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# Introducing the Turkish Journal of International Development (TUJID)

This journal has emerged from a long-standing debate that has evolved from field practice, policy engagement, and critical theory. This debate is taking place in the context of emerging actors and narratives that have entered the field of international development studies. The study of international development today requires deeper academic engagement with the complex and evolving policy landscape. This is because the prevailing development paradigm, rooted in Western liberal modernity and neoliberally informed policy models, has reached its limits in both normative and analytical terms.

For decades, the concept of development has been devised through a narrow set of policy prescriptions (including market liberalisation, privatisation, and technocratic governance) that have been promoted by influential global institutions and legitimated by assertions of universality and specialised knowledge. Scholars have criticised this model for obscuring the structural and historical causes of poverty, deprivation and inequality. As James Ferguson (1990) observed, development has often functioned as an “anti-politics machine” which has defined the political and structural foundations of poverty as technical problems, thereby legitimating technocratic interventions. Arturo Escobar (1995) described development as “a regime of representation” that served to reinforce Western dominance through the marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems. Mark Duffield (2001) exposed how the merging of the development and security agendas has given rise to a global “will to govern” characterised by the use of new forms of surveillance, intervention, and control, particularly in fragile and post-conflict countries.

More recent studies have further contributed to the debate. Tanya Murray Li (2007), for instance, has demonstrated how the “will to improve” has enabled new forms of governmentality in the specific context of Indonesia. Jason Hickel (2020) has contested the widely accepted notion that economic growth necessarily results in improvements in human well-being. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) called for “epistemic freedom” through the decolonisation of development thought and practice and suggested that Africa’s path to liberation must begin with “the right to think, theorise, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism” (p. 17).

These powerful arguments highlight the fact that development is not a universal path to progress. It is rather a historically contingent and essentially contested process. It reflects power over knowledge structures, institutions, and people’s day-to-day lives. In the current age of intensifying inequality, environmental crises, and changing geopolitical power balance, we need alternative frameworks that may help better address these challenges.

TUJID positions itself within these critical conversations – not merely to criticise dominant paradigms, but to actively contribute to international development theory and practice. We aim to open up a participatory intellectual and policy space for the discussion and establishment of alternative conceptual frameworks and actionable solutions that are value-driven and context-sensitive.

We welcome the submission of interdisciplinary research, which interrogates the ideological and political foundations of development, examines the institutional reproduction of global inequality, and proposes locally rooted and transformative pathways to sustainable and equitable development. Special attention is given to conflict-affected societies, historically marginalised communities, and Global South researchers, whose experiences and knowledge go often underrepresented in the mainstream development literature.

As the journal evolves, we envision that it will not only remain as a site of critical publication, but also as a vibrant intellectual and practical community – one that engages seriously with the ethical, political, and epistemological challenges of development in the 21st century. At this current moment of crisis and opportunity, we believe that more just, participatory and inclusive futures are possible.

Selver ŞAHİN

Mehmet KÖSE



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# The Rise of Türkiye as a Foreign Aid Actor (2014-2024) Through the Lens of Complex Realism

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## Abstract:

This chapter examines Türkiye's evolving role as a foreign aid actor between 2014 and 2024 through the analytical lens of Complex Realism. While Türkiye's Official Development Assistance (ODA) has drawn increasing scholarly interest, much of the existing literature treats its foreign aid strategy through isolated lenses—focusing either on soft power, domestic political motives, or regional geopolitics. What remains lacking is an integrated framework capable of accounting for how these dimensions intersect and evolve. This chapter addresses that gap by exploring how domestic political objectives, regional ambitions, and global strategic interests under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) have shaped Türkiye's ODA trajectory. The chapter employs Raymond Hinnebusch's Complex Realism framework to analyze Türkiye's foreign aid as both a humanitarian instrument and a geopolitical tool. This approach is particularly well-suited to Türkiye's context, given its transcontinental identity, shifting alliances, and concurrent pursuit of

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domestic legitimacy, regional influence, and global recognition. Four illustrative case studies—Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan—demonstrate the multifaceted motivations behind aid allocation, including soft power projection, economic interests, and security considerations. Central to this analysis are the roles of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), which have enabled Türkiye to expand its influence across multiple regions. Drawing on official government documents, policy reports, and academic literature, the chapter argues that Türkiye's ODA functions as a mechanism for projecting national identity, consolidating political legitimacy, and enhancing regional and global influence.

**Keywords:** Türkiye; foreign policy; TİKA; AFAD; complex realism; soft power; official development assistance

## Introduction

Since 2014, Türkiye has significantly elevated its role in Official Development Assistance (ODA), emerging as a key humanitarian and geopolitical actor. Under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye's ODA surged from \$2.4 billion in 2014 to \$8.6 billion in 2018, ranking it among the world's top donors relative to Gross National Income. This expansion reflects a strategic shift wherein foreign aid is used not only for humanitarian relief but also to advance domestic legitimacy, regional influence, and global diplomatic positioning.

Despite Türkiye's growing prominence in aid diplomacy, much of the existing literature treats its motives—whether soft power projection, domestic political consolidation, or strategic influence—as isolated factors. This article adopts Raymond Hinnebusch's Complex Realism to offer an integrated analysis that connects Türkiye's domestic, regional, and global imperatives. The framework is well-suited for semi-peripheral states like Türkiye, whose foreign policies are shaped by intersecting internal dynamics and external pressures.

The core research question guiding this study is: how has Türkiye's foreign aid strategy from 2014 to 2024 been influenced by domestic politics, regional security goals, and global diplomatic ambitions? To address this, the article analyzes four case studies—Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan—selected for their geopolitical diversity and strategic relevance to Türkiye's evolving foreign policy.

By situating aid within a broader realist paradigm that incorporates both structure and agency, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of Türkiye's aid diplomacy. It contributes to broader debates on middle power behavior, foreign aid instrumentalization, and the strategic use of development policy in contemporary international relations.

## Literature Review: Türkiye's Rise as a Foreign Aid Actor

The rise of Türkiye as a significant foreign aid actor has attracted growing scholarly attention, and existing literature on this topic can be categorized into three interrelated strands. One stream examines the broader transformation of Turkish foreign policy, focusing on the influence of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership. Another explores Türkiye's official development assistance (ODA), particularly through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), analyzing its role as an instrument of soft power. A third strand investigates the underlying determinants shaping Turkish foreign policy, considering domestic political, economic, and strategic dynamics.

The first stream of literature centers on the impact of the AKP and Erdoğan's leadership on the evolution of Turkish foreign policy. Scholars contend that under Erdoğan, Türkiye has transformed into a regional power and expanded its global influence. This transformation is attributed to Türkiye's reliance on a blend of Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism, promoting an "assertive foreign policy" through soft and hard power (Avatkov & Sbitneva, 2023). In pursuit of regional power and global status, Türkiye adopted "strategic assertiveness" in its foreign policy (Koçak, 2022).

Expanding on this transformation, the literature also emphasizes the increasing importance of soft power in Türkiye's foreign policy toolkit. Under the AKP, Türkiye developed a unique soft power model based on heritage, cultural ties, and economic engagement (Kara & Sözen, 2016). This model emphasizes regional engagement through diverse diplomatic instruments, with international aid being central (Özkan, 2017). The model includes institutions like TİKA and tools such as media and educational outreach.

Further extending this perspective, scholars conceptualize Turkish foreign policy as "multi-vector," engaging several power blocs (Vokhmintsev & Guzaerov, 2023). Türkiye's vectors include a global vector (U.S., Russia, UN), a post-Soviet vector tied to its Turkic identity, a Balkan vector, and a Middle East vector. Türkiye is notably most active in the Balkan and Middle East regions, where diplomatic focus is concentrated. While these contributions are insightful, they often focus more on describing Türkiye's geopolitical outreach than on evaluating the consistency or impact of these strategies across aid sectors.

Building on this foundation, the second major stream of literature focuses on the role of official development assistance (ODA) in Türkiye's foreign policy. This body of work examines how Türkiye strategically uses state-sponsored aid to project influence, cultivate partnerships, and pursue diplomatic goals beyond traditional foreign policy mechanisms.

Within this stream, one subset of scholarship focuses on the ODA as a Turkish foreign policy instrument. Scholars examine how institutions like TİKA and the Turkey Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) serve not only humanitarian roles but also advance nation branding and public diplomacy (Tüylog̃lu, 2021; Kocan & Arbeiter, 2019). These agencies have become “narrators” of Türkiye's “national story,” branding the country as a major donor (Ongur & Zengin, 2016). Thus, ODA is strategically employed to gain influence and deepen ties with aid recipients (Kocan & Arbeiter, 2019).

Complementing this view, another body of work highlights soft power projection through TİKA as a distinct diplomatic strategy. Scholars underscore the central role of TİKA in Türkiye's nation branding efforts (Akili & Celenk, 2019; Besg̃ul, 2024). Humanitarian assistance by TİKA—especially in the Middle East—enhances Türkiye's image domestically and globally (Akili & Çelenk, 2019). TİKA has thus become a conduit for a soft power strategy combining cultural and economic diplomacy (Ipek, 2015). However, a critical gap in this body of literature is the limited evaluation of aid effectiveness, sustainability, and recipient country perspectives.

Adding another layer of analysis, a third major stream of literature investigates how Türkiye's foreign aid is shaped by internal political, economic, and security considerations. This scholarship contends that Türkiye's international humanitarian assistance is primarily driven by domestic motives (Guo, 2020; Kavakli, 2018; Ardic, 2014). Aid is pragmatically allocated to serve strategic interests and strengthen political and economic ties (Kavakli, 2018). Yet, these works often analyze domestic drivers in isolation from Türkiye's broader geopolitical calculus, leaving the link between internal and external motivations underexplored.

While existing literature explores Türkiye's foreign aid as a soft power tool, a geopolitical strategy, or a domestically driven policy, few studies systematically integrate these dimensions into a single analytical framework. The Complex

Realism approach—examining the interplay between domestic politics, regional ambitions, and global diplomatic positioning—provides a more comprehensive perspective on Türkiye’s foreign aid policy that has not been explored in an integrative manner. Building on this gap, the present study employs the Complex Realism framework to synthesize these dimensions, offering a theoretically grounded interpretation of Türkiye’s foreign aid behavior across diverse contexts.

### **Theoretical Framework: Complex Realism**

Balancing the dichotomy between agency- and structure-based analyses of foreign policy, complex realism attempts to provide an integrative framework that recognizes the diverse influences on foreign policy making. For hybrid and semi-peripheral states like Türkiye, which defy rigid regional classifications yet operate under intersecting global, regional, and domestic constraints, such an integrative framework is especially valuable. Türkiye’s unique geostrategic position, with deep entanglements in both European and Middle Eastern affairs, makes it an ideal candidate for a layered theoretical lens that accounts for both material and ideational influences across multiple levels of analysis.

Although complex realism was initially introduced to better understand the foreign policy behavior of Middle Eastern states, particularly by scholars Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2002), its analytical logic extends to other contexts where traditional realist assumptions fall short. As Korany (1984) had earlier noted, foreign policy analysis needed to evolve beyond Eurocentric models to reflect the structural and political heterogeneity of the Global South and transitional states. Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2014) built on this imperative by framing Middle Eastern policymakers as “quintessential realists” operating under conditions that challenge conventional state-centric realism. The value of complex realism lies not in its regional specificity, but in its adaptability to contexts where sovereignty is fragmented, policymaking is elite-dominated, and external dependence complicates autonomous state behavior. These characteristics, though prominent in the Middle East, also resonate strongly with Türkiye’s foreign policy environment.

Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2014) identify three mutually reinforcing “environments” that shape foreign policies in such states: global, regional, and internal. Unlike traditional realism, which tends to prioritize the international



system as the primary explanatory variable, complex realism offers a multi-layered approach that captures the interplay of global structures, regional dynamics, and domestic imperatives. The fragmentation of sovereignty, regime-centered policymaking, and the instrumental use of foreign policy for domestic legitimacy are key features that render a single-level analysis inadequate. These dynamics are particularly evident in Türkiye's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), where soft power tools, humanitarian diplomacy, and regional activism converge with domestic consolidation.

The global environment establishes the overarching framework in which states operate, structured as a hierarchical system of core and periphery states (Galtung, 1971). Within this structure, Türkiye occupies a semi-peripheral position—neither a consolidated global power nor a purely dependent actor. This placement subjects it to systemic pressures, including external penetration by major powers, yet also affords it limited strategic agency. In this context, Türkiye may bandwagon with core powers to maintain influence, especially in a unipolar system, or maneuver strategically in a bipolar or multipolar setting to maximize autonomy. This strategic behavior aligns with Ayooob's (2002) notion of subaltern realism; wherein semi-peripheral states navigate global hierarchies through tactical engagement rather than outright resistance.

The regional environment represents the immediate geostrategic surroundings, which for Türkiye include not only the volatile Middle East but also the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Eastern Mediterranean. As Ehteshami and Hinnebusch (2016) explain, such regions are often anarchic and conflict-prone, prompting states to adopt balancing strategies to ensure survival. Türkiye's regional conduct reflects both defensive and offensive realism, tailored to specific contingencies and opportunities. Factors such as resource distribution, population size, and geostrategic positioning influence the methods of regional balancing. In this context, pragmatism often overrides ideological alignment (Ramazani, 2004), with Türkiye engaging in both regional alliances and partnerships with extra-regional powers. Supra-state identities, including Pan-Islamism and Ottoman nostalgia, also play a significant role, influencing domestic legitimacy and foreign policy narratives (Hinnebusch, 2016).

The internal environment consists of domestic political dynamics, including state formation, elite interests, and role conception. The degree of internal consolidation shapes whether a state perceives its primary threats as internal

or external (Alons, 2007). In Türkiye's case, the authoritarian consolidation under the AKP has elevated the role of ruling elites in steering foreign policy, often aligning external engagements with regime survival and domestic political narratives (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 2014). Policymakers define threats and alliances based on both domestic imperatives and strategic calculations, leading to revisionist or status quo orientations depending on context (Holsti, 1970; Korany & Dessouki, 2019). Yet, internal fragmentation and civil-military dynamics can lead to inconsistency, while high executive autonomy risks irrational policy decisions. The bureaucratic politics model, as highlighted by Halperin and Clapp (2007) and Kasza (1987), underscores the influence of institutions like the military and intelligence services in shaping foreign policy at the expense of traditional diplomatic channels.

These three environments—global, regional, and internal—do not operate in isolation. They interact in complex and sometimes contradictory ways, pulling foreign policy in multiple directions depending on prevailing threats and opportunities (Nonneman, 2005). For Türkiye, which navigates conflicting regional affiliations and shifting global alignments, this interplay is especially pronounced. Leaders must constantly calibrate their foreign policy strategies to balance regime survival, regional ambition, and global relevance, often prioritizing pragmatic objectives over ideological consistency.

Raymond Hinnebusch's complex realism framework is particularly well-suited for analyzing Türkiye's ascent as a foreign aid actor because it acknowledges that state behavior is the result of multiple, interdependent forces. Unlike traditional realist approaches that often reduce foreign policy to power balancing among states, complex realism accounts for the intricate interplay between domestic political imperatives and external strategic interests. Türkiye's unique transcontinental identity—bridging both Western and Middle Eastern spheres—exemplifies the multifaceted pressures that shape its foreign aid policy. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of how domestic political consolidation under the AKP, coupled with regional ambitions and global diplomatic objectives, converge to inform Türkiye's expansive foreign aid strategy. In doing so, complex realism provides the analytical depth necessary to understand how foreign aid serves not only as a tool of humanitarian diplomacy but also as a mechanism for projecting soft power and reinforcing national legitimacy.

## Research Design and Analytical Framework

This study employs a qualitative, theory-driven case study approach to examine Türkiye's foreign aid strategy from 2014 to 2024 through the lens of Complex Realism. The methodology is structured to ensure analytical rigor, transparency of data sources, and clarity in case selection criteria.

The four cases—Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan—were selected to reflect the diversity of sectoral focuses within Türkiye's foreign aid strategy. Each case highlights a distinct modality of aid engagement: humanitarian relief in Syria, cultural diplomacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, state-building and security cooperation in Somalia, and education and healthcare development in Kyrgyzstan. This range enables a more comprehensive exploration of how Türkiye's foreign aid strategy operates across different sectors, aligning with domestic priorities, regional ambitions, and global diplomatic goals as conceptualized in the Complex Realism framework.

The selection was guided by three criteria:

High levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Türkiye; strategic importance in Türkiye's regional or global positioning; and diversity of aid motives and mechanisms (e.g., emergency aid, infrastructure, education).

To maintain a coherent analytical scope, cases such as Palestine, Pakistan, and Libya were not included. These exclusions are based on either insufficient access to comprehensive data or the potential for analytical overlaps with the selected cases, thus ensuring conceptual clarity and focus.

The study draws from both primary and secondary sources:

Primary data: Reports, annual reviews, and press releases from Turkish governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), and Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD).

Secondary data: Peer-reviewed academic studies, policy briefs, media analyses, and international reports (e.g., UNHCR, World Bank, ReliefWeb) that critically assess Türkiye's ODA.

To mitigate confirmation bias, official data were triangulated with independent and critical sources whenever available. Limitations arising from source bias are

explicitly discussed in the analysis.

