

# POMEAS

Project on the Middle East and the Arab Spring

## Turkey as a “Humanitarian State”

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### **Abstract:**

*The global power shift that started over a decade ago has taken a most curious turn in recent years with the decadence of great power politics and the rise of new contenders. The multiple crises of globalization are imminent on international system. These multiple crises entail a nearly synchronistic eruption of the following international conundrums: 1) a global economic crisis that consists of a financial crisis, global recession and unemployment; 2) a crisis of hegemony and power that comes about with lack of leadership, multipolarity, a deluge within Western modernity and the emergence of multiple, alternative modernities; 3) the crisis of civilization accompanied by global climate change, energy scarcity, depleting food resources, and eroding global social justice with skyrocketing rates of poverty, uneven and “uncompassionate” development, and inequality.*

All in all, the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2008 global financial meltdown, and the recent uprisings in the broader Middle East have exposed the deep cracks in the foresight, reach, and capacity of the great powers. Amidst today’s uncertain world order, the U.S. hegemony dwindles; the European Union is fatigued; and a number of emerging regional actors rise to fill the vacuum.

What has come to be known as the “emerging powers” share a number of characteristics, such as high and steady growth rates, political and economic stability, a sphere of influence over their vicinity, and tangible contributions to the good of international order. Moreover, they aspire to be more assertive in shaping global politics. They therefore request recognition as “pivotal actors” of regional and global politics. They consequently demand more representation in the decision-making bodies and processes of critical international organizations ranging from the UN Security Council to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, granting this collective wish of the emerging powers comes at a price. That is, claiming stake in global decision-making compels emerging powers to share the traditional actors’ burden in addressing such vital global issues as armed conflicts, human rights violations, poverty, deteriorating health conditions, environmental degradation and climate change. In other words, a power shift from the metaphorical global North to South puts significant pressure on emerging regional actors to become responsible actors of development.

Emerging markets such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the rising regional actors like Turkey, Indonesia, and Mexico are increasingly considered as alternatives to traditional Western donors of official development assistance and humanitarian aid. Each country has enjoyed at least a decade of economic growth, relative political stability, and influence over the course of critical international issues. Their successful domestic performances have helped most of these countries reinforce their image as reliable regional powerhouses. Brazil, for instance, has lived up to this reputation by committing significant development aid to Latin American countries and security assistance to fragile states such as Haiti. China’s involvement in Africa has been growing gradually and rapidly.

Similarly, Turkey’s reputation as a “humanitarian state” rings louder over a vast territory from the broader Middle East and North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia to the Balkans. The reference “humanitarian state” signifies a distinctive attribute of the Turkish aid model from that of both established and emerging donors. Subsequently, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on Turkey’s humanitarian assistance model. The paper analyses the Turkish model in a comparative fashion with the emerging powers, and by exploring the ways in which it differs from the other donors’ aid policies and strategies. Moreover, it assesses the strengths and shortcomings of the Turkish humanitarian and civilian capacity

assistance to conflict-sensitive territories. The study concludes with concrete policy recommendations to improve Turkey's humanitarian engagement with the beneficiaries on the ground.

### **"Humanitarian state" unveiled**

The concept "humanitarian state" is not just a matter of semantics; it has significant methodological connotations and implications for a state's foreign

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policy priorities. As such, "humanitarian state" is rather a strategically crafted concept that demarcates state building and nation building, and it reveres the former over the latter. In that, the promotion of state building in Turkish foreign policy vernacular indeed accents a discursive debate that transcends beyond any national or cultural confines. Fukuyama offers one of the most compelling comparisons of the two concepts and highlights the virtues of the state building in his writings on U.S. nation building campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> A valid criticism that Fukuyama considers in his 2004 Atlantic article suggests an important fallacy of nation building: that is, "outsiders can never build nations, if that means creating or repairing all the cultural, social, and historical ties that bind people together as a nation."<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama asserts that any initiative that seeks reconstruction of political infrastructure of the recipient country in the image of the donor country can be classified as nation-building. On the other hand, the cases where national unity is preserved and "the underlying social and political infrastructure remains relatively intact" skew more toward state building.<sup>3</sup> State building therefore can be achieved by strictly targeting the rebuilding of fundamental state institutions that are vital for economic development, as well as to ensure government's efficacy. In other words, the overarching principle of state building, and that which corresponds with the European view on the matter rather than the U.S. approach, is that nations cannot be built, only institutions can.

Turkey chooses state building over nation building. This is a natural extension of an essential Turkish foreign policy principle that dismisses a "values-free realpolitik agenda, solely focused on advancing its economic and security interests."<sup>4</sup> Ethics, civil rights, upholding human dignity and integrity, on the other hand, make the central tenets of Turkish foreign policy. Ascending on these values, the humanitarian state approach is free from ideological impositions of nation building; it prioritizes good governance and best practice-driven development and humanitarian assistance without any conditions based on race, gender, ethnicity, or religious orientation. Humanitarian state, all in all, encompasses any official and private relief initiative that enables resources and best practices—free of conditions or earmarks—for the reconstruction of institutions and infrastructure that are critical for people in conflict sensitive areas to live in dignity, prosperity, and peace.

