharia law. The aim is for accountable, transparent institutions.
2. Economic reform. The government's goals are vocational development, recovery of family income, focusing on women's labor, and applying the principles of the free market.
3. Peacebuilding. The government's goal is social reconciliation through bridges of trust. Dialogue centers to facilitate social reconciliation are being established at local and national levels. Mediation will occur at the grassroots level with government playing the mediating role to reconcile between clans; the goal is to empower traditional leaders to facilitate the healing process.

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<sup>95</sup> Lang D. (2013). Why Obsess over Somaliland in Faynuusi ( Commentary, Reflections and Ethics).

<sup>96</sup> HIPS Policy Briefing Issue. (2013). Reviewing the Somali Government's First 100 Days.

4. Service delivery. The government recognizes service delivery as a vital part of reconciliation. Health, education, water, and sanitation services are vital for all citizens.
5. International relations. Good relations with the international community can support recovery and the reconciliation process. The government is working to build diplomatic relations and believes that the African Union should be free of conflict.
6. Unity & integrity. The government's largest challenge is integration of people which comes through trust-building in society.<sup>97</sup>

Turkey has a unique role to play in helping Somalia accomplish many, if not all, of these goals.

#### **4.4.2 Secondary parties**

Regional actors such as Ethiopia and Kenya have historically had significant interests in Somalia. Ethiopia is perceived as a potential threat to Somali independence since it colonized part of Somalia in the late 1800's. At the height of Ethiopia's occupation of Mogadishu in 2008 there were over 15,000 troops stationed in the capital, either from the Ethiopian army or Somali troops trained in Ethiopia.<sup>98</sup> Somalia has also been the site of a proxy battle between Ethiopia and Eritrea, where "Eritrea allegedly funds and arms anti-Ethiopian Somali Sufi factions while Ethiopia reportedly arms pro-Somali government militias."<sup>99</sup> Turkey's lack of historic interest in the country has actually been compared favorably to Ethiopia's continual entanglement in Somalia's conflicts. Kenya sent 3,000 troops to Somalia in October 2011 in an effort to secure

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<sup>97</sup> Self attendance at Istanbul Conference on Mediation in 2013.

<sup>98</sup> Bruton, B.E. (2010). *Somalia: A New Approach*. Council on Foreign Relations (p.20). New York, NY, USA

<sup>99</sup> Marima, T. (2011). Kenya's blundering mission in Somalia. *Aljazeera*.

their northern border, where violence was starting to decrease tourism to Kenya and destabilize the region.<sup>100</sup> It was Kenya's first time to go to war or lead a military intervention against another state, so the intervention was a significant decision. Even though the Somali TFG stated that it did not invite Kenya to help in the war against the Shabaab, they decided to support the effort since it provided valuable military training and assistance to their own forces.<sup>101</sup> Al-Shabaab encouraged its members to retaliate violently against Kenya for its involvement.

The African Union has also become a secondary party in the conflict due to its involvement through AMISOM. As Ethiopian troops made substantial inroads in Mogadishu against the ICU and convinced some of its senior leaders to switch alliances to the TFG, AMISOM was established in 2007 and spent the next three years trying to gain control of the capital. Originally given a six month mandate, AMISOM was given new strength in 2009 and basically became Somalia's de facto army. Today, AMISOM is tasked with a broad mission of countering Al Shabaab and other opposition groups; expanding the Federal Government's control over Somalia; supporting the government in establishing security, infrastructure, rule of law, and delivery of basic services; supporting the government in being able to hold free and fair elections by 2016; and facilitating humanitarian assistance in Somalia, including resettlement of IDPs, among other responsibilities.<sup>102</sup> The size of the force is over 22,000 people.<sup>103</sup> Since AMISOM includes Ethiopian and Kenyan troops, some of the federal government's political opponents have stated that "Kenya and Ethiopia, under the cover of AMISOM, have gained a free hand to support sectarian Somali clients to gerrymander the country's future" rather than bolster Somalia to support itself through democratic governance and a capable military.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Taxta, I. and Sheikh A. (2011). Somalia's Al-Shabaab vows huge blast in Kenya in Reuters.

<sup>102</sup> AMISOM Mandate. (n.d.).

<sup>103</sup> AMISOM. Frequently asked questions. (n.d.).

<sup>104</sup> Samatar, A.I. (2014). Defeating Al-Shabaab and dismembering Somalia. *Al Jazeera*.

The United Nations has played an important role in the conflict since the 1990's, as outlined in the historical background. The UN's botched intervention attempts forever altered the political economy of the country by employing members of certain clans as local representatives at higher wages than most Somalis, and by leaving behind massive amounts of scrap metal and materials which a few individuals were able to sell and use to become wealthy war lords.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, the United Nations is actually a key player in the ongoing conflict and in fact, a source of conflict. In November 1992 UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali outlined the options for continuing involvement in Somalia. Maintaining the status quo was not feasible since supplies intended for aid and relief were being hijacked by warring militias. Abandoning the mission entirely was also not seen as an option since,

Apart from the fact that an admission of failure of this magnitude is too costly for a new Secretary- General in his first year in office, it was also unlikely to be acceptable to a United Nations flushed with success in dealing with Iraqi aggression. Moreover, coming on top of a policy of inaction in the former Yugoslavia, it would have called into question the credibility of the organization.

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Thus, the UN's primary motive for being involved in the conflict is revealed; in an effort to avoid having its credibility questioned and the UN's leadership to reveal weakness, the organization entangled itself in one of the messiest and most intractable conflicts in modern history.

#### **4.4.3 Interested third parties**

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<sup>105</sup> Lewis, I.M. (2002). *Modern History of the Somali: Revised Edition*. Athens Ohio, Ohio University Press (p. 276).

<sup>106</sup> Thakur R. (1994). *From Peacekeeping to Peace Enforcement: the UN Operation in Somalia*. *The Journal of Modern Affairs Studies*, 32,3 (p.394). Cambridge University Press



The United States has played a lesser role in the conflict primarily since joining the UN effort in the early 1990's and once again in 2006 when the US believed that Somalia was becoming a breeding ground for radical Islamic terrorists. As Bruton explained, the US is mainly interested in: preventing Somalia from becoming a safe haven for al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, preventing destabilization of the region and resulting large-scale humanitarian disasters, and protecting sea lanes from piracy.<sup>107</sup> CIA support of the TFG and Ethiopian intervention in 2006 was in part responsible for the swift public backlash to the TFG. A series of US strikes against militants in Somalia in 2008 threatened to undermine peace talks between the remnants of the ICU and TFG.<sup>108</sup> The U.S. has recently begun to conduct operations in Somalia again; news reports in early September 2014 indicate that the U.S. conducted a drone strike against Al-Shabaab.<sup>109</sup> Like the UN, the US has historically been a source of conflict in Somalia rather than a mediating presence.

Turkey has become an important interested third party mainly since 2011. The details of Turkey's initial push in Somalia, including Erdoğan's seminal visit to Mogadishu, are described below. Now, it is time for a closer look at Turkey's motivations for involvement. Even though Turkey's intervention was framed in terms of humanitarianism and genuine concern, it also had strategic reasons for choosing to intervene in Somalia. International Crisis Group (ICG) is one of the few organizations that has provided a partial critique of Turkey's actions in Somalia. ICG states that even though Turkey's intervention originated in a humanitarian desire to help the country, its strategic reasons for doing so should not be overlooked. ICG goes on to identify domestic political considerations as a motivating factor for Turkey's intervention, since the AKP's benevolence toward a fellow Muslim country plays well with domestic audiences; and business considerations, due to the increasing trade opportunities that a stable (and grateful) Somalia can bring to Turkish entrepreneurs. Politically, Somalia provides Turkey a chance to exercise its soft power and show the world that Turkey has

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<sup>107</sup> Bruton, B.E. (2010). *Somalia: A New Approach*. Council on Foreign Relations. New York, NY, USA.

<sup>108</sup> US raid 'undermines' Somalia talks (2008). Hiiraan Online ( News and Information about Somalia) Website.

<sup>109</sup> Starr, B. and Nor, O. (2014). US Military conducts operation in Somalia, Pentagon says. CNN.

an important role to play in the region. While Turkey may be forced to intervene in countries still at the messy peak of conflict such as Syria due to its proximity, Somalia was a strategic choice. In 2011 the Transitional Federal Government had UN backing, was on the path toward establishing legitimacy in Mogadishu, and was paving the way for a successful permanent government. The conditions were ripe for Turkey to do what it does best; humanitarian aid, economic development, and civilian capacity building. In fact, Ali (2011) identified Somalia as Turkey's "foundation for its foray into Africa" and a way for Turkey to "pronounce its unique foreign policy orientation, predicated upon its moral authority, not its military or economic clout."<sup>110</sup> Murphy and Sazak (2012) called Somalia "the capstone of Turkish development aid, technical and civilian assistance in Africa."<sup>111</sup> Therefore, Turkey's domestic political considerations and perception as a soft power internationally are tied to Somalia's outcome.

Economically, Somalia provides an opportunity for Turkey to utilize its skilled (and growing) workforce, especially in the construction sector, since Somalia lacks skilled labor after so many decades of violence. Turkey has rebuilt Mogadishu's airport along with hospitals, schools, and other major infrastructure projects, often utilizing companies owned by the "Anatolian tigers," emerging businessmen from central Turkey with ties to the Erdoğan government.<sup>112</sup> For example, Favori LLC, a firm founded by Kardeşler Construction Group and Çetin Group from Turkey, will invest \$10 million to enlarge the Mogadishu International Airport.<sup>113</sup> Turkish medical company Medical Park opened a hospital in Mogadishu in March 2012 with the capacity to treat 600 people daily, costing \$5 million.<sup>114</sup> The economic benefits of Turkey's foray into Africa are already apparent; "Turkey's exports to Africa leapt to \$10.3 billion last year from \$2.1 billion in 2003, with iron and steel, mineral fuels and machinery among the most

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<sup>110</sup> Ali, A. (2011) Turkey's foray into Africa: A new humanitarian power? Insight Turkey. Vol. 13 No. 4 (p. 65-73)

<sup>111</sup> Murphy, T. and Sazak, O. (2012). Turkey's civilian capacity in post-conflict reconstruction. Istanbul Policy Center.

<sup>112</sup> Lough, R. (2012). Insight-Turkey tries out soft power in Somalia in Reuters News Official Website.

<sup>113</sup> Aksam Haber. (2013). Somali'ye Türk firma havalimanı yapacak.

<sup>114</sup> Medical Park'tan Somali'ye 'SHIFA'. (2013). Medical Park's Official Website.

exported items, according to Turkey's Ministry of Economy."<sup>115</sup> Business organizations such as the Turkish-Somali Businessmen Association (SOMTURBAS) and the Turkish-Somali Development Forum have been established. Somalia is a key factor in expanding the horizons for ambitious Turkish firms and providing a gateway to the rest of Africa.

## 4.5 Dynamics

### 4.5.1 Precipitating events

The precipitating events to the conflict between Al-Shabaab and the Somali Federal Government have already been discussed extensively in the Conflict history and Context sections. Now, we should turn our attention to the events that really jump started Turkey's involvement with Somalia. Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan along with his wife, daughter, and more than 200 political, business, and cultural elite arrived in Mogadishu in August 2011.<sup>116</sup> Rather than remaining in the heavily-fortified airport as countless lower-level foreign visitors had done since 1992, Erdoğan and his family ventured into the city and were heavily photographed holding Somali children and speaking with families devastated by the famine and years of war. In doing so, Erdoğan became the first foreign leader in two decades to enter the city.<sup>117</sup> His visit made a huge impression on Somalis, evidenced by their adoration of Erdoğan and the Turks through Erdoğan's pictures and Turkish flags hung about the city, Turkish

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<sup>115</sup> Lough, R. (2012). Insight-Turkey tries out soft power in Somalia in Reuters News Official Website.

<sup>116</sup> Turkish premier urges international community to help Somalia (2011). BBC Monitoring Europe.

<sup>117</sup> Abdirahman A. (2011). Turkey's Foray into Africa: A New Humanitarian Power? Insight Turkey Vol.13 No 4 (p. 66)

music played on radio stations, and countless opinion pieces and other news articles which appeared in the Somali press around the same time.<sup>118</sup> Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated at the time that the visit was largely symbolic, aimed at showing the international community that Mogadishu should no longer be avoided.<sup>119</sup> At the time, Mogadishu was controlled by the Transitional Federal Government along with 9,000 African Union (AMISOM) forces.

#### **4.5.2 Issue emergence, transformation, and proliferation**

The conflict in Somalia is complex; it is not based simply on a lack of resources but on divisions between clans, disparate ideologies, foreign interests and intervention, lack of leadership, and absence of stable institutions. Dr. Ayare Elmi, a Somali academic now working in Qatar, identified several causes of the conflict, including destructive competition over resources and power among the political class; a colonial legacy and 20 years of dictatorship; the presence of unemployed, idle youth; availability of weapons and expensive guns; and elements in the culture that legitimize the use of violence - what he called a culture of violence.<sup>120</sup> Most actors have a zero-sum view of power; believing that if power is obtained by a rival clan or militia (often the same thing), they will be powerless. As Menkhaus explained, Somalis' adaptation to an environment without governance has perhaps become counterproductive, as incentives to stay with the status quo and prevent stable governance grow.<sup>121</sup> The preference for a strong central government or decentralized state depends on the benefits that each will

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Turkish premier urges international community to help Somalia. (2011). BBC Monitoring Europe.

<sup>120</sup> Self attendance at Istanbul Conference on Mediation (2013). Statement by Dr. Ayare Elmi.

<sup>121</sup> Menkhaus, K. (2006/7). Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping. *International Security*. Vol. 31, No. 3, Pages 74-106.

accrue to a particular clan. While some weaker clans want a federal government, those that benefit from the chaos push to maintain it. Meanwhile Islamists reject the idea of a federal government completely. Spoilers have played a particularly large role in the conflict; as Menkhaus stated:

Some spoilers have successfully undermined peace accords to perpetuate armed conflict; others have acted only to undercut local efforts to improve law and order and reduce criminality; still others support peacebuilding and the reduction of crime, but block efforts to revive an effective central government.

The importance of spoilers in Somalia is due to the interest that many actors have in creating peace and rule-of-law locally while also preventing the formation of a functional state.

### **4.5.3 Polarization**

As usual in Turkish politics, polarization has largely occurred between the two dominant parties, AKP and CHP. In February 2014, CHP deputy Osman Koruturk submitted a parliamentary question regarding the government's distribution of foreign aid. Regarding Somalia, he stated, "There are serious doubts about whether the financial aid has been received by Somalia, where accountability of the government is doubtful and where the financial transaction does not work due to the lack of banking and auditing mechanisms and where a corruption scandal took place in 2013."<sup>122</sup> CHP Deputy Chairman Faruk Logoglu submitted a similar question the same month. These questions partially arise due to the fact that Somalia's lack of banking infrastructure meant that Turkish officials gave foreign aid "paid in boxes full of cash to the central bank" rather than through more transparent banking processes.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Today's Zaman. (2014). Opposition quizzes government on Turkey's foreign aid.

<sup>123</sup> Today's Zaman. (2014). CHP submits parliamentary question on Turkish support to Somalia.

#### 4.5.4 Spiraling

Since Turkey's push for Somalia in 2011, the violence in the country has in some ways improved, and in others, digressed. In July 2013, Al-Shabaab attacked an office housing Turkish Embassy staff in Mogadishu, killing three people including one Turk. The explanation for the attack by Turkish officials was interesting, with Prime Minister Erdoğan claiming that the attack was carried out "against the Turkish government. Why? Because we are helping our brothers in Mogadishu."<sup>124</sup> An Istanbul-based academic claimed that the attack was aimed at disrupting Turkey's aid efforts, while another academician stated that Western countries were in fact inciting violence because they are not happy with Turkey's encroachment on their power in the region.<sup>125</sup> A new tactic of targeting Somali political institutions has emerged, as Al-Shabaab attempts to strike at the heart of Somalia's future prospects for stability. Members of Parliament have been a special target, with five Parliamentary representatives being killed so far in 2014.<sup>126</sup> In July, Al-Shabaab attacked both the Presidential Palace and Parliament building.<sup>127</sup>

The humanitarian situation in Somalia also seemed to improve after 2011, when Turkey stepped in to assist Somalis in the face of a terrible famine. However, in Summer 2014 Somalia was again threatened with famine, as reports indicated that "around 203,000 children under the age of five are acutely malnourished while about 2.9 million people need urgent life-saving support" as of August 2014.<sup>128</sup> The UN calls the current situation in Somalia one of "food insecurity and malnutrition" due to the

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<sup>124</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). Turkey's int'l aid efforts, soft power ruffle feathers.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Africa News. (2014). Somalia; UN Special Representative for Somalia Deeply Concerned By Murder of Somali MPs.

<sup>127</sup> Africa News. (2014). Somalia; UN Envoy Condemns Al-Shabaab Attack On Somali Presidential Palace.

<sup>128</sup> UN News service. (2014). World Must Act Now to Avert Repeat of Devastating Famine in Somalia - UN Expert.

ongoing conflict, lower than average rains, increasing food prices, and the inability of aid agencies to deliver assistance in certain parts of the country due to violence.

Finally, the political situation in Somalia has been through ups and downs over the past three years. The Federal Government of Somalia has attempted to establish control over more of the country in order to realize its goal of holding elections by 2016, yet some observers are concerned about the possibility of political fragmentation. Quarrels at the sub-national level caused by regional tensions and clan-based alliances threaten to derail the federalism process. The UN's envoy to Somalia expressed his fears for the country, stating, "I fear that Somalia is approaching a danger zone in a number of areas. Politically, there needs to be urgent progress in establishing the mechanisms to revise and implement the constitution, oversee the establishment of federal states and prepare for elections."<sup>129</sup> Somalia's state-building exercise is not moving as swiftly as expected, and opposition to the President threatens to throw the country back into deadlock. The Somali Compact was completed after consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders in September 2013. It outlines a "strategic framework for coordinating political, security and development efforts for peace and statebuilding activities" from 2014-2016.<sup>130</sup> If the Somali government can maintain momentum in its efforts to implement the Compact, the spiraling violence and precarious humanitarian situation will be remedied.