The study utilizes Raymond Hinnebusch's Complex Realism framework to interpret Türkiye's ODA policy through three interrelated dimensions:

Domestic environment: Political regime dynamics, national identity narratives, and economic interests; regional environment: Security imperatives, strategic alliances, and regional power aspirations; and global environment: Diplomatic positioning, soft power projection, and international system structures.

This framework enables a layered examination of how domestic, regional, and international forces shape Türkiye's foreign aid agenda. It serves as the conceptual basis for interpreting the selected case studies, offering a structured yet adaptable lens suited to the complexities of Türkiye's semi-peripheral geopolitical status.

## Results

### **Turkey's Strategic Use of TİKA and AFAD in Enhancing Official Development Assistance (2014–2024)**

Over the past decade, Türkiye has significantly increased its foreign aid, with both the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) playing central roles. This expansion has positioned Türkiye as a major humanitarian and development actor on the global stage, with an increasing share of its official development assistance (ODA) dedicated to humanitarian relief efforts (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2021). Türkiye's foreign aid approach aligns with its broader soft power strategy, blending humanitarian objectives with geopolitical ambitions, a trend that has become more evident since the AKP's rise to power (Guo, 2020).

Türkiye's humanitarian and development assistance has been shaped by multiple factors: its geopolitical ambitions, historical and cultural ties, and a desire to position itself as an alternative to Western donors. Unlike traditional donor states, Türkiye combines bilateral aid with diplomatic engagement, reinforcing its influence in recipient countries while also serving domestic economic and security interests (Guo, 2020; Ipek, 2015).

## **Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)**

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) is a pivotal institution in Turkey's official development assistance (ODA) strategy. Established in 1992 under the Prime Ministry (now under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism), TİKA was initially focused on providing development aid to newly independent Turkic states in Central Asia. Over time, its scope expanded significantly, with operations in over 170 countries as of 2022 (TİKA, n.d.). TİKA's mission is to promote socio-economic development, reduce poverty, and strengthen institutional capacities in recipient countries (Çevik, 2016).

TİKA plays a crucial role in Turkey's soft power diplomacy by providing technical assistance, humanitarian aid, and development projects in education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. It partners with Turkish ministries, universities, NGOs, and private-sector actors to implement sustainable development initiatives. Türkiye's ODA reached approximately \$8.6 billion by 2018, with humanitarian aid constituting about 85% of the total, reflecting a sharp increase from \$2.4 billion in 2014, when humanitarian aid accounted for 67% of Türkiye's overall ODA (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2021). Through TİKA, Türkiye has positioned itself as a reliable development partner, particularly in regions with historical and cultural ties to the country (Ipek, 2015).

## **Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD)**

While TİKA focuses on long-term development aid, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) serves as Turkey's main agency for disaster response and emergency humanitarian assistance. Founded in 2009 under the Ministry of Interior, AFAD coordinates disaster risk management, search-and-rescue operations, and international humanitarian aid efforts (AFAD, n.d.). The agency transformed Turkey's disaster response framework by introducing an Integrated Disaster Management System, shifting the focus from crisis response to risk mitigation.

AFAD's role extends beyond Turkey's borders, providing humanitarian aid to disaster-stricken regions worldwide. It has also conducted humanitarian missions in over 50 countries across five continents providing refugee aid, establishing temporary shelters, and delivering medical supplies. AFAD collaborates with

international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Red Crescent, reinforcing Turkey's reputation as a global humanitarian actor (Guo, 2020). Its emergency aid programs complement TİKA's long-term development projects, forming a comprehensive foreign aid strategy that blends humanitarian assistance with sustainable development.

### **Türkiye's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Projects (2014–2024)**

Türkiye's ODA administered by TİKA and AFAD has been significantly amplified under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Balancing its humanitarian commitments with its geopolitical objectives, Türkiye has demonstrated its ability to expand its ODA between 2014 and 2024 and position itself as a global development actor. Over the years, its engagement in development aid has been defined by both short-term emergency relief efforts and long-term sustainable projects, covering various sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and cultural heritage restoration. Türkiye's commitment to humanitarian aid has continued to grow over the years.

According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, Türkiye was the largest humanitarian donor in the world in 2018, contributing \$8.399 billion in official humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, Türkiye was recognized as the "most generous country" in terms of humanitarian aid relative to its Gross National Income, allocating 0.79% of its GNI in 2018 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Türkiye, n.d.). Accordingly, this section provides an exploration of Türkiye's major ODA initiatives in Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan, tracing the evolution of its aid strategy, financial commitments, and the tangible impact of its development efforts in each region.

### **Syria**

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Türkiye has played a crucial role in providing humanitarian relief and reconstructing war-torn regions. The conflict in Syria led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history, displacing millions and creating severe shortages of essential resources such as food, clean water, and medical supplies. As a neighboring country, Türkiye has

borne a significant portion of the responsibility of addressing this crisis through its humanitarian agencies, particularly TİKA and AFAD, both of which have been instrumental in delivering aid and rebuilding infrastructure (TİKA, 2018; AFAD, 2021).

One of the most notable humanitarian interventions was the establishment of food supply chains to support internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Syria. Among these efforts, the Aleppo Bakery Project, initiated in 2017, was particularly significant. The project established several bakeries in Aleppo, producing and distributing thousands of loaves of bread daily to food-insecure populations (TİKA, 2019). These bakeries ensured a stable food supply to vulnerable communities, reducing reliance on sporadic aid deliveries and allowing for a more consistent approach to addressing food shortages. In addition to food security initiatives, TİKA coordinated large-scale medical aid programs, supplying hospitals and clinics with necessary equipment and medicines. Throughout the conflict, Turkish-supported field hospitals and mobile clinics played an essential role in treating war victims, with thousands of patients benefiting from free healthcare services (AFAD, 2020).

Apart from immediate humanitarian relief, Türkiye has invested heavily in rebuilding Syria's social infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of vocational education in reconstructing post-conflict societies, TİKA launched several vocational training centers across northern Syria. These centers focused on skill development in fields such as carpentry, metalwork, and textile production, helping Syrians regain economic independence (TİKA, 2020; Tüylüoğlu, 2021). The goal was not only to provide temporary aid but also to equip individuals with the skills necessary for rebuilding their communities, thereby fostering long-term economic resilience. Similarly, AFAD has played a crucial role in managing large-scale refugee aid operations, facilitating cross-border aid deliveries and ensuring that essential supplies reach vulnerable populations in northern Syria. By 2017, Türkiye had allocated over \$8 billion in humanitarian assistance to Syria, a figure that included direct aid as well as support for refugee integration within Türkiye's own borders (AFAD, 2018).

Cross-border humanitarian aid remains a pivotal component of Türkiye's strategy in supporting Syria. The primary border crossings at Öncüpınar and Cilvegözü have facilitated approximately 80% of the total cross-border humanitarian aid deliveries into Syria, constituting nearly 31% of all international humanitarian

assistance sent to the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Türkiye, n.d.). Türkiye's humanitarian assistance to Syria has been substantial, with aid reaching \$6 billion by 2016, up from \$3.2 billion in 2015, positioning Türkiye as the second-largest humanitarian donor globally and the most generous relative to its Gross National Income (GNI), allocating 0.75% of its GNI to humanitarian causes (AFAD, 2016). As of December 31, 2021, Türkiye hosted 3,736,799 Syrians under temporary protection, representing the largest Syrian refugee population worldwide (UNHCR, 2021). In the same year, 76% of Türkiye's total foreign aid activities were directed toward Syria, underscoring the centrality of the Syrian crisis in Türkiye's foreign aid agenda (TİKA, 2021). The scale of these operations demonstrates Türkiye's pivotal role in ensuring aid reaches those most in need despite persistent security and logistical challenges.

In addition to direct assistance within Syria, Türkiye has taken on the immense responsibility of hosting Syrian refugees. The World Bank has highlighted that Türkiye now accommodates the largest refugee population globally, with over 2.2 million Syrians registered under Temporary Protection (World Bank Group, n.d.). Unlike many other host countries that rely on refugee camps, Türkiye has adopted a unique approach that integrates refugees into urban and rural communities while providing government-financed support. This policy ensures that displaced individuals have access to essential services, including education and healthcare, reducing dependency on external humanitarian agencies (World Bank Group, n.d.).

Additionally, Türkiye faced significant challenges following the devastating earthquakes that struck southern Türkiye and northern Syria on February 6, 2023. These earthquakes, among the most violent to hit the region in over a century, resulted in nearly 60,000 fatalities and left millions displaced, compounding the existing humanitarian crisis in the area. The disaster's impact was particularly severe due to the pre-existing vulnerabilities in the region, including the ongoing conflict and displacement (ReliefWeb, 2024). In response to the earthquakes, Türkiye, through agencies like AFAD and TİKA, intensified its relief efforts to address the compounded humanitarian needs. These efforts included providing emergency shelter, medical assistance, and facilitating the delivery of international aid to the affected regions (ReliefWeb, 2024).



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

TİKA has been at the forefront of Türkiye's development assistance in the Western Balkans, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Türkiye has long-standing historical and cultural ties with the region, dating back to the Ottoman period, which has influenced its approach to development aid. In Bosnia, TİKA has concentrated on infrastructure development, cultural heritage restoration, education, and healthcare (TİKA, 2016). One of the most significant projects undertaken was the restoration of key Ottoman-era architectural landmarks. The Mostar Bridge Renovation Project was a landmark initiative aimed at restoring the UNESCO World Heritage Site, a structure that symbolizes the multicultural heritage of the Balkans. This restoration project was critical not only for preserving cultural history but also for revitalizing tourism in the region, which plays a significant role in Bosnia's economy (TİKA, 2017).

Türkiye has also provided extensive humanitarian assistance in times of crisis. Following the devastating floods that struck Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014, Türkiye, through AFAD and TİKA, delivered immediate humanitarian aid. Emergency relief included food supplies, clean water, temporary shelters, and medical assistance. Türkiye also provided financial support for infrastructure repair in affected regions, ensuring that flood-damaged roads, schools, and public buildings were quickly rehabilitated (Andalou Agency, 2024; TRTWorld, 2024; TİKA, 2024).

Another key focus of TİKA's engagement in Bosnia has been the restoration of Islamic cultural heritage sites. The Aladža Mosque, originally constructed in 1550, was destroyed during the Bosnian War. In 2019, TİKA completed the reconstruction of the mosque, ensuring that this historic and religious landmark was restored to its former state (TİKA, 2019). Similarly, the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, another significant Ottoman-era monument, was restored in 2016 with support from TİKA. Accordingly, it is evident that such projects served both as cultural preservation efforts and as symbols of reconciliation in post-war Bosnia (TİKA, 2016).

Education and healthcare have also been central to Türkiye's aid strategy in Bosnia. Recognizing the importance of bilateral educational exchanges, TİKA has established Turkish-Bosnian schools and introduced scholarship programs that allow Bosnian students to pursue higher education in Türkiye (TİKA, 2018).

Türkiye has funded numerous school renovation projects, ensuring access to modernized learning environments. Additionally, Türkiye has invested in vocational education, supporting training programs in areas such as agriculture, mechanics, and IT skills to equip young Bosnians with employment opportunities (Mujadizevic, 2017).

Additionally, investments in the healthcare sector have included the construction of clinics in rural areas and the provision of modern medical equipment to existing hospitals (TİKA, 2020). TİKA has supplied critical medical aid, including neonatal care units, ambulances, and surgical equipment, enhancing Bosnia's healthcare infrastructure. Türkiye has also sent teams of medical professionals to provide training and direct care in understaffed hospitals (Mujadizevic, 2017).

Rather than solely providing short-term assistance, Türkiye's deployment of ODA in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects a broader vision of fostering long-term development in the region. With over 700 completed projects, Türkiye has demonstrated a sustained commitment to aiding Bosnia's reconstruction, economic development, and disaster response (MFA Türkiye, 2024).

## Somalia

Türkiye's engagement with Africa has expanded significantly under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), with Somalia emerging as a primary beneficiary of its Official Development Assistance (ODA). Between 2010 and 2014, Türkiye's aid to Africa increased by 67%, from \$30.9 million to \$71 million, reflecting a strategic commitment to the continent's development (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

One of the most notable infrastructure investments is the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Hospital, inaugurated in 2015 in Mogadishu. As the largest hospital in Somalia, it provides critical healthcare services and functions as a medical training center for Somali doctors and nurses, thereby strengthening local capacity in the health sector (TİKA, 2018). Additionally, the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) and TİKA have established four field hospitals in Mogadishu and deployed numerous medical professionals to deliver essential healthcare services (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2016). However, some analysts argue that these health initiatives, while impactful, may not be

sustainable without long-term capacity-building strategies and local ownership (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

In the agricultural sector, the Somalia Agricultural Development Project, initiated in 2018, aimed to address food insecurity by providing local farmers with access to modern agricultural machinery, improved irrigation systems, and training programs (TİKA, 2019). These efforts have contributed to enhancing local food production and reducing reliance on external aid. Nevertheless, critics point out that such projects often lack comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, making it challenging to assess their long-term effectiveness (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

Somalia has faced recurrent food crises due to drought, displacement, and economic instability. In response, Türkiye has intensified its humanitarian relief efforts, providing emergency food supplies, water distribution programs, and nutritional support for vulnerable populations (MFA Türkiye, 2016; TRT World Research Centre, 2021). In 2017, Türkiye dispatched over 3,000 tons of humanitarian aid to Somalia, including food, medicine, and hygiene products, to combat severe drought conditions (TC-America, 2024). While these interventions have been crucial, some observers highlight the need for more coordinated efforts with other international donors to avoid duplication and ensure comprehensive coverage (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

Beyond immediate relief, Türkiye has focused on infrastructure projects to support long-term recovery. Turkish NGOs and state agencies have been instrumental in reconstructing roads, schools, and public facilities in Mogadishu and other regions. These projects aim to foster stability and economic resilience by ensuring essential services remain operational. Additionally, Türkiye has facilitated the rehabilitation of key government institutions, aiding Somalia in rebuilding its administrative capacity to sustain aid projects (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2024). However, some critiques suggest that the concentration of aid projects in Mogadishu may neglect other regions, potentially exacerbating regional disparities (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

Türkiye's investments in education and vocational training have also been significant. Multiple schools, universities, and a medical vocational school have been established in Mogadishu, providing Somali students with access to

quality education (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2016). Furthermore, Türkiye has offered numerous scholarships for Somali students to study in Turkish universities, fostering long-term human capital development. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring the alignment of educational programs with local labor market needs and in preventing brain drain (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

Security assistance constitutes a crucial component of Türkiye's aid strategy in Somalia. Through Camp TURKSOM, Türkiye has provided military and police training for Somali security forces, contributing to stabilization efforts in the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2016). Additionally, Türkiye has donated military equipment, uniforms, and vehicles to Somali forces to strengthen their counterterrorism and national security capabilities (TRT World Research Centre, 2021). However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential for such military assistance to inadvertently fuel local conflicts or be perceived as favoring certain factions over others (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

Türkiye's aid efforts in Somalia reflect a comprehensive approach encompassing humanitarian relief, infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and security. While these initiatives have yielded tangible benefits, it is imperative to address the highlighted shortcomings to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of aid programs. Ensuring inclusive development, fostering local ownership, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be essential in realizing long-term stability and prosperity in Somalia.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

Türkiye's aid initiatives in Kyrgyzstan have been focused primarily on education and healthcare, reinforcing Türkiye's historical ties with the region. In 2015, TİKA implemented the Kyrgyzstan School Refurbishment Project, which involved renovating the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk School, modernizing classrooms, and improving overall educational facilities to enhance learning conditions for students (TİKA, 2015). Since then, Türkiye has expanded its support for the education sector by funding multiple educational institutions and offering scholarships for Kyrgyz students to study in Türkiye (TRT World, 2018). Türkiye has implemented over 760 development projects in Kyrgyzstan, many of which

focus on expanding access to quality education (TRT World, 2018).

In addition to education, Türkiye has played a crucial role in strengthening the Kyrgyz healthcare sector. TİKA has implemented large-scale medical training programs, equipping hundreds of Kyrgyz medical professionals with the skills needed to combat infant mortality and improve maternal health services. Furthermore, Türkiye has supported hospitals with modern medical equipment, ensuring better healthcare accessibility in both urban and rural areas (TİKA, 2017). In 2021, Türkiye inaugurated the Kyrgyz-Turkish Friendship Hospital in Bishkek, a state-of-the-art facility offering advanced medical services and providing specialized training to Kyrgyz doctors. Türkiye has committed \$32 million to the hospital's operational budget and medical training programs (Tokoeva, 2025).

Beyond healthcare and education, Türkiye has provided substantial economic and humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan. Since its independence, Kyrgyzstan has received approximately \$1 billion in Turkish aid, including grants and technical assistance for infrastructure, agriculture, and social programs (Turksam, 2018). Türkiye has also been involved in food assistance efforts; in 2022, TİKA distributed 3,000 food parcels to vulnerable families across Kyrgyzstan during Ramadan, ensuring food security for those in need (ReliefWeb, 2022).

Türkiye has further strengthened its bilateral cooperation with Kyrgyzstan through diplomatic agreements. In 2021, Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan signed 19 new agreements in key sectors, including energy, education, and health, solidifying their long-term partnership and facilitating continued development aid efforts (Anadolu Agency, 2021). In 2024, Türkiye played a key role in establishing a joint humanitarian aid network among Red Crescent societies in the region, expanding coordinated disaster response and relief efforts in Central Asia (Daily Sabah, 2024).