These specific connotations of "humanitarian state" in the Turkish aid development assistance glossary place Turkey in a category of its own. Because Turkey in principle does not tie its aid to political, military, economic conditions, the breadth and implementation of its humanitarian assistance missions diverge greatly from the practices of the established donors. In the same vein, it is also difficult to group Turkey with emerging donors. There are a number of plain differences in Turkey's and BRICS' engagement with beneficiaries in terms of the depth and breadth of their strategies. The BRICS countries such as India and South Africa, for instance, prefer concentrating their assistance in one specific area. India, for instance, channels most of its aid to robust peacekeeping in conflict regions. Brazil, similarly, is heavily involved

***As a country with vast outreach and depth, Turkey extends a mix of assistance.***

in preservation of public safety and order in conflict-affected countries. Russia, on the other hand, persistently refuses to commit monies; it rather delivers in-kind aid. As a country with vast outreach and depth, Turkey extends a mix of assistance ranging from on-the-ground training of doctors, police, prosecutors,

fishermen, farmers to water purification and nutrition. Furthermore, Turkey does not deliberately seek to create or reinforce a sphere of influence through its aid, while a few emerging donors associate investing in the future of fragile societies with their longer term national and regional interests.

Against this backdrop, Turkey's short but voluminous track record as a humanitarian state offers insights into the virtues of bilateral and unconditional assistance. Yet, the prospect of improving Turkey's capacities as a reliable actor of development also allows room for a debate on the benefits of joining multilateral system and consideration of certain conditions for the sake of accountability, transparency, and effective distribution of aid. But all in all, Turkey's and BRICS's rise as alternative donors bring along two prominent questions: The first question is more fundamental, and

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yet less relevant for the purposes of this paper: Are BRICS and the other rising actors of development really committed to the humanitarian agenda?<sup>5</sup> Or do they use humanitarian assistance as a means to challenge the hegemony of great powers over the international order? Second, and more important, what are the traits that set Turkey apart from the others? To better understand these diametrical differences, one must be current with the ongoing debate over the commitment to and capacities of emerging donors in becoming responsible and reliable actors of development and humanitarian assistance.

**Established donors versus emerging donors**

Since 2009 the BRICS countries and the other emerging powers have stepped up as reliable providers of aid. In subsequent communiqués issued since the first BRICS summit in that year, the group has maintained that the current international order was not sustainable, as

it has overwhelmingly represented the interests of a handful of great powers while excluding the majority of rising economies and the G20 actors from the decision making bodies of influential intergovernmental organizations.<sup>6</sup> BRICS have argued that this model was no longer maintainable. From financial crises to wars, global climate change to environmental degradation, the policies of a minority of industrialized powers continue to have detrimental effects on the sustainable and inclusive growth trajectories of developing countries. Therefore, the BRICS countries and other emerging markets such as Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico appear to be exploring an alternative and more equitable global order that is defined by peaceful coexistence and stability. Many an emerging economy has its own conceptualization of peaceful coexistence. But all the definitions seem to highlight the following unequivocal principle of peaceful coexistence: the common interest of states in promoting the socioeconomic welfare of not only their citizens, but also that of other states.<sup>7</sup>

Official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian assistance as an important component of ODA are useful instruments available to states that do not only pursue their own development goals, but also strive to pull up the rest of the international community. It is important to give the definitions of humanitarian aid and official development assistance for further clarity and distinction. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) definition, humanitarian assistance is a form of "assistance designed to save lives, to alleviate suffering and to maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies."<sup>8</sup> The most common forms of rapid response to emergencies includes basics such as the provision of shelter, food, water, sanitation, and emergency health and security services to the

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victims of armed conflicts or natural disasters. The distinguishing attributes of humanitarian assistance are the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. By definition, humanitarian



assistance thus has to be free of conditions and not driven by accomplishing any military goals. Although this is the accepted norm among the experts and veteran practitioners in the field, credible monitoring organizations point out that these principles have been violated more frequently by established donors for the last decade, especially in active conflict zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in fragile states that are deemed safe havens for terrorist organizations. The 2012 Oxfam report indicates that “in Afghanistan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia and elsewhere, donors and military forces have made aid conditional on the political and military cooperation of communities and aid organizations; and have used aid to buy information or compliance with military forces.”<sup>9</sup>

Official development assistance, on the other hand, covers financial and material resources provided to promote the broader economic development and the welfare of developing countries.<sup>10</sup> Yet, unlike humanitarian assistance, development aid essentially comes with political goals. ODA may be committed towards engendering political transformations in the recipient countries. Although the aid itself may target the reduction of poverty and promotion of economic and social development, the institutions that ODA empowers may be accompanied by a certain ideology (e.g., IMF financial assistance on the conditionality of implementing an open market economy).

The underlying principles of ODA dictate that it must be provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies. Furthermore, each ODA transaction must be administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective. Last, ODA has to be concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 percent. ODA does not include military aid, though it can be extended to non-combatant UN-administered or UN-approved peace operations to enhance human rights, election monitoring, rehabilitation of demobilized soldiers and or national infrastructure, restoration of administrative functions of the state. Assistance to refugees, on the other hand, is considered ODA only for the duration of the first 12 months of refugees’ stay in the host country. Activities combating terrorism are not reportable as ODA, “as they generally target perceived threats to donor, as much as to recipient countries, rather than focusing on the economic and social development of the recipient.”<sup>11</sup>

Attaching political and economic conditions to official development assistance is a common practice among the traditional donors. Although the emerging donors ardently criticize this practice, many of them also resort to similar, albeit subtle, political and economic