#### **4.5.5 Stereotyping and mirror imaging**

Al-Shabaab has criticized Turkey's involvement in Somalia, claiming that Turkey wants to import secularism to the country. They believe that Turkey is working for Western countries as a secular spy; that Turkey's aim is to make Somalia a secular country. They are especially critical of people who receive scholarships to study in Turkey. One of the Al-Shabaab leaders said regarding the 400 students who go to

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<sup>129</sup> UN news Service. (2014). Somalia Nearing 'Danger Zone', Warns UN Envoy.

<sup>130</sup> The Somali Compact. (n.d.). (p. 4.)

Turkey with a Diyanet scholarship that "Turkey is feeding their neo-colonial ambitions" with the scholarships. A Shabab Imam claimed that students are being educated in Turkey to become spies and receive a military education. There is also a rumor that Somali girls who study in Turkey cannot wear hijab. These rumors and criticisms are dangerous in a society where most people have limited access to main stream sources of news.

At the same time, it is difficult to hear Somalis themselves say anything negative about Turkey. Since service delivery is a key area of concern in the Somali government's development policy, Turkish efforts in this area are noticeable and benefit a wide segment of society. As one Somali pharmacist stated, "Other governments say they will come but they are not serious. The Turkish government said it would come and it started operating immediately."<sup>131</sup> When asked how fair he considered the International Crisis Group's criticisms of Turkey's interventions in Somalia to be (specifically the criticism that Turkey does not put conditions on the Somali government for the receipt of its aid), Somali academic Dr. Afyare Abdi Elmi replied (paraphrased), "I've seen some of the projects and practically, the infrastructure of Turkish efforts is unparalleled. Turkey has done a great thing. What should Turkey learn? It should expand to the rest of the country *and future interventions*". Clearly, he is so impressed with Turkish efforts in Somalia that he is encouraging Turkey to broaden the scope of its activities throughout the country and possibly, in other post-conflict zones.

Certainly, the former TFG praised Turkey's role in Somalia. Somalia's former Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali said Turkey had "changed the landscape in Somalia." "They are the sponsor we have been looking for the last 20 years. They are the Holy Grail for Somalia," said Ali.<sup>132</sup> Judging by Turkey's presence as a facilitator between Somalia and Somaliland in 2013, the relationship between Turkey and the Federal Government of Somalia seems to be off to a good start. Recently, Somalia's president thanked Turkey for its support, saying "Turkey has shown remarkable support to Somalia during a time where the world seemed to have forgotten about us. The

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<sup>131</sup> Lough, R. (2012). Insight-Turkey tries out soft power in Somalia.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



friendship and support Turkey has shown is something that will be forever cherished."<sup>133</sup>

## **4.6 Conflict regulation potential**

### **4.6.1 Internal limiting factors**

Perhaps the most significant internal limiting factor is the Somali people's desire for stability and an end to the violence. In a hopeful January 2013 article, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton wrote,

A successful military campaign has succeeded in asphyxiating Al Shabaab while, daily, defectors seek to give up violence and find a future in this new Somalia. Piracy in 2012 was 95% down on 2011. Somalis are returning from exile, investing and helping build a new state. Mogadishu, the capital, is bustling. The aroma of coffee has replaced the whiff of cordite. Militias, once the instruments of warlords, are now negotiating their integration into a national army. Regions that had to survive on their own through twenty years of civil war are now engaged in a debate over how they will become part of a federal system.<sup>134</sup>

Over one and a half years later, this assessment still rings true; however, the Somali Federal Government must take steps to hasten the transition to a truly federal nation and consolidate control over wider territory if it hopes to sustain the momentum. If the SFG can bring together the nation, create a truly federal nation, extend the rule of law over a wider stretch of Somali territory, and most importantly, ensure transparency in the governing institutions, then it will prove to be the best internal limiting factor in the conflict. If the Somali National Army is able to take over from AMISOM and truly

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<sup>133</sup> Somali Shabelle Media Network. (2014). Somali president thanks Turkey for "significant" aid contribution.

<sup>134</sup> Joint article by Hassan Sheikh M., President of Somalia, and Catherine A., High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. ( 2013). Brussels.

serve as Somalia's defense force, it will be another significant internal limiting factor. However, AMISOM is still the primary defense for Somalia against Al-Shabaab as the SNA is still not able to operate to the level required to serve as the primary military force. Somalia's private sector could also serve as a long-term stabilizing force by creating the economic conditions conducive to peace. Somalia has many natural resources, including coal, gas, and minerals; the longest coastline in Africa; a strong agricultural sector; and the ability to raise livestock.<sup>135</sup> An interesting internal and external limiting factor is the Somali diaspora. The Somali Federal Government is currently trying to encourage young professionals and businesspeople to return and invest in the country, especially those with knowledge of the ICT and telecommunications sectors.<sup>136</sup> Remittances from the diaspora already constitute a form of aid to the Somali people, but the SFG hopes that as the diaspora returns, the remittances will turn into investment in the country.

#### **4.6.2 External limiting factors**

AMISOM has thus far been the largest external limiting factor in the conflict by acting as the de facto Somali military, routing Al-Shabaab from the capital and slowly from other parts of the country, providing protection to humanitarian workers, and doing a variety of other tasks to improve the country's safety and stability. Their mandate was extended in 2013 by the UN Security Council until 2016, at which time they plan on leaving Somalia.<sup>137</sup> The United States military has also sent a limited number of advisors to Somalia to support the Somali National Army and AMISOM. There are currently around 120 troops in Somalia, and the US military has secretly maintained some troops in the country since 2007.<sup>138</sup> The troops' main goal is to train

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<sup>135</sup> HE Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adam. (2013). *Somalia's Transformation into a Regional and International Actor*. Chatham House.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Lumu, D. (2014). *The New Vision*. African Union mission to leave Somalia in 2016 - envoy.

<sup>138</sup> Africa News. (2014). *Somalia; U.S. Military Acknowledges Presence in Somalia*.

and advise the Somali National Army, rather than conducting combat missions themselves.

#### **4.6.3 Interested or neutral third parties**

Turkey's involvement in Somalia has obviously produced many benefits for Somalis; scholarships given to Somali students to study in Turkey, opening up Mogadishu to the world, assistance in infrastructure development, humanitarian aid, and other tangible benefits. However, Turkey is not without criticism, mainly articulated by the International Crisis Group, which produced the most comprehensive report on Turkish involvement in Somalia to date. In their report (2012), ICG criticizes Turkey for not having a realistic and sustainable Somalia policy (and not enough knowledgeable diplomats to implement it); not tying development aid to good governance and financial stability, and thus de-incentivizing the Somali government from improving its processes; not coordinating with the international community effectively when delivering aid and security assistance; and for not expanding its assistance outside Mogadishu rapidly enough, which might cause resentment and further exacerbate inequality throughout the country; among other criticisms and recommendations.<sup>139</sup>

Though not specifically discussing Turkey, Menkhaus (2006-2007) identified the negative effects of foreign aid on Somalia's political economy; foreign aid artificially inflated the country's budget and lead to a political system based on patronage which was unsustainable when Somalia was left to operate on its true budget.<sup>140</sup> Foreign aid also reduces the need for compromise and consensus-building, enabling the government to act autonomously when it should seek compromise. These problems are similar to the ones pointed out by ICG when they report that Turkey's habit of providing aid through the Somali government without incentivizing the government to achieve important development milestones actually enables it to continue

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<sup>139</sup> International Crisis Group. (2012). Assessing Turkey's Role in Somalia.

<sup>140</sup> Menkhaus, K. (2006/7). Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping. *International Security*. Vol. 31, No. 3, Pages 74-106.

operating poorly, and in some cases, corruptly. The economy is one of the worst in the world and relies on foreign remittances, nomadic pastoralism, and has almost no public sector involvement. Due to the long absence of a central government, the economy is largely unregulated and criminality remains rampant. ICG points out that Turkey funnels most of its aid through the President's office, often ignoring the Prime Minister and completely bypassing other ministries. The combination of foreign aid artificially inflating Somalia's capabilities and being funneled primarily through the President creates a situation ripe for corruption.

#### **4.6.4 Techniques of conflict management**

Turkey understood from the beginning that traditional forms of mediation would not work in Somalia's complex environment. Somalia requires a fresh approach, which Turkey's Ambassador to Somalia terms "modified mediation," and involves deploying aid rather than diplomats, and encouraging the parties "without fear or favor." Ufuk Gezer also calls it "modifying mediation", saying "you try to modify the situation on the ground with a view toward creating a more amendable situation for the resolution." Turkey's first task was to end the famine, but its second task was to end Somalia's isolation in the international community. In order to accomplish those goals, Turkey spent time to understand the issues that ailed Somalia; spent more time attempting to establish its credentials as a benefactor, and worked to gain the trust of the Somali people and government. As Ufuk Gezer stated:

You see Turkey going in with a long-term commitment seeing mediation as part of a larger peace building agenda. State building is not part of it. We're not making the mistakes of the past 20 years. When you look around, the international community went in with immense capacity and resources, but when you get bogged down in the state building exercise, there are little precious

success stories that we can talk about. This is the lesson we're getting from these experiences.<sup>141</sup>

In addition to the Turkish government and business community, Turkish NGOs are also active in Somalia. As previously mentioned, Somalia actually received the highest amount of financial assistance by Turkish NGOs in 2012 with \$26.41 million, followed by Syria with \$19.97 million. Murphy and Sazak (2012) identified several NGOs that were operating in Somalia which were either Turkish or with Turkish support, including Doctors Worldwide, Kimse Yok Mu (Is Anybody There?), Humanitarian Aid Foundation (IHH), Islamic Relief, Physicians for Hope Foundation, and the Gulen-affiliated Nile Foundation of Turkey.<sup>142</sup> International Crisis Group also identified Helping Hands as a smaller non-profit operation in Somalia.<sup>143</sup> In 2012, for instance, IHH conducted cataract surgeries for 200 in Somalia, constructed a school, drilled a water well, and distributed food aid.<sup>144</sup> Kimse Yok Mu constructed a hospital in Mogadishu, constructed dormitory buildings and soup kitchens, drilled water wells, and provided scholarships for Somali students to study in Turkey.<sup>145</sup>

The Turkish government coordinates aid in Somalia through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), which is basically the go-between for distributing aid and determining projects between the Turkish and Somali ministries, agencies, and government officials. TIKA has also coordinated some projects itself. In 2012, TIKA coordinated the delivery of 50 tons of material and 80 tons of medicine, provided two inflatable field hospitals and their equipment, delivered healthcare services through ambulances and other vehicles, trained healthcare providers, delivered food packages to hungry families, constructed structures such as a water treatment plant and children's playgrounds, selected 400 Somali students to study in Turkey through interviews, established an Animal Waste and Bone Disposal Facility

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<sup>141</sup> Gezer, U. (2013). Interview with Ufuk Gezer.

<sup>142</sup> Murphy, T. and Sazak, O. (2012). Turkey's civilian capacity in post-conflict reconstruction. Istanbul Policy Center.

<sup>143</sup> International Crisis Group. (2012). Assessing Turkey's Role in Somalia.

<sup>144</sup> TIKA. Turkish Development Assistance 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

with a daily capacity of 1 ton, and cleared the wreckage of planes from Mogadishu to "remove psychological effects of the war."<sup>146</sup>

Turkey's Health Ministry and Religious Affairs Directorate (DIYANET) also played active roles in administering humanitarian assistance. For example, DIYAT conducted the repair and maintenance of the Sheikh Sufi School building, provided scholarships to Somali students to study in Turkey, and gave sacrificial meat to Somali families during Ramadan.<sup>147</sup> Some projects demonstrate the power of various Turkish government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector working in unison. The only two hospitals currently in operation in Somalia were built by Turkey; Shifa built by Medical Park and the field hospital built by the Turkish Ministry of Health. Doctors Worldwide Turkey continues to train Somali staff for the hospital and periodically sends envoys of doctors there to perform surgeries.

After establishing its presence in Mogadishu and gaining the trust of the Somali people and administration, Turkey has turned its attention in 2013 to more traditional forms of mediation, acting as the mediator for talks between Somalia and Somaliland. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and President Abdullah Gul met with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud and Somaliland President Ahmed Silanyo in Ankara in April 2013 to discuss cooperation between the two administrations.<sup>148</sup> Even though the two sides apparently could not reach an agreement about the largest looming issue, whether Somaliland would eventually unify as part of Somalia, the President of Somaliland had nothing but praise for Turkey's involvement, saying: "Turkey has played a very important role in trying to bring different sides together during the Somali conflict. They have consistently put an effort into establishing stability and promoting development in the region."<sup>149</sup> Both parties consistently praise Turkey's involvement in the process, and Turkey continues to

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). Somalia, Somaliland Presidents have talks in Turkey.

<sup>149</sup> Donat N. G. (2013). Somaliland commends Turkish role in facilitating talks with Somalia. Today's Zaman.

participate in international conferences on Somalia such as the Somalia Conference held in London in May 2013.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

When we compare what has been discussed about Turkey's involvement in Somalia with the definitions of humanitarian intervention described in the literature review, it is clear that Turkey's efforts in Somalia cannot be described as humanitarian intervention. Turkey has the permission of the Somali Federal Government (and of the Transitional Federal Government before that) and is not using force. However, Turkey's efforts can be described as "interference," since Turkey is intervening in a conflict to help the victims and support one side over the other. Turkey has been criticized by some observers, especially the International Crisis Group, for acting somewhat unilaterally in its relationship with Somalia; for example, by not coordinating aid to the Somali security forces with AMISOM and for Turkey's criticism of other international actors and countries which have been more deeply involved in the conflict for longer than Turkey. However, Turkey has certainly coordinated with the international community to open up Somalia to the world; it has encouraged more countries to move embassies to Mogadishu and for NGOs to do the same with their representative offices, it has hosted conferences on Somalia attended by all the relevant international actors and attended the same abroad, and it has become part of the regional working groups related to the conflict. Ultimately, Turkey's efforts regarding Somalia can be labelled as more inclusive than not, and these efforts have been highly praised by a wide swath of Somali stakeholders, from government officials to academics to ordinary citizens.

After establishing a close relationship with the Somali Federal Government; economic ties through trade, investment, and construction; and becoming ingrained as a benefactor of the Somali people through aid such as educational scholarships, medical care, and food distribution, Turkey was fully invested in Somalia's future and seen as a beneficial player by nearly every group of stakeholders. Then, Turkey was able to

extend its influence by mediating between the Somali Federal Government and Somaliland. Though there is not much specific information available about Turkey's actions in this mediation, it is clear that Turkey is an insider mediator due to its relationship with the Somali Federal Government. The mediation is not a one-off event, but the latest effort in Turkey's ongoing relationship with Somalia. Turkey certainly has ties to Somalia and is invested in the outcome of the conflict. In other words, this instance of mediation fits nicely within the four points that Ufuk Gezer outlined about what makes Turkey an effective mediator. Since Turkey and the rest of the international community desires to see Somalia and Somaliland united, it is hard to understand how Turkey can be a neutral, objective mediator; two criteria that Ahmet Davutoğlu identified as being important for good mediators. However, Turkey has not done anything to harm its relationship with Somaliland, and has, by all indications, approached the mediation with a desire to assist both parties in accomplishing what is best for the Somali people. Overall, Turkey's involvement in Somalia is a good example of how Turkey can incorporate mediation into a broader strategy of involvement in conflict situations, including development aid, support to the government without attempting to directly influence its decision-making process, creating economic ties, and helping to open up the country to the international community.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SYRIA**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Just as Somalia is Turkey's centerpiece in its increasing relationship with Africa, Syria was Turkey's gateway to the Middle East. Since 2009, Turkey has been working to build a stronger relationship with Syria, and to use this relationship to broaden cultural, economic, and political ties with other Middle Eastern countries. The following sections provide a comprehensive overview of Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict, which has thus far not been described in significant detail by the academic literature. After understanding the conflict and Turkey's involvement, we will be able to discuss which aspects of Turkey's involvement have so far produced results that have been beneficial to the Syrians Turkey has sought to aid, and to Turkey itself; and which aspects have thus far led to consequences that were perhaps unintended or unanticipated. At the same time, we must avoid heavy-handed pronouncements of 'success' and 'failure' since the conflict is ongoing and determining what constitutes a successful or unsuccessful intervention effort is a very subjective task that is outside the purview of this thesis. That being said, we can still draw conclusions about how Turkey is best positioned to utilize its soft power, humanitarian capacity, and mediation capabilities; and what other similarly-positioned states can learn from it.

## 5.2 Conflict history

Knowledge of Syria's fraught history is key to understanding the environment of repression, skepticism, and secrecy that eventually led not only to protests, but the Assad government's violent response to them. Most accounts of Syria's position in the Middle East begin with the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which was certainly a defining moment in Syria's and the region's history. However, it was the French mandate which began after WWI in 1923 and ended in 1943 with the creation of the separate states of Syria and Lebanon, which impacts today's conflict. When the Ottoman Empire was dissolved after WWI, the Sykes-Picot Agreement assigned the territory in what is today Syria, Lebanon, and Hatay (now part of Turkey) to the French. Part of Syria's instability has always been attributed to its diverse population. 60% is Sunni Arab Muslim, 13% Christian, 12% Alawite, 9% Kurdish, and 5% Druz.<sup>150</sup> In order to govern their new territory, the French installed Alawites, a minority group in the midst of a majority Sunni territory, into positions of power and divided the territory into six autonomous regions, further exacerbating religious and sectarian differences. During French rule Syrians were temporarily united against the French, and sectarian interests were not divisive. After independence,

Aleppines contested with Damascenes for dominance in commercial and political life; the Druzes pledged allegiance to Druzes, the Kurds to Kurds, and tribal peoples to tribal institutions. Alawis, the poorest yet largest of the minorities, tried to rebel from Sunni Muslim control. Rural leaders contended with urban leaders; the progressive, increasingly secularized, younger generation vied with the older, religious-minded leaders.<sup>151</sup>

The first Syrian President, Quwatly, was immediately faced with the crisis of the creation of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab invasion. The first of Syria's numerous military coups occurred in March 1949, followed by a counter coup in August of the same year. In November 1951 the country's third coup was orchestrated

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<sup>150</sup> Rubin, B. (2007). *The truth about Syria*. Palgrave Macmillan (p. 28).