Through targeting investment in key sectors in Kyrgyzstan, such initiatives reflect Türkiye's broader strategy of fostering sustainable social and economic development in Central Asia.

## Discussion

### **Analysis of Türkiye's Official Development Assistance (ODA) through Complex Realism (2014-2025)**

#### ***Domestic Environment: Political and Economic Motivations for Aid Expansion***

Türkiye's increasing deployment of Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 2014 to 2024 must first be understood within the domestic environment outlined in Complex Realism, which posits that foreign policy is shaped significantly by internal political structures, leadership interests, and national identity considerations. Under the AKP government, foreign aid has functioned as a mechanism for political consolidation, economic expansion, and the reinforcement of Türkiye's national identity.

The 2014 presidential elections, which marked Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's transition from Prime Minister to Türkiye's first directly elected president, reshaped Türkiye's foreign policy apparatus. With the AKP's strengthened executive control, foreign aid became increasingly tied to presidential diplomacy, enhancing Türkiye's global visibility and bolstering domestic support for the ruling party. The 2017 constitutional referendum, which granted Erdoğan expansive powers, further cemented the use of the ODA as a tool for political consolidation and legitimacy enhancement (Özcan, 2017).

The ODA has also served as an instrument of political leverage to maintain public support for Türkiye's proactive foreign policy. Within Türkiye, foreign aid, particularly to Muslim-majority regions such as Syria, Somalia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been framed as an extension of Türkiye's historical and cultural legacy, appealing to nationalist and religious sentiments (Yenokyan, 2023). This period saw Türkiye amplifying its humanitarian efforts in Syria, not only to address the refugee crisis but also to bolster domestic support by portraying itself as a protector of oppressed Muslim communities (Chatham House, 2024). This narrative has been actively reinforced through state media and public discourse, where aid operations are portrayed as a moral and civilizational responsibility rather than mere diplomacy.

Economically, Türkiye's increasing foreign aid investments have aligned with its ambition to expand its economic footprint in recipient states. The anticipated

\$400 billion cost of Syrian reconstruction presents lucrative opportunities for Turkish companies, positioning aid as a precursor to economic engagement (Chatham House, 2024). In Kyrgyzstan, large-scale infrastructure investments and vocational training initiatives have been closely linked to Turkish business interests, with aid creating favorable conditions for Turkish companies (Turksam, 2018). Similarly, in Somalia, Türkiye's aid has facilitated the establishment of trade routes and investment zones, solidifying Türkiye's role as a major external economic player in the Horn of Africa (Hasjmi, 2014). Aid thus serves a dual function: projecting Türkiye's influence while also creating new economic opportunities for domestic industries.

National identity and historical legacy also play pivotal roles in shaping Türkiye's aid policies. The AKP government has leveraged Ottoman-era connections to foster a neo-Ottoman identity, resonating with domestic audiences and reinforcing support for aid initiatives in former Ottoman territories, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. This cultural diplomacy serves to strengthen national pride and project soft power abroad.

However, critical literature highlights the risks of relying predominantly on official Turkish sources such as TİKA, AFAD, and the MFA. These sources often lack independent verification and may reflect confirmation bias aligned with political narratives (Guo, 2020; Kavakli, 2018). While they offer detailed accounts of aid activities, their limitations in terms of transparency and accountability raise concerns about the objectivity of data used to evaluate Türkiye's foreign aid strategy. To enhance methodological robustness, this study triangulates these sources with independent reports and academic critiques wherever available, while recognizing the broader challenge of accessing recipient-side perspectives in authoritarian or fragile contexts.

### ***Regional Environment: Security, Influence, and Strategic Depth***

Türkiye's ODA strategy is deeply intertwined with its regional security concerns and ambitions for strategic depth. The protracted Syrian Civil War posed direct threats to Türkiye's border security, prompting Ankara to support opposition forces and establish a buffer zone in northern Syria. This intervention aimed to curtail Kurdish separatist movements and mitigate refugee influxes, thereby stabilizing its southern frontier (Chatham House, 2024). Accordingly, Turkish efforts in Syria not only mitigate potential refugee spillovers but also

strengthen Türkiye's long-term influence in post-war Syria, positioning it as a dominant regional player. The fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime further altered regional dynamics, with Türkiye emerging as a significant power broker in the Levant.

The regional environment, as defined by Complex Realism, plays a central role in Türkiye's ODA expansion by shaping its security concerns, cultural engagements, and geopolitical alignments. Türkiye has leveraged foreign aid as a tool to stabilize neighboring regions, counterbalance regional rivals, and deepen its strategic reach.

Cultural, religious, and historical ties have facilitated Türkiye's influence in the Balkans. Through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Türkiye has undertaken numerous restoration and development projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reinforcing its presence in the region and countering rival influences. Aid to the Balkans has also been instrumental in promoting a shared Ottoman-Islamic heritage, aligning Türkiye with Muslim communities across Southeastern Europe (TİKA, 2016; Mujadžević, 2017). Critics, however, warn that this selective focus on religious or cultural affinity may reinforce identity politics and hinder long-term institutional development in recipient countries (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015).

In Somalia, Türkiye's aid has been strategically oriented towards state-building and counterterrorism efforts. The establishment of military training academies and security cooperation agreements highlights Türkiye's attempt to ensure stability in the Horn of Africa, a region of increasing importance due to maritime trade routes and regional rivalries (Haşimi, 2014). Türkiye's role in security sector reform in Somalia aligns with defensive realism, wherein states act preemptively to neutralize potential threats in their spheres of influence (Göle, 2014). While these initiatives have enhanced Türkiye's visibility and strategic influence, scholars have pointed to the risks of bilateralism and the lack of coordination with other donors, which may result in fragmented aid delivery and duplication of efforts (Saferworld & Istanbul Policy Center, 2015; TRT World Research Centre, 2021).

Additionally, Türkiye's regional aid distribution exhibits strategic selectivity. Regions with higher geopolitical value—such as the Levant, Balkans, and Horn of Africa—receive sustained investment, whereas other crisis-affected areas



(e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa or Central Latin America) are less prioritized. This uneven engagement pattern suggests that ODA allocation is informed as much by geopolitical calculus as by humanitarian criteria, reflecting Türkiye's efforts to assert regional leadership within its extended neighborhood.

In summary, Türkiye's regional ODA practices underscore a pragmatic blend of humanitarian concern and *realpolitik*, consistent with the regional logic of Complex Realism. However, the long-term sustainability of such engagements depends on whether they foster inclusive development or deepen asymmetric dependencies rooted in strategic alignment.

### ***Global Environment: Türkiye's ODA as a Diplomatic and Strategic Tool***

Türkiye's foreign aid is also influenced by the global environment, where its policies align with a broader ambition to diversify alliances, enhance diplomatic reach, and potentially challenge Western aid dominance. Unlike traditional donors who operate within the OECD-DAC framework, Türkiye has positioned its ODA model as a distinct alternative, emphasizing South-South cooperation and a non-interventionist development philosophy (Nurdun, 2024). This differentiation enhances Türkiye's soft power appeal, particularly among postcolonial states seeking alternatives to Western-centric models of development.

On the global stage, Türkiye's ODA serves as a vehicle to diversify alliances and enhance its diplomatic clout. By actively participating in Syrian reconstruction efforts, Türkiye positions itself as an indispensable player in Middle Eastern geopolitics, thereby strengthening its bargaining power with the European Union and NATO (Chatham House, 2024). This foreign aid diplomacy has also enabled Türkiye to broker influence in multilateral forums, including the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, by presenting itself as a humanitarian power with unique geopolitical credibility.

Türkiye's ambition to become an energy hub has gained momentum following Assad's fall, with Turkish companies poised to secure major contracts in Syria's reconstruction (Chatham House, 2024). This economic engagement not only bolsters Türkiye's economy but also elevates its strategic importance in global energy markets. However, critics argue that such strategic use of aid may blur the line between development and transactional diplomacy, raising questions about ethical consistency and long-term development outcomes (Akilli &

Çelenk, 2019; Saferworld & IPC, 2015).

Furthermore, Türkiye's foreign aid diplomacy has been critiqued for its selective globalism. While championing a multipolar order and south-south solidarity, Türkiye has often avoided cooperation with DAC-aligned institutions and has only partially engaged in global aid transparency initiatives like IATI (International Aid Transparency Initiative). This selective approach, though reinforcing national sovereignty, also limits Türkiye's integration into established aid governance mechanisms and complicates comparative impact assessment.

From a Complex Realism perspective, Türkiye's global aid strategy illustrates the intersection between national identity formation and system-level positioning. As a semi-peripheral state, Türkiye navigates between core and periphery through tactical alliances, value-based messaging, and economic leverage—often recalibrating its aid posture in response to shifting global power configurations. Yet, the long-term efficacy of this approach will depend on its ability to align strategic goals with development legitimacy and policy coherence.

### ***Türkiye's ODA through the Lens of Complex Realism***

Navigating the interplay between domestic, regional, and global environments, Erdoğan has pragmatically balanced challenges and opportunities to advance Türkiye's ODA strategy. His leadership has leveraged aid not only as a humanitarian instrument but also as a tool for diplomatic negotiation, regional influence, and economic expansion. This approach, as outlined by Complex Realism, reflects Türkiye's ability to adapt to shifting geopolitical realities while solidifying its status as a key global aid actor.

Unlike classical realism, which privileges state-centric competition and security dilemmas, Complex Realism captures the multi-level incentives that drive Türkiye's aid policy. Domestically, ODA functions to legitimize political authority and promote identity narratives. Regionally, aid is deployed to manage conflict spillovers, deepen influence in culturally proximate zones, and counter rival actors. Globally, Türkiye uses aid to reposition itself as a credible actor outside the traditional West-led donor system, promoting a South-South model of cooperation.

This inter-level interaction is not linear but mutually constitutive. For example, Türkiye's aid in Syria exemplifies how domestic political imperatives (refugee

management, electoral narratives) intersect with regional security goals (buffer zones) and global visibility (humanitarian diplomacy). Similarly, investments in Somalia fuse economic strategy, Islamic solidarity, and geopolitical signaling toward Gulf and Western partners.

Nonetheless, the application of Complex Realism also exposes tensions in Türkiye's aid narrative. Humanitarian aims are often entangled with strategic calculations, raising ethical questions about instrumentalization. Aid policies tailored to short-term political or economic gains may undermine longer-term development effectiveness, especially where coordination with multilateral actors is weak.

By viewing Türkiye's foreign aid expansion through Complex Realism, this study demonstrates that Türkiye's ODA is not reducible to singular motives but rather emerges from the complex, dynamic interaction of layered geopolitical forces.

## Conclusion

Türkiye's foreign aid expansion from 2014 to 2024 reflects the strategic interplay between domestic political priorities, regional ambitions, and global positioning, as conceptualized through Complex Realism. Far from being purely humanitarian, the ODA has functioned as a multifaceted policy instrument—reinforcing domestic legitimacy, extending regional influence, and reshaping Türkiye's global diplomatic posture.

Domestically, foreign aid has bolstered national identity narratives and political consolidation under the AKP. Regionally, it has served both soft power and security functions in zones of strategic interest such as Syria, Somalia, and the Balkans. Globally, Türkiye has sought to differentiate itself from traditional Western donors by advancing a South-South cooperation model grounded in religious solidarity and postcolonial critique.

However, this study also recognizes several limitations. The analysis is based on a limited number of case studies, which may not capture the full diversity of Türkiye's ODA engagements. The study relies heavily on Turkish institutional sources, which, while detailed, often lack independent verification and transparency. Furthermore, the perspectives of aid recipients remain underrepresented due to access and language constraints. These limitations

underscore the need for future research to incorporate the recipient countries' voices, cross-validate state-reported data, and explore comparative frameworks involving other emerging donors.

Nonetheless, by applying Complex Realism, this article offers a comprehensive lens to understand the political rationality behind Türkiye's development diplomacy. It highlights how aid, while outwardly altruistic, operates at the nexus of domestic governance, regional competition, and global ambition—constituting a central pillar of Türkiye's evolving international identity.

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### **Ethics Statement**

This study did not include human participants and therefore did not require ethical approval.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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# Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development:

## Lessons from Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy in Africa with a Focus on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon.

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### Abstract:

This paper examines Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in Africa with a special focus on Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis, analyzing its implications for post-conflict reconstruction and development. The Anglophone Crisis, rooted in perceived historical and socio-political marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians, has led to significant humanitarian needs. While Türkiye has increased its engagement in Africa, its humanitarian-led partnerships in Cameroon have indirectly benefited the Anglophone Crisis. Employing a qualitative case study analysis, this paper investigates Türkiye's humanitarian and developmental initiatives, guided by the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and human security. The study identifies a research gap concerning the specific

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analysis of Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in this context. By synthesizing existing literature and available reports, the paper draws lessons regarding best practices, challenges, and potential implications for future humanitarian interventions in post-conflict settings. The findings suggest that while Türkiye's development assistance contributes to long-term stability, a more direct and targeted approach may be needed to address the immediate humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis.

**Keywords:** Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Humanitarian Diplomacy, Türkiye, Turkish Foreign Aid, Cameroon, Anglophone Crisis.

## Introduction

The implementation of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa revealed multifaceted challenges that required comprehensive strategies addressing security, political governance, economic rehabilitation, and social reconciliation (Tzifakis, 2013). These complex settings necessitate the involvement of diverse actors, extending beyond traditional Western powers to include emerging global players (Bogatyreva, 2022). The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon serves as a stark example of such a challenging post-conflict scenario. This protracted conflict, arising from elongated historical grievances and political struggles, has culminated in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, warranting international concern and intervention (Akanga, 2025). Understanding the roles and approaches of various actors, including non-traditional ones, in these reconstruction efforts is crucial for developing effective and sustainable peacebuilding strategies globally.

The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon is rooted in the country's colonial legacy. After World War I, following Germany's defeat, British and French forces occupied Cameroon, which was a German colony. Subsequently, it was divided by the League of Nations into two territories: French Cameroon and British Southern and Northern Cameroons (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), 2025). This partition created distinct political, Sociocultural, legal, and educational systems in the two regions (Ekah, 2019). Following the emergence of decolonization and subsequent independence of African countries, British Northern Cameroons opted to join Nigeria while Southern Cameroons voted for unification with French Cameroon in a plebiscite that was organized by the UN in 1961, forming the Federal Republic of Cameroon (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2023; USCRI, 2025). However, the predominantly Francophone-majority government gradually centralized power, causing an outcry of marginalization and disenfranchisement among the Anglophone minority (Iyal et al., 2024; ICG, 2017, 2023). These long-standing grievances erupted in 2016 when English-speaking lawyers, students, and teachers protested against the perceived erosion of their cultural and legal heritage by the Francophone-dominated government (Bang and Balgah, 2022; USCRI, 2025). The government's heavy-handed response to these nonviolent demonstrations aggravated tensions, which amplified the radicalization of separatist groups (Fairbend, 2018; Bang

and Balgah, 2022). In October 2017, after the October 1<sup>st</sup> massacre<sup>1</sup>, Anglophone separatists declared independence for the Northwest and Southwest regions, proclaiming the new state of “Ambazonia,”<sup>2</sup> which triggered an armed conflict with the Cameroonian security forces (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), 2025). The inability to address and resolve grievances of the Anglophone minority after unification paved the foundation for this protracted and violent conflict (USCRI, 2025).

The persisting conflict has created severe humanitarian conditions. Violent confrontations between government forces and separatist groups have multiplied and are plagued by numerous human rights violations perpetrated by both sides. These human right violations constitute extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and the burning of villages (Oxford Human Rights Hub, 2019; Bang and Balgah, 2022; Salome, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2024). As of February 2025, the crisis had registered over 900,000 internally displaced people, while over 60,000 people are seeking refuge in neighboring Nigeria (Ekah, 2019; Mutah, 2022; Fonkwo et al., 2023; Africanews, 2024b; USCRI, 2025). Over 3.3 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, requiring urgent assistance with food, shelter, healthcare, and protection (Tientcheu, 2023, TIKA, 2024). Humanitarian efforts are further hampered by increased restrictions on movement and targeted attacks on aid workers and facilities (USCRI, 2025).

In this complex humanitarian landscape, Türkiye has emerged as a significant global humanitarian actor, increasingly engaging with African nations (Tank, 2015; Bayram, 2020; Donelli and Cannon, 2025). Türkiye perceives itself as a state that champions justice, conscience, and fairness in its foreign policy, often framing its engagement through the lens of “humanitarian diplomacy” (Altunisik, 2019; Akpınar, 2021; Devecioğlu, 2024). The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) plays a central role in delivering Türkiye’s development assistance across various domains in Africa, including Cameroon (Mehmet, 2018; Rugutt, 2023; TIKA, 2024). Given the severity of this humanitarian crisis, this article explores how Türkiye’s humanitarian contribution to Africa and Cameroon in particular supports stability and development necessary for post-conflict recovery.