***ODA may be committed towards engendering political transformations in the recipient countries.***

considerations when determining the beneficiary countries. However, there are several golden rules of engagement that both traditional and emerging donors must abide by for effective delivery of humanitarian relief. The first and most important of all is that “humanitarian aid ‘does no harm’ and is sensitive to conflict.”<sup>12</sup> Second, it cannot be a means to achieve a military objective or a political goal.<sup>13</sup> In other words, humanitarian aid should not be provided on the condition of cooperation with military forces or supplying information for counterinsurgency operations. Any aid given on the basis of recipients’ political and military cooperation dismantles the founding principle of “do no harm.” Third, the aid must be comprehensive; it should not be confiscated by a political aid; and the donors must ensure that it benefits all walks of a society, especially the lowest common denominator. Fourth, community support and ownership of the relief program must be ensured. Turkey’s and many other emerging donors’ experiences demonstrate that from health services to school constructions, the projects that communities support and own are more cost-effective and stand a better chance to endure.<sup>14</sup> Last, the aid must be free of ideology.

The traditional donors, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, have often come under criticism for violating the “do no harm” clause by associating aid with their greater military and political objectives in the conflict-affected countries. This is also a derivative of a foreign policy infested with realpolitik. In fact, since the European reconstruction at the end of World War II, both ODA and humanitarian assistance have been the preferred instruments of great powers in advancing

their broader hegemonic aspirations. In the dawn of the “war on terrorism,” showcased by the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, “winning the hearts and minds” have been the popular mantra of the twenty-first century relief programs that hide subtle, yet prominent, political, economic and military intentions.<sup>15</sup>

The communiqués from the five consecutive BRICS summits (the last one held in Durban in South Africa in 2013) and the existing literature on the emerging powers like Turkey so far ensure that the emerging donors are less likely to imitate the aforementioned practices that they have criticized in the first place.<sup>16</sup> In fact, both BRICS and the others pledge their support for the development of LDCs, with special attention to fragile states in Africa. In spite of this pledge, however, there are still suspicions whether the commitments from emerging donors are long-term and sustainable. In tandem with this question, other critics of the mushrooming interests of the emerging donors in humanitarian aid argue that the real reason behind their involvement may have to do with consolidating power over their former and present spheres of influence.

Brazil, Russia, and China’s giving trends demonstrate significant patterns to support this claim. Russia makes an important case study in this regard. The majority of the Russian aid is directed towards the former Soviet republics—Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, as well as countries and territories such as Afghanistan, North Korea, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Serbia, Pakistan, and Somalia.<sup>17</sup> [T]his reflects some continuity with Soviet aid policies: countries such as North Korea became Soviet aid recipients during the Cold War era and continued to receive aid from Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The geographical distribution of Russia’s aid must be viewed in the context of its long-term strategic ambitions. Russia regards former Soviet republics as its sphere of influence, and its willingness to maintain close ties with them explains why they receive such a large proportion of its aid.<sup>18</sup> This observation reveals the following important conclusion about Russia, which can easily be generalized to other emerging donors too: “The regional focus of Russian aid effort has caused many experts to conclude that its motivation for becoming a donor once more is primarily one of *realpolitik*.”<sup>19</sup>

When we focus on the Brazilian and Chinese humanitarian assistance patterns, we observe a similar regional focus. Brazil, for example, has contributed

over \$1.6 billion in international cooperation activities over the past couple of year; however, the majority of this capacity has been invested in Latin America and in security sector. Only after 2010, Africa overtook Latin America and Caribbean as the largest recipient region of Brazilian technical cooperation assistance.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, according to the figures of the China Foundation Center and Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013, certain regions of Africa as well as a few South

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East Asian countries emerge as the top recipient of the Chinese ODA. Similarly striking is that China imports high commodity minerals from most of these countries.

**Turkey as a responsible development actor**

Turkey differs fundamentally from both traditional and emerging donors in terms of its -humanitarian commitments to conflict-affected and fragile states. The four distinct features of Turkey’s perspective on engaging the states in need can be summarized in terms of Amartya Sen’s conceptualization of resources in economic development. In that regard, first, Turkey has the instrument factor; that is, Turkey uses its foreign policy as an effective tool in establishing links with the

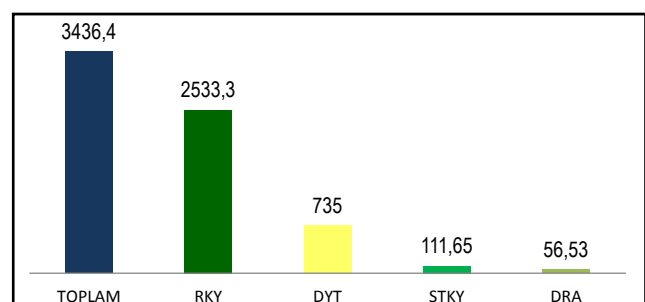
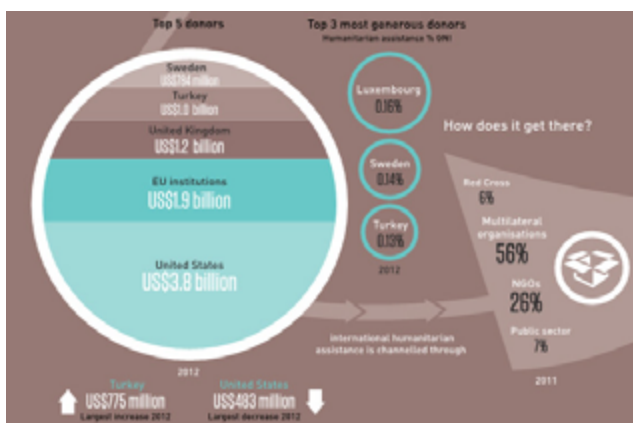