<sup>151</sup> Collelo T. ( ed.) (1987) *Syria: A Country Study*. Washington GPO for the Library of Congress

by Colonel Adib Shishakli, who established the Arab Liberation Movement (ALM) and abolished all other political parties. In a July 1953 referendum Syria became a presidential republic with one-party rule. However Shishakli's regime would not last; the army staged a fourth coup in February 1954 and re-installed the 1949 government. Throughout the early 1950's the Syrian government was marked by power shifts between conservatives and left-wing socialists. By 1955 however the Baath Party and Syrian Communist Party were the most organized and the only parties not beholden to sectarian interests. The British, French, and Israeli invasion of Sinai in 1956 solidified the anti-Western sentiment that was already present in Syria, and the country began to cooperate more with the Soviet Union while becoming increasingly isolated in the Middle East. By 1957 the Baathists, Communists, and other left-wing allies were completely in control of the government and a fierce power struggle between the two major parties ensued.<sup>152</sup>

In an attempt to prevent the Communists from seizing control of the government, the Baath party announced a union with Egypt in 1957 as part of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser's plan for a united Arab nation. The United Arab Republic was thus formed, but the Baath party miscalculated its results. Instead of the Baath party receiving a favored place of power, the Nasser regime gained complete control of both Syria and Egypt. Syrians also became dissatisfied with Nasser's rule, as a drought hit Syria and Egyptians began to assume all the key Syrian administrative posts. In September 1961 yet another military coup was staged in Damascus, and Syria was free from the UAR.<sup>153</sup>

From 1961-1966 Syria experienced a series of coups, counter-coups, dissolved governments, and power struggles that left the government in complete chaos, including the first coup to cause violence in the capital in July 1963. Finally in February 1966 two Baathist, Alawi generals, Salah al Jadid and Hafiz al Assad launched a coup that placed an extremist wing of the Baath Party in power. This extremist wing was opposed to Arab union and instead favored an independent Syria, more closely aligned with the Soviet Union than with other Arab governments. Major General Assad was appointed

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

Minister of Defense, making him intimately involved in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that would have immediate and lasting impacts on the region.<sup>154</sup>

As Lesch (2005) explained, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was a radical turning point for the Middle East, resulting in several repercussions that would permanently impact Assad and Syria, including: a) the creation of the occupied territories, including Israel's capture of the Golan Heights from Syria b) the end of secular Arab nationalism with the defeat of Nasser c) the resurrection of Islamism, particularly anti-Western and anti-Israeli, due to the realization that secular Arab regimes were unable to confront Israel or mend the region's broken economies and d) increasing involvement of the United States and Soviet Union in the region. The 1967 war was quickly followed by the "War of Attrition" in March 1969 - August 1970 which, though led by Egypt and with very little involvement from Syria, would eventually lead to Hafiz al-Assad's assumption of power.<sup>155</sup>

From 1968-1970 the military wing of the Baath party, led by Assad, and the political wing led by Jadid, vied for power. Their differences regarding Palestinians were particularly stark; Jadid wanted to support the Palestinian Liberation Organization completely, including in its short-lived war against Jordan's King Hussein, while Assad wanted to refrain from outright support. Despite the Baath party's Congress on November 12, 1970 which reaffirmed Jadid's civilian rule and censored Assad for his military's meddling in politics, Assad staged an internal, bloodless coup on November 13th which deposed Jadid and installed Assad as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense along with his hand-selected government. By March 1971 Assad was elected president of the Syrian Arab Republic. Assad's regime was actually more pragmatic than that of Jadid; he opened up the economy to the private sector and pursued better relations with other Arab states, but remained committed to the return of the Golan Heights.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid

<sup>155</sup> Lesch, D. (2005) *The new lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Assad and modern Syria*. Yale University Press: New Haven. (p.26).

<sup>156</sup> Ibid p. 29

The 1973 Arab-Israeli war launched by Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in an attempt to reclaim the Sinai Peninsula once again had an immense impact on Syria and the region. Syria was encouraged to enter the war by Egypt, and in fact Assad's goal was to reclaim the Golan Heights. Initially the Arabs inflicted heavy losses on Israel, but the tide turned and while Sadat attempted to negotiate a cease-fire with Israel and the U.S., the Israelis advanced almost to Damascus and killed around 6,000 Syrians. Bashar al-Assad was eight at the time and his early memories of evacuating Damascus and the grief surrounding Syrian losses would have a large impact on his early impressions of political power. After the war, Syria was more isolated than ever in the Arab world, and looked toward the Soviet Union for weapons as a bulwark against further Israeli aggression.<sup>157</sup>

The next significant development for the Assad regime occurred in the 1980s when the Muslim Brethren (MB) began to emerge in Syria due to several reasons: a) the secular nature of the Baath regime b) economic difficulties combined with rampant corruption c) the example set by the Iranian revolution and d) Assad's support for Maronite Christians in Lebanon against the PLO.<sup>158</sup> In February 1982 Assad ordered the now infamous attack against the Muslim Brethren stronghold, Hama. The attack left between 10,000 - 30,000 Syrians dead and crushed the MB opposition in the country, but the Assad regime's reputation suffered both domestically and internationally as a result.<sup>159</sup> In a conversation with Dr. Lesch, Bashar Assad explained his father's regime's attitude toward the Muslim Brothers, comments that shed light on his reaction to today's protests:

Syria has a great deal of experience with the Muslim Brothers...my father negotiated with them to possibly become part of the government. They did not say no, but they said they wanted to discuss it. But they kept on killing while they were thinking about it. In the end they did not want to share power - they wanted to take power, and they wanted to transform Syria into an Islamic republic...So we began the conflict with them in 1979...It was a difficult time,

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid

<sup>158</sup> Ibid p.44

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

much worse than when Nasser was confronted by Muslim Brothers, because my father was not as strong as Nasser was at the time, and we were besieged and somewhat isolated in the region.<sup>160</sup>

Bashar is articulating the Assad regime's fear of what they perceive to be radical Islamist groups wishing to overthrow their government and impose Islamic law upon the country, something that the staunchly secular Baath party has worked hard to prevent. Therefore, Bashar's rhetoric today identifying the protesters as extremists and accusing them of imposing Sharia law on parts of the country is no surprise. Though, at least initially, the Assad regime undoubtedly claimed that the opposition was composed of extremists for their own political maneuvering, those accusations might be based in part on Assad's personal experiences and natural fear of extremists taking root in Syria.

Another event during Hafiz Assad's presidency that probably had an impact on Bashar's conception of state power occurred in 1983, when Hafiz became ill and his brother Rifaat, commander of the Defense Companies (an elite unit of the Syrian military) made a move to usurp power. Though Hafiz was able to force his brother to back down and maintained control, the fact that the Baath party, government structure, and military were unable to prevent Rifaat from a power grab during the president's illness taught the Assad's a valuable lesson. In a prescient analysis, Lesch (2005) stated that Bashar realized that "the state had to build up a firmer institutional foundation so that it could better withstand such internal and external disruptions - this was fantasy back then [during Hafiz's reign]; Bashar was slowly attempting to turn fantasy into reality."<sup>161</sup> Many people expected the Syrian government to collapse quickly after the violence began, with talks of defections and possible internal power grabs occurring regularly in the Western media. It seemed that Bashar took this lesson from his father's experience and applied it to his own regime quite well, which helped to explain his regime's longevity in the face of serious internal dissent and ultimately, civil war.

Most people know that Bashar was never meant to be president. His elder brother Basil was groomed for the presidency but lost his life in a car accident in 1994. After Basil's death, Bashar returned from London where he was studying

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid p.45

<sup>161</sup> Ibid p.51

ophthalmology to be with his family; a time during which many observers consider him to have been groomed for the presidency in the absence of his older brother, but which Bashar maintains he did to help his family without the clear objective of becoming president in mind.<sup>162</sup> In the period after Hafez Assad's death in 2000, people believed that Bashar would institute reforms. After all, he was an eye doctor who had been educated in England and had a beautiful, modern wife and family. After a short-lived "Damascus Spring" those hopes died. Political instability, the history of attempted coups, and Bashar's own life experiences growing up under his father's regime led him to focus on stability more than progress. The regime he inherited is described by critics such as Dr. Barry Rubin as:

Syrians can conduct business only by making government officials their partners or succeed in most careers only by echoing the regime's ideology, whether they believe it in their hearts or not. It is a society where all the media are under regime control and adhere to the official line; sustained public criticism can lead to torture and imprisonment; cell phones and internet use are tightly controlled; private conversations may well be reported to the secret police; and any contact with a foreigner is suspect. Yet it is also a society in which the people generally accept the regime's stories and the permanent war footing this worldview demands.<sup>163</sup>

The regime was co-opted by the elites and became known for patronage at a time when the country's wealth was more unevenly divided than ever. Lesch articulated the common regime sentiment that "there is almost too much societal inertia economically, culturally, and politically to bring about change in anything but an incremental fashion."<sup>164</sup> However, change did not come fast enough even for Syria.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> Rubin, B. (2007). *The truth about Syria*. Palgrave Macmillan (p.44).

<sup>164</sup> Lesch, D. (2005) *The new lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Assad and modern Syria*. Yale University Press: New Haven. (p.69).

### 5.3 Conflict context

Turkey intervened in Syria long before a conflict erupted. As Dr. Bülent Aras, one of the top academic advisors to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu explained about Turkey's early engagement:

‘The Turkish policy towards Syria is aimed at indirect transformation of Syria. There was an authoritarian rule and no way to get in touch directly with civil society and Syrian people. The only way was to help Syria through the regime. Trade liberalization, lifting visas; the idea was to facilitate exchange of people and goods and services. The other idea is to have an impact on the Syrian regime for some opening encounter. This is what I call "particular idealism;" it's not a universalistic idealism since you are engaging with an authoritarian regime, but it was the only way.<sup>165</sup>

The idea of "particular idealism" is an interesting one because it acknowledges that Turkey recognized the Assad regime as a less-than-ideal partner in the Middle East long before the protests began. Dr. Aras described a three-step policy which Turkey had toward Syria beginning in 2008. The first step was confidence building. Turkey and Syria went from being on the eve of war in the mid-2000s to having a good relationship by 2008 due to confidence building measures. The second step was engagement. Trade liberalization, lifting visas, high-level visits, and political dialogue between Turkish and Syrian ministers and the presidents were the key elements of this step. There was even talk as late as March 2011 about developing a 'Şamgen' visa system for Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran; in contrast to the 'Schengen' visa regime used by the European Union.<sup>166</sup> The third step was integrating Syria into the international community. Unfortunately, Dr. Aras said that Turkish efforts stopped during the second stage when Syria began to experience protests and initial violence.

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<sup>165</sup> Aras, Bulent. (2013). Interview with Bulent Aras.

<sup>166</sup> CNN Turk. (2011). Schengen olmazsa Şamgen verelim!



## 5.4 Conflict parties

### 5.4.1 Primary Parties

Ulutas (2011) divided the initial protesters into two groups; the first group was made up of those who wanted the regime to "implement reforms that would address the immediate political and economic needs of the people" such as "the introduction of a multi-party system, abolition of the emergency law, amendment of local administration law, regulation of state security and intelligence services, judicial reform, etc." <sup>167</sup> The second group of protesters called for the fall of the regime. As the protests continued, those in the second group began to outnumber the ones in the first. <sup>168</sup> The opposition is now divided into political and military units, which are further sub-divided to the point of having multiple leaders and no central command structure. One of the international community's priorities has been to unite the opposition into groups which can be represented internationally and supported coherently.

The Syrian National Coalition is the main body recognized by the international community and charged with leading the opposition efforts from outside Syria. The Coalition is supported by the Syrian National Council. The National Coalition named Ghassan Hitto as prime minister of an interim government which was tasked with providing stability and leadership to opposition-controlled areas in Syria. However, Hitto resigned on July 8, 2013 after claiming that he was unable to form an administration, in part due to mistrust within the National Coalition due to his perception of being aligned with Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood. <sup>169</sup> Hitto was replaced by Ahmad Jarba, who served the maximum term of one year before being replaced by Hadi al-Bahra, the Coalition's chief negotiator in Geneva, in a July 2014

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<sup>167</sup> Ulutas U. (2011). The Syrian Opposition in the Making: Capabilities and Limits Insight Turkey Vol.13 No.3

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> BBC News. (2013). Syria opposition government head Ghassan Hitto resigns.

vote held in Istanbul.<sup>170</sup> The opposition has been plagued by infighting; accusations that it does not represent all of Syria's many religious, ethnic, and other minorities; and difficulties in securing international support.

The Muslim Brotherhood has historically been the most active opposition to the Assad regime in Syria, despite being banned and severely persecuted. When the protests began the Brotherhood tried to avoid active participation in order to prevent the regime from labeling the protesters as extremists.<sup>171</sup> However, due to the disorganized nature of the protests and lack of unified opposition, the Brotherhood felt that they had to take a larger role in the opposition.<sup>172</sup> Now, Brotherhood members make up a significant portion of the political opposition and fighters, including a quarter of the Syrian National Council, which they helped found.<sup>173</sup> The MB operating in Syria has historically had a good relationship with the AKP, with the AKP attempting to mediate between the MB and Assad regime in 2009 (an effort which ultimately failed to gain the MB entry back into Syria), hosting regular meetings in Turkey, and calling on Turkey to intervene in the Syrian conflict early in the fall of 2011.<sup>174</sup>

The military opposition consists of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and brigades united under it; and jihadi opposition groups who are not affiliated with the FSA, and in fact, increasingly fight against it. The FSA is in reality multiple brigades fighting in different regions of Syria, with different command structures, yet all in opposition to the regime. These brigades are made up of mostly Sunni civilians, military defectors, and Islamists. The FSA is headed by the Supreme Military Council, based in Turkey, and led by Brigadier General Abdel Ilah al-Bashir, a Syrian army defector.<sup>175</sup> Some of the largest brigades under the FSA include the Farouk Brigade (moderately Islamic; has

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<sup>170</sup> Al Jazeera. (2014). Syrian opposition body elects new president.

<sup>171</sup> Ulutas U. (2011) The Syrian Opposition in the Making: Capabilities and Limits. Insight Turkey Vol.13 No.3 (p.94).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2013). The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Al Arabiya. (2014). Free Syrian Army confirms new military chief.

clashed with Jabhat al-Nusra), the Tawhid Brigade (conservative Islamist orientation), the Idlib Martyr's Brigade (involved in battles near the Turkish border), the National Unity Brigades (secular orientation and include many minority fighters), and the Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi Brigade (mostly Kurdish fighters).<sup>176</sup> The FSA was once considered the strongest opposition group in Syria, but its influence and power has waned in light of the proliferation of extremist groups.

Starting in mid-2012, extremist jihadi groups began operating in Syria, the first of which was the al Nusra Front (sometimes called Jabhat al Nusra). By March 2013 al Nusra established a religious council to administer Eastern Syria (Deir Al Zor, Hassaka and Al Raqqa provinces), which was largely under their control.<sup>177</sup> By May 2013 al Nusra was in control of key oilfields near Raqqa which enabled them to profit from selling the crude oil; at first locally, and now even past the Turkish border.<sup>178</sup> Free Syrian Army and other 'moderate' opposition fighters have begun defecting to extremist groups due to their greater ability to pay and provide benefits.<sup>179</sup> The entry of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an al-Qaeda extension, in the conflict around early 2013 further splintered the opposition. ISIS' goal is not only to wrest control of Syria from Assad, but to establish an Islamic caliphate in Syria and eventually, the rest of the Middle East and world. Moderate opposition groups accused ISIS of imprisoning and executing opposition fighters, and possibly being in collusion with the Assad regime.<sup>180</sup> The presence of Chechen members of ISIS who had previously served in the Russian military fueled these suspicions. A common belief is that Assad is allowing ISIS to proliferate in order to accuse the opposition of being radical Islamists, and hold himself up as the only moderate option for Syria's future. Even the Islamist groups

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<sup>176</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2013). *Syria's armed opposition: a brief overview*.

<sup>177</sup> Gulf News. (2013). Syrian Islamist rebels set up Eastern council.

<sup>178</sup> Spencer, Richard. (2013). Al-Qaeda's Syrian wing takes over the oilfields once belonging to Assad.