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1     *The October 1st Massacre refers to violent events that occurred on October 1st, 2017 during the symbolic declaration of the Independence of ‘Ambazonia’.*(ICG, 2017)

2     *Ambazonia is a self- proclaimed independent state by Anglophone separatists in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon (ICG, 2017)*

A comprehension of Türkiye's motivations, the types of aid it provides, and its overall approach can offer valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of humanitarian diplomacy and its potential contributions to post-conflict reconstruction and development. This paper seeks to address the following research question: What lessons can be learned from Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in Africa and Cameroon for post-conflict reconstruction and development? To answer this, the paper aims to examine the history, causes, and current state of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis; investigate Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy efforts in Africa and Cameroon; and analyze the theoretical frameworks guiding Türkiye's interventions; and ultimately, highlight the implications of Türkiye's aid for broader post-conflict strategies. Türkiye's bilateral relations with Cameroon strengthened, particularly following President Biya's visit to Türkiye in 2013. Türkiye's foreign policy towards Cameroon appears to prioritize economic cooperation and development partnerships (MFA, 2022). While Türkiye's broader humanitarian engagement in Africa has been subjects of academic inquiry, existing research documenting Turkish humanitarian aid interventions in Cameroon (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), 2022) remains largely unexplored. This paper aims to address this gap by providing a focused examination of Türkiye's aid intervention in Cameroon. Filling this gap will contribute valuable insights to the fields of international relations, humanitarian studies, and African studies, potentially informing future policy and practice in similar contexts.

This paper employs a qualitative case study analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in Africa and its impact on crisis-affected countries like Cameroon, as a mechanism for post-conflict recovery and development. The data for this study primarily comprises secondary sources. Academic articles focusing on the Anglophone Crisis, Turkish foreign policy, and humanitarian diplomacy provide crucial analytical perspectives (Bang and Balgah, 2022; Muth, 2022.; Fonkwo et al., 2023), reports from international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Crisis Group offer valuable insights into the humanitarian impact of the Anglophone Crisis and the broader international response (ICG, 2017, 2023; USCRI, 2025, GCR2P, 2025). Official statements and reports from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and TİKA provide insights into Türkiye's official stance and development activities in Cameroon (TİKA, 2024, 2035; MFA, 2022). News

articles and reports from reputable media outlets offer additional perspectives and details on Türkiye's engagement and its perceived impact and potential for post-conflict reconstruction in Cameroon.

## 1. Theorizing Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy strategies in Africa

This paper utilizes the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and human security to analyze Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in Africa and by extension Cameroon and Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis.

Constructivism in international relations emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping state behavior (Wendt, 1992; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Dixon, 2013). Constructivism posits that international relations amongst states is shaped by socially constructed ideas, norms, and identities rather than material power alone (Wendt, 1992). Unlike realism or liberalism, which prioritize material interests or institutional frameworks, constructivism emphasizes the role of shared beliefs and intersubjective understandings in shaping state behavior. Key tenets like ideational power posit that norms such as "human dignity" and "solidarity" are not static but evolve through interaction. For example, Finnemore (2015) argues that humanitarian norms gain legitimacy through repeated state practices and institutionalization. Constructivism also posits that non-state actors like NGOs, the media, and religious groups act as norm entrepreneurs, mediating state identity (Checkel, 1998). Türkiye's use of institutions like TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) exemplifies this. Lastly, identity formation as a constructivism tenet showcases how states craft identities through discourse and practice, which in turn influence how they are perceived (Hopf, 2002). Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy is both a reflection and reinforcement of its identity as a "benevolent power."

When reconciling constructivism and humanitarian diplomacy, humanitarian diplomacy is inherently normative. It emphasizes values like solidarity and shared responsibility. Türkiye frames its aid as a moral duty rooted in historical Ottoman benevolence and contemporary Islamic solidarity (Özkan, 2010). This aligns with constructivist claims that state behavior is driven by identity narratives. For instance, Türkiye's emphasis on "Africa as a Strategic Partner" (Davutoğlu, 2013) reflects a deliberate effort to reconstruct its identity from a regional player



to a global humanitarian actor (Ipek, 2015). This framework helps understand Türkiye's motivations for engaging in humanitarian diplomacy, potentially driven by its evolving identity as a humanitarian actor and its aspiration to influence international norms around humanitarian intervention and development (Bayram, 2020; Devicioğlu, 2024). Türkiye's increasing emphasis on providing aid and engaging in diplomatic efforts can be viewed as a reflection of its changing self-perception and its desire to be recognized as a significant and responsible actor in the international arena. Constructivism offers a compelling lens through which to understand Türkiye's evolving behavior as a humanitarian actor within Africa. This theory emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, identities, and social interactions in shaping state interests and actions (Wendt, 1992).

One key aspect of constructivism is the idea that state identities are not fixed but are socially constructed through interaction and the adoption of shared norms (Hopf, 1998). Türkiye's historical identity as a post-Ottoman, secular state with a growing economy has been evolving to embrace a more proactive and compassionate role in global affairs, including humanitarianism in Africa. This shift is partly driven by a desire to cultivate a positive image and enhance its soft power on the continent (Ipek, 2015; Güler, 2020). Türkiye's framing of its humanitarian actions often emphasizes solidarity, historical ties and a commitment to South-South cooperation, contributing to the construction of an identity as a benevolent and reliable partner for African nations (Sıradağ, 2022).

Norm diffusion, which is also central to constructivism, plays a significant role in shaping Türkiye's humanitarian behavior. The increasing global emphasis on humanitarian responsibility and the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) norm, while debated, has influenced the discourse surrounding state action in humanitarian crises. Türkiye's active participation in international forums and its engagement with organizations like the African Union expose it to these evolving norms, which can then be internalized and influence its foreign policy decisions, including its humanitarian responses in Africa (Sıradağ, 2025). For instance, Türkiye's increasing focus on providing aid in protracted crises and supporting resilience-building initiatives aligns with broader normative trends in the humanitarian sector (Tepeciklioğlu, 2021).

Social interaction and the relationships Türkiye cultivated with African states directly shape its humanitarian actions. Constructivism highlights that state

interests are not solely material but are also influenced by intersubjective understandings and shared meanings developed through interaction (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Türkiye's growing diplomatic presence in Africa, the establishment of numerous embassies, and increasing trade and investment foster closer relationships. These interactions provide Türkiye with a deeper understanding of the specific needs and priorities of African nations, allowing its humanitarian assistance to be more tailored and effective. Furthermore, positive interactions can lead to reciprocal understandings and strengthen Türkiye's legitimacy as a humanitarian actor on the continent (Özcan, M., & Köse, 2024).

Finally, constructivism underscores the importance of ideational factors and the role of domestic political discourse in shaping foreign policy. The emphasis on humanitarian values and a proactive foreign policy under the AKP government has created a domestic environment supportive of humanitarian engagement in regions like Africa (Altunisik, 2019). This domestic consensus, shaped by religious values, historical narratives, and a desire for Türkiye to play a larger global role, provides the ideational underpinning for its humanitarian actions on the continent. A constructivist perspective illuminates how Türkiye's evolving identity as a caring global actor, the internalization of international humanitarian norms, its deepening social interactions with African states, and supportive domestic political discourse collectively shape its behavior as a humanitarian actor within Africa. This theoretical lens moves beyond purely materialist explanations, highlighting the crucial role of ideas, norms, identities, and interactions in understanding Türkiye's increasing and nuanced humanitarian engagement on the continent. Applying constructivism to Türkiye's humanitarian engagement in Africa reveals how shifting self-perceptions, evolving normative frameworks, and interactions with African states and international organizations have influenced its approach and priorities.

The human security framework provides a complementary perspective by shifting the focus from a state-centric view of security to a people-centric one (Conteh-Morgan, 2005, Adisönmez, 2016). It argues that security encompasses not just freedom from violence but also freedom from want and freedom from fear, addressing a broad range of threats to human lives and dignity (Muguruza, 2017). This framework broadens the understanding of security to encompass

various threats to human well-being beyond military conflict, including poverty, disease, and violence (Craig, 2020; Agwanda & Asal, 2021; Mutah, 2022). The Anglophone Crisis has created profound security issues for Cameroon, affecting the population, threatening their physical safety, livelihoods, and dignity (ICG, 2017, 2023; USCRI, 2025). Analyzing Türkiye's humanitarian efforts through this lens allows for an assessment of how its interventions have supported post-conflict recovery and development by addressing these multi-dimensional insecurities, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of Cameroon. This analysis explores how Türkiye's engagement via its broader humanitarian actions and its foreign policy priorities in Africa, has impacted Cameroon and the Crisis.

## **2. Reviewing the Crisis, Humanitarian Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development**

The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon has been extensively studied, with existing literature providing a comprehensive understanding of its historical roots, underlying causes, and the escalation of the conflict (Achu, 2023; Okereke, 2022; Achu & Tutumlu, 2023). The crisis is deeply embedded in the legacy of colonial rule, where the partition of Cameroon under British and French mandates created distinct socio-political and legal systems involving distinctive French and English linguistic, educational and legal (Common law and Civil law) structures (ICG, 2017, 2023; Iyal et al., 2024). The subsequent unification in 1961, while intended to foster national unity, inadvertently laid the groundwork for future conflict due to the centralized governance that often marginalized the Anglophone minority (Okereke, 2018; USCRI, 2025). This marginalization, encompassing political, economic, social, and linguistic dimensions, fueled resentment and a sense of second-class citizenship among Anglophone Cameroonians (Agwanda & Asal, 2021; Sobseh, 2024). The government's violent response to peaceful demonstrations led by lawyers and teachers in 2016 decrying the imposition of Francophone legal and educational systems in Anglophone regions sparked the emergence of the 2016 Crisis (Achu & Tutumlu, 2023). The violent crackdown on these protests led to increased calls for secession and the eventual declaration of independence of "Ambazonia" in 2017, marking a significant escalation into an armed conflict (Fon et al., 2024, Bang and Balgah, 2022). The ongoing violence has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, with widespread displacement,

human rights abuses, and urgent needs for basic necessities (USCRI, 2025). As of February 2025, over 3.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance across Cameroon, with the Anglophone regions bearing a significant burden.

Displacement is a major concern, with over 900,000 people internally displaced and 60,000 having fled to Nigeria and other countries. More than 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently residing within the Anglophone regions. These populations face limited access to essential services, including food, shelter, protection, water, and healthcare. For instance, in the North-West and South-West regions, almost 500,000 people lack adequate shelter, and 36% of schools are non-functional due to the conflict (USCRI, 2025). The conflict has resulted in significant casualties, with over 6,500 people killed since 2016. Both governmental security forces and separatist armed groups have been implicated in human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, and arbitrary detention.

The humanitarian response remains severely underfunded. For example, Cameroon's 2024 humanitarian response plan was only 45% funded, leaving a gap of \$202.8 million (UNFPA, 2025). This shortfall impacts critical services, with UNFPA reporting a 50% reduction in their humanitarian response as of March 2025, potentially leaving over 25,000 direct beneficiaries without access to essential sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services (OCHA, 2025). As such, any strategy for terminating violence and implementing sustainable peace requires an anticipatory trajectory for post-conflict reconstruction and development that includes the support of international actors.

Although post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa is well-documented, addressing the complexities of rebuilding societies shattered by violence and conflict is still a major issue plaguing Africa's development (Tzifakis, 2013; Neethling & Hudson, 2013; Earnest, 2015; Oder, 2021). The cessation of violent conflict often marks not an end, but rather the commencement of a complex and protracted process of post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD). This phase necessitates a holistic approach encompassing security sector reform (SSR), economic recovery, the cultivation of local ownership, and the restoration of vital political and social institutions (Rutherford & Saleh, 2019; Barakat, 2020; Fiedler & Mross, 2023). Together these pillars ensure the sustainability of peace and the trajectory of development in war-

torn nations. Security sector reform stands as a foundational element of the PCRD. The presence of fragmented, politicized, or abusive security forces can undermine peace agreements and perpetuate instability (Nathan, 2007; Achu, 2023). Effective SSR mechanisms can transform the security apparatus into a legitimate, accountable, and professional entity that serves the needs of the entire population. This involves demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, the restructuring and training of military and police forces, and the establishment of civilian oversight mechanisms (DCAF, 2019). However, the implementation of SSR in Africa is fraught with difficulties. Weak governance structures, a lack of financial resources, and resistance from entrenched security elites often impede progress. Moreover, externally driven SSR initiatives can be perceived as impositions, lacking the crucial buy-in from local actors necessary for long-term success (Richmond, 2004). The African Union's revised Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (2024) emphasizes the importance of African leadership and national ownership in SSR processes, recognizing that sustainable reform must be rooted in local contexts and priorities.

Furthermore, economic recovery is inextricably linked to the consolidation of peace. Conflict devastates infrastructure, disrupts livelihoods, and depletes human capital, leaving behind widespread poverty and unemployment. Post-conflict economic strategies must focus on creating opportunities for income generation, stimulating productive investment, and addressing inequalities that may have fueled the conflict (UNDP, 2008). This often involves a combination of short-term measures, such as humanitarian assistance and job creation programs, with long-term strategies aimed at diversifying the economy, strengthening institutions, and promoting inclusive growth. However, African states emerging from conflict often grapple with weak institutions, a lack of access to capital, and the lingering effects of war economies, including illicit trade and corruption (Du Rand, 2010). Also, the equitable distribution of the benefits of economic recovery is crucial to prevent the resurgence of grievances and instability.

Additionally, the principle of local ownership is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of a successful PCRD. External actors can provide valuable technical and financial assistance, but ultimately, the responsibility for rebuilding and developing a country lies with its own people and institutions (Paffenholz, 2010).

Local ownership entails the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including government, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and the affected population, in shaping the priorities and processes of PCRD. This ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate, contextually relevant, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. The lack of genuine local ownership can lead to the imposition of externally driven agendas, which may not address the root causes of conflict or foster sustainable peace. Empowering local actors and building their capacity to lead and manage PCRD processes is therefore essential for long-term success (Interpeace, 2020).

Lastly, the restoration of political and social institutions is vital for establishing legitimate governance and fostering social cohesion in post-conflict settings. This includes rebuilding state capacity, strengthening the rule of law, promoting democratic processes, and creating inclusive platforms for dialogue and reconciliation (Call, 2008). The legacy of conflict often manifests in deep-seated mistrust, social fragmentation, and weakened institutions. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that promote justice, accountability, and reconciliation. Transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions and reparations programs, can play a crucial role in addressing past abuses and fostering healing. Moreover, inclusive political processes that ensure the participation of marginalized groups are essential for building a stable and equitable society. The African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy Framework (2006, revised 2024) underscores the importance of inclusivity, equity, and non-discrimination as guiding principles for the restoration of political and social institutions.

Despite growing recognition of the key elements of an effective PCRD, the current state in Africa remains complex and often falls short of achieving sustainable peace and development. Challenges such as limited financial resources, weak institutional capacity, persistent insecurity, and a lack of genuine local ownership continue to impede progress in many countries. Moreover, the interconnected nature of these challenges necessitates integrated and coherent approaches that are often difficult to achieve in practice. External interventions, while often necessary, can also be fragmented, poorly coordinated, and insensitive to local contexts.

In conclusion, post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa is a multifaceted and long-term endeavor that requires sustained commitment

from both national and international actors. While significant progress has been made in understanding the key pillars of a successful PCRD – security sector reform, economic recovery, local ownership, and institutional restoration – their effective implementation remains a significant challenge. Future efforts must prioritize genuine local ownership, build institutional capacity from the ground up, adopt integrated and context-specific approaches, and ensure the equitable distribution of peace dividends. By learning from experiences and adapting strategies to the unique challenges of each conflict-affected nation, Africa can move towards a future of sustainable peace and development. The African context presents unique challenges, including weak governance structures, systemic corruption, and the potential for external interventions to exacerbate existing tensions (Kalu & George, 2021). Lessons learned emphasize the need for context-specific approaches that address the root causes of conflict, promote inclusive governance, and foster reconciliation. Effective post-conflict reconstruction requires coordination among multiple actors and a long-term commitment to building sustainable peace.

### 3. Türkiye and Humanitarian Diplomacy in Africa

The field of humanitarian diplomacy has witnessed a growing involvement of non-traditional actors, moving beyond the conventional dominance of Western powers (Özerdem, 2017; Bogatyreva, 2022). Humanitarian diplomacy involves leveraging diplomatic channels to advance humanitarian interests and goals (Geremedhn & Gebrihet, 2024). This includes negotiation, advocacy, and building relationships with various stakeholders. Non-traditional actors, such as Türkiye, are increasingly engaging with African countries under the humanitarian context (Donelli and Cannon, 2025). Türkiye's foreign policy has undergone a significant transformation, moving from a historical focus primarily on Western and neighboring regions to a more diversified global engagement (Bayram, 2020). Traditionally, African affairs held a secondary status, with Turkish governments since the Republic's establishment in 1923 prioritizing political, economic, and military relations with the West, often influenced by Cold War dynamics. However, a pivotal shift occurred with the adoption of the "Action Plan for Opening up to Africa" in 1998, which gained increased prominence under the government of the Justice and Development Party (Altunisik, 2019). This re-engagement reflects Türkiye's broader aspiration for a more dynamic

and constructive role in post-Cold War international politics, particularly in regions like Africa (Özkan, 2010; Donelli, 2018).