Figure 1: Turkey's ODA (RKY), Direct Aid (DYT), NGO Aid (STKY) and Other Official Assistance (DRA)  
Source: 2012 TİKA Report on Turkey's Development Aid

beneficiary states. Second, its impressive growth rate and economic performance in the last several years have provided Turkey with the confidence factor. In other words, driven from its own experience Turkey is apt to offer non-partisan, ideology-free, sustainable and inclusive economic growth strategies as well as models for many LDCs and fragile states in the region. Third, through its historical and cultural links to region, aided by its identity as a democracy with predominant Muslim population well on its way to join the EU, Turkey exercises significant soft power over the majority of the fragile states in its immediate and broader vicinity. The fourth attribute is the institutional factor, which refers to the over-concentration of power in state institutions.

Translation of these principles into practice reveals \$3.4 billion<sup>21</sup> worth gross aid per annum committed by Turkish state. This sum includes both ODA and humanitarian assistance figures.

An important trait of Turkish engagement in this field is the priority it gives humanitarian assistance within its entire official development assistance. In 2012, for example, Turkey was among the most generous counties with over USD 1 billion it donated in humanitarian assistance to the countries in need.<sup>22</sup> Only in 2012, Turkey increased its contributions by \$775 million.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 2:** Turkey had the largest increase in its humanitarian assistance in 2012 and was among the top 5 donors, allocating 13 percent of its GDP

**Source:** Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013

The essence of Turkish assistance to conflict sensitive countries is therefore its commitment to state building.

Turkey substantiates this pledge by providing invaluable know-how and on-the-ground training. Turkish civilian capacity has been instrumental in building judiciaries, education and health care systems, training police force and doctors, as well as enhancing

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agrarian production through direct aid and transfer of knowledge. The term “civilian capacity” in this context refers to “non-uniformed civilian individuals or groups deployed overseas to crisis or post-conflict settings by (or coordinated through) their respective governments. The term includes personnel deployed through bilateral cooperation programs as well as those deployed through the United Nations, regional organizations or other intergovernmental organizations. It includes civilian capacity deployed from the public sector or private sectors, including academia and civil society organizations that is in some way ‘coordinated’ under government auspices.”<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, Turkey prioritizes a sustainable and long-term civilian capacity assistance over in-kind and monetary aid. Under the coordination of various state institutions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Development, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) to Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Turkish doctors, engineers, educators, constructors and various aid workers provide long-term and sustainable services to conflict-affected and disaster-stricken geographies. As will be outlined in the rest of this report, Turkey’s civilian capacity deployments to countries like Somalia and Afghanistan have made real, observable differences in people’s lives in the regions where traditional donors are scarcely engaged. Turkey’s nonpartisan approach to humanitarian assistance gives Turkish relief agencies an unprecedented access to these areas. Acting solely on the needs of beneficiaries without any kind of political motive or self-interest, Turkish relief programs yield measurable and sustainable results

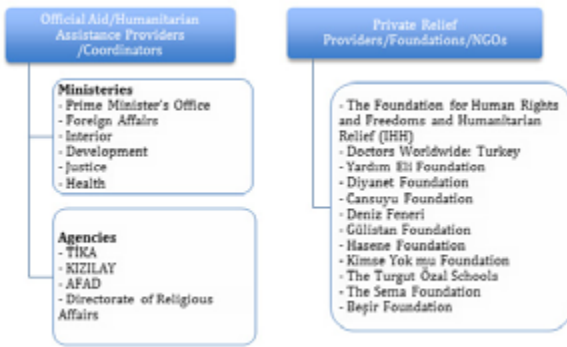


Figure 3: Organizational Chart of Official and Private Turkish Aid Coordination/Provision Agencies

that benefit broader communities and consequently contribute to Turkey’s reputation as a humanitarian state. In brief, Turkey’s humanitarian foreign policy, coupled with responsible and non-ideological aid strategy contributes to Turkey’s image as a reliable and responsible development actor.

Turkey’s new role has also stoked curiosity about its strategy in both domestic and international discourse. Turkey’s bilateral engagement with the recipient countries and unconditionality of its humanitarian assistance are the two areas that have been scrutinized widely in the global humanitarian assistance discourse. The bilateral engagement with the recipient countries has a number of indispensable advantages. A vital offshoot of a bilateral engagement, for instance, is the opportunity it provides the donor to get to know the actors on the ground well. This knowledge is essential for symmetric distribution of the aid to all of the actors, rather than leaving it to the discretion of a political elite in a society.

However, the bilateral engagement model also brings out a number of serious coordination problems, especially in the areas of personnel deployment (level of expertise and personnel insurance packages), absence of a reliable monitoring and evaluation model and language constraints. Encountered with the limitation from the absence of reliable monitoring and evaluation model, Turkey has taken a new initiative to build a foreign aid strategy. The Foreign Aid Law is also in the process of creation. Turkey, nonetheless, remains acutely aware of the international analysis of global dynamics but prefers bilateral development assistance arrangements. Roughly 90 percent of aid

efforts are coordinated directly between Turkey/TIKA and the donor recipient country. The main reason why Turkey prefers bilateral arrangements is the effectiveness of this model in expediting the process and delivering tangible results, according to the Turkish officials who have frequently commented on this issue.