<sup>179</sup> Sly, L. (2014). New U.S. help arrives for Syrian rebels as government, extremists gain. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>180</sup> Sengupta, K. (2014). Syria's three way war: Free Syrian Army rebels fight the regime and, now, the Islamists. *The Independent*.

themselves are splintered and in opposition to one another; the Islamic Front has stated its opposition to ISIS while Jabhat al-Nusra has declared itself to be 'neutral'.<sup>181</sup> Some of the other jihadi groups operating in Syria include Ahrar al Sham Brigade, Ahfad al Rasoul Brigades, Liwa al-Islam, and Al Farouk Brigades.<sup>182</sup>

As discussed in the historical background section, the Assad regime is composed primarily of Alawites who also make up most of the Baath party apparatus, security forces, and other government officials. The main centers of power for the regime are "the president, ruling family and their personal networks; elite military units; and the security apparatus's most aggressive components," which all depend on one another's survival in order to maintain the conflict.<sup>183</sup> Once again International Crisis Group has perhaps the best insight into the regime's logic thanks to their interviews with regime officials, who:

consistently portray the war as one of protracted attrition. On good days, they exude optimism they ultimately will prevail, albeit at huge cost to regime and country. On bad ones, they appear to accept possible defeat, but at a cost that would make their domestic and foreign enemies' victory pyrrhic. In both instances, they cannot imagine a way for the regime to change its approach.<sup>184</sup>

In other words, the regime has convinced itself and its supporters that its only option in the conflict is to respond to the opposition with violence. Many observers thought that the Assad regime would fall quickly once numerous defections began from the Syrian army, including high-level officers. However, the defectors have not taken entire units with them, meaning that while the defections may damage moral, they have not caused the army apparatus to disintegrate.<sup>185</sup> The presence of Sunni chiefs of staff in the army

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Syria Deeply. (2014). The Opposition.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid p.16

<sup>184</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts. Middle East Report No 143 (p.20).

<sup>185</sup> Gaub, F. (2014). Syria's Military: Last man standing?

and the close relationship that officers have to the ruling party reduces the army's sectarian nature and has helped ensure its cohesion.<sup>186</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Secondary parties**

The Assad regime has not faced the protests alone, but is receiving help from a variety of actors. Hizbollah has long been accused of being involved in Syria, but there has been no doubt of its involvement since October 2012 when one of its leaders was killed while fighting in Syria.<sup>187</sup> International Crisis Group states that "Hizbollah is directly engaged in a far-reaching battle against those it denounces as Sunni fundamentalists (takfiris) allied with Israel, a denomination it uses to encompass large swathes of the opposition."<sup>188</sup> In addition to being a long-time ally of the Assad regime, Hizbollah views the conflict in Syria as a sectarian one in which the Assad regime is fighting against Sunni and Western forces intent on its destruction. Iran has also been accused by Western governments of giving more aid to the Syrian regime as the conflict intensifies.<sup>189</sup> The conflict is exacerbating tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims, aided by the Assad regime's propaganda against Sunni extremists and the presence of radical Islamic groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra among the opposition. Evidence of this divide is obvious when the number of foreign Shia fighters flooding in to aid the regime is taken into account. For example, one brigade called

Abu Fadl al-Abbas suggest that upwards of 10,000 volunteers – all of them Shia Muslims and many from outside Syria – have joined their ranks in the past year alone. The group's *raison d'être* is to be custodian of Shia holy sites, especially

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts. Middle East Report No 143 (p.20).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

Sayyida Zeinab, a golden-domed Damascus landmark, but its role has taken it to most corners of Syria's war. It is now a direct battlefield rival, both in numbers and power, for Jabhat al-Nusra, the jihadist group that takes a prominent role among opposition fighting groups.<sup>190</sup>

Recruitment centers for the brigade have opened in Iraq, and new recruits are told that they are fighting for the Syrian regime, not just Shiite shrines.<sup>191</sup> Alongside Hizbollah, Iran supports the Assad regime by sending fighters and weapons. In fact, the Syrian opposition acknowledges (and perhaps overdramatizes) Iran's role in the conflict, with al-Tawhid Brigade Commander Abdulkader Saleh stating “Iran and Hezbollah are the ones who are continuing the war in Syria.”<sup>192</sup> Without the support of these valuable Shiite allies, the Assad regime might have been forced into negotiations with the opposition.

From the beginning, Russia has taken a strong stance against the United States and Europe, in part due to Russia's realist worldview that prioritizes state sovereignty over humanitarian intervention. Russia also supports the Assad regime and is loathe to see him replaced with a potentially less-friendly government in the region, since Syria is one of the last Middle Eastern countries to be under Russian influence. The Syrian port of Tartus is Russia's only naval resupply facility outside the former Soviet Union and Russia's weapons sales to Damascus have always been brisk.<sup>193</sup> Trenin (2013) identified four pillars of Moscow's support for Syria: its position on the changing international order, including its desire for the UN Security Council to mandate and oversee all use of international force; the effects of the Arab Spring, which Russia sees as bringing more instability to the region and the overthrow of secular authorities; its material interests in Syria, which are modest but worth maintaining; and the role of religion in the conflict, where it wishes to protect Christian minorities and prevent the

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<sup>190</sup> Mahmood M. and Chulov M. (2013). Syrian war widens Sunni-Shia schism as Foreign jihadis join fight for shrines. *The Guardian*.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>192</sup> Cemiloğlu, B. and Ala, A. (2013). Opposition commander: Assad defeated, we are fighting Iran, Hezbollah. *Today's Zaman*.

<sup>193</sup> Trenin, D. (2013) *The Mythical Alliance: Russia's Syria Policy*. The Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Moscow Center

spread of radical Islam.<sup>194</sup> Moscow is consequently hostile to the Syrian National Council and Free Syrian Army, viewing them as Western pawns and radical Islamists, respectively. Russia (along with China) has consistently blocked the UN Security Council from passing resolutions against the Assad government. Beyond preventing international intervention, Human Rights First accuses Russia of being one of the Assad regime's staunchest enablers, sending "continual provision of military equipment via air and sea, supplies of diesel fuel that powers Syria's infantry weaponry and tanks, and financial access that helps the regime fund its crimes."<sup>195</sup> At the same time, Russia was unable to use its influence to convince Assad to end the violence, and Russia has almost no legitimacy as a mediator among the opposition due to its ties with the regime.<sup>196</sup>

The last secondary party to the Syrian conflict is Turkey, which actually did not begin as a secondary party but as an interested third party. When the Assad regime faced its first protests, Turkey immediately recognized the need for Assad to respond carefully. As Dr. Aras describes, Turkey once again had a three stage formula. First, Turkey began with engagement. Turkish officials believed from the beginning that they could influence Damascus' reaction, as Dr. Aras explained the mentality at the time: "We have invested a lot in Assad... We can, to some extent, have an influence on Assad. This was the Turkish assumption."<sup>197</sup> During the early stages of the protests and even the regime's initial use of force against the protesters, Turkish officials seem to have believed that they could guide Assad's response. What followed was engagement with the Assad regime for several months in 2011. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu went back and forth to Damascus about 9-10 times during this period and encouraged Assad to propose solid plans for transformation, allow for the formation of new political parties, run in elections, and other attempts at appeasing the protesters. At the same time, Turkey offered development aid and planning aid, promising to work on Syria's emerging issues with the international community. In a sense, Turkey was offering to be a partner with Syria to ensure that the steps Turkey suggested could be carried out

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Human Rights First. (2013). Enablers of the Syrian Conflict.

<sup>196</sup> Trenin, D. (2013) The Mythical Alliance: Russia's Syria Policy. The Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Moscow Center

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Dr. Bulent Aras, Istanbul Policy Center, 24 May 2013.

effectively. On March 28, 2011 Erdoğan publically called on Assad to listen to his people and not suppress their cries for more freedom.<sup>198</sup> The next day, Erdoğan announced that he spoke with Assad ("Sayın Esad"), who agreed to implement reforms such as abolishing the State of Emergency. In April and May 2011 Erdoğan continued to make statements indicating Turkish support for Assad, and sending delegations to Syria.

But in August 7, 2011, Erdoğan expressed his disappointment with Assad at an Iftar dinner speech in Istanbul, saying that the Turkish government's patience was at an end after hoping that Assad would implement the promised reforms. Erdoğan stated that he was sending Foreign Minister Davutoğlu to Syria with a forceful message, and how Assad answered the message would shape Turkey's next moves.<sup>199</sup> He further stated that he did not consider the Syrian crisis as a foreign problem, but a domestic one due to the 850 km border, shared culture, history, and relatives. Therefore, Erdoğan concluded, Turkey cannot just watch what happens in Syria, but will listen and do what is necessary.<sup>200</sup> This speech is an important example of how Erdoğan appeals for intervention based on shared heritage, similar to his statements regarding the need for intervention in Somalia.

Dr. Aras stated that the Turkish government's engagement with the Assad regime lasted for about 10 months, but this timeline necessarily overlaps with the time when Turkey began talking to the opposition. Even if Turkey began urging the Assad regime to respond to the protesters with moderation as early as January 2011, before the protests had hardly begun, other scholars have identified August 2011 as the date when Turkey began to openly host the Syrian opposition.<sup>201</sup> Dr. Aras also stated that Turkey did not speak with the opposition while speaking with Assad, and once Turkey started working with the opposition, they no longer spoke with Assad. Therefore, the timeframe of engagement with Assad and the opposition cannot overlap. So there is some

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<sup>198</sup> Çetin, Ü. (2011). Haykırısı bastırma dinle. Hurriyet Daily News.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Cebeci, E. and Ustun, K. (2012) The Syrian Quagmire: What's Holding Turkey Back? Insight Turkey. (p.15).



confusion over how long Turkey actually tried to work with Assad, which although a minor detail perhaps speaks to the rapidity with which Turkey switched sides. Since the protests hardly began until March 2011 and Turkey broke off diplomatic relations with the Assad regime in August 2011, it is reasonable to assume that Turkey only spent six months (during actual protests) attempting to influence Assad. This is not to discount the many years of engagement that Turkey had already experienced with the Syrian regime, only to point out that active engagement during the protests was more limited than perhaps many people realize.

Unfortunately the Assad regime ostensibly accepted the need for reform but did not agree with Turkish officials about the extent of reform necessary. Therefore, the opposition was not willing to accept the small reforms proposed by the Assad administration. When the government began reacting violently toward the protesters, Dr. Aras described the Assad regime's actions as "almost a collective punishment of its own people." At that point, Turkey switched to the second step in its plan; isolation. Turkey limited communication with the regime and stepped back from the conflict, but this did not last long. Almost immediately Turkey transitioned into the third step, intervention. As Dr. Aras stated, "Turkish foreign policy is to never be in a position to intervene...it's not on the Turkish foreign policy maker's agenda." Despite this sentiment, several complex dynamics which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections caused Turkey to not just isolate the Syrian regime, but to become one of the most active players in the conflict through their support of the Syrian opposition. In contrast to Dr. Aras's clearly delineated steps of isolation and then intervention, some scholars perceived that Turkey went directly from engaging with Assad to assisting the opposition, as Cebeci and Ustun (2012) pointed out, "Once it was clear that the regime would not respond constructively to Turkish advice and instead insist on using force against its citizens, Turkey took a clear stance against Assad and started openly hosting the Syrian opposition in August 2011."<sup>202</sup> Dr. Aras elaborated on Turkey's reasoning during the break with Assad, stating that the war had degenerated into a proxy war with almost no chance for a political settlement; Turkey decided that Assad was no longer a legitimate actor and any solution to the Syrian conflict needed to happen without him.

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<sup>202</sup> Cebeci, E. and Ustun, K. (2012) The Syrian Quagmire: What's Holding Turkey Back? Insight Turkey. (p. 13-21)

Clearly, it did not take long for the Turkish government to shift from supportively encouraging Assad to a firm decision that his leadership of the Syrian government was no longer possible. Whether Turkey's shift was too hasty, and prevented it from playing a stronger role as a mediator, or whether it was the only option in the face of the regime's brutality, is a point of contention. Still, Turkey's shift to supporting the opposition in itself is not enough to transform Turkey from an interested third party to a secondary party. This transformation occurred slowly, as mortar shells began to kill Turkish civilians in border towns; the Turkish government allowed opposition groups to cross back-and-forth over the border, often smuggling weapons and foreign fighters; Turkey was accused of providing weapons and training to opposition elements, including jihadi groups; and Turkey became the most vocal international community member calling for humanitarian intervention. The slide from interested third party to secondary party will become more clear during the discussion of the conflict dynamics.

#### **5.4.3 Interested third parties**

Saudi Arabia has thus far been invested in the outcome of the Syrian conflict but was initially hesitant to support the opposition; especially its Islamist elements. A member of the Saudi establishment explained: "Saudi Arabia opposes what Turkey and Qatar are doing: We will support neither the Muslim Brotherhood nor the Salafis. The friction caused by Turkey running the show in the north led Saudi to switch to Jordan in the fall of 2012. The switch wasn't visible because the Jordanians didn't want this to be public – although ultimately they can't prevent it from being known. Saudi Arabia also enjoys more leverage over Jordan than it does over Turkey."<sup>203</sup> At the same time, Saudi Arabia is united with Qatar and Turkey against the Assad regime. All three Sunni Muslim governments desire to lessen Iran's influence in the region and prevent it from gaining a major victory if the Assad regime withstands the conflict. Conversely, they

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<sup>203</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts. Middle East Report No 143 (p.13).

hope that a new Sunni government in Damascus would weaken Iran's power in the region to their benefit. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and Qatar especially believe that a Sunni regime in Damascus could increase their influence over Shia-dominated Iraq by strengthening the currently-marginalized Iraqi Sunnis.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, the Assad regime's demise would weaken Hezbollah in Lebanon, another key area where the Gulf States would like to see their influence increase.<sup>205</sup> However, in contrast to Saudi Arabia, Qatar has allied itself with the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the region and has actively supported them and other extremist groups in the Syrian opposition.<sup>206</sup> It is difficult to track the flow of weapons and cash from the Gulf States to various opposition groups, causing Saudi Arabia and the West to grow concerned over whether the weapons will ultimately end up in the hands of radical Islamists who could then further upset the regional balance of power. Still, Saudi Arabia has criticized the U.S. for only providing non-lethal aid to the rebels, and has pushed Europe to arm them.<sup>207</sup>

The United States has thus far been more cautious in its involvement in the conflict than Arab governments or even the European Union. While the US agrees with Turkey that Assad should no longer have power in Syria, the media has frequently reported on the division between Obama and Erdoğan over how deeply the US should be committed to the conflict. Prior to Erdoğan's meeting with Obama in Washington and right after the Reyhanli bombings, the media reported that "Erdoğan has pressed Washington to provide military assistance to rebels trying to oust Assad, but Obama has resisted. Erdoğan is expected to raise reports that Assad has used chemical weapons against the rebels to urge Obama to take a more aggressive stance."<sup>208</sup> The U.S. sent a group of 27 soldiers to Gaziantep in January 2013 to operate NATO-controlled Patriot

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<sup>204</sup> Hassan H. (2013). Syria: the view from the Gulf States. European Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Ibid

<sup>207</sup> Black, I. (2013). U.S. pledges expanded support for the Syrian rebels but no military aid. The Guardian.

<sup>208</sup> Sullivan, K. (2013). Turkey's Erdoğan to air policy differences with Obama. Washington Post.

missile defense barriers near the Syrian border.<sup>209</sup> Then, in February 2013, it pledged \$60 million in non-lethal assistance to the Syrian National Coalition, along with food and medical supplies which would go directly to the Free Syrian Army through the Supreme Military Council.<sup>210</sup> The Syrian opposition barely expressed gratitude for the aid and sought to downplay the existence of extremist elements in the opposition while pushing for military aid. In April the U.S. agreed to double its aid, reaching a total of \$250 million, including 'battlefield support equipment' such as body armor, but still refused to provide lethal assistance.<sup>211</sup> Finally in March 2014 the U.S. authorized the provision of anti-tank guided missiles to the rebels, the most advanced weapons to be donated thus far in the conflict.<sup>212</sup> In June 2014 President Obama requested Congress to authorize \$500 million for U.S. military training and equipment to 'moderate' Syrian rebels.<sup>213</sup> However, there are logistical hurdles to getting the aid to the rebels, and if approved, it is unlikely to start until mid-2015. In the meantime, the U.S. and allies have begun accelerating the supply of arms and ammunition to some Syrian opposition groups through the Turkish border.<sup>214</sup>

The European Union, mainly driven by the United Kingdom and France, has taken a typically cautious approach to the Syrian conflict but has increased its insistence on the need for Assad to leave in recent months. Jon Wilks, the United Kingdom Representative to the Syrian Opposition, outlined Britain's principles for involvement in

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<sup>209</sup> Brumfield, B. (2013). U.S. troops arrive in Turkey; rebels battle for airport in Syria. CNN.

<sup>210</sup> Black, I. (2013). U.S. pledges expanded support for the Syrian rebels but no military aid. The Guardian.

<sup>211</sup> Brunnstrom, D. (2013). Kerry says U.S. doubling non-lethal aid to Syrian opposition. Reuters.

<sup>212</sup> Sly, L. (2014). New U.S. help arrives for Syrian rebels as government, extremists gain. The Washington Post.

<sup>213</sup> Gibbons-Neff, T. (2014). Obama wants \$500 million to train Syrian rebels. Now What? The Washington Post.

<sup>214</sup> Sly, L. (2014). New U.S. help arrives for Syrian rebels as government, extremists gain. The Washington Post.

the conflict at the Istanbul Conference on Mediation (2013).<sup>215</sup> These principles are similar to the European Union's and are:

- Give more support to National Coalition and in different areas.
- Ask the opposition to reach out to center ground and to all communities hesitant to join opposition.
- The need for more unity with the international community and Security Council. Iran has to be part of the solution and mediation.
- Britain agrees that Assad must go. Even Russia and Iran realize that a military solution will fail. Alawites must get on board with this political solution.
- Whatever Britain does must be aimed at saving Syrian lives. It will be justified to the public and parliament on that basis. Can we do more to change the crisis trajectory to bring death rates down?

Though British Prime Minister David Cameron has indicated his support for military action, Parliament failed to pass the proposal in August 2013. The French government has also been heavily involved with providing intelligence to and about the Syrian opposition; evaluating which elements of the opposition are stable enough to warrant European support.<sup>216</sup> President Francois Hollande also indicated that France would support a military intervention if led by the United States.<sup>217</sup>

Collectively, the countries seeking to support the Syrian opposition have formed a loose coalition called the "Friends of Syria" which consists of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and the United States. In a June 2013 communique the group urged each member to "provide urgently all the necessary material and equipment to the opposition on the ground, each country in its own way" through the Syrian Supreme Military

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<sup>215</sup> Self attendance at the Istanbul Conference on Mediation in 2013

<sup>216</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts. Middle East Report No 143 (p.14).