Türkiye's approach to foreign aid is often referred to as the "Turkish way" or "Ankara consensus," presenting an alternative model of development cooperation distinct from the Washington or Beijing consensus. (Parlar Dal and Dipama, 2023). This model is characterized by a "sincere, unconditional, transparent, and human-oriented approach," aiming to cultivate fair, equitable, and sustainable relationships. A key distinguishing feature is Türkiye's preference for providing grants to African countries, eschewing loans, which sets it apart from both traditional Western donors and emerging donors like China (Parlar Dal and Dipama, 2023). In 2017, Türkiye's official development assistance (ODA) reached \$8.12 billion, representing 0.95% of its Gross National Product (GNP), surpassing the UN's 0.70% target and positioning Türkiye as the 6th largest donor among OECD DAC members and 4th globally by ODA as a percentage of GNP (TIKA, 2017). Türkiye's engagement with African countries has significantly expanded over the last two decades, evolving from an opening policy to a strategic partnership (Devecioğlu, 2024; Donelli & Cannon, 2025). This comprehensive shift, often framed within the context of "humanitarian diplomacy," seeks to establish Türkiye as a "benevolent power" through extensive foreign aid and development initiatives (Turhan, 2024). This "Turkish-type" aid model, which focuses on grants, human-centered approaches, and a non-colonial ideology, serves as a strategic differentiator for Türkiye, granting it influence and acceptance in African nations wary of traditional or loan-heavy aid models (Turhan, 2021). This combination of humanitarian, economic, diplomatic, and geopolitical motivations indicates that aid is employed as a versatile tool, not purely altruistic, but designed to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships that serve Türkiye's strategic interests while simultaneously contributing to the recipient countries' development.

Turhan (2024) argues that Türkiye's commitment to humanitarian aid, particularly in the healthcare sector, is driven by humanitarian motives and has remained consistent, even amidst domestic and international challenges. This approach, rooted in a public diplomacy paradigm, aims to foster a positive image and new and deeper engagement with African nations, positioning Ankara as a strategic partner on the continent. Özkan (2023) complements this perspective by delving into the broader political, economic, military, and cultural dimensions of Turkish



African relations. He asserts that foreign aid, particularly humanitarian and development projects implemented through entities like TİKA and AFAD in over 40 African countries, is a crucial element of Türkiye's soft power on the continent (Özkan, 2023). This soft power strategy, encompassing humanitarian activities, cultural diplomacy, and scholarships, enables Turkey to emerge as an important international actor and secure diplomatic support, particularly in global forums (Tepeciklioğlu et al., 2023). Türkiye's foreign aid policy is also primarily defined by its humanitarian and benevolent identity, an identity that can be traced back to the Ottoman era. He suggests that humanitarian assistance serves as an "entry point" to the continent, allowing Türkiye to establish a presence and cultivate relationships beyond mere economic considerations (Özkan, 2018).. This dimension offers a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary analysis, discussing various dimensions of Türkiye's African engagement, such as public diplomacy, humanitarian/development assistance, and religious activities. This broader analysis of Türkiye's peacebuilding responses in Africa, such as the case of Somalia, provides a conceptual framework for understanding how Türkiye might approach humanitarian diplomacy in conflict-affected regions (Tepeciklioğlu, 2021). This underscores how Türkiye's involvement goes beyond summit diplomacy, utilizing diverse soft power tools, including humanitarian aid and development assistance, to solidify its presence and influence (Ipek, 2015; Rugutt, 2023).

The primary instrument for Türkiye's development cooperation overseas is the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). Established in 1992, TİKA initially focused on former Soviet republics but has since expanded its mission to encompass a wide array of development assistance across various regions, including Africa. Türkiye has established a growing presence in Africa, including Cameroon, primarily through its development assistance channeled via TİKA (Turkish Red Crescent, 2022). These efforts encompass various sectors, including education, health, infrastructure, and agriculture (Gülabi, 2015; TİKA, 2024, 2024c). The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) serves as a key instrument in implementing Türkiye's development and humanitarian policies in Africa (Gunner, 2020; Ipek, 2015). TİKA plays a significant role in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy through its focus on development and humanitarian aid. Established in 1992, TİKA operates as a government agency dedicated to fostering sustainable development and providing humanitarian assistance across a wide geographical area, spanning from the Balkans to Africa, the Middle

East, and Latin America (Ipek, 2015; Altunisik, 2019). This extensive reach allows Türkiye to engage with diverse nations and communities, building goodwill and strengthening diplomatic ties. TİKA's approach centers on understanding and responding to the specific needs and priorities of partner countries (Donelli, 2018). This demand-oriented strategy ensures that projects are relevant and impactful, contributing to long-term development goals rather than imposing external agendas. By implementing projects in crucial sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure, TİKA directly supports the socio-economic progress of recipient nations (Ipek, 2015). This commitment to tangible improvements on the ground enhances Türkiye's image as a reliable and supportive partner in the international arena.

Furthermore, TİKA's rapid response to humanitarian crises underscores Türkiye's dedication to alleviating suffering and providing timely assistance. Whether it's delivering essential supplies, establishing healthcare facilities, or supporting vulnerable populations, TİKA's humanitarian efforts reflect Türkiye's principled stance on global solidarity. This proactive engagement in humanitarianism not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters stronger relationships based on shared values and empathy (Beşgöl, 2024). Through its multifaceted activities, TİKA serves as a key instrument of Türkiye's soft power, promoting cooperation, development, and cultural exchange. By prioritizing human-centered and sustainable solutions, the agency effectively translates Türkiye's foreign policy objectives into tangible actions, contributing to a more peaceful and prosperous global environment.

In the context of Cameroon, Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy aligns with these principles, leveraging humanitarian aid for public diplomacy, establishing a benevolent presence, and potentially contributing to post-conflict reconstruction through development projects. While direct engagement in the complex Anglophone Crisis is challenging due to its internal dynamics and the Cameroonian government's stance, Türkiye's established mechanisms for humanitarian assistance and development cooperation in Cameroon offer avenues for support in areas such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, influencing stability and post-conflict recovery in the long run. However, the specific implications for post-conflict reconstruction and development in Cameroon would depend heavily on the nature and scale of Türkiye's involvement, as well as the local political and security landscape.

#### 4. Analysis: Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis

Cameroon holds particular strategic importance within this evolving foreign policy. Identified as one of Africa's "most emergent countries" and a "close ally in Central Africa," Cameroon became a key partner for Türkiye (Amadou, 2024). A landmark visit by Cameroonian President Paul Biya to Türkiye in 2013, the first of its kind, provided substantial impetus to bilateral relations, fostering increased public interest in Türkiye within Cameroon (MFA, 2022). This diplomatic connection has directly contributed to a steady rise in Turkish companies' engagement and investment in Cameroon's ambitious goal of becoming an emerging economy by 2035 (MFA, 2022). This demonstrates that Türkiye's engagement in Cameroon is not merely an isolated or opportunistic endeavor; rather, it is a direct and strategic manifestation of a broader, long-term foreign policy pivot towards Africa, aiming to diversify international relations and establish new spheres of influence beyond traditional Western alliances. High-level diplomatic engagement, such as presidential visits and accelerated rapprochement, serves as a direct catalyst, enabling the intensification of practical development cooperation and increasing economic interest from Turkish entities in Cameroon.

TİKA's direct presence in Cameroon began with the opening of its Yaoundé Program Coordination Office in 2014, which has since intensified its activities across diverse sectors. As such, Turkish companies are increasingly contributing to Cameroon's infrastructure and transformational projects, and the total trade volume between Türkiye and African nations surged from \$1.35 billion in 2003 to \$12.4 billion in 2023 (Parens and Plichta, 2025). Since its establishment, TİKA has intensified its activities, developing projects in collaboration with Cameroonian authorities across various sectors, such as education, health, infrastructure, and agriculture (Turkish Red Crescent, 2022; MFA, 2022; APO Group, 2023b). These projects include the renovation of health centers, support for educational infrastructure, and initiatives to boost agricultural production (TİKA, 2024c). These development-oriented initiatives align with Türkiye's broader foreign policy strategy in Africa, which emphasizes building long-term partnerships and contributing to sustainable development (Amadou, 2024).

In the health sector, TİKA renovated the Nkol Mvak Integrated Health Center in Yaoundé, increasing its service capacity (TİKA, 2024b). TİKA has notably

undertaken the refurbishment of a safe house for women fleeing abuse in Yaoundé. Ongoing high-level discussions, such as the April 2025 meeting between Cameroon's Ambassador to Turkey and the Turkish Minister of Health, underscore continued efforts to strengthen health cooperation and finalize a legal framework for collaboration.

Education and capacity building are also central to Türkiye's initiatives. TİKA renovated the Nyambaka High School and built new classrooms (Turkish Red Crescent, 2022). TİKA supports global education efforts, including the construction, repair, and equipping of schools. In Cameroon, the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) operates schools and a Turkish studies center at the University of Yaoundé 1 SOA, promoting Turkish culture through language instruction. Significantly, the TMF has also initiated Turkish language training for Cameroonian Army personnel preparing for courses in Türkiye. Since 1992, numerous Cameroonian students have benefited from Türkiye Scholarships (MFA, 2022). The involvement of the Turkish Maarif Foundation in education, particularly the provision of Turkish language training to the Cameroonian Army, signifies a deeper, long-term cultural and institutional penetration beyond conventional development aid, fostering closer ties and potentially shaping future leadership and bilateral understanding at a strategic level.

TİKA also established a fish farm in Maroua, supporting agriculture and rural development in the Far North Region, Cameroon, comprising three fishponds and providing material support to the local cooperative "SCOOPS Agros Pisciculteurs Du Sahel" (TİKA, 2024c). This project aims to enhance production capacity and contribute to local employment (AfricaNews, 2024). Under social infrastructure and women/youth empowerment, TİKA's efforts extend beyond humanitarian aid to focus on social welfare initiatives. In Dschang, Western region, TİKA constructed a multi-purpose sports field on the campus of the National Youth and Sports Center (CENAJES), commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye. This "100th Year Türkiye-Cameroon Multi-Purpose Sports Field" supports students' physical education and provides a safe community space (TİKA, 2024). Additionally, TİKA built a "Handicraft and Women's Shelter" in Okola, near Yaoundé, a 200 m<sup>2</sup> facility enabling Cameroonian women to produce and sell goods and serving as a venue for educational seminars and social activities (APO Group, 2023).

While these development projects are valuable for the long-term well-being

of the Cameroonian population, the available information suggests a limited direct response from Türkiye specifically targeting the urgent humanitarian needs of those affected by the Anglophone Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions. The snippets do not provide extensive details of Turkish humanitarian aid, such as the provision of emergency food, shelter, or medical assistance, directly aimed at conflict-stricken areas (USCRI, 2025). Nonetheless, these initiatives show Türkiye's commitment to Cameroon's development, which also impacts the conflict-affected regions. Türkiye's has also been involved in providing general food aid to families in need in Cameroon (Mehmet, 2018). Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy efforts in Cameroon, particularly in relation to the Anglophone Crisis, appear to be primarily focused on broader development assistance rather than direct, targeted interventions addressing the immediate humanitarian needs arising from the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions. While Türkiye has a growing profile as a humanitarian actor globally, its direct engagement specifically targeting the Anglophone Crisis has been relatively circumscribed, primarily channeled through multilateral organizations and broader development initiatives rather than large-scale, direct interventions focused solely on the crisis. This limited direct engagement can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including geographical distance, Türkiye's foreign policy priorities in other regions, and the complex political dynamics of the Cameroonian conflict.

Despite the absence of extensive, direct Turkish humanitarian operations specifically labeled for the Anglophone Crisis, Türkiye's broader humanitarian principles and its increasing engagement in Africa with multilateral organizations active in Cameroon might represent an indirect form of humanitarian assistance to the Anglophone regions. Türkiye contributes financially and politically to bodies like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP), which are actively involved in providing aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees affected by the Anglophone Crisis (UNHCR, 2024; WFP, 2025). Türkiye's support for these organizations indirectly contributes to the humanitarian response on the ground, even if not through explicitly Turkish-led initiatives.

The limited direct Turkish intervention can also be understood within the framework of Türkiye's broader foreign policy priorities. Türkiye has significant humanitarian and development engagements in regions closer to its

geographical sphere of influence, such as the Middle East and the Balkans, as well as a growing focus on the Horn of Africa (Oğuzlu, 2020). The Anglophone Crisis, while a significant humanitarian concern, may not have yet reached the threshold of triggering a large-scale, direct Turkish intervention due to these competing priorities and the logistical challenges associated with operating in Central Africa.

Moreover, the complex political landscape of the Anglophone Crisis, involving secessionist movements and government responses, might present challenges for direct bilateral humanitarian intervention. Navigating the sensitivities of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs is a crucial consideration for any external actor. Türkiye, like other international partners, likely prioritizes working through established international frameworks to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered impartially and effectively, without being perceived as taking sides in the conflict (Weiss, 1999).

Türkiye's primary approach appears to be development-focused, which can contribute to long-term stability and resilience in Cameroon, including potentially in the Anglophone regions once the conflict subsides. Improved infrastructure, better healthcare, and enhanced educational opportunities can address some of the underlying socio-economic grievances that may have contributed to the crisis. However, the immediate humanitarian needs of the displaced population, including access to food, shelter, clean water, and protection from violence, may require more direct and targeted interventions. The effectiveness of Türkiye's current approach in directly addressing the urgent humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis may therefore be limited.

## **5. Lessons Learned and Implications for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development**

Several key lessons can be drawn from Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in the context of Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis for broader post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts.

The diplomatic cooperation between Cameroon and Türkiye, formally established in the 1960s, has yielded "immense ramifications," with the Cameroonian government consistently benefiting from Turkish aid. This collaboration is characterized as a "beneficial cooperation that has come to stay" and a "win-win cooperation" (Amadou, 2024). Turkish initiatives contribute

directly to Cameroon's socio-economic development and welfare, supporting its sustainable development efforts. Specific projects, such as the fish farm, are designed to boost local employment, while the sports field enhances physical education and provides a safe community space (TIKA, 2024). The Maarif schools and scholarships further expand educational opportunities and cultural exchange for Cameroonian citizens.

This comprehensive cooperation extends beyond purely political relations to encompass economic, social, and cultural spheres, thereby deepening the bilateral relationship. TIKA's collaborative approach, involving engagement with international organizations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Health Organization (WHO), coupled with a strong emphasis on local participation, amplifies the reach and effectiveness of its efforts, fostering a sense of solidarity between nations while indirectly supporting Cameroon's post-conflict reconstruction.

Furthermore, these initiatives highlight the potential role of non-traditional actors like Türkiye in providing development assistance that can contribute to long-term stability in post-conflict settings. Türkiye's commitment to infrastructure development, capacity building, and educational support can help address some of the underlying socio-economic factors that contribute to instability and conflict. This aligns with the broader understanding that sustainable post-conflict reconstruction requires addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering inclusive development.

Thirdly, the case illustrates the challenges faced by non-traditional actors in navigating complex political landscapes and addressing immediate humanitarian crises. The Anglophone Crisis is deeply rooted in historical and political grievances, making external intervention a sensitive issue. Türkiye, while increasing its engagement in Africa, may be navigating these complexities by focusing on development assistance that is less politically contentious than direct humanitarian aid in a conflict zone.

Finally, Türkiye's growing influence and soft power in Africa present a potential avenue for its increased involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (Cevik, 2014; Sofos, 2022). While not explicitly detailed in the context of the Anglophone Crisis in the provided snippets, Türkiye's experience in mediation and its relationships with various African nations could be leveraged to facilitate dialogue and contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The lessons learned from Türkiye's experience in Cameroon have several

implications for future humanitarian interventions and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Africa and beyond. There is a clear need for a multi-faceted approach that combines immediate humanitarian aid to address urgent needs with long-term development initiatives to foster sustainable peace. Non-traditional actors like Türkiye have the potential to play a more significant role in this process, particularly in providing development assistance and potentially contributing to peacebuilding through diplomatic channels. Effective coordination and collaboration among various international actors, including traditional and non-traditional donors, NGOs, and international organizations, are essential to ensure a comprehensive and impactful response to complex crises. Leveraging the diverse strengths and approaches of different actors can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy in the context of Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis, drawing on lessons for post-conflict reconstruction and development. The Anglophone Crisis, with its deep historical roots and devastating humanitarian consequences, requires a concerted international response. Türkiye's foreign aid initiatives in Cameroon, primarily channeled through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and complemented by the Turkish Maarif Foundation, exemplify a strategic and evolving "Opening to Africa" policy. This aid is characterized by a distinctive "Turkish-type" development assistance model, emphasizing human-centered, unconditional, and grant-based support, with a focus on tangible, micro-level development projects across crucial sectors such as social infrastructure, education, health, and agriculture.

These initiatives have demonstrably contributed to Cameroon's socio-economic development and welfare, fostering a "beneficial cooperation that has come to stay". The engagement has strengthened bilateral relations across political, economic, social, and cultural domains, thereby enhancing Türkiye's soft power and diplomatic influence in the region. Turkey's foreign aid to Cameroon exemplifies a broader strategic shift in its foreign policy, effectively leveraging development assistance as a key instrument of soft power and economic diplomacy, while simultaneously addressing genuine humanitarian needs and contributing to local development.

TİKA's commitment to long-term partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and people-



centered development suggests a sustained and evolving role in Cameroon's developmental trajectory.