Relaying aid via a multilateral mechanism is not foolproof either. One-size-fits-all prescription employed by multilateral institutions does not always guarantee a match between the right type of aid and the beneficiary. More often than not, the beneficiary may not even have an unrestricted access to provisions. In such standardized way of aid distribution, the donors are afforded little freedom to adjust their assistance according to the needs of the beneficiaries. However, multilateral initiatives have their perks. Especially as far as best practices are concerned, delivering assistance as part of a comprehensive multilateral system increases transparency, accountability, coordination and evaluation of humanitarian assistance. Being part of a multilateral system especially pays off if the donor wants to expand the breadth of its assistance. In fact, being part of a multilateral system enhances an emerging donor’s capacity to reform the current order that was founded and operated by established donors.

Turkey deliberately stays away from nation building; that is, it does not impose its political culture, or national security interests, on the recipient countries. This key difference sets Turkey apart from other nations in the region that attach their political conditions and governing principles to the assistance they make available. The Ministry of Development reiterates that state building is an important pillar of Turkey’s global vision. In addition, although the focus on the link between security and development has increased in the last five years, Turkish aid policy has not wavered from its aforementioned principles of ethical and humane foreign policy. In fact, Turkey’s objective take on this enterprise draws beneficiaries even closer in order to learn from Turkish experience in state building.

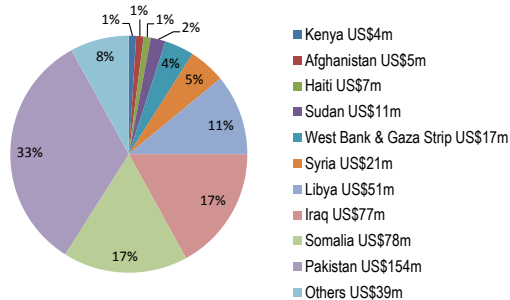
Since the early 2000s, Turkish assistance to post-conflict countries seems to have shifted dramatically from military missions to civilian capacity assistance. The types of assistance Turkey has provided so far in the five fundamental clusters of post-conflict reconstruction are: basic services, government functionality, basic safety and security, inclusive political processes, economic revitalization. Furthermore,



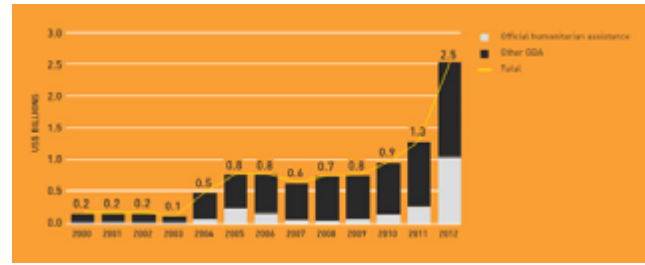
Turkish development and humanitarian aid efforts are considered as functional conflict resolution, or conflict sensitive development, responses. If there is an ongoing conflict in an aid-receiving country, Turkey adopts a conflict sensitive development approach. A development project is effectively used to bring the conflicting parties together in order to transform the conflict. Turkey has been involved in a variety of similar facilitations without any kind of labeling or asserting prejudice. Therefore, Turkish strength lies first and foremost with Turkey’s historical and social depth in its region, second with its influence over the region, and third, its ability to respond rapidly to the developments within its immediate neighborhood.

By remaining closely engaged with the majority of the conflict-affected nations and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Turkey observes that the sources of most daunting conflicts today stem from an unequal distribution of resources, negligence of the LDC grievances, as well as the lack of dialogue between conflicting parties. There are thus three vital points to keep in mind when thinking about Turkey’s efforts in peacebuilding: Prioritization, dilemma between multilateralism and bilateralism, and development aid to fragile states. Another problem that needs to be addressed, on the other hand, is Turkey’s absorption and response capacity to requests from beneficiaries. An equally challenging and immediate shortcoming in this vein is the lack of collaboration among public offices when addressing foreign state-building efforts. Turkey has the capacity; yet, coordination still stumbles on a number of roadblocks.

In 2011 Turkey contributed nearly \$3.2 million in Official Development Aid (ODA) to Sudan (not South). Turkish aid made up for the 14 percent of the total of the ODA to



**Figure 4:** Turkey’s top 10 recipients of Turkey’s official humanitarian assistance 2007-2011  
**Source:** Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013



**Figure 5:** Official Development and Humanitarian Assistance From Turkey, 2000 – 2012

**Source:** Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013

Sudan for governance, peace and security from 2007 – 2011. Turkey’s ODA has grown exponentially between 2002 and 2011. According to TIKA’s own development report for 2012 Sudan received 21.33 million dollars in 2011 in humanitarian assistance aid, demonstrating quite a difference in reporting. The countries that were officially granted the most Turkish development assistance were Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Palestine, Kazakhstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively.

According to figures in the 2013 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, all in all Turkey donated \$1.04 billion in urgent/emergency humanitarian aid in 2012, elevating Turkey to the highest league of donors and ranking it behind the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom. That same year, the amount of humanitarian aid provided globally decreased 5.9 percent. Turkey also ranks as the third-largest donor in proportion to its gross national product (GNP), having provided aid worth 0.13 percent of its GNP.