<sup>217</sup> BBC News. (2014). Syria Crisis: Where key countries stand.

Council.<sup>218</sup> In a May 2014 communique, the group agreed to take coordinated steps to increase support for the moderate opposition, remove Syria's chemical weapons, refer Syria to the International Criminal Court, and deliver more humanitarian aid across the border into Syria.<sup>219</sup> The goal of referring Syrian government officials to the ICC for war crimes was thwarted in May 2014 however, when Russia and China vetoed the Security Council resolution.

## **5.5 Conflict dynamics**

### **5.5.1 Precipitating events**

The initial protests which began in 2011 were very small. One person set himself on fire on January 26, 2011 but it had little effect on the population, in stark contrast to Tunisia. A few people gathered in several cities in February 2011, but the real protests began in March 2011, when a group of school children in Dera'a wrote "down with the system" on the wall of their school. Their subsequent arrest and torture caused more intense protests. The regime responded to the protesters with violence, killing several people.<sup>220</sup> On March 24, 2011 the government announced reforms and pay increases for government workers. Bashar gave televised speeches to the People's Assembly, Cabinet,

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<sup>218</sup> Friends of Syria Core Group- Final Communique (2013). Official website of the UK Government.

<sup>219</sup> London 11 Friends of Syria core group ministerial communique (2014). Official website of the UK Government.

<sup>220</sup> Ulutas U. (2011) The Syrian Opposition in the Making: Capabilities and Limits. Insight Turkey Vol.13 No.3

and Damascus University in late March, when he blamed armed gangs and foreign conspirators for the violence.<sup>221</sup>

In order to avoid their fates, Bashar attempted to do exactly the opposite of what Tunisia's Ali and Egypt's Mubarak did in reaction to protests. In late March Bashar formed a committee to study the possible termination of the emergency law, which had been in effect since 1963 and was used to justify repression. A new Prime Minister was also announced. By March 15th protests erupted in Deraa, Dayr-al-Zor, al-Hasaka, Hama, and a few parts of Damascus. Throughout March the protests intensified, and Fridays were especially important as people streamed out of Friday prayers to protest in city centers. Even though most of the protests were peaceful, some violence did occur and Baath party headquarters and other government offices started to be attacked.

By March 29th there were also pro-regime demonstrations in parts of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Tartus. In early April the government announced concessions to Kurds (who make up about 10% of the population) and instituted policies in favor of religious Sunni Muslims (such as rehiring teachers who were fired for wearing the niqab, closing casinos, and other measures). By April 14th political prisoners were released. On April 16th Assad announced the lifting of the emergency law and pledged to tackle economic problems, but his speech did not focus on political reform. On April 21st the emergency law was lifted but replaced with other legislation designed to be equally restrictive. During the first week of April government snipers appeared and the protests started to result in more deaths. By late April there were around 100 reported deaths and rumors began to spread about government soldiers who were wounded when they refused to fire on protesters. This was the environment when Turkey began its attempts to influence the Assad regime.<sup>222</sup> Now, nearly four years into the conflict, the initial isolated protests and rumors of violence seem a world away from the civil war and humanitarian disaster the country faces today.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Lesch D. (2012). Syria: The fall of the house of Assad. Yale University Press: New Haven.

### 5.5.2 Issue emergence, transformation, and proliferation

The conflict has gone from being isolated protests over the treatment of students caught creating anti-regime graffiti; to calls for Assad to step down; to a civil war; to a regional war between the Assad regime, opposition groups, and extremist groups such as ISIS. The conflict's transformation illustrates how issues can change quickly, new actors can become involved, and opposing parties can become polarized.

In late April 2011, exiles formed an opposition group called the National Initiative for Change and called for a peaceful democratic transition from Assad rule, the first time there were calls for Assad to step down. Until that point, the protests generally revolved around the need for political reform, and Assad had responded tepidly with concessions to minority groups, plans for 'national dialogue', the appointment of a new prime minister, and finally, a plan to abolish the emergency law. Soon, these gestures were not enough. By August 2011, the U.S., France, Germany, and Britain called for Assad's resignation, along with the Syrian people. Also in August, the Syrian National Council was formed, moving the uprising one step closer to civil war. By Fall 2011, Syria has spiraled into civil war.

Unfortunately, this was not the last time the conflict would transform. Jihadi groups became active in Syria around mid-2012, and had taken over certain areas of the country by Spring 2013. As jihadi groups proliferated, Israel's director of military intelligence called Syria the "center of global jihad," concerns that were echoed by Jordan.<sup>223</sup> Now, the conflict in Syria is considered a three-way war, as Free Syrian Army moderate opposition groups battle not only the Assad regime, but al-Qaeda backed extremist groups. Furthermore, as ISIS gains power in Syria, it has also been able to make massive gains in Iraq. As one Iraq analyst stated, "Syria has a much greater impact on Iraq than Iraq has on Syria. Having this rear base in Raqqa has been great for ISIS – it's what allowed them to organize and recruit and train their

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<sup>223</sup> Cohen, G.H. (2013). Syria is becoming center of global jihad, MI chief warns.



fighters."<sup>224</sup> The conflict is once again on the verge of transformation; this time, from a civil war to a regional conflagration.

### 5.5.3 Polarization

After trying for several months to convince the Assad regime to stop responding to the protests with violence, Turkey completely switched sides and began supporting the Syrian opposition. The switch was abrupt in the sense that Turkey cut off all relations with the Assad regime and began exclusively supporting the opposition, refusing to maintain ties with Assad. However, the fact that Turkey would begin supporting the opposition was not unexpected. There was a slow process of polarization between the Assad and Erdoğan governments which began just a few months after the protests started. In May 2011 Turkey still publicly supported the Assad government remaining in control of Syria while taking into account some of the protestors' demands, but privately, government officials were starting to question whether Assad was really invested in the changes necessary to save the country.<sup>225</sup> Analysts were already pointing out that Turkey was continuing to engage with Assad partially out of fear of ceding that relationship to Iran, which would quickly step in to become Assad's champion if Turkey cut him off.<sup>226</sup> In June 2011, Turkey began welcoming defecting Syrian soldiers and announced that it would send humanitarian assistance over the Syrian border. Turkish rhetoric was still not too harsh; Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated at the time: "Regional people's demands are normal, rightful and legitimate. Meeting those demands will make our region a more stable, more democratic and more prosperous region. We are ready to do our utmost to help our region complete this transition process in a healthy way."<sup>227</sup> Turkey seemed to embark on its last-ditch effort to sway Assad in

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<sup>224</sup> Leigh, K. (2014). Iraq, Syria, and ISIS: What it all means. ABC News.

<sup>225</sup> Mcevers, K. (2011). Syria strains Turkey's 'No problems' foreign policy. NPR.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Daragahi, B. (2011). Turkey breaks with Syria over crackdown. Los Angeles Times.

August 2011, when Davutoğlu went to Damascus along with envoys from India, Brazil, and South Africa, to convince him to stop the violence.<sup>228</sup> In response, the Syrian government stated, "If Davutoğlu is to deliver a firm message to Syria, he will hear a firmer reply regarding the Turkish stance."<sup>229</sup> By late September 2011, Erdoğan stated that he was "not very optimistic" that Syria's future could include Assad.<sup>230</sup> By October, the Syrian opposition met in Istanbul and created the Syrian National Council, which began operating out of Turkey along with the Free Syrian Army. The polarization between the Erdoğan and Assad regimes was complete.

Polarization has also occurred between Turks and the Syrian refugees they are hosting. Turkey's open-border policy for Syrian refugees and fighters has led to mistrust of the government by Alawite populations and general discontent with the proliferating number of Syrians in Turkish villages. According to the International Crisis Group:

The situation also demonstrates Turkey's limitations in imposing its will or shaping the arc of the war: its policies essentially have erased the border, accelerated southern Anatolia's integration with northern Syria and forced Ankara to take ownership of the latter's predicament but failed to affect more important dynamics further south.<sup>231</sup>

However, Turkish officials seem to believe that they can change the border situation if desired; as a senior Turkish official told the Crisis Group, "I agree that borders have become meaningless. But if need be, we can harden them again."<sup>232</sup> The belief that the borders can be reconstituted at will is perhaps not shared by the minority populations of the affected areas. As Şefik Çirkin, an MHP deputy from Hatay told the International Crisis Group, "The Alawites think that when the Syrian war is finished [these al-Qaeda

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<sup>228</sup> The Guardian. (2011). Turkey to press Syria to end bloodshed.

<sup>229</sup> Utku, B.S. (2011). Erdoğan sends Turkish FM to increase pressure on Syria. Hurriyet Daily News.

<sup>230</sup> Tharoor, I. (2011). Time Exclusive: Time meets Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

<sup>231</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts. Middle East Report No 143.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

affiliates] will turn their guns on them. Sometimes impressions can outweigh facts."<sup>233</sup> The fear that the heavily armed Syrian population in Turkey, steeped in violence, will become hostile to their Turkish protectors is a real one which is articulated more by NGOs and research organizations such as International Crisis Group than by the Turkish press.

#### **5.5.4 Spiraling**

Turkey's practically open-border policy with Syria allowed the Free Syrian Army to set up command in the country while still being able to cross into Syria. By mid-2012 Turkey was serving as a conduit for weapons being funneled from Qatar and Saudi Arabia into Syria. Around this time, relations between Turkey and Syria deteriorated. In April 2012 Syrian regime forces fired across the Turkish border into a refugee camp for the first time. Then on June 22, 2012, a Turkish military airplane was shot down by Syrian government forces. After Turkish civilians were killed for the first time when Syrian government forces fired into Akçakale, the Turkish parliament authorized military operations against Syria the very next day, October 4, 2012. Despite Turkey's hesitance to work with the international community on some aspects of the Syrian crisis, such as refugee camps, Turkey accepted the deployment of NATO Patriot missiles on the Turkish border in January 2013. Yet, the precautions were not enough to prevent two more massive tragedies from occurring. In February 2013, a car bomb attack at the Cilvegözü border post killed seventeen people, and in May 2013 car bombs in Reyhanlı killed 52 and wounded over 100 people. The war has also caused a black market of illicit traders, smugglers, and traffickers to spring up along the Turkish-Syrian border. Tea stands and small shops now serve as fronts for smugglers to get people, weapons, and other equipment from Turkey to Syria, a task which, despite Turkey's

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<sup>233</sup> International Crisis Group. (2013). Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey. Europe Report No 225

claims to the contrary, is not described as difficult by a group of investigative journalists visiting in July 2014.<sup>234</sup>

As the conflict progressed, radical Islamic extremist groups developed first a foothold, then a large swath of territory, across Syria and Iraq. Turkey has been criticized by the U.S. and other Western allies for being slow to recognize extremist groups as such, and has even been accused of assisting groups such as al-Nusra. The criticism became even more intense after al-Nusra announced their alliance to Al-Qaeda in April 2013. For example, Today's Zaman columnist Lale Kemal quoted a Western official as saying "Any means necessary for Assad to go, even if it means through al-Nusra, appears to be valid for Turkey. But this is a very short-sighted view," in April 2013.<sup>235</sup> The U.S. refers to the largest extremist group, ISIS, as "a transnational Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group."<sup>236</sup> By September 2013, ISIS was fighting the FSA near Aleppo, and FSA fighters considered it as big a threat as the Assad regime. ISIS is strongest in Raqqah and Syria's eastern provinces of Dayr az Zawr and Hasakah, after facing battles and disagreements with other Syrian extremist groups such as al-Nusra. In January 2014, groups including the Islamic Front, al-Nusra, and the FSA launched an attack against ISIS, pushing them out of Aleppo but not managing to clear them out of Raqqah. However, the brief coalition of fighters could not maintain control, and by June 2014 ISIS had retaken territory stretching from outside Aleppo to Eastern Iraq, declaring it a caliphate led by its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.<sup>237</sup> According to the U.S. government, ISIS' gains in Iraq could significantly destabilize Syria, as captured U.S.-origin military equipment provided to Iraqi security forces has already appeared in Syria along with Iraqi militants.<sup>238</sup> ISIS is a magnet for foreign fighters, including militants from Pakistan and Afghanistan in addition to Iraq. Execution of Alawites and

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<sup>234</sup> Lyons, J. (2014). Business of war booming on Turkey-Syria line. *The Australian*.

<sup>235</sup> Demirelli, F. (2013). Al-Qaeda officially in Syria: What is next? *Today's Zaman*.

<sup>236</sup> Congressional Research Service. (2014). *Armed conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. response*.

<sup>237</sup> BBC News. (2014). *Timeline: How the Syria conflict has spread*.

<sup>238</sup> Congressional Research Service. (2014). *Armed conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. response*.

Shiites along with moderate Sunnis and opposition fighters have led to massive waves of refugees and even greater chaos. After ISIS fighters captured the Mosul Dam in Iraq and made territorial gains nearly to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish area of Northern Iraq, the US worked with Iraqi troops and Peshmerga (Kurdish) fighters to retake it and confirmed that they would begin a long-term strategy to defeat ISIS.<sup>239</sup> Though it is perhaps too little, too late to stop the spiraling that has already occurred, in July 2014 Turkey announced efforts to limit the flow of jihadists going into Syria and Iraq, including Turkish citizens. Efforts include increased border protection and interviewing families of Turks who went to fight in order to build a profile of the jihadists and prevent them from crossing back into Turkey.<sup>240</sup> Turkey also finally blacklisted al-Nusra as a terrorist group in June 2014.

The use of chemical weapons was also a sign of spiraling violence. The U.N. Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic's report concluded in September 2013 that surface-to-surface rockets containing sarin were used in the Ghouta area of Damascus against civilians on a 'relatively large scale,' while reports of attacks using chlorine gas in Hama province surfaced in mid-April 2014.<sup>241</sup> After the Obama administration threatened military action in August 2013 due to the use of chemical weapons, the Assad regime agreed to destroy all of its chemical weapons stocks and production facilities. As of June 23, 2014, all of Syria's declared chemical weapons have been removed from the country.<sup>242</sup>

Refugees began arriving in Turkey in April 2011, before Ankara switched its support from Assad to the opposition. As the refugee influx continued, Turkey, believing as did most of the international community that the conflict would be short-lived, extended an open-door policy to the refugees and welcomed them into the

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<sup>239</sup> BBC News. (2014). Timeline: How the Syria conflict has spread.

<sup>240</sup> BBC Monitoring Europe. (2014). Turkey boosts measures to stop jihadist flow to Syria, Iraq.

<sup>241</sup> Congressional Research Service. (2014). Armed conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. response.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

country under a legal framework known as 'temporary protection'.<sup>243</sup> As the conflict progressed, the refugee camps were pushed past capacity and Turkish towns along the border began to be inundated with Syrian refugees and fighters. Now, there are an estimated 1.5 million refugees living in Turkey, and tensions are high between them and the Turks, who accuse refugees of causing violence, increasing rent, and accepting wages lower than Turks would be willing to, thus creating tougher competition for jobs. However, Turkey has responded to the wave of Syrian refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants with what most international observers have determined to be great compassion. First, the government extended the 'temporary protection' designation to Syrian refugees in October 2011, giving them more legal rights than they would have as 'guests'. This also committed the Turkish government to the principle of 'non-refoulement', which is not forcing refugees to return to the country from which they fled violence, and to providing basic humanitarian services.<sup>244</sup> Other steps taken by the Turkish government to improve services to refugees are the 'open-door policy', establishing a coordination committee led by a deputy prime minister, and coordinating between the governors of the border provinces.<sup>245</sup> The camps themselves are heralded as the finest seen in any conflict environment, and international praise includes an article by the *New York Times* called 'How to build a perfect refugee camp'. However, Turkey has been criticized for discouraging international aid to the refugees and maintaining tight control of the camps. As Turks recognize that the crisis has no end in sight, the Erdoğan government may slowly allow for more international involvement. It must also begin to consider what to do with the refugees who are stuck in legal limbo without the ability to work or in some cases, provide their children with education. This is especially pressing for the majority of refugees who live outside the camps. Voluntary return is unlikely; even if the violence ended, the large-scale destruction and presence of extremist groups would discourage many refugees from returning, as would a settlement that left the Assad regime in power.<sup>246</sup> Resettlement into other countries for such a large

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<sup>243</sup> Kirişçi, K. (2014). Brookings. Syrian Refugees and Turkey's Challenges: Going beyond hospitality.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

amount of refugees is also not feasible, though it is a possibility for the most vulnerable. Ultimately, this leaves Turkey with the task of accommodating the bulk of the refugees through integration. Rumors of refugees being granted citizenship rights abound, causing considerable distress for opposition parties who recognize the loyalty refugees would have for the AKP if this were to happen. However, government officials have thus far denied the possibility of refugees becoming citizens.<sup>247</sup> No matter how the Turkish government decides to deal with the influx, officials along with the refugees themselves seem resigned to their presence being a long-term reality.

### **5.5.5 Stereotyping and mirror imaging**

As described in previous sections, the conflict's progression has seen the steady erosion of 'moderate' opposition elements as fighters gravitate toward the extremist groups. Similarly, everyone involved in the conflict, from widows to diplomats to national leaders, have hardened their own positions and created stereotypes regarding the opposing parties. Importantly, the Erdoğan regime has completely changed the tone of its rhetoric regarding Assad, going so far as to change the spelling of the name by which they refer to him. AKP leaders:

changed the name of the Syrian leader from “Esad” to “Esed” during the crisis. And as the political leadership started to use the new term, all the pro-government Turkish media used it as well...after this discourse change, the Turkish Language Institution ruled in June 2011 that the new version, Esed, is the correct one.<sup>248</sup>

Erdoğan began to stereotype Assad as the typical brutal dictator, whereas just a few months before he was hopeful that Assad would avoid such a fate. As early as July

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Demirtaş, B. Turkish-Syrian Relations: From friend 'Esad' to enemy 'Esed'. Middle East Policy, Vol. 20 No. 1, 13 May 2013.