While Türkiye has increased its development assistance to Cameroon through TİKA, its direct humanitarian engagement, specifically targeting the Anglophone Crisis, appears limited based on the available information. However, its humanitarian contributions to Cameroon's development are also useful and significant for Cameroon's post-conflict recovery, especially in the context of the Anglophone Crisis. The study highlights the importance of context-specific interventions that address both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development challenges.

Non-traditional actors like Türkiye have a significant role to play in contributing to sustainable peace through development, and potentially through leveraging their soft power for conflict resolution. Future efforts should focus on fostering greater coordination among all international actors to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to complex post-conflict scenarios in Africa and beyond.

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### **Ethics Statement**

This study did not include human participants and therefore did not require ethical approval.

### **Use of Generative AI**

During the preparation of this work, the author used Google Gemini to assist in reducing the word count by shortening sentences without altering the logical structure or conceptual content of the manuscript. The author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the final version.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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# Türkiye's Role in the Peacebuilding Process of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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## ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, particularly from the 2000s onward, Türkiye has emerged as an increasingly active actor in humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Strategically positioned between Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, Türkiye has pursued policies aimed at promoting peace and stability both regionally and globally. This study examines Türkiye's contributions to peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which experienced intense conflict during the 1990s. Using a conceptual framework focused on peacebuilding, the study analyzes Türkiye's efforts in four key sectors: state-building, security-building,

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transitional justice, and post-conflict reconstruction. It explores what Türkiye has done in each of these areas and how it has contributed to the peacebuilding process. Adopting a qualitative research method, the study utilizes primary sources, including official documents related to Türkiye's peacebuilding policies and activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the 1990s. Additionally, secondary sources such as news articles, reports, and academic studies are employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of Türkiye's role and policies. The analysis reveals that Türkiye has made substantial contributions across all four peacebuilding sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The findings suggest that Türkiye has largely aligned with international peacebuilding efforts, actively supported them, and pursued an assertive foreign policy to further peace and stability beyond these initiatives.

**Keywords:** Bosnia and Herzegovina; Peacebuilding; Statebuilding; Security-building; Transitional Justice; Post-conflict Reconstruction; Turkish Foreign Policy

## Introduction

Following the Cold War, especially from the 2000s, Türkiye emerged as an active actor in humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Positioned strategically in Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, Türkiye has implemented policies aimed at peace and stability both regionally and globally<sup>1</sup> (Özerdem, 2019, p. 470). With this vision, it pursued active foreign policy in over a hundred countries (Haşimi, 2014, p. 129). These policies include mediation in conflicts (Akpınar, 2015; Altunışık & Cuhadar, 2010; Aras, 2012), political entrepreneurship (Akçapar, 2019, 2021), post-conflict reconstruction, disaster response, humanitarian aid, development initiatives (Haşimi, 2014), and strengthening political, economic, and cultural ties with neighboring countries through soft power and public diplomacy. Reflecting its role in global humanitarian policies, Türkiye hosted the first World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, organized by the UN (Özerdem, 2016, p. 131), where solutions to global challenges were discussed with international organizations, NGOs, scholars, and affected communities (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a).

In recent decades, one of the prominent goals of Turkish foreign policy has been to emerge as a leading actor in humanitarian diplomacy and aid—not only through diplomatic and mediatory support to conflict-affected regions but also by providing substantial humanitarian and development assistance (Altunışık, 2023, p. 657; TİKA, 2020). Starting its humanitarian efforts in the mid-1980s with food deliveries to crisis areas,<sup>2</sup> Türkiye has since expanded its aid capacity,

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- 1 *Contributing to peace-building efforts in African countries such as Somalia and Sudan or in Asian countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar and providing development assistance in many countries in Africa are examples of such global activities.*
  - 2 *Examples of Türkiye's humanitarian assistance activities include the 2004 Southeast Asia earthquake, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, the 2006 humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, the Gaza Crisis that erupted at the end of 2008, the 2010 Haiti and Chile earthquakes and the floods in Pakistan, the 2011 Japan earthquake, the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines, the 2014 floods in the Balkans and the attacks on Gaza, the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the humanitarian crisis in Iraq caused by conflict, the humanitarian crises in Yemen and Libya in 2015 and 2016, and the floods in North Macedonia in 2016. In 2017, Türkiye provided assistance in Colombia and Georgia; in 2018, in Vietnam, Laos, and Indonesia; and in 2019, in Mozambique, Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh,*

becoming a global humanitarian actor. Reaching out to countries affected by natural disasters, war, poverty, and social conflict, Türkiye allocated 0.86% of its gross national income to humanitarian aid in 2021, ranking among the world's most generous countries in aid-to-GNI ratio since 2015. With humanitarian aid amounting to 5.587 billion USD in 2021, Türkiye ranked second globally after the United States (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a).

Alongside its humanitarian efforts, Türkiye has also emerged as a key contributor to peacebuilding in various regions. It aligns with the international community's peacebuilding model while emphasizing cooperation with local actors and adopting a win-win approach. Türkiye has thus started to develop its own peacebuilding model, moving beyond merely replicating international methods. The liberal peacebuilding model, shaped by Western values post-Cold War, has been criticized for its top-down, standardized approach that often neglects local needs. In contrast, Türkiye's model is tailored to the unique conditions of each country, prioritizing cooperation with local actors rather than applying a one-size-fits-all method, enhancing its effectiveness as a peacebuilding actor.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design to explore the role of Türkiye

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*Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Djibouti, Chad, Ethiopia, Palestine, The Gambia, South Sudan, Georgia, Iraq, Iran, Cameroon, Colombia, Comoros, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Lebanon, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Niger, the Central African Republic, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Jordan, and Yemen. In 2020, humanitarian assistance efforts continued in Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Palestine, Fiji, South Sudan, Cambodia, TRNC, North Macedonia, Myanmar, Niger, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Romania, Somalia, Tanzania, Tunisia, Ukraine, Jordan, and Yemen. In 2021, Türkiye extended aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, Guatemala, South Sudan, Haiti, Croatia, Honduras, Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tajikistan. In 2022, cash and in-kind assistance were provided in response to natural disasters such as floods, wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions in Afghanistan, Brazil, Iraq, Madagascar, and Pakistan (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a).*

*As can be observed, Türkiye's humanitarian assistance activities are not confined to its immediate neighborhood; however, Türkiye tends to play a particularly prominent role in humanitarian relief and diplomacy efforts in crises occurring in its surrounding regions. For instance, during the humanitarian crisis in Syria that erupted with the outbreak of civil war in 2011, Türkiye has acted within the framework of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and has emerged as one of the leading actors in cross-border humanitarian aid deliveries to Syria since 2014 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a).*

in the peacebuilding process of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter, Bosnia). Qualitative descriptive research is particularly well-suited for studies that aim to provide a straightforward, data-driven account of events, processes, or actions without extensive theoretical abstraction (Kim et al., 2017; Sandelowski, 2010). Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed: (1) What have been Türkiye's main contributions to the peacebuilding process in Bosnia since the end of the War? (2) How has Türkiye engaged in the four core sectors of peacebuilding in Bosnia? (3) To what extent have Türkiye's peacebuilding efforts aligned with or diverged from broader international peacebuilding frameworks in Bosnia?

The data collection relied on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official documents, policy statements, speeches, reports, and press releases from Turkish institutions (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TİKA, and the Ministry of Defense), as well as selected documents from Bosnian institutions and relevant international organizations. Secondary sources encompass academic books and articles, policy reports, think-tank publications, and media reports that provide additional context on Türkiye's peacebuilding policies and activities. In addition, two personal communications were conducted in 2025 in Sarajevo with Ali Erdem (legal expert) and Mirsad Karić (expert in Political Science and International Relations), both of whom reside in Bosnia and possess extensive knowledge of Türkiye's Balkan policy and Bosnia-related peacebuilding initiatives. Although these personal communications were limited in number, they provided valuable contextual insights that helped clarify specific aspects of Türkiye's role and complemented the document-based analysis. The collected data were then subjected to descriptive analysis, which yielded a comprehensive and accurate summary of Türkiye's peacebuilding contributions across four key sectors: state-building, security building, transitional justice, and post-conflict reconstruction.

A notable limitation of the study is its heavy reliance on Turkish official documents and Turkish media reports, which may introduce a degree of national framing bias. Despite the incorporation of secondary international and Bosnian sources, as well as the two personal communications conducted in Sarajevo, which provided additional insights, the study still lacks a more extensive inclusion of local Bosnian and international perspectives. Moreover, the article's descriptive approach, while useful for systematically delineating

how Türkiye has contributed to the process of peacebuilding in Bosnia, may result in an absence of critical analysis regarding Ankara's policies.

This study first outlines the conceptual framework of peacebuilding, which gained prominence after the Cold War, explaining its four interrelated dimensions: state-building, security sector reform, transitional justice, and post-conflict reconstruction. It then examines the international community's peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia —a country that endured intense warfare during the Yugoslav disintegration in the 1990s and still struggles for lasting peace—and analyzes Türkiye's contributions to these efforts. In the discussion and conclusion, Türkiye's policies aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability in Bosnia are evaluated, along with potential future policy options that could enhance its role in peacebuilding.

## 1. Post-conflict Peacebuilding

With the end of the Cold War, significant changes in the international system influenced conflict resolution approaches. As interstate wars gave way to internal conflicts, traditional peacekeeping, which focused mainly on ceasefires between warring states, began to be seen as inadequate due to its narrow scope (Call, 2008, p. 1). In response, the peacebuilding approach gained prominence, based on the belief that structural and institutional changes can address the root causes of conflicts and create a sustainable foundation for peace. Unlike mere ceasefire arrangements, this approach aims for broader transformations in conflict-affected countries (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Post-conflict peacebuilding encompasses four interconnected and complementary sectors: 1) State-building, 2) Security building (or security sector reform), 3) Transitional justice, which focuses on justice and social reconciliation after conflict, and 4) Post-conflict reconstruction.

### 1.1. State building

State building, a key pillar of peacebuilding, involves large-scale political and constitutional transformation. Its goals include establishing a transitional government, ensuring democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, restoring state institutions, and implementing constitutional arrangements and free elections to achieve peace and reconciliation (Call & Wyeth, 2008). The process



focuses on an institutional approach, aiming to rebuild state institutions that were largely destroyed during the conflict while considering the conflict's dynamics (Lemay-Hébert, 2020, p. 57).

State building is the process of restoring state authority, which may have been weakened or entirely dismantled due to war or similar causes, to ensure peace and reconciliation within a framework of democratic values and institutions. When state authority collapses, the term “failed state” is often used, although it is sometimes softened to “fragile state” to avoid negative connotations (Lemay-Hébert, 2020, pp. 56–57). This terminology is frequently applied to countries like Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda, which experienced conflicts in the 1990s. In the post-conflict period, effective state building is seen as crucial for achieving peace and stability in such regions.

State building in post-conflict countries is often carried out through international intervention. Although this may seem at odds with principles like democracy, local ownership, and self-governance, post-conflict security and stability are prioritized, leading to the adoption of the “institutionalization before liberalization” approach (Paris, 2004). This approach assumes that international intervention is initially necessary to establish democracy and self-governance, with the expectation that, over time, this need will decrease, allowing the international community to withdraw.

## 1.2. Security Building

Establishing sustainable peace after conflict requires a stable security environment, concentrating on the legitimate use of force within official state institutions, and disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating (DDR) armed groups. This includes restoring security through state channels, regulating national security institutions like the military, police (Davis, 2009; Licklider, 2014), and judiciary (Strohmeyer, 2001), as well as integrating former combatants into formal security institutions or disarming them for civilian reintegration—key components of security sector reform (Kurtenbach & Ansorg, 2022, p. 1362).

Conflicts often leave behind various armed groups that retain power in the post-conflict period, challenging official security forces and hindering normalization. Therefore, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of these groups are crucial components of post-conflict security sector reform (Özerdem, 2008). Highlighted by international organizations, especially

the United Nations, DDR is among the most urgent post-conflict priorities, as the success of peacebuilding sectors like statebuilding, transitional justice, and reconstruction depends on effective security. If the DDR fails, the state's monopoly on violence remains compromised, and the presence of armed groups can lead to a violent oligopoly, risking renewed conflict (Kurtenbach & Ansorg, 2022).

### 1.3. Transitional Justice

Transitional justice in peacebuilding focuses on ensuring post-war justice, addressing human rights violations and war crimes through institutions like international courts, national judicial mechanisms, or truth and reconciliation commissions (Kostić, 2008, p. 205, 2012; Vinjamuri & Boesenecker, 2007). It includes not only judicial measures to hold war criminals accountable but also non-judicial actions such as recognizing victims' rights, providing compensation, and implementing political and social measures to prevent future conflicts. The goal extends beyond prosecution to achieving social reconciliation, reducing polarization, and preventing renewed conflict. Transitional justice encompasses multiple dimensions, including justice, social reconciliation, and healing from conflict-related trauma. Steps like the voluntary return of displaced people to their homes without security fears are also crucial for its realization.

Truth and reconciliation commissions in many post-conflict countries serve as key transitional justice mechanisms, enabling victims and perpetrators to confront each other and helping to heal the divisions and traumas caused by conflict. While legal processes to investigate wartime events and prosecute perpetrators are important, such commissions recognize that political and legal measures alone are insufficient for post-conflict peace and reconciliation. Instead, broader societal truth-telling, forgiveness, and healing are necessary for genuine reconciliation (Huyse, 2003; Rigby, 2001, p. 180; Williams & Scharf, 2002, pp. 16–22). These commissions aim to make perpetrators acknowledge their crimes, apologize, and document victims' experiences, thereby preventing the denial of war crimes—a process that is deeply painful for victims (Aslan, 2014, pp. 287–294; Van Zyl, 2000). The focus is also on encouraging victims' participation in reconciliation, promoting healing without a desire for revenge. Truth and reconciliation commissions provide a platform for victims to voice their grievances, share their stories, and restore their dignity and faith in justice. Notable examples include those established in South Africa and Rwanda (Hayner, 2002).

#### 1.4. Post-Conflict Reconstruction

As seen in nearly all conflicts, war not only claims lives and causes injuries but also devastates a country's economy, infrastructure, and social systems. The inability to restore political, social, and economic stability after conflict heightens the risk of renewed violence (Mason & Meernik, 2009). Therefore, a key focus of post-conflict peacebuilding is the reconstruction process, aimed at rebuilding the physical and socio-economic infrastructure essential for resuming social life (Barakat & Zyck, 2009).

Post-conflict reconstruction primarily involves humanitarian aid and development assistance aimed at repairing the socio-economic and physical damage caused by conflict. This process goes beyond the concept of negative peace, the mere cessation of war and direct violence, and strives toward positive peace, which addresses long-term structural issues like political and social inequalities, lack of infrastructure, and poverty (Galtung, 1969). As Johan Galtung and other peace scholars emphasize, ending direct violence (negative peace) is insufficient for lasting peace; addressing structural violence and systemic inequalities is crucial (Galtung, 1976; Galtung & Fischer, 2013; Lederach, 1997; Özerdem & Roberts, 2016; Roeder & Rothchild, 2005). Humanitarian policies, including economic support, infrastructure rebuilding, and technical assistance, are essential in post-conflict reconstruction, contributing to the realization of positive peace by tackling these deeper structural challenges.

Post-conflict reconstruction, viewed as part of the broader peacebuilding process, is generally defined to include all political, socio-economic, security, and justice-related rebuilding efforts following a ceasefire or peace agreement. For this reason, the terms “post-conflict reconstruction” and “peacebuilding” are often used interchangeably (Özerdem, 2021, p. 347). This overlap illustrates that the various sectors within peacebuilding are not always clearly distinct and are sometimes discussed as synonymous with peacebuilding itself or its dimensions, such as state building, security-building, or transitional justice (Barakat & Zyck, 2009; Özerdem, 2021, pp. 348–349).

## 2. The Process of State building in Post-Conflict Bosnia

The Bosnian War (1992–1995), which claimed around 160,000 lives—mostly Bosniak civilians—and forcibly displaced nearly one million people, ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) in 1995. Officially known as the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia, the agreement not only halted the war but also defined the country's political structure and constitutional order. One of its annexes, the Constitution of Bosnia, established a political system consisting of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (51% of the territory) and the Republika Srpska (49%), along with the special status of the Brčko District (İrdem, 2023, p. 133). These entities were granted extensive powers in social services, education, infrastructure, and policing. While Republika Srpska maintained a largely centralized structure, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided into ten cantons, each with significant autonomy over education, health, and justice (Belloni, 2009, p. 359; Ekinci, 2014, pp. 17–18). In contrast, the central state retained limited authority and operated under a consensus-based governance model among the three *constituent peoples* (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) (Uygun, 1998).

The highest office in Bosnia, the Presidency, consists of three members representing each of the constituent peoples, with the presidency rotating every eight months. The legislature is bicameral, comprising the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. Representatives of the three constituents have veto rights on decisions deemed harmful to their vital interests. Although the Constitution ensured peace, it left the country with a highly complex administrative structure, including 14 separate governments and parliaments (state level, two entities, and 10 cantons) (Korkut & Mulalić, 2009, p. 111; Lamba & Hisoğlu Koç, 2022, pp. 77–81). This complexity has hindered the central government's ability to perform basic state functions and created barriers to effective public administration. Since the ceasefire was primarily achieved through international pressure rather than the parties' willingness, there was little expectation of a rapid adoption of strong statehood. Consequently, the peacebuilding process in Bosnia has been closely monitored and actively supported by the international community from the beginning.