Official figures also show that Turkey has increased its provision of aid tenfold in the last decade. The Turkish development aid increased to \$2.533 billion dollars in 2012—a 38 percent increase over 2011. Accordingly, Turkey ranked first among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in terms of the increase of its aid provision.

Aid to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) takes a significant share of Turkey’s humanitarian relief program. Turkey donated \$1.053 billion to these countries between 2008 and 2012, \$337 million of which was provided in 2012 alone. Africa also receives a great deal of foreign aid from Turkey at \$727 million. In addition to the official provision of aid, donations from Turkish NGOs reached \$111 million in 2012. While the

## **Turkey's contributions in 2012 make it the 15th largest government donor.**

figures for 2012 are only preliminary (and subject to change), ODA from Turkey has grown substantially in recent years, almost doubling between 2011 and 2012. Turkey's contributions in 2012 make it the 15th largest government donor. Official humanitarian assistance has also significantly increased to US\$1.0 billion in 2012, making up over 40% of total ODA and ranking it the 4th largest donor that year. From 2007 – 2011 Turkey's aid to Sudan totaled 2% of its total official humanitarian assistance. Overall from 2011 to 2012, South Sudan experienced an increase of \$483 million in aid, while Sudan experienced a \$404 million decrease in aid.<sup>25</sup>

Turkey's best practices as a humanitarian state can also be observed in other diverse geographies. In Syria, Turkey has performed infrastructure building and ethnic relations building between 2006 and 2011. In Tunisia, Turkey has provided assistance to the government/public offices with capacity building. The Police Department Directorate started building capacity and awareness within the department after 1996. Currently, Turkish experts train local police in human rights and the rule of law in numerous countries. In addition, Turkey trains judiciary personnel and provides assistance with constitution making in Africa or near Asia. Turkish correctional officers are also deployed to improve the prison conditions in some of these countries. From Somalia to Gaza, Turkish Red Crescent operates numerous refugee camps and provides safe heavens to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people. In Gaza, the Turkish Red Crescent along with other humanitarian relief organizations provide medication and textile aid, educational aid, drinking water rehabilitation, agricultural projects. Similarly in Kyrgyzstan, Turkish relief agencies deploy psycho-social aid and mediation efforts

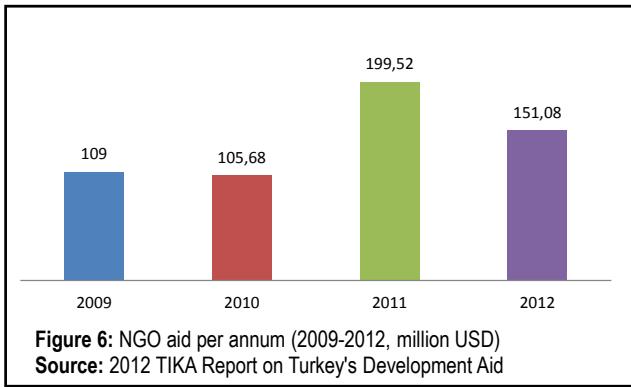
Since 2008, TIKA has organized nearly \$100 million of emergency aid to Iraq, along with the equipment, food, shelter and medical supplies sent to Georgia after its conflict with Russia, as well as to the Palestinians suffering under the Israeli blockade. In the Balkans Turkish organizations are reliable addresses for

development of social and economic infrastructure, financing infrastructure and construction projects, development of education infrastructure, extending humanitarian assistance and donating equipment.

More important, in Afghanistan TIKA has committed over \$30 million for two prominent Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Wardak and Jawzjan. The PRT in Wardak assisted Afghan authorities with reconstruction efforts and enhanced development and stability within the province. It focused on providing health care, education, police training and alternative methods of farming to local farmers. Furthermore, all projects were coordinated and structured to meet the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact Document and the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy. TIKA's efforts aimed to improve the quality of life in Afghanistan through the reconstruction of its much-needed civilian infrastructure. Examples of completed projects include: 68 schools established or restored; nursing and midwifery and outpatient clinics built or reconstructed; thousands of Afghan police officers and soldiers trained; education programs for judges, prosecutors and district governors provided, and several roads, bridges and wells completed. In addition to the aid and assistance given through TIKA during this timeframe, Turkish entrepreneurs have also completed projects worth nearly \$2 billion.<sup>26</sup> Similar reconstruction projects were undertaken by the PRT in Jawzjan, which included a staff of 22 administrative personnel to coordinate the efforts of the approximately 220 deployed experts and advisors from the Turkish Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, TIKA, Presidency of Religious Affairs, several universities, and a police special operations team.<sup>27</sup>