2012, Erdoğan claimed in a national speech that the Assad regime was "desperately" attacking its own people, showing their panic, desperation, and insanity.<sup>249</sup> He went on to say that Assad had "blood on his hands" and would meet the same fate as previous dictators.<sup>250</sup> According to some commentators, Erdoğan's rhetoric is coming from intense emotion. Erdoğan is:

enraged that Assad didn't heed his advice to curtail violence and embark on reforms, humiliated that for years he has been talking up the Syrian president to partners in the West as the man to reform Syria. "Erdoğan is [angry] at Bashar for not listening to him, the big brother," Turkey specialist Barkey said. "There is a danger for Bashar that Erdoğan may personalize this."<sup>251</sup>

Erdoğan's rhetoric against Assad intensified in August 2011, saying: "Those who sent scores of Muslims to the gallows are not up on their feet now; look where they are going on a stretcher ... Those who do not learn a lesson will suffer," in comparison to Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.<sup>252</sup>

As the conflict progressed and violence came over the Turkish border, Turks began to stereotype the Syrian refugees in their midst as well as question the government's Syria policy. In response to questions regarding the Reyhanlı bombing, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that "those who linked this atrocity to the government's Syrian policy were committing a crime against humanity."<sup>253</sup> In the wake of the bombing, the AKP government and CHP opposition began attacking each other, with Erdoğan stating, "Activities at the level of treason by some dark people in disguise as journalists, traders, and businessman have been detected in Hatay and they are being arrested and submitted to the judiciary," while accusing the CHP of being connected to

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<sup>249</sup> Erdoğan, R.T. (2012). Address to the Nation.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Daragahi, B. (2011). Turkey breaks with Syria over crackdown. Los Angeles Times.

<sup>252</sup> Utku, B.S. (2011). Erdoğan sends Turkish FM to increase pressure on Syria. Hurriyet Daily News.

<sup>253</sup> Idiz, S. (2013). Turks query government's Syria policy. Hurriyet Daily News.



these treasonous activities.<sup>254</sup> Meanwhile, CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu accused the AKP government of not acting on intelligence warnings before the bombing, and of helping to perpetuate the Syrian conflict, saying “they are sending these militants to Syria saying ‘Go kill your brothers.’ They are handing them arms and putting money in their pockets” in reference to the AKP's support for Syrian opposition groups.<sup>255</sup> Of course, this rhetoric sounds more innocent when compared to his inflammatory statement that Erdoğan is the "terrorist chieftain" for Syria, implying that the Syrian opposition is a terrorist group.<sup>256</sup> The rhetoric has only intensified by summer 2014. A video was leaked in March 2014 which allegedly shows a conversation between Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu, National Intelligence Organization (MIT) head Hakan Fidan and Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Yaşar Güler discussing how Turkey could intervene in Syria, and how intervention could be justified. In response, CHP deputy chairman Haluk Koç stated,

Are you [the government] still making plans to intervene in Syria via a series of plots? Have you plotted an attack by the Syrian opposition forces on Turkey, to be blamed on the Assad regime, to convince people of the threat coming from the Syrian regime... Such plots and plans do not make you a hero but turns the plotters into war criminals.<sup>257</sup>

The inflammatory statements by politicians led some journalists to accuse both the AKP and CHP of increasing polarization not only in Turkey, but among all the parties in the conflict.<sup>258</sup>

Of course, Assad hit back against the Erdoğan government with his own harsh words. In April 2013, he accused Turkey of assisting terrorists in coalition with Israel, and stated, "when the prime minister or the government or officials get involved in

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<sup>254</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. (2013). Turkish government, opposition engage in war of Reyhanli words.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Demirelli, F. (2013). The Syrian battle in Turkish politics. Today's Zaman.

<sup>257</sup> BBC Monitoring Europe. (2014). Turkish opposition MP suggests government planned Syria invasion.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

shedding Syrian people's blood, there is no place for bridges between me and them or the Syrian people that don't respect them."<sup>259</sup> In a wide-reaching interview with Turkey's Halk TV, Assad claimed that Turkey was supporting terrorists in order to see a Muslim Brotherhood-controlled Syria, and denied Turkish officials' claims that the conflict spiraled after he refused to listen to their advice, "as if Erdoğan is a sultan and I am his governor."<sup>260</sup> In what was perhaps a prescient statement about Turkey's alleged support for some radical Islamist groups, Assad said "it is not possible to put terrorism in your pocket and use it as a card because it is like a scorpion that won't hesitate to sting you at the first opportunity."<sup>261</sup> Assad has consistently claimed that supporting him is the only option besides supporting terror, and equates opposition supporters with terrorists.

## **5.6 Conflict regulation potential**

### **5.6.1 Internal limiting factors**

According to Brookings, Turkish officials have lost hope that the conflict will end quickly; "a number of members of parliament from both the governing and opposition parties interviewed in January 2014 openly stated that they could see the conflict in Syria persisting for the next 10-15 years."<sup>262</sup> This dismal view reflects the

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<sup>259</sup> The Japan Times. (2013). Assad warns of Mideast 'domino effect.

<sup>260</sup> Tremblay, P. (2013). Assad warns Erdoğan on Turkey's Syria policy. Al Monitor..

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Kirişci, K. (2014). Syrian Refugees and Turkey's Challenges: Going beyond hospitality. Brookings.

reality that there are few internal or external limiting factors to the conflict, leading to limited conflict regulation potential. The Assad regime gets supported and resupplied by Russia and Iran; the opposition is aided by the Friends of Syria including Turkey, the US, and the European Union; and ISIS supports itself through oil revenues. The never-ending stream of resources being pumped into the conflict allows the parties to keep fighting and reduces the incentive to reach a negotiated settlement. As Jim Muir describes in a BBC article, there is not sufficient pressure on Assad to step down, nor is military victory by the opposition a strong possibility. Similarly, a negotiated settlement is remote. The only possibility for a settlement of the conflict is if the opposition makes extreme concessions to the Assad regime, or if external pressure forces the Assad regime to do the same. Until either of these possibilities occur, the civil war has degenerated into a war of attrition in an unstable stalemate whereby the Assad regime has the upper hand, but not enough to completely overpower the opposition.<sup>263</sup>

Interestingly, the Syrian Kurds have emerged as a bright spot of peace in the northern part of Syria, if not an actual internal limiting factor. The Party for Democratic Unity (PYD) took control of Kurdish areas in northern Syria in July 2012 and proceeded to maintain peace in the area while generally staying out of the fights between the opposition and Assad regime; indifference reciprocated by the other parties in the conflict who also generally avoided PYD controlled areas. However, the entrance of ISIS into the conflict changed the PYD's calculations, as it showed no inhibition to attack Kurdish-controlled territory. If Erdoğan can maintain peace with the Kurds in Turkey and Syria, the PYD-controlled 450 miles of Syrian territory along the Turkish border may prove to provide a buffer between Turkey and ISIS.<sup>264</sup> However, the current relationship between Erdoğan and the Syrian Kurds is not good, with the PYD accusing Turkey of allowing ISIS militants to cross back-and-forth over the border and attack Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria in July 2014, citing evidence that many captured or killed ISIS fighters have Turkish identity cards.<sup>265</sup> Foreign fighters captured by Kurds

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<sup>263</sup> Muir, J. (2014). Analysis: Why Assad can have confidence in his survival. BBC News.

<sup>264</sup> Cagaptay, S. (2014). Foreign Affairs. Turkey's Kurdish buffer.

<sup>265</sup> BBC Monitoring Europe. (2014). Syrian Kurdish party claims Turkey turning blind eye to ISIS attacks.

have claimed that they were trained in Turkish camps and that Turkish instructors teach at rebel camps in Syria, according to Saleh Muslim, the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party, the biggest Kurdish faction in Syria.<sup>266</sup> At the same time, Turkish Kurds from the PKK have been crossing the border to assist Syrian Kurds in the fight against ISIS.

### **5.6.2 External limiting factors**

The best possibility for ending the conflict is if the U.S. becomes more involved, which looks increasingly likely after it recently bombed ISIS strongholds in Iraq. Yet, the relationship between Erdoğan and the U.S. has completely eroded over the course of the conflict. Many reports in the Turkish media, especially surrounding Erdoğan's visit to Washington in May 2013, emphasize Turkey's dependence on the U.S. and even Erdoğan's nearly pleading desire for President Obama to intervene in Syria. For example, a Hurriyet Daily News writer says in reaction to Obama's noncommittal attitude about intervention, "That was not exactly what Erdoğan actually wanted to hear. Erdoğan hoped he could convince Obama that Assad's use of chemical weapons had violated the U.S.'s 'red lines,' but no, Washington DC was still to wait despite atrocities in Syria."<sup>267</sup> Erdoğan and Davutoğlu were quick to deny allegations that Turkey was too dependent on U.S. intervention for the success of their Syria policy. But, the U.S.'s lack of intervention obviously strained the relationship. By July 2014, Erdoğan stated; "in the past, I was calling him (Obama) directly. Because I can't get the expected results on Syria, our foreign ministers are now talking to each other."<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Sly, L. (2013). Turkey faces blowback from anti-Assad policy. The Washington Post.

<sup>267</sup> Yetkin M. (2013). What does Erdoğan want from the Turkish media. Hurriyet Daily News.

<sup>268</sup> Siasat Daily. (2014). 'I no longer talk to Obama': Turkey's Erdoğan.

Even if the U.S. intervened now, it is unclear whether the conflict could be de-escalated. The chief-of-staff of the FSA's Supreme Military Council, Abdelilah al-Bashir, has criticized Washington for giving weapons directly to what the U.S. claims are moderate rebels on the ground, rather than going through the FSA. Bashir stated, "Providing support to individual battalions could turn the commanders of these battalions into warlords and they will be difficult to control in future. This could turn Syria into Afghanistan or Somalia."<sup>269</sup> President Obama has also expressed cynicism about the U.S.'s power to affect change, saying "The notion that they were in a position to suddenly overturn not only Assad but also ruthless, highly-trained jihadists if we just sent a few arms is a fantasy."<sup>270</sup> The problems of identifying "moderate" opposition groups to support, transporting the weapons or other aid to them safely, and communicating with them effectively, all make the possibility of providing enough military aid to quickly end the conflict slim. Furthermore, domestic U.S. opinion will probably prevent Obama from intervening on a large scale with "boots on the ground," as it appeared to in 2013 after the discovery of chemical weapons. Therefore, the U.S. is unlikely to play a large role as an external limiting factor.

### **5.6.3 Interested or neutral third parties**

Though Turkey is now a secondary party to the conflict, various public, private, and charitable Turkish organizations are the most active in providing assistance to Syrians affected by the conflict, especially refugees within Turkey. Therefore, they fall under the category of 'interested or neutral third parties' helping to manage the conflict. The first level of aid comes from public administrative agencies. TIKA describes Turkey's response to the refugee crisis as "a fullscale mobilization of the Turkish public administration apparatus" involving governorships; municipalities; AFAD; Ministries of

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<sup>269</sup> Afanasieva, D. (2014). U.S. arms could create Syria 'warlords', rebel commander says. Reuters.

<sup>270</sup> Talev, M. and Greiling, K.A. (2014). Obama Says Quickly Arming Syrian Opposition a 'Fantasy'. Bloomberg.

Health, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Environment and Urbanization, National Education, Family and Social Policies, Food, Agriculture and Livestock; Turkish Armed Forces; TOKI; Department of Religious Affairs; and the Turkish Red Crescent.<sup>271</sup> These efforts are all coordinated by the Office for Coordinating Syrian Guest Affairs, which has the largest development assistance budget of any Turkish public agency, with over \$979 million spent in 2012.<sup>272</sup> The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) is another public agency which is heavily involved in helping Syrians in Turkey, handling Syrian guest affairs and providing financial support for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The second level of aid comes from Turkish NGOs and private charitable foundations. Interestingly, Syria was the second largest recipient of Turkish NGO aid in 2012 with almost \$20 million, while Somalia was the first with over \$26 million.<sup>273</sup> Turkey's Humanitarian Relief Foundation is one of the largest NGOs and has been supplying aid such as food packages to Syria since the beginning of the conflict. In April 2014, it sent fifteen trucks with one hundred tons of food packages into Syria in memory of the nine Mavi Marmara victims.<sup>274</sup> The Society of Doctors of Earth has also been active in helping Syrians both in and out of Turkey. They provided \$8 million worth of medicine to Syrian refugees along with other medical supplies to refugees in Turkey, examined refugees in Lebanon and Libya, transported injured Syrians to Turkey and treated them, and set up mobile clinics along the Lebanon-Syria border, to name a few projects.<sup>275</sup> Kimse Yok Mu (Anybody there?) has also conducted various projects for Syrian refugees in Turkey, such as distributing food packages, blankets, and hygiene items; setting up mobile toilets and showers; constructing a playground and

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<sup>271</sup> Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency. Turkish Development Assistance 2012.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> BBC Monitoring Europe. (2014). Turkish NGO sends humanitarian aid to Syria in memory of flotilla victims.

<sup>275</sup> Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency. Turkish Development Assistance 2012.

medical center; and giving hot meals through a mobile soup kitchen.<sup>276</sup> Dosteller (Friendly Hands) and Yardimeli (Helping Hand) are two more organizations working to help Syrian refugees by providing food aid and other supplies. These NGOs are providing valuable assistance to the millions of refugees and in some cases, internally displaced persons still inside Syria. However, just as the Turkish government has been accused of providing help indiscriminately to the Syrian opposition, including extremist groups, non-governmental organizations operating in the border areas have been accused of the same; offering non-lethal help to extremist fighters.<sup>277</sup> In perhaps the most controversial case, an NGO called HİSADER (Haznedar Islamic Research, Sustenance and Helping Association) was accused of using a logo similar to ISIS's and sending young Turkish men into Syria to fight with the extremist group.<sup>278</sup> Though the directors vehemently denied the charge, the charity shut down. All NGOs must be careful to avoid having their aid become another currency in the conflict through being monopolized by certain parties. So far, this does not seem to be a problem.

Finally, there are now international NGOs operating in Turkey with the goal of aiding Syrian refugees. As of April 2014 there were twenty-four NGOs mostly from the U.S. who have received their authorizations to assist refugees in Turkey, with another twenty applications pending and ten rejections.<sup>279</sup> Though Turkey was previously criticized for its unwillingness to work with international organizations and subsequent confusing, lengthy procedure for their registration, it now seems to have recognized the need for cooperation due to the indefinite length of the conflict. In May 2014, the U.S. announced efforts to ramp up support to Turkey and other countries such as Lebanon and Jordan affected by the Syrian conflict and hosting large numbers of refugees

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Christie-Miller, A. (2013). Is Turkey helping international jihadis head to Syria? Christian Science Monitor.

<sup>278</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. (2014). Turkish charity using 'ISIL-adopted' insignia shuts down.

<sup>279</sup> Kirişci, K. (2014). Syrian Refugees and Turkey's Challenges: Going beyond hospitality. Brookings.

through the "Counter-Terrorism Partnerships Fund" of up to \$5 billion.<sup>280</sup> The effort was criticized as being too little, too late, but it is clear that with the growing humanitarian need, international help is necessary.

#### **5.6.4 Techniques of conflict management**

So far, several techniques have been attempted or suggested in an effort to manage the conflict. First, mediation between the opposing parties was attempted at the Geneva I and II conferences. In another attempt, various second and third parties attempted to support one of the primary opposing parties with overwhelming force in order to topple the Assad regime and thus, in theory, end the conflict. Finally, Turkey has consistently advocated for forceful humanitarian intervention by either the UN or a coalition of interested countries in order to overthrow the Assad regime. The attempt to arm the opposition has already been discussed extensively, but the Geneva conferences and Turkey's insistence on humanitarian intervention deserve a closer look. Lastly, in an interesting twist, some diplomats and commentators have encouraged giving Assad a second chance in light of the growing extremism in the Syrian opposition.

The first Geneva conference was held on 30 June 2012, and was attended by a group of actors calling themselves the Action Group for Syria, including the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, the Foreign Ministers of China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, Turkey, Iraq (Chair of the Summit of the League of Arab States), Kuwait (Chair of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States) and Qatar (Chair of the Arab Follow-up Committee on Syria of the League of Arab States), and the European Union High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy. According to the Action Group's Final Communique, their goals were bringing an end to the violence and human rights abuses, launching a democratic, Syrian-led political process leading to a transition, and

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<sup>280</sup> BBC Monitoring Europe. (2014). USA to step up efforts to help Syria's neighbours, including Turkey.



maintaining the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria. The Communique further identified steps to be taken in order to implement the Six Point Plan, and agreed on principles and guidelines for a Syrian-led transition. Significantly, it called for the establishment of a transitional governing body which could include members of the Assad regime, as long as it was formed on the basis of 'mutual consent.'<sup>281</sup> The Six Point Plan is an amendment to UN Security Council resolution 2042 backed by Kofi Annan and ostensibly accepted by the Assad regime. The six points are 1) committing to work with the Envoy (Annan, at the time) toward a Syrian-led political process 2) stopping the violence 3) ensuring provision of humanitarian assistance 4) releasing detained people and making the circumstances of those still in detention more transparent 5) ensuring that journalists have safe access to report in Syria and 6) respecting freedom of association and the right to demonstrate.<sup>282</sup> The Six Point Plan and subsequent Final Communique of the Action Group for Syria were the first and most optimistic documents released as part of the international community's efforts to mediate the conflict.

Next, The Friends of Syria Core Group of countries – the 'London 11', issued a communique on 22 October 2013 urging the adoption of the original Geneva Communique and the attendance to Geneva II, with a few modifications. By this point, the Assad regime was no longer granted the option of being a member of the transitional governing body (TGB), as the group specified, "We agree that when the TGB is established, Assad and his close associates with blood on their hands will have no role in Syria." The document also expressed concern over the use of chemical weapons and growing threat of extremism, while pledging increased aid to the moderate opposition.