The DPA and its subsequent implementation mechanisms transformed international community representatives from mere foreign observers into active participants in Bosnia's state-building process. Following the war, the

Office of the High Representative (OHR) was established to oversee the civilian aspects of the DPA (Office of the High Representative (OHR), n.d.). The Peace Implementation Council (PIC), initially composed of 55 states and international institutions, was later reduced to 11 members. In 1997, during a ministerial meeting in Bonn, the PIC granted the OHR expanded powers—known as the “Bonn Powers”—allowing the High Representative to directly intervene in local politics (Banning, 2014; OHR, n.d.). These powers enabled the OHR to enforce decisions to strengthen state institutions. For example, in 1998, the High Representative unilaterally determined the new flag and coat of arms of Bosnia after parliamentary deadlock. That same year, standardized license plates were mandated, and in 2000, a uniform passport policy was introduced. Through these interventions, several central institutions were established, including the joint tax administration (Bosna i Hercegovina Uprava za indirektno – neizravno oporezivanje, 2025), the state prosecution office (Tužilaštvo Bosne i Hercegovine, 2025), the state court (Sud Bosne i Hercegovine, 2025), and the intelligence agency (Obavještajno-sigurnosna agencija Bosne i Hercegovine (OSA BiH), 2025). In 2006, international pressure led to the unification of Bosnia's armed forces (Oružane snage Bosne i Hercegovine, 2025). Despite these efforts to centralize and strengthen the state, the country's ethnically divided political structure continued to hinder the development of an effective government mechanism.

## 2.1. Türkiye's Role in State building

On February 6, 1992, Türkiye decided to recognize the breakaway republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia. Although Türkiye closely followed Yugoslavia's dissolution alongside international actors like the US and the European Community (EC), it recognized Bosnia's independence before both the US and the EC, even before the results of the independence referendum (Kodal, 2018; Sönmezoğlu, 2016, pp. 211–215). This decision was warmly welcomed in Bosnia, and President Alija Izetbegovic expressed gratitude to Türkiye and the Turkish nation (Kodal, 2018, p. 435). Diplomatic relations soon followed, and on March 10, 1993, Şükrü Tufan became the first Turkish Ambassador to Bosnia. On March 19, 1993, Hayrudin Somun, Senior Advisor to Izetbegovic, was appointed as Bosnia's first Ambassador to Ankara. During his meeting with Ambassador Somun, Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin criticized the global indecision on Bosnia, stating it prolonged the massacres (Kodal, 2018, p. 437). Thus, Türkiye began supporting Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity during the war,

continuing its support in the post-war state-building process.

Since the beginning of the Bosnian War, Türkiye has firmly supported the independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia, pursuing active diplomatic efforts in this direction. The Ankara administration backed international initiatives to ensure security, stability, and peaceful conflict resolution in Bosnia (İrdem, 2023, p. 131). Türkiye actively supported Bosnia's UN membership, believing it would legitimize the Sarajevo administration and deter Serb attacks (Sönmezoğlu, 2016, p. 216). Although Bosnia became a UN member on May 22, 1992, this did not stop the Serb assaults.

Since the beginning of the war, Türkiye has played a significant role in bringing the issue to the attention of international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Council of Europe. It also initiated diplomatic efforts under the UN and sought to mobilize the Islamic world through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) regarding the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia (Sönmezoğlu, 2016, p. 216). In this context, the OIC meeting held on June 17–18, 1992, at Türkiye's request, heightened international awareness of the war in Bosnia. The Istanbul meeting in November 1992, led by Türkiye, along with various diplomatic initiatives, fostered international dialogue against the risk of the war's expansion. Türkiye also worked to influence global opinion to lift the arms embargo that left Bosniaks defenseless and emerged as a key actor in NATO's decision to launch an air campaign against Serb forces (Sönmezoğlu, 2016, p. 217).

The US sought cooperation with Ankara to leverage Türkiye's close relations with the Bosnian leadership. During this process, many high-level officials, including US National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and Richard Holbrooke, one of the architects of the DPA, maintained close contact with Ankara (Demirtaş Coşkun, 2007, pp. 65–71). Türkiye's active diplomatic role during the Bosnian crisis continued in the post-Dayton state-building mechanisms, where it became a member of the PIC Board of Directors, representing the OIC (İrdem, 2023, p. 136).

After the war, Türkiye continued its active diplomatic efforts to ensure Bosnia's political stability, extending its role beyond the PIC. Türkiye's peacebuilding efforts include supporting dialogue among Bosnia's constituent nations and promoting regional normalization with neighboring countries. In domestic

politics, Türkiye seeks to play a constructive and balanced role among the three founding nations,<sup>3</sup> leveraging its respected status to facilitate dialogue during political crises (Strategic Thinking Institute, 2021). For instance, in 2021, amid rising tensions, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan engaged in effective diplomacy by meeting first with Bosniak leader Bakir Izetbegovic and then with Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik a week later (TRT Avaz, 2021). In 2025, when Milorad Dodik was sentenced to one year in prison and a six-year political ban by Bosnia's judicial authorities for defying OHR decisions, Türkiye again intervened. Erdoğan contacted Bosnian representatives, affirming Türkiye's support for Bosnia's territorial integrity and constitutional order. Maintaining a balanced stance, Türkiye also reached out to Dodik, cautioning against escalating the crisis (Anadolu Agency, 2025a, 2025b).

Alongside its mediation efforts within Bosnia, Türkiye has also acted as a mediator between Bosnia and its neighbors, Serbia and Croatia. A key initiative in this regard was the Türkiye-Bosnia-Serbia trilateral dialogue mechanism, launched in October 2009. This mechanism aimed not only to normalize relations among the three countries but also to enhance regional peace and stability (Ekinci, 2019, p. 39). In the first five months, foreign ministers met five times in Istanbul, Belgrade, and Sarajevo, intensifying diplomatic engagement. These meetings led to concrete steps, including Serbia's parliamentary declaration condemning the 'Srebrenica massacre' and the opening of Bosnia's embassy in Belgrade (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-b). Türkiye's regional diplomacy significantly contributed to the peacebuilding process by improving relations between Bosnia and its neighbors. The trilateral mechanism also provided Bosnia with a platform to address unresolved post-war issues, helping to ease domestic political crises and accelerate decision-making processes.<sup>4</sup>

Türkiye's support for the peacebuilding process has gradually expanded through diplomatic initiatives and regional economic and infrastructure cooperation. Within the trilateral mechanism between Bosnia and Serbia, Türkiye has taken concrete steps to strengthen trade and economic relations, particularly

3 Personal communication with Ali Erdem, [Legal expert], Sarajevo, March 24, 2025.

4 Personal communication with Prof. Dr. Mirsad Karić, [Expert in Political Science and International Relations, International University of Sarajevo], Sarajevo, 27 March 2025.

focusing on infrastructure projects since the 2010s. Notably, highway projects connecting Bosnia and Serbia were seen as crucial for enhancing regional economic cooperation and sustaining peace (DEİK, 2016; Kaplan & Gül, 2019). At the 2016 Türkiye-Bosnia-Serbia trilateral summit and subsequent meetings, the importance of economic integration in the region was highlighted, with meetings also held in the Türkiye-Bosnia-Croatia trilateral format until the last summit in June 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2024a). Türkiye's successful implementation of two separate dialogue mechanisms involving Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia has earned it international recognition as an effective mediator in the Balkans (Ekinci, 2019, p. 39).

### **3. Security Building in Post-Conflict Bosnia**

During the Bosnian War, NATO played a crucial role in military operations, enforcing international sanctions, monitoring the UN-designated no-fly zone, and supporting peace efforts. NATO's involvement began in 1992 with monitoring operations in the Adriatic Sea to enforce the UN arms embargo and sanctions on former Yugoslavia (Mueller, 2000, p. 18). Following UNSC Resolution 749 on April 7, 1992, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed to Bosnia. On April 12, 1993, NATO launched Operation Deny Flight, establishing a no-fly zone over Bosnia and monitoring its enforcement. NATO also provided air support to UNPROFOR and carried out limited operations to protect UN-designated safe zones. The most impactful intervention was Operation Deliberate Force, launched on August 30, 1995—a 16-day intensive bombing campaign targeting Bosnian Serb forces. This operation shifted the war's dynamics, pressuring Bosnian Serb leaders into peace negotiations and paving the way for the DPA (Owen, 2000). NATO's intervention marked the beginning of efforts to end the war and build security infrastructure in Bosnia.

Immediately after the war, NATO established a 60,000-strong international peacekeeping force called the Implementation Force (IFOR) under UNPROFOR's authority. IFOR's mission was to implement the military provisions of the DPA, withdraw heavy weapons from front lines, and monitor the ceasefire. A year later, NATO transitioned to the Stabilization Force (SFOR), which served from 1996 to 2004 to maintain long-term stability in Bosnia (Keil & Kudlenko, 2015). Initially deployed with 31,000 troops, SFOR's presence was reduced to 7,000 by 2004 as security improved. Beyond preventing renewed conflict, SFOR supported justice by assisting in the arrest of war criminals, handing them over to The Hague



to uphold the rule of law. In December 2004, NATO ended its peacekeeping mission and transferred security responsibilities to the European Union, leading to the launch of Operation EUFOR Althea with 7,000 troops ("European Union Force in BiH," 2024). Although troop numbers decreased over time, they were periodically increased based on political dynamics, such as the addition of 400 troops in February 2025 due to rising tensions (klix, 2025). Althea remains one of the EU's largest and longest-running military operations, focused on enhancing Bosnia's defense capacity and maintaining security. However, NATO maintains a presence through its Sarajevo headquarters, advising on defense reforms and supporting local authorities in counterterrorism efforts.

The UN played a key role in the civilian aspects of security and security sector reforms in Bosnia by establishing the International Police Force (IPTF) under the DPA framework. Following a UNSC decision in December 1995, the UN Police Task Force and the UN Office for Civil Affairs (UNMIBH) were deployed, with nearly 2,000 international police officers overseeing the supervision, training, and restructuring of local police from 1996 to 2002. During this period, the IPTF implemented key reforms, including removing former combatants from the police force, creating ethnically mixed police units, and promoting human rights-focused policing standards. After the UN mission ended in December 2002, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) took over, advising local law enforcement on combating organized crime and corruption while supporting civilian capacity development in the security sector until 2012 (Sweeney, 2018).

The international community played a crucial role in restructuring Bosnia's military and defense institutions. Supported by NATO and the OHR, the two entities' separate armies were abolished in 2005, unifying all military forces under the Ministry of Defence to create a single armed force under national sovereignty. This reform was complemented by DDR programs to reintegrate former soldiers into society. Police reform was another significant aspect of security sector restructuring. Although the EU insisted in the mid-2000s that Bosnia reorganize its police across entity and canton lines to progress toward EU membership, resistance from Republika Srpska limited the process. Despite this, international pressure led to the creation of new state-level institutions like the Border Police, the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), and the Intelligence Agency (OSA), establishing common structures in the security sector. This coordinated support from NATO, the UN, and the EU contributed

to security and paved the way for Bosnia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

### 3.1. Türkiye's Contributions to Security Building

Türkiye has been an active contributor to peace and security in Bosnia since the war (Sönmezoglu, 2016, p. 217). During the conflict, Türkiye supported UN- and NATO-led military forces with its Naval and Air Forces. It participated in the air force established to enforce the UN Security Council's March 31, 1993, decision to impose a no-fly zone over Bosnia, contributing 18 F-16 aircraft. Additionally, Türkiye took part in NATO's Operation Sharp Guard under the UN Peacekeeping Operation from 1992 to 1996 with 18 frigates, two submarines, four fuel vessels, and 5,000 personnel (İrdem, 2023, p. 131).

After the war, the Turkish Armed Forces contributed to the military dimension of the peace process by actively participating in NATO-led IFOR and SFOR missions in Bosnia. When NATO transferred its mission to the EU-led EUFOR Althea operation in 2004, Türkiye became its second-largest contributor (Land Forces Command, n.d.). Turkish military personnel served in key roles at EUFOR headquarters, deployed liaison and observation teams across Bosnia, and operated a maneuver company within the international battalion. These units were crucial in monitoring security, clearing mines, and maintaining public order. Türkiye also supported security sector reform in Bosnia by contributing personnel to the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) from 2003 to 2012 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2025). Furthermore, Türkiye leveraged its influence within NATO to advocate for Bosnia's NATO Membership Action Plan, resulting in its inclusion in 2010.<sup>5</sup> These efforts highlight Türkiye's long-term and multidimensional role in strengthening Bosnia's security capacity, sustaining peace, and advancing its integration into the Euro-Atlantic security framework.

Türkiye has made significant contributions to the modernization and operational capacity of the Armed Forces of Bosnia through training, logistical, and technical support (Anadolu Agency, 2014). In 2021, a Military Financial Cooperation Agreement and a Cash Aid Implementation Protocol were signed between the defense ministries of both countries (Ministry of National

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5      *Personal communication with Prof. Dr. Mirsad Karić, [Expert in Political Science and International Relations, International University of Sarajevo], Sarajevo, 27 March 2025.*

Defense, 2021), followed by a Security Cooperation Agreement in 2022 (Ministry of Interior, 2022). Türkiye's support extends beyond military training to defense industry cooperation. A notable example is the agreement signed in December 2022 between Bosnia's Ministry of Defense and Türkiye's defense company ASFAT. This agreement includes logistical support for M113 armored personnel carriers and M60A3 tanks, providing spare parts, maintenance services, and training for Bosnian military personnel ("Turkish Defense Industry's Hand in the Armored Armor of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Army," 2022). Additionally, Kirpi II armored vehicles are expected to be delivered to Bosnia in 2025, and the Ministry of Defense announced the purchase of six Bayraktar TB2 drones from Türkiye (Özdemir, 2024). These developments highlight Türkiye's commitment to strengthening Bosnia and Herzegovina's defense capacity and contributing to regional stability and security sector sustainability (Emiñn & Ekiñciñ, 2024).

#### **4. Transitional Justice in Post- Conflict Bosnia**

The fourth annex of the DPA, which established the Constitution of Bosnia, incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and its additional protocols as directly binding elements of Bosnian law, granting them supremacy over all national legislation. Article 6 of the Constitution outlines the composition of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and the selection of its members: four are nominated by the Assembly of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia, two by the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, and three are appointed by the President of the European Court of Human Rights. This structure highlights the international community's direct influence on Bosnia's constitutional and legal framework.

Established in 1993 by a UN Security Council resolution, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) played a crucial role in promoting transitional justice in Bosnia. The ICTY's mission was to ensure justice and foster reconciliation by prosecuting genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes committed throughout the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia (ICTY, 2001). Its goal was to prevent collective blame and revenge by establishing individual criminal responsibility and giving voice to war victims through an international judicial mechanism. The tribunal brought senior military and political leaders to justice, focusing on major war crimes like the Srebrenica Genocide and the Siege of Sarajevo. In 2017, the ICTY concluded its mandate

and transferred its responsibilities to the International Residual Mechanism of Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), having indicted 161 individuals and secured 91 convictions (Cazzoli, 2023).

Alongside international judicial mechanisms, strengthening the domestic justice system has been another crucial aspect of transitional justice. In 2005, the War Crimes Chamber was established within the State Court of Bosnia to handle mid-level cases transferred from the ICTY and new domestic investigations. Initially, the court operated as a mixed structure with international judges and prosecutors trying serious war crimes, while local courts in the two entities and Brčko District handled lower-level cases. As the capacity of the local judiciary grew, the number of war crimes trials significantly increased. From 2005 to 2022, the State Court alone convicted 326 individuals of war crimes, resulting in a total of 3,475 years of imprisonment (Cazzoli, 2023).

While the DPA established political institutions and electoral mechanisms after the war, it did not provide a comprehensive framework for transitional justice, leaving truth-seeking and reparations for victims incomplete. Unlike South Africa or Latin America, Bosnia did not implement a formal truth commission process; instead, reconciliation efforts were limited to civil society initiatives and internationally supported projects. Consequently, justice mechanisms have not fully healed the war's wounds, and debates over these issues persist. The ongoing political and legal disputes over the Srebrenica Genocide exemplify the incomplete nature of transitional justice in Bosnia.

In 2004, under international pressure, the Republika Srpska government established the Srebrenica Commission, which published a report acknowledging serious violations of international humanitarian law in Srebrenica in July 1995. The government expressed condolences to the victims' families and committed to bringing war criminals to justice. However, in 2018, the Republika Srpska government repealed the report during a special session and announced plans to create an independent international commission to investigate all disappearances between 1992 and 1995. This denial escalated into a crisis in 2021 when High Representative Valentin Inzko introduced a law criminalizing genocide denial, mandating a minimum three-year prison sentence for those glorifying individuals convicted of crimes against humanity. Serbian political authorities strongly rejected the law, deeming it legally invalid (Crnovrsanin, 2021). On 23 May 2024, the UN General Assembly declared 11 July as the "Day

of Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide”, further deepening the political polarization. The resolution condemned genocide denial and the glorification of war criminals, emphasizing the need to continue identifying victims and prosecuting those responsible (United Nations, 2024). Although intended to raise awareness and promote education about the genocide, these initiatives sparked intense debates among local political actors, highlighting the fragility of the peace process. The lack of consensus on sensitive war issues, such as Srebrenica, underscores the unfinished nature of transitional justice in Bosnia.