### **Turkish NGOs at the forefront of capacity building and humanitarian aid**

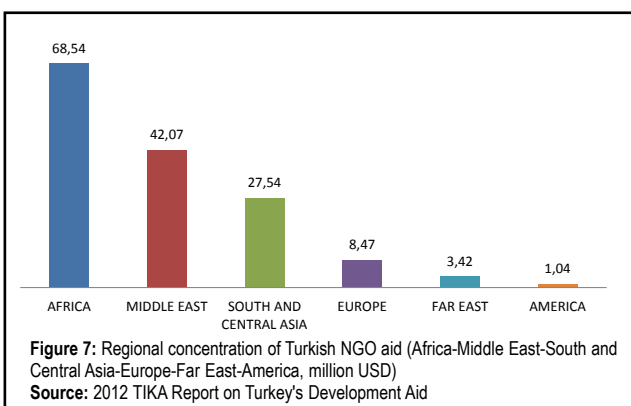
Another important attribute of the Turkish humanitarian assistance is its commitment to the common lowest denominator on the ground. From Afghanistan to Somalia, neither civilian nor official donors have ever forsaken the real beneficiaries on the ground for political elite. Combined with this, the involvement of Turkish civil society organizations boosts the quality and quantity of Turkish humanitarian assistance. Somalia, Afghanistan, and Sudan present important case studies in this respect. Similar to the Russian case, Turkish humanitarian assistance brings together key agents of Turkish bureaucracy with influential NGOs: On the



government side the indispensable actors are: the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Development, Interior and Justice, TIKa, AFAD, Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Turkish Red Crescent (KIZILAY). From the NGOs, the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), Doctors Worldwide: Turkey, Dost Eli Foundation, Türkiye Diyanet Foundation, Cansuyu Foundation, Yardımelı Foundation, Deniz Feneri, Gülistan Foundation, Turgut Özal Schools, and Sema Foundation are at the forefront.

The total aid committed by Turkish NGOs remains significant at nearly \$112 million in 2012, inspite of the 44 percent decline from the 2011 figure of nearly \$200 million. In 2012 alone, coupled with the grants from public institutions and cooperations, Turkish NGOs channeled over \$150 million to conflict-affected states. The breakdown of this figure consists of emergency and humanitarian aid worth \$55 million, technical and project-specific aid of nearly \$100 million.<sup>28</sup> Turkish NGO aid appears to concentrate primarily in Africa, followed by the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Europe and Far East.

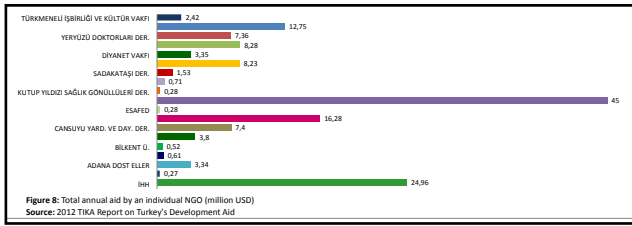
From a longer perspective, Somalia may prove to be Turkey's backdoor into the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.



Turkey's work in Somalia has earned it a reputation in Africa as a generous and effective rehabilitator of broken countries. The more Turkey accomplishes in Somalia, the greater its political capital will be throughout the region, improving its investment prospects and political alliances with countries from Mozambique to Gambia. This will be especially true in majority-Muslim nations, where the importance of Sunni Islam in everyday life gives Turkish investors and envoys an advantage over their non-Muslim counterparts, given their familiarity with Islamic finance, social mores, and shared holidays.<sup>29</sup>

Since 2005, the makers of Turkish foreign policy have expanded the country's focus, opening up to regions that were considered faraway territories in former decades. A significant step has been Turkey's new Africa policy, which was created through a joint governmental, NGO and business community involvement. The motives behind this new policy are to consolidate Turkey's position in international politics, benefit from African markets at a time of economic crisis, and support Turkish business and NGO community involvement in this continent.<sup>30</sup>

Turkey's cumulative official aid to Africa has reached approximately \$1 billion, a substantial portion of \$2.5 billion total global aid. Turkish schools, from elementary education to universities, have been founded in Africa, and Turkish NGOs are among the most visible on the continent.<sup>31</sup> Somalia is an important case that demonstrates all three key attributes of Turkish humanitarian assistance, functioning in harmony with one another. These are the strong interests and presence of civilian Turkish aid organizations in treacherous and hostile regions like south-central Somalia; Turkish state's official support for these organizations and role as a facilitator; and the direct engagement with local beneficiaries regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and ideology. Perhaps, the most important factor that distinguishes the Turkish aid providers from their Western counterparts is that the absence of political, economic, and military goals attached to the aid that Turkish relief organizations give. This approach provides Turkish donors with access to the areas that are off limits to traditional donors. In Somalia's case, these are mainly the al-Shaabab controlled areas.<sup>32</sup> Even though, this is a positive development in terms of delivering the aid on equal footing, the outreach of Turkish organizations to an extremist terrorist organization creates concern



among the traditional donors.

In the short term, however, the active engagement of both official and civilian aid organizations with the country has immense and tangible benefits. Kimse Yok Mu?, Cansuyu, Doctors Worldwide, The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedom and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), Beşir, Deniz Feneri, Yardım Eli and Hasene are the principal foundations that provide relief in Somalia in a range of areas from medicine to education, sanitation to water purification, fisheries to food provision.

These institutions also claim that they cooperate with over 700 domestic (Somali) and international NGOs. The coordination and cooperation between IHH and Doctors Worldwide are exemplary; the collaboration between the two institutions has resulted in 75,000 cataract surgeries, curing over 30,000 patients suffering nutritional problems, prevention of children's diseases through distributing cattle meat. Other institutions have also addressed significant emergency situations such as lack of potable water and food. Hasene, in this respect, honors its motto "Think Global, Act Local." Hasene's operations provide home for orphans and erect facilities to train local community in a number of vocations, including fishing.