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None of the goals described in the Six Point Plan or subsequent Communiques had been achieved by early 2014, except the appointment of envoys to participate in the talks. Therefore, the Geneva II conference was held on 22 January 2014 in Montreux

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<sup>281</sup> Action Group for Syria. (2012). Final Communique.

<sup>282</sup> Six-Point Proposal of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. (2012). As annexed to Security Council resolution 2042.

<sup>283</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2013). Final Communique of the London Ministerial Meeting on Syria.

and 23-31 January in Geneva with the aim of discussing the implementation of the Plan and subsequent Communiques. The Syrian National Coalition attended, but its largest bloc, the Syrian National Council, quit the Coalition in protest of its decision to engage in negotiations before Assad was ousted.<sup>284</sup> The first round of talks began with even more hostility than expected, as Ahmad Jarba, the head of the National Coalition, insisted that Assad transfer power immediately to a transitional government, while members of the Syrian government coalition such as UN ambassador Bashar Jaafari and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem claimed that opposition supporters had "blood on their hands."<sup>285</sup> The talks were also attended by Senior Officials from Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States, who released a London 11 Communique on the Geneva II Conference on January 31. In the Communique, they praised the efforts of Joint Special Representative Brahimi for bringing the parties together, and the Syrian National Coalition, for continuing to attend the talks. At the same time, they accused the Assad regime of obstructing talks and using a "starve or surrender" strategy and "barrel bombs" against the Syrian people. This Communique outlined the international community's position going into the second round of talks held from 10-15 February.<sup>286</sup>

The second round of talks was no more productive than the first, and ended without setting a date for another meeting. The UN's mediator for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi blamed the failure squarely on the Syrian government delegation, who refused to negotiate the opposition's demands before focusing on their own. In fact, the talks never proceeded to actual negotiations, but only on what would be discussed and how. The main demand of the Syrian government is the ending of terrorism, which they define to include all opposition groups. The opposition's main concern is the establishment of a transitional governing body; one that does not include Assad. Despite the failure of the talks, the opposition also had an optimistic hope that it "had highlighted the government's inflexibility and might prompt a stronger international

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<sup>284</sup> The Times of Israel. (2014). Main bloc quits Syrian National Coalition over Geneva.

<sup>285</sup> BBC News. (2014). Syria Geneva II peace talks witness bitter exchanges.

<sup>286</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2014). London 11 Communique.

response."<sup>287</sup> However, some commenters also blamed the fragmentation of the opposition for the talks' failure. The opposition's split over the decision to negotiate in the first place, along with its failure to include Kurdish groups or Al-Qaeda elements, meant that it was unable to negotiate with the Syrian regime from a united position.<sup>288</sup> Turkey seemed to play a very limited role in Geneva II, evidenced by the paucity of news articles referencing its involvement. This might be partially due to the Assad regime's anger at Turkish support for the opposition. In the lead-up to Geneva II, Syria's deputy foreign minister Faisal Muqdad criticized "the stupid Turkish policy which has compromised the Turkish people... by attracting Al-Qaeda" to its territory.<sup>289</sup> With Erdoğan's harsh rhetoric against the Assad regime and the opposition's increasing fragmentation, Turkey was unable to play a role in uniting the opposition prior to the talks or in encouraging the Syrian delegation to compromise during the negotiations.

Erdoğan has seemingly advocated military intervention on several occasions. In September 2013 he condemned the international community's failure to take action, using the analogy of campaigns against seal hunting, he said: "People turn the world upside down when a couple of seals are killed. It is unacceptable that the world remains silent as 100,000 people are killed."<sup>290</sup> Erdoğan further signaled his desire for long-term military intervention, stating "It cannot be a 24 hour hit-and-run. A limited military action will not satisfy us," leading a Turkish media commentator to call him "trigger-happy."<sup>291</sup> In response to the UN's failure to immediately intervene following the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, Erdoğan called on UN members to resign and for concerned countries to form their own United Nations separate from the five permanent

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<sup>287</sup> Barnard, A. and Cumming-Bruce, N. (2014). After second round of Syria talks, no agreement even on how to negotiate. *New York Times*.

<sup>288</sup> Dede, A. Y. (2014). Why did the Geneva II peace talks fail? *Today's Zaman*.

<sup>289</sup> Daily News Egypt. (2013). A Syria solution must have Assad's blessing: Minister.

<sup>290</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). Erdoğan says leaders at G-20 summit accept need for Syria operation.

<sup>291</sup> Baydar, Y. (2013). Commentary views Obama speech on Syria, says Turkey remains "trigger-happy". *Today's Zaman* reprinted by BBC Monitoring Europe.

members of the Security Council who were preventing action.<sup>292</sup> At the same time, he called for a 'coalition of the willing' similar to what was done in Bosnia in the absence of a Security Council resolution. However, Turkey was not joined by any international partners in its zeal to intervene. In April 2014 Erdoğan claimed that Syria and Turkey were at war, stating, "Syria is in a state of war with us. They are harassing our planes. They have martyred 74 of our brothers, and the tomb of Suleyman Sah is our land. An attack on it is an attack on 780,000 square kilometers. Can we remain silent about such a thing?"<sup>293</sup> In fact, Turkish military forces did enter Syria during the same month in order to protect the tomb of Suleyman Sah (considered Turkish land due to an agreement signed in 1921 and recognized by the Syrian authorities after gaining independence). However, the UN Security Council will never authorize humanitarian intervention, due to Russia and China's veto power, and Turkey has not found any partners for its 'coalition of the willing' initiative. Therefore, humanitarian intervention does not appear to be a strong possibility for conflict management.

With the decreasing influence of the 'moderate' opposition, it may be necessary for the Friends of Syria to accept supporting Islamist groups if it intends to continue arming the opposition. Finally, a few diplomats and commenters have recently suggested that the Assad regime is the 'least of all evils' option in Syria, where radical Islamist groups have gained territory and followers in comparison to the 'moderate' opposition, which is increasingly seen as ineffectual by supporters inside and outside of Syria. Ryan C. Crocker, a US diplomat with a long history of service in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, said, "We need to start talking to the Assad regime again," according to The New York Times. "It will have to be done very, very quietly. But bad as Assad is, he is not as bad as the jihadis who would take over in his absence," Crocker added.<sup>294</sup> Time will tell if Crocker's assessment proves correct and the international community suddenly reaches an agreement with the regime.

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<sup>292</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). Turkish PM presses for UN reform, says members should quit over Egypt, Syria. Reprinted by BBC Monitoring Europe.

<sup>293</sup> Today's Zaman. (2014). Davutoğlu clarifies Erdoğan's Syria war remarks.

<sup>294</sup> Today's Zaman. (2013). Al-Qaeda elements in Syria significant threat for Turkey.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The discussion of Turkey's involvement in Syria enables us to see a clear progression from Turkey using its soft power to attempt to influence the Assad regime, to Turkey supporting the opposition, to advocating for forceful humanitarian intervention in the conflict. Throughout the entire process, Turkey has provided humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees through the variety of actors described above. Turkey has also taken several actions that could constitute forcible intervention in the conflict, yet the nature of Turkey's support to the opposition means that it cannot be labelled 'humanitarian' or 'military' intervention. Turkey has provided the opposition with an open border to cross back-and-forth into Syria, bringing fighters and weapons into the country. Many sources have also accused Turkey of providing the opposition with weapons, though Turkey has denied these allegations. Turkey's support for the opposition contributed significantly to the opposition's ability to maintain its survival and continue its war against the Assad regime, but was not enough to decisively enable it to win the conflict. This support, and especially Turkey's porous borders, has been criticized by international actors and Turks. At the same time, Turkey's humanitarian efforts in support of the Syrian refugees have been unparalleled, and praised widely by international actors and Syrians themselves. Thus, we see a tension between the positive results of Turkey's humanitarian aid to the refugees, and the negative perception of Turkey's intervention on behalf of the Syrian opposition.

The repercussions of Turkey's support for the opposition can perhaps be seen most fully in the effect it has had on Turkey's ability to mediate in the conflict. Due to its efforts since around 2009 to cultivate economic, cultural, and political ties with Syria, Turkey would have been in the best position compared to other international actors to offer mediation between the Assad regime and opposition, or between the Assad regime and international community. Looking at the qualities that Ahmet Davutoğlu claims are important for mediators to possess, such as neutrality, objectivity, and an ability to be a 'defender of shared values,' it is hard to see how Turkey expected

to fulfill these qualities after breaking off ties with the Assad regime. Therefore, we must assume that Turkey had no intention of mediating between Assad and any other parties after the civil war began, and Turkey switched to supporting the opposition. Turkey might have expected mediation to be unnecessary because the Assad regime would fall quickly or the conflict would be settled by some other means. This seems to be in contradiction with Davutoğlu's statements about mediation being the ultimate instrument for peace. Ultimately, Turkey was too tied to the outcome of the Syrian conflict; the human ties between the countries are so close that Erdoğan claimed the conflict was domestic in nature, rather than foreign. Though Ufuk Gezer made the point that a mediator must have an 'innate understanding' of the conflict and mediate from an insider perspective, Turkey's investment in the Syrian conflict was simply too much to serve as an effective mediator in this instance.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **6.1 Revision of initial assumptions**

In line with the principles for case study research outlined in my Methodology section, I had initial assumptions about my conclusions which were revised continuously throughout my research process. After preliminary research, I concluded that Turkey's efforts in Somalia were overall a good example of Turkey's use of soft power in a conflict environment. Despite further and more in-depth research, this conclusion has remained virtually intact. Of course, I discovered areas in which Turkey could improve its assistance to Somalia as described in that chapter; for example, coordinating cash aid more effectively through the proper government agencies instead of channeling the bulk of it through the President's office, or more openly acknowledging that the aid Turkey provides does influence the conflict by bolstering the Somali Federal Government and thus, taking steps to ensure that certain accountability and transparency measures are taken as a condition of receipt. However, my research indicates that overall, Turkey's efforts in Somalia are producing positive results for Somali stakeholders, the international community, and Turkey itself; and that Turkey is continually striving to improve its service delivery by, for example,

expanding the scope of its aid to areas outside of Mogadishu. The positive relationship Turkey has cultivated led to Turkey mediating between Somalia and Somaliland. Though the mediation has thus far not produced tangible results, both parties have acknowledged Turkey's unique qualification to act as mediator and have expressed satisfaction with Turkey's role.

On the other hand, my initial conclusions regarding Turkey's role in the Syrian conflict have been revised more extensively than those regarding Somalia, and have gained further nuance with more in-depth research. I initially determined that Turkey's efforts in Syria had produced unintended consequences which make it less of a 'success story' than Somalia, but that those consequences were not so much a result of Turkish actions but of the unpredictable and chaotic conflict context. At the time of my preliminary research, for example, I thought that Turkey's switch from attempting to influence the Assad regime's response to supporting the opposition was a logical, if hasty, response to the conflict dynamics. Later, after discussing the move with Dr. Aras and comparing Turkey's actions with some of Ahmet Davutoğlu's statements and writings on Turkey's vision of mediation, I began to revise my initial conclusion. Turkey's abrupt divorce with Assad was not in line with any of Turkey's stated ideals regarding mediation as a means of conflict resolution, and seemed to be more of an emotional response to Assad's uncooperative nature rather than a means of moving toward a settlement of the conflict. Turkey's lack of a relationship with Assad might have prevented it from playing a more constructive role as a mediator in the conflict. For example, Turkey could have played a larger role in the Geneva I and II meetings between the Syrian regime, opposition, and international parties; helping to facilitate dialogue or mediate between the parties.

Another way that my conclusions regarding Turkey's role in the Syrian conflict gained more nuance is that I discovered through a second round of research that Turkey is playing a very significant and beneficial role as a provider of humanitarian aid. Just as Turkey mobilized civil society, NGOs, and government ministries to aid Somalia, many of the same organizations are involved in providing aid to Syrian refugees in Turkey and even Internally Displaced Persons within Syria. In other words, Turkey may have failed to mobilize international support for humanitarian intervention, and may not have been able to support the Syrian opposition enough to enable them to topple the Assad regime, but they are still playing a constructive role in the conflict through



humanitarian endeavors. Perhaps if Turkey had confined its involvement to humanitarian efforts, similar to its involvement in the Somalia conflict, it would have been able to play a more constructive role as a mediator in the Syrian conflict.

## **6.2 Turkey's capacity for conflict intervention**

At first glance, the comparison between Turkish involvement in Syria and Somalia seems counterintuitive. There are more differences than similarities; prior to the civil war, Syria was a stable country with a legitimate government, ties to the international community, and a growing economy that did not rely on foreign aid. Somalia was a failed state with only a transitional government and no ties to the international community, with NGOs and governments operating their offices from neighboring Nairobi. Now, Syria is in the midst of a violent civil war with over a million refugees spilling into neighboring countries, Turkey most especially, while Somalia has transitioned to a 'fragile state' rather than a 'failed' one with an elected government. However, the differences enable observers to draw important conclusions about Turkish foreign policy, and the similarities are stronger than they initially appear. Considering that "former U.N. envoy for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi has warned that the war-torn country [Syria] was heading toward becoming “another Somalia” ruled by warlords," these two cases could prove ideal in understanding when Turkish soft power, and specifically mediation capacity, is at its best and worst.<sup>295</sup>

When Turkey first began to deepen its relationship with Syria around 2009, conditions were at their prime. The Syrian government was open to becoming a more active member of the international community, it had seemed to weather the Arab Spring without significant unrest, and welcomed its increasing ties to Turkey. These conditions seem to be the ideal ones for Turkish involvement. Similar to Somalia, there

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<sup>295</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. (2014). Syria becoming ‘another Somalia’ ruled by warlords, former UN envoy Brahimi warns.

was a governing entity capable of inviting Turkey to become more involved; a lack of international attention but not outright hostility; and room for rapid economic, humanitarian, and educational development. A comparison of the two cases shows that Turkey may be ready to take the lead on mediation, peacebuilding, and humanitarian efforts in cases like Somalia, and Syria prior to the civil war. However, Turkey has not reached the point where it can expect to play a positive role in violent conflicts that are at their peak, as is the current Syrian civil war. When the level of violence makes it impossible for Turkey to do what it does best - infrastructure development, educational exchanges, security force training, etc. - its power to mediate and play a constructive role in the conflict is greatly reduced.

However, Turkey can still play a constructive role in a violent conflict like Syria and set itself up for greater involvement after the peak of violence. Turkey does this through support for refugees and involvement of its humanitarian workers to the extent possible. In fact, many of the same organizations that support the rebuilding of Somalia also support Syrian refugees in Turkey. If Turkey had managed to support refugees while maintaining some distance from both the Assad regime and opposition, it might be in a better position today to mediate in the conflict.

### **6.3 Turkey's philosophy of conflict intervention**

As described in the Syria chapter, Turkey has worked hard in the past few years to develop a close relationship with Assad's Syria. Turkey did not just rush to intervene once the protests and later, violence, began; Turkey has been carefully cultivating a relationship upon which the Foreign Ministry believed they could rely when it came time to deal with these tough issues along with the Assad regime. For example, Turkey intervened with Syria in the August 2006 Lebanon Crisis when its relationship with Israel was becoming increasingly strained. Aras and Gorener's statements regarding Turkish intervention in the Crisis echo what Aras later told me regarding Turkey's attitude at the beginning of the Syrian protest; that Assad would listen to logic:

Turkey's involvement in this crisis stood in stark contrast to its former stance of deliberate non-involvement in Syria's regional affairs and Middle Eastern conflicts in general, which again demonstrates the confidence of Turkish policy-makers that Turkish–Syrian relations were in such good standing that Syria would respond positively to Turkish demands in regional matters.<sup>296</sup>

In contrast to 2006 however, Assad did not listen to Turkey and instead insulted the Foreign Ministry's years of relationship building by failing to heed its suggestions and eventually, demands.

Bülent Aras explained the Turkish government's and specifically Prime Minister's reasoning behind intervention in Syria. He began by saying that "geography has bitter historical memories."<sup>297</sup> People need to understand the history and historical traumas before they can understand how governments in the region can make such drastic decisions. He described how the Prime Minister considered the Halepci massacre in Iraq in 1988, when Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against the Kurds. Then he considered the Hama massacre in Syria in 1982, when the Hafiz Assad regime decimated the village in order to wipe out the Muslim Brotherhood, killing up to 30,000 Syrians in the process. Dr. Aras described how the Prime Minister made an interesting statement when Assad began attacking the protesters; he said, "I will not let another Halepci and Hama happen in this geography." Dr. Aras went on, "Of course it's a very wise statement if you say I will not let another Hama or Halepci happen in this geography that makes you a regional leader, but later on you need to fulfill this promise. This high rhetoric sometimes puts the Foreign Ministry people into real trouble to fulfill it."<sup>298</sup> This is a blunt reminder that though the Turkish government's grand humanitarian ambitions may be heartfelt and sincere, it is still easier said than done.