#### **4.1. Türkiye's Contribution to Transitional Justice in Bosnia**

Türkiye has been a strong supporter of international efforts to achieve transitional justice in Bosnia. In 1998, Türkiye co-sponsored a UNSC draft resolution urging all parties to cooperate with the ICTY to prosecute war crimes in Bosnia and advocated for expanding the court's jurisdiction to accelerate justice processes (United Nations, 1998). Türkiye's support continued under the ICTY's successor, the International Residual Mechanism of Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). Additionally, Türkiye co-sponsored a draft resolution at the UN General Assembly on May 23, 2024, to designate July 11 as the “International Day of Reflection and Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide.” Following this, a Presidential Decree officially declared July 11 as the International Day of Reflection and Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide in Türkiye (Official Gazette, 2024).

Türkiye has maintained a clear stance on the apprehension of war criminals and cooperation with international courts. In 2008, it welcomed Serbia's arrest of Radovan Karadžić, emphasizing that it would contribute to justice in Bosnia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, 2008). Ankara also viewed the 2021 ratification of Ratko Mladic's life sentence for genocide and crimes against humanity, initially given in 2017, as a positive step for justice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, 2021). Türkiye has consistently supported the prosecution of war criminals, advocating that transitional justice should also promote reconciliation among Bosnia's constituent peoples. The Türkiye-Bosnia-Serbia Trilateral Summit, mentioned earlier, is a concrete example of Türkiye's diplomatic initiatives in this regard. A significant outcome of the summit was the Serbian Parliament's adoption of a resolution officially condemning the “massacre in Srebrenica” (Cvetković & Martinović, 2010).

## 5. Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Bosnia

Beyond the loss of life, ethnic cleansing, and forced displacement, the Bosnian War caused significant damage to the country's infrastructure, industrial capacity, and economic functioning. Consequently, reconstruction and development became crucial pillars of the post-war peacebuilding process. The international community provided substantial financial and technical support for economic recovery and infrastructure rebuilding, with the World Bank and the EU playing major roles.

Between 1996 and 2002, the World Bank allocated over \$1 billion through its International Development Administration (IDA), financing 45 projects aimed at repairing transport infrastructure, restoring power plants and transmission lines, upgrading water and sewage systems, and revitalizing agriculture and forestry. The EU invested more than €3.5 billion from 1996 to 2021 to support reconstruction and Bosnia's EU integration process (European External Action Service, 2021). Besides infrastructure reconstruction, the EU's support focused on public administration reforms, the rule of law, and structural transformations to promote the transition to a market economy.

The United States, primarily through USAID, has implemented extensive development projects in Bosnia, providing a total of \$2 billion in assistance since 1992. Under the PRO-Future program, peacebuilding activities were conducted in 75 municipalities to strengthen civil society and boost political participation, with a particular focus on encouraging women's involvement in local governments. In economic development, the WHAM Project supported the integration of SMEs into regional and EU markets, while the Diaspora Invest program generated \$9 million in new investments and created 40 jobs. In the fields of education and social services, over 120,000 students received training in democracy and human rights. Media support initiatives included investigative journalism projects aimed at combating corruption (United States Department of State, 2021).

The international community's development strategies enabled Bosnia to achieve greater economic and political independence in the 2010s and make notable progress toward EU membership. However, the country still lags its regional neighbors in terms of per capita income and investment climate, remaining reliant on long-term international support. The EU has allocated significant funds to Bosnia through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), investing €552.1 million between 2014 and 2020. These funds targeted various sectors, including €9.1 million for the Civil Society Facility, €10 million for

the Regional Housing Program, and €51 million for special measures, particularly after the 2014 floods (European Commission, 2024).

### **5.1. Türkiye's Role in Post-Conflict Reconstruction**

Türkiye, a leading global actor in foreign aid and development assistance, has made significant efforts toward the post-war development of Bosnia, which declared independence during Yugoslavia's disintegration and subsequently endured a brutal war. Türkiye played a vital role in the country's reconstruction and development, undertaking various projects in education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. One of the key institutions in this process was TİKA. Since establishing its Program Coordination Office in Sarajevo in 1995, TİKA has implemented over a thousand projects in Bosnia, covering areas such as education, production, health, housing, agriculture, capacity building, development, and the preservation of cultural heritage (TİKA, 2024).

In the field of education, Türkiye supported the improvement of physical and technological infrastructure in schools, built modern educational institutions, and enhanced teacher professional development. Through the "Turkey-Balkans Experience Sharing in Special Education" project, the standards of eight special education schools were elevated, promoting the social integration of students with special needs.

In rural development, agriculture and animal husbandry projects were implemented to economically empower families returning home after the war. Launched in 2017, the "Food and Life Support Program" provided agricultural equipment and production support to nearly 1,000 families. To encourage women's participation in production, the "Organic Walnut Farming Project" was introduced, along with donations of agricultural machinery to cultivate foundation lands in Eastern Bosnia. To boost employment, Türkiye supported the Gradačac Vocational Training Center, established in 2018 in cooperation with UNDP and the Gradačac Municipality, to train skilled labor for the automotive industry and offer computer courses. In the health sector, hospitals and health centers were modernized, and medical equipment was provided, enhancing the quality of health services. Türkiye's development projects in Bosnia went beyond humanitarian aid, directly contributing to the country's long-term economic and institutional capacity building. These efforts were well-regarded by the international community, with then-High Representative Valentin Inzko praising TİKA's development work as a source of stability in the Balkans (Crnovrsanin, 2020).

Türkiye has undertaken significant projects in Bosnia to protect and restore cultural heritage damaged during the war, with TİKA playing a key role in reconstructing Ottoman-era historical monuments. Notably, the 16th-century Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, destroyed in 1993, was restored by TİKA and reopened for worship in 2016. Türkiye's cultural heritage preservation efforts were not limited to Ottoman-era monuments but also included projects reflecting the country's multicultural and multi-religious heritage. For example, TİKA restored the tombstone of Zeki Efendi—an important figure in Jewish-Muslim cooperation during the Ottoman period—featuring inscriptions in Ottoman, Hebrew, and Bosnian. Additionally, Türkiye supported initiatives to preserve Bosnia's multicultural identity, including sponsoring the “Coexistence of Jews and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina” conference held in Sarajevo.

Türkiye's influence in Bosnia extends beyond culture into trade, investment, and human resource development, contributing significantly to the country's economic growth. The Free Trade Agreement, effective since July 2003, has been pivotal in boosting economic relations, particularly with the abolition of customs duties in 2007, which substantially increased trade volume. Türkiye's exports to Bosnia, which accounted for only 0.06% of its total imports in 2000, rose to 4.6% by 2007, with some fluctuations in the following years. Similarly, Bosnia's exports to Türkiye grew from 1.5% in 2010–2011 to 3.95% in 2015 and 4.26% in 2016, before dropping to 2.5% by 2019. According to the Central Bank of Bosnia, Türkiye ranked 11th among the top investors in the country, with direct investments of 210.8 million euros from 1994 to 2018, representing 3% of total foreign direct investments. However, the total economic contribution of Turkish companies and institutions is estimated to exceed 1 billion euros (Saraybosna Büyükelçiliği Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2024).

## Conclusion

Türkiye plays an active role in all sectors of peacebuilding in Bosnia, including state-building, security-building, transitional justice, and post-conflict reconstruction. While supporting international peacebuilding efforts, Türkiye also leverages its close political, cultural, and humanitarian ties with Bosnia—rooted in historical connections—to promote peace and stability. Operating on principles of inclusivity and regional/local ownership, Türkiye's peacebuilding approach is based on dialogue, cooperation, and consensus with local actors, resembling its “African solutions to African problems” strategy for Africa (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024b, pp. 15–16). Rather than



imposing solutions, Türkiye collaborates with local stakeholders to shape peacebuilding, stability, and development based on their needs. Türkiye's ability to engage with all three major communities—Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats—and its reputation as a trusted and respected actor enhance its influence in mediation and peacebuilding. Its role as a mediator during political tensions and its active involvement in resolving crises by engaging with all parties underscore Türkiye's unique position in Bosnia.

One of Bosnia's major post-war challenges is the recurrence of political crises, particularly the separatist policies of the Republika Srpska administration that contradict the state structure and constitutional order established by the DPA. The persistence of such crises nearly 30 years after the war suggests that the international community's peacebuilding process has not fully achieved lasting peace and stability. Türkiye, actively participating alongside the international community in peacebuilding efforts, contributes to Bosnia's political, diplomatic, military, economic, and cultural stability. Its acceptance as a respected actor by all three constituent communities—Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats—and its good relations with Serbia and Croatia enhance Ankara's role as an effective mediator in Bosnia's ethnic and political disputes.

Despite Türkiye's constructive approach, the core issue lies in the political structure established by the DPA, which grants Republika Srpska extensive powers, creating a complex political system that hinders Bosnia's functioning as a unified state. While the DPA successfully halted armed conflict, it left many of the country's underlying issues frozen and unresolved, providing separatist leaders like Milorad Dodik with substantial political leverage. For effective peacebuilding, reforming the political system established by the DPA needs to be prioritized. Should these reforms come to the agenda, Türkiye is expected to act as a constructive facilitator, supporting dialogue and reconciliation among the parties to promote long-term stability.

In post-war Bosnia, alongside political crises like the separatist policies of the Republika Srpska administration and unresolved ethnic tensions, various socio-economic problems also remain unaddressed. These include significant population decline, limited employment opportunities, high unemployment, and an inefficient public bureaucracy. Although often overshadowed by political crises, these issues pose substantial barriers to the country's development and progress (İrdem, 2023, p. 140). According to the 1991 census, Bosnia had a population of 4.37 million, but the 2013 census recorded a drop to 3.53 million. Experts estimate that due to high emigration rates, the current population is

even lower than the 2013 figures (Karcic, 2022). Unemployment remains another major socio-economic challenge. Despite a downward trend in recent years, it continues to be a critical issue awaiting resolution (Saraybosna Büyükelçiliği Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2024).

Türkiye's expanding economic relations with Bosnia, along with its development support through institutions like TİKA, contribute significantly to addressing these socio-economic challenges and fostering peace and stability. This illustrates that Türkiye's peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia extend beyond high-level political crises to include solutions to socio-economic issues—often considered “low politics”—such as unemployment and population decline. Through its multidimensional peacebuilding approach, Türkiye plays an effective role in addressing these critical socio-economic challenges.

For Türkiye to play a more effective role in the peacebuilding process in Bosnia, several constructive policy recommendations can be proposed to deepen its qualitative contributions. Firstly, Türkiye's most stable and concrete contributions so far have been achieved by aligning with international institutions and carefully considering regional and global balances. This strategic alignment not only positions Türkiye as a reliable partner in multilateral platforms but also grants its interventions legitimacy at the local level. Therefore, maintaining this pluralistic sensitivity in future policies is crucial. Additionally, Türkiye's constructive diplomatic relations with Serbia and Croatia contribute indirectly but significantly to Bosnia's political stability. Institutionalizing these relations into multilateral cooperation mechanisms could enhance regional reconciliation processes and further solidify Türkiye's role in peacebuilding. The success of such an approach requires inclusiveness and balance, considering the historical fragilities and political sensitivities of the region. Türkiye's diplomatic experience, historical and cultural ties with the region, and multi-layered relationships with local actors indicate strong potential for managing this process effectively. Thus, Türkiye's capacity to position itself as a more influential peacebuilding actor depends on sustaining this strategic, multi-level cooperation within an institutional framework.

In conclusion, regardless of how much effort Türkiye or other international actors invest in peacebuilding in Bosnia, lasting peace and stability ultimately depend on the attitudes and policies of the country's internal actors. Türkiye plays a facilitating role in effective peacebuilding with its institutional and diplomatic capacity and historical experience. However, it is unrealistic to expect Türkiye or any other external actor to establish peace in Bosnia without

the commitment of its internal stakeholders. In the state-building process, it is crucial for Bosnia's authorities to chart their own course based on models that suit their needs and preferences, demonstrating determination in this path. Türkiye's responsibility as a key regional power is to encourage and support local actors towards peace and stability, mediate in resolving disputes, and help in political, military, economic, and socio-cultural areas. However, the primary agents of Bosnia's peaceful future are its own people. Türkiye's approach reflects an understanding that the solution lies with Bosnia's internal actors. By acting with respect for the country's sovereignty and avoiding top-down impositions, Türkiye contributes to the peacebuilding process in a manner that supports local ownership and sustainable peace.

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### **Ethics Statement**

This study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Karabük University Social and Humanities Research Ethics Board, under the protocol number 2025/05(79), dated 30 May 2025. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work.

### **Author Contributions**

Both authors are equally responsible for the conception, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

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# The Ecological Impact of Turkish Official Development Assistant in Africa

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## ABSTRACT

Global warming, climate change and the increase in environmental disasters have caused attention to be turned to these areas recently. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, the environment has gained great importance and new investments have started to be made in this field, especially in developed countries. However, in developing and undeveloped countries, these investments are secondary to growth targets. For this reason, foreign aid is needed to realize green transformation in developing and underdeveloped countries. In particular, directing development aid to this area can be a solution for green transformation. Accordingly, the current study examines the impact of Turkey's official development assistance to Africa

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on the ecological footprint of these countries. The impact of Turkey's aid to Africa in the period 2006-2022 is analyzed with the panel-ARDL PMG estimator. A two-stage analysis was used. First, general African countries were analyzed, and then the countries to which Turkey regularly provides aid every year, but the total amount of aid provided during the analysis period was over 10 million dollars, were analyzed. According to the results of the analysis, while aid to Africa in general increases the ecological footprint, it decreases it in the countries that receive the most aid. This result shows that concentrating aid in certain regions can positively affect the environment.

**Keywords:** Official Development Assistance, Ecological Footprint, Turkey, Africa

**JEL Codes:** Q5, Q56, F35



## INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity is the variety of life and interactions between living things at all levels on land, in water, at sea and in the air. They also regulate climate, natural hazards and extreme events, air quality, freshwater quantity and quality, pollination and seed dispersal, pests and diseases, soil and ocean acidification, and the creation and maintenance of habitats. Recently, however, biodiversity has been rapidly changing and decreasing all over the world. The direct drivers of this situation are increasing demands for energy, food and other materials because of rapid economic growth, population growth, international trade and technology choices, especially in the last 50 years. Today, one million plants and animals are threatened with extinction. 1-2.5% of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish have already gone extinct, population abundance and genetic diversity have declined, and species have lost their climatically determined habitats (WWF, 2022).

The Earth has warmed by 1.2°C since pre-industrial times. While climate change has not been a major cause of biodiversity loss to date, unless warming is limited to below 2°C, climate change is likely to become a major cause of biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystem services in the coming decades (WWF, 2022). Global warming also poses a significant threat to African countries. Even at temperatures of 1.5°C below pre-industrial levels, the Western Sahel region will see a significant increase in the maximum length of dry spells. Central Africa is expected to experience a decrease in the duration of wet periods and a slight increase in extreme rainfall. In West Africa, climate change is expected to reduce agricultural yields and production. The western part of southern Africa is likely to become drier towards the end of the 21st century, with increased frequency of droughts and more heat waves (UNDP, 2024).

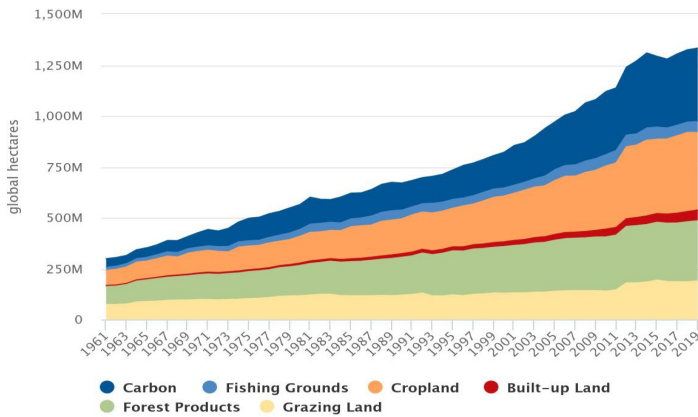
Africa accounts for less than 4% of global carbon emissions but is highly exposed to their effects. Around 52% of African countries are affected by climate change. More than 110 million people are directly affected by climate, air and water-

related hazards, with an estimated economic loss of \$8.5 billion in 2022. The impact of climate change is reflected in the loss of agricultural productivity, disruptions in production and supply chains, and income losses from trade, especially for countries whose economies are heavily dependent on climate-sensitive sectors, such as agricultural commodity exports (UNDP, 2024).

Two metrics are calculated to measure ecological balance: ecological footprint and bio-capacity. First, ecological footprint measures how much bio-productive space (land or water) a population would need to sustainably produce the renewable resources it consumes and absorb the waste it produces using existing technology. Second, bio-capacity measures the supply of bio-products available in a given area (e.g., arable land, pasture, forest, or productive sea). When the ecological footprint is greater than the bio-capacity, there is a deficit in the stock of renewable resources. A national ecological deficit can be compensated to some extent through trade with countries with high ecological reserves or through the liquidation of national ecological assets. A country with ecological reserves can still experience a local deficit. Conversely, if the ecological footprint is smaller than the bio-capacity