**Conclusion: Areas of contention and policy recommendations**

Turkey's transformation from an aid recipient to a donor country in a short amount of time offers a host of best practices for both established and emerging donors. Turkey's quick metamorphosis, first and foremost, signifies the importance of constructing foreign policy on the right set of principles. The concepts "humanitarian state" and "humanitarian diplomacy" are henceforth crafted to project Turkey's commitment to and respect for an ethics-based foreign policy. As corroborated by the cases presented in this essay, preservation of universal human rights and respect for the dignity of human life are the foundations of Turkey's engagement with all other nations—whether they are industrialized, emerging, least developed, or fragile. Nonetheless,

putting ethics, human rights and human development first provides Turkey with a rare—and almost unique—vantage point in its relations with conflict-affected countries. The absence of realpolitik and embedded security interests in its foreign policy increases the breadth, efficacy, and legitimacy of Turkish aid. As the data demonstrate, Turkish aid penetrates deep into the least stable and most heated conflict zones. From Somalia to Afghanistan, both official and civilian aid have curbed human suffering and considerably improved health and economic conditions. In most of these countries, Turkish relief organizations and aid workers are actively present on the ground, curing preventable children's diseases, drilling water wells, providing staple food and sanitary supplies, building schools, training locals in fishery and husbandry. That Turkish agents perform these tasks in certain zones that are off-limits to international organizations and delegations from established donors for security reasons gives a rare edge to Turkish aid work over the others.

There is room, however, for improvement even in Turkey's activities as a responsible actor of development. Countless interviews with representatives from a number of government agencies in charge of aid coordination and delivery, as well as delegates from private relief organizations, independently concur the following shortcomings. First and foremost, coordination emerges as a fundamental problem in all walks of aid provision. With respect to government efforts to coordinate aid, the most recurrent problem is a lack of communication between key government ministries and agencies including TİKA, ministries of foreign affairs, development, health, and justice. Furthermore, the data also point toward lack of coordination between Turkish relief funds operating in the field and country representatives of vital government agencies like TİKA. To alleviate this problem, an interagency cooperation scheme ought to be developed and implemented in haste. Universities and think tanks with reliable conflict resolution and civilian capacity building programs can be recruited with a view to developing a functional interagency cooperation system within government bureaucracy.

Second, Turkey appears to have been caught in the middle of an existential debate over the multilateral versus bilateral approach to effective aid delivery. As the cases previously discussed illustrate (especially the practices in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central



## ***Turkey must recognize the changing nature of the debate with respect to vices and virtues of bilateralism versus multilateralism.***

Asia), Turkish aid favors a bilateral engagement model. That is, both agencies and their field offices prefer to directly engage the beneficiary country without being part of any UN-sponsored multilateral system. The requests of the host country are submitted to TIKA directly. Having processed this information, TIKA relays the request to the relevant departments in a number of ministries. This process hardly necessitates Turkish aid agents to be part of or access any international roster to better understand not only the situation on the ground but the conditions of the host countries. Because Turkey has just penetrated the vast sphere of international aid giving, coordinating its relief operations with multilateral organizations can render a number of advantages in generating more thorough pre-deployment analyses and strategies. However, this recommendation should not be read as an endorsement of the multilateral model, for it has also its own shortcomings. The most important deficiency attributed to the multilateral systems is one of confidence. Veteran experts in humanitarian aid criticize the established donors that operate through multilateral system on their practices of favoritism, bunkering, and securitization of aid. These seasoned analysts often point to arbitrary decisions of established donors and their skew towards bilateralism in picking their partners on the ground. Therefore, though it should not be fully immersed in a bilateral engagement model, Turkey should also coordinate its efforts with international community to a healthy degree, while taking all other functions of the multilateral system with a grain of salt.

Third, a more frequent blunder that targets all donor countries is their perception as though they favor a particular political or ethnic faction over others. Locals subscribe to this perception often when a country's aid focuses in a specific region where certain political

faction or ethnic group is the majority. Even though this may not be the donor's intention, its activities may be confined into one region controlled by one ethnic group due to budgetary, geographical and security restrictions. The recent targeting of Turkish relief entities and officials in Somalia suggest that Turkey is not immune to this blunder. In some of these countries where conflict roars with full momentum Turkey's well intentioned initiatives appear to have succumbed to this trap. A more deliberative and analytical pre-deployment assessment stage at ministerial and interagency level may help generate solutions to this perception issue. Collaborating with seasoned international organizations on the ground can also improve the knowledgebase on the endemic sensitivities on the ground.

Fourth, Turkey must recognize the changing nature of the debate with respect to vices and virtues of bilateralism versus multilateralism. A new discourse on the horizon in fact highlights the contribution of regional organizations to facilitation and maintenance of peace in conflict-affected countries. From Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Turkey already enjoys considerable leadership and political weight in most of these regional organizations. By using this influence, Turkey can harness and channel the political capital and mandate of these organizations towards finding lasting solutions to some of the most protracted conflicts in its immediate vicinity and broader region.

Overall, Turkey's sprint into becoming an influential and respected humanitarian state can only be bolstered with these additional measures taken into practice. Already a reliable partner in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, Turkey is also embarked upon a path to claim its stake in international community as an innovative and effective provider of civilian capacity assistance, inclusive and sustainable growth models, and functioning institutions of deliberative and participatory citizenship. Preparing to take over the G20 presidency next year, and thanks to its track record and accomplishments as a "humanitarian state," Turkey demonstrates that there are better alternatives to realpolitik in a country's plight for a responsible global leadership.

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