Though pledging to prevent massacres sounds like the "morally correct" position, the practical steps that must be taken in order to do so are not clear-cut. The

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<sup>296</sup> Aras, B. and Gorener A. (2010). National role conceptions and foreign policy orientation: the ideational bases of the Justice and Development Party's foreign policy activism in the Middle East. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*

<sup>297</sup> Interview with Bulent Aras May 24, 2013

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

difference between refusing to support Assad due to his violence against the Syrian people versus actively working toward his overthrow causes Turkey to move from the realm of activist foreign policy to something more akin to nation building, or at the very least, the threat of military intervention. Once these promises are made public, the Turkish government must either take the necessary steps to fulfill them, or risk losing face not only in front of the international community, but the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees currently living in Turkey, along with the Turkish citizens who vote them into power. The tension between fulfilling their promises and balancing strategic considerations of their own power and limited military strength has caused the AKP government to entrench themselves ever deeper in the Syrian conflict without leaving themselves with a safe exit strategy. Therefore, Turkey will continue to shelter refugees, support the opposition, and to some extent, mediate among the various parties to the conflict in order to fulfill their promises to the Syrian people, but not at the level necessary to actually resolve the conflict. The amount of force necessary to allow the opposition to triumph over Assad is more than the Turkish government and military can muster alone. Not only is the strategy reactionary, but it illustrates the sharp divide between the AKP and previous administrations:

This is where the AKP's perspective on regional matters is distinct from Ozal's regional activism, which was primarily driven by a powerful economic initiative. AKP's regional initiatives are often motivated by a normative moral framework. That is, Turkey is developing a strongly pronounced sense of responsibility to provide stability for the people and countries of the region with which it shares a common historical heritage.<sup>299</sup>

When the sense of responsibility is not matched by capability or international will, Turkey's involvement in an ongoing violent conflict becomes precarious.

In relation to international will, there seems to be differing views regarding Turkey's reliance on the United States. Due to Turkey's experience dealing with the United States when it attempted to mediate with Iran and the international community, Turkey has learned that "mediation is good when you do not put all your eggs into one

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<sup>299</sup> Aras, B. and Gorener, A. (2010) National role conceptions and foreign policy orientation: the ideational bases of the Justice and Development's Party's foreign policy activism in the Middle East', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* (p.83).

basket."<sup>300</sup> During the Iranian mediation attempt, Turkey and Brazil convinced Iran to meet the United States' conditions but in the end, the U.S. rejected the deal anyway. Perhaps the United States never expected Turkey to succeed in convincing Iran to accept the conditions. This experience taught Turkey not to rely on U.S. assistance in future intervention attempts. Dr. Aras assured me that Turkey's calculations in Syria are made without consideration of significant amounts of U.S. aid. However, Erdoğan's statements advocating humanitarian intervention make it clear that Turkey strongly desired to intervene in Syria, and the Turkish government worked hard to generate international support for such intervention. Since Turkey could not generate support for intervention, its efforts to support the Syrian opposition were not enough to end the conflict decisively. We can only speculate how Turkey would have acted, and how much support it would have given the opposition, if it knew that international intervention would not be forthcoming.

#### **6.4 Turkey's humanitarian success**

In contrast to the situation with Syria, Turkey has so far managed to stay on the course it originally envisioned when it began its involvement with Somalia. All of my Turkish government-affiliated interviewees, Ufuk Gezer, Bülent Aras, and Ertuğral Apakan, took pains to emphasize that Turkey's involvement in Somalia is purely out of moral necessity. As already described, the Somali people, ranging from ordinary citizens to academics to government officials, largely perceive Turkey to be an impartial, effective, friend of Somalia, just as Turkey perceives itself. In fact, Turkey can even use its efforts in Somalia as prime examples of its increasing soft power and influence in the region. After establishing an embassy and operating regular Turkish Airlines flights in Mogadishu; creating educational exchanges for Somali students to study in Turkey; building Mogadishu's finest hospital; giving direct aid to the

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<sup>300</sup> Interview with Bulent Aras May 24, 2013

Transitional Federal Government for use in such efforts as strengthening the security forces; and assisting NGOs, religious charities, and Turkish businesses through TIKA to invest in and support Somalia, Turkey is able to act as a mediator between Somalia and Somaliland and take one of the main roles in the international community in support of the country.

Yet, even with Somalia there is a slight difference between Turkey's rhetoric and action. Ufuk Gezer stated that "You can strengthen the hand of the central government which will in turn increase the confidence of the people in their central government, which might weaken the clout of the insurgents" in reference to the idea of giving direct monetary aide to the Somali government to be used in reforming the security services.<sup>301</sup> Of course, Turkey must work through the central government as the only legitimate governing entity capable of representing Somalia, but it should also be more conscious of the repercussions of its relationship with the Somali government. As International Crisis Group points out, giving cash aide directly to the Somali government without also expecting controls and accountability for its use may perpetuate the government's lack of accountability to its citizens and increase corruption. Even within the Somali government, aid may be given to some ministries or officials and not others, further undermining governance.<sup>302</sup> The Turkish government must carefully balance its stated goals of efficiency, autonomy, and self-government for Somalia with the need to ensure that its aid does not directly or indirectly support corruption or be used to prop up an unaccountable government.

Turkey's work with Syrian refugees also constitutes a humanitarian success. As discussed in the Syria chapter, Turkey has mobilized a huge support network of government ministries, civil society organizations, and NGOs to assist the Syrian refugees in Turkey, and eventually allowed international NGOs to operate in Turkey and assist the refugees. It is clear from the research so far that Turkey has good intentions. Certainly, Turkey's involvement in Somalia is primarily motivated by humanitarian goals, and is perceived that way by Somalis themselves, the most

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<sup>301</sup> Interview with Ufuk Gezer, 27 May 2013

<sup>302</sup> Murphy, T. and Woods, A. (2014). Turkey's international development framework case study: Somalia. IPC- Mercator Policy Brief, Istanbul Policy Center, Sabanci University

important constituents. Turkey's involvement in Syria is in large part due to necessity, but still it is clear that the Foreign Ministry is concerned by Syrians' suffering and has taken many steps to ease it, most notably through well-supplied refugee camps. As Davutoğlu explained, the two cases are closely tied in Turks' minds as humanitarian causes:

This is a test, an ethical test for all of us. If one day we will be living with Syrian brothers and sisters next to each other, it is right today to help them, to share our wealth, to share our destiny. Many people questioned, again, why Turkey spent 300 million dollars to Somalia. We don't have any national interest. Yes, but we have a huge ethical ideal to help them.<sup>303</sup>

Therefore, we see that in Turkey's efforts to help Somalia and in its humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees, rhetoric, action, and perception converge; Turkey conceptualizes it as an altruistically-motivated action, and stakeholders agree with this conception.

### **6.5 Turkey's effective use of soft power to intervene in conflicts**

Despite Turkey's humanitarian success, the question still remains; is Turkey able to fulfill its ideals on the ground? As the director of the International Crisis Group in Turkey, Hugh Pope, pointed out, "It would be very nice if there was an example where Turkey had solved its own conflict. It would give a lot more legitimacy and credibility to Turkey's wish to be a constructive player" in the mediation of other regional conflicts.<sup>304</sup> Turkey currently has strained relations with Israel and Armenia, has failed to end the stalemate in the Northern Cyprus conflict, and has still not satisfactorily

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<sup>303</sup> Davutoğlu, A. (2013). Speech delivered by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey in the University of London School of Economics in the Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website.

<sup>304</sup> Interview with Hugh Pope, director of International Crisis Group in Turkey. May 23, 2013.

resolved the Kurdish conflict. Then, Turkey was given the opportunity to truly lead by example when faced with the Gezi protests starting in May 2013. After Turkey had encouraged the Assad administration to listen to the protesters in Syria, few could have imagined the violence with which Turkish protesters would be met. Amnesty International's report on the protests and Turkish response is subtitled "Brutal denial of the right to peaceful assembly in Turkey" and describes the abuse not only of protesters, but of "journalists reporting from the protests, doctors treating the injured and lawyers defending their rights."<sup>305</sup> By July 10th there were 8,000 injuries, and five deaths by August. Even the Turkish government rhetoric about the protests sounded eerily similar to the Assad regime's, as Amnesty International points out, "the government has repeatedly sought to discredit the protestors' motives, integrity and behavior. Public officials have variously referred to the protestors as hooligans and claimed that marginal or even terrorist groups were behind the protests."<sup>306</sup> Though the protests eventually ended in August 2013, the police involved in serious abuse and rights violations have largely gone unprosecuted, and the protesters' concerns regarding the use of public space have been unheeded. Turkey's relationship to the Assad regime becomes more complex when seen in light of the response to its own internal conflict.

Another issue that arises when comparing Turkish rhetoric to reality is the emotional nature of its reactions. As discussed in the Somalia chapter, Turkey's intervention was clearly motivated in part by concern for fellow Muslim brothers who were suffering. There were other important considerations too, such as the desire to make an inroad in Africa for Turkish businesses and demonstrate Turkey's soft power. When dealing with the Syrian conflict, Turkish government officials had what could arguably be called an emotional response to the Assad government once it became clear that Assad would not listen to Turkish advice when dealing with the protesters. Hugh Pope states that "the diplomats were angry and not just Erdoğan...after the Syrians promised change the Turkish side announced it as a kind of victory."<sup>307</sup> Then, the Assad

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<sup>305</sup> Amnesty International Report. (2013). Gezi park protests: Brutal Denial of the right to peaceful assembly to Turkey.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with Hugh Pope, director of International Crisis Group in Turkey. May 23, 2013.



regime backed out of its stated compromises and increasingly used violence to oppress the protesters. Turkey rather quickly switched sides and began supporting the opposition, never looking back to continue the dialogue with Assad. On the other hand, Pope also points out the real humanitarian crisis that was evidently looming in Syria. As mentioned above, Bülent Aras also stated that Turkish government officials would not allow another massacre to occur in their region. Perhaps Turkish officials believed that if they continued to talk to Assad while he procrastinated implementing their suggestions and instead used violence against the protesters, they would be seen as complicit in the crime, so they took the drastic step of completely cutting off communication with Assad and switching to talks with the opposition. This is just speculation regarding their motivations; the only thing we can understand with more certainty is the results. Rather than preventing another massacre, the Syrian conflict has spiraled out of control into a civil war. Turkey's (and the international community's) support has not proven enough to give the opposition the upper hand, nor too little to cause the opposition's downfall. Instead, the conflict has reached a stalemate which only seems possible to solve with either a surge of support for one side or the other, or mediated talks. Since Turkey has completely alienated the Assad regime, it no longer seems possible for Turkey to play a mediating role in the conflict, if mediation is even possible at this point.

Ahmet Davutoğlu's statement in his speech to the London School of Economics and Political Science neatly summarized Turkey's foreign policy philosophy:

As Turkey - I said in one of our latest ambassador's conferences to our ambassadors - you will not run after history. You will run in the history and you will lead in front of the history. You may do wrong. We are not perfect. We may sometimes do mistakes. But even doing a mistake could be corrected. But if you don't have any position, there is even nothing to be corrected.<sup>308</sup>

Davutoğlu's assertion that it is better to do something and fix it later than to be paralyzed by inaction and do nothing is certainly an apt description of Turkey's dramatic choices in the Syrian and Somalian cases. Turkey's rapid entry into Somalia started off

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<sup>308</sup> 'Speech delivered by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey in the University of London School of Economics and Political Science' in the Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website. 7 March 2013

positively and gave Turkey the chance to correct, or perhaps more accurately, reposition, its actions in the country. For example, Turkey can now consider expanding its offices and projects beyond Mogadishu in order to provide the rest of the country with similar support and avoid exacerbating inequalities. On the other hand, Turkey's initial involvement with Syria was not an impulsive choice, but some of the choices made as the conflict intensified seemed to be. What distinguishes Turkey's involvement in the two cases is the stage of the conflict. In Somalia, Turkey had the opportunity to use soft power after the conflict had already reached its peak; the pressing issue was feeding starving Somalis during the famine. Though there is certainly still violence in Somalia, Mogadishu is no longer a war zone; there was a Transitional Federal Government at the time of Turkey's initial involvement in Somalia and there is now a government recognized by the international community and a majority of Somalis. Most importantly, the government requested Turkey's help and is happy to work with Turkey in order to benefit the country. In contrast, Turkey began engaging with Syria before the conflict started, but found itself beyond the limits of soft power once civil war broke out. After civil war began in Syria, Turkey was no longer involved at the request of the Syrian government; there was no internationally-recognized, legitimate governing entity with which Turkey could coordinate aid; there was no opportunity for soft power techniques such as education exchanges, joint military exercises, healthcare assistance, infrastructure development, or economic ties that are staples of Turkish foreign policy. Syria demonstrates the reality that when Turkey's soft power does not achieve the desired outcome, its rhetoric starts to exceed its capabilities. A comparison of the two cases shows that Turkey's soft power is beneficial post-conflict, to a limited extent pre-conflict, but not during actual violent conflict.

## **6.6 Application to other small states**

The lessons learned from Turkey's attempts to use its soft power and mediation capacity in Syria and Somalia can find broader applicability by discussing how other

small states can benefit from it. As mentioned in the literature review, Randa Slim (1992) writes that despite the superpowers' historic dominance of mediation activities, small states have also played important roles as mediators. Small states use persuasion to mediate conflicts, whereas superpowers use power and coercion. Since small states usually do not possess the economic or military resources to influence a conflict through coercion, they must rely on other resources. Slim writes that "the power of a small state as a mediator usually resides in its neutrality, and its fair treatment of all parties' basic interests and concerns."<sup>309</sup> As discussed above, Turkey was unable to maintain neutrality in the Syrian conflict, with the conflict actually becoming akin to a domestic one rather than foreign for the Turkish government. On the other hand, the Somali Federal Government and academics emphasize Turkey's perceived lack of interest or historical antagonism in the Somali conflict, giving Turkey added legitimacy as a mediator between Somalia and Somaliland.

Some small states are already practicing a form of mediation similar to Turkey's. For example, Norway works closely with Turkey on developing the Friends of Mediation initiative and is also a well-known small state mediator. In fact, it might be appropriate to say that Turkey is learning from Norway, as Norway has a long history of mediating in conflicts such as Israel-Palestine, Guatemala, Sri Lanka and Sudan.<sup>310</sup> Foster (2010) uses the example of Norway's mediation with Sudan to describe its creation of "a new model of conflict resolution which emphasizes personal trust, long term commitment, and neutrality."<sup>311</sup> Two of the three most important elements of the "Norwegian model" of conflict resolution are similar to Turkey's method; creating personal trust and making a long term commitment to play an active role in resolving the conflict. Mason and Sguaitamatti (2011) deem Turkey along with Brazil, Qatar, and Malaysia to be part of a group of "emerging mediators" which use mediation to increase

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<sup>309</sup> Slim, R. (1992). Small-state mediation in international relations: The Algerian mediation of the Iranian hostage crisis. In *Mediation in International Relations*. Bercovitch, J. and Rubin, J. (eds). Macmillan Press: London.

<sup>310</sup> Foster, M. (2010). Small States in Peacemaking Roles: Applying the 'Norwegian Model' of Conflict Resolution in Sudan. *Research Discourse* Vol. 2 No. 1.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

their soft power within a specific group of states.<sup>312</sup> This discussion is situated in the context of how Switzerland can become involved in international mediation, where Switzerland's characteristic as a small state is emphasized as being beneficial to its mediation capabilities.

## **6.7 Suggestions for future research**

Since the Syrian conflict is ongoing, there will of course be multitudes of future research regarding not only Turkey's role in it, but also its impact on Turkey. Focusing on Turkey's involvement in the Syrian and Somalian cases, there is an important area for future research that is not immediately obvious. First, it is necessary for Turkey to carefully study and document the various interventions it undertakes and, to the extent possible, the effect each intervention has on the conflict into which Turkey is intervening. As anyone involved in mediation efforts can attest, it's sometimes difficult to quantify "success" and "failure." A successful mediation may prevent a conflict before most people become aware of it, while a failed mediation is more obvious. Certainly, "failed" mediations do not always reflect a failure on the part of the mediator, but are often indicative of intractable conflicts to which peaceful solutions are not viable for one or both of the parties involved. I was reminded about these ideas regarding failure and success often during my interviews with Turkish government advisors, and sometimes it seemed that the ambiguity surrounding success and failure was used as a justification for why the Turkish government does not appear to be collecting data regarding tactics used in the various conflict zones in which Turkey is involved. For example, Ufuk Gezer, the Directorate General for Policy Planning in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is responsible for dealing with mediation as a theme and

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<sup>312</sup> Mason, S.J.A. and Sguaitamatti, D.A. (2011). Mapping Mediators: A comparison of third parties and implications for Switzerland. Center for Security Studies (CSS) Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH Zurich.

driving it to a more prominent place in the international agenda with organizations such as the United Nations. Yet, he is not aware of specific mediation strategies being used in current conflicts, such as Syria. Similarly, the "desks" in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are staffed with regional experts who are not necessarily trained in classical mediation techniques, and who are not intimately familiar with what goes on at other desks. I am not sure how much dialogue occurs between members of the Syria and Somalia desks, for example, but a good avenue for future research would be to gauge the extent of dialogue and how it can be improved to gain a better understanding of Turkey's involvement in various conflicts and the effect it has on the conflict dynamics. Then, the lessons learned can be applied to Turkey's larger mediation strategy. When asked the question, "How do you take the lessons learned from mediation efforts in those specific conflicts and apply them to Turkey's larger mediation strategy?" Gezer was unable to explain how the Foreign Ministry actually does it. His answer, even after repeated clarification, that "the lessons that we get is that we live in an extremely complicated world, it's not really easy to see...for planners and strategists like us, life is really tough because it's not really easy to see ahead," shows an unwillingness to acknowledge that more careful study is needed.<sup>313</sup> Future research should also examine whether there is a need for closer coordination among the various Foreign Ministry desks assigned to deal with regional conflicts and the civil society organizations that implement soft power tactics on the ground, such as TIKA, the Turkish Red Crescent, and even the Religious Affairs Directorate.

Finally, future research could focus on the role of small states in mediating international conflicts, and on how small states can learn from one another's mediation attempts. For example, a case study comparing various small state mediation attempts to understand the most commonly used techniques and their repercussions could be attempted; perhaps using Turkey, Norway, and Brazil as cases, to name a few. More research is necessary to understand how small states may use their soft power effectively in mediating international conflicts, since the age of superpower dominance is waning and today's intractable social conflicts call for more nuanced approaches. Small states such as Turkey will play a huge role in providing humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding activities, and mediation in the future.

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<sup>313</sup> Interview with Ufuk Gezer. 22 May 2013.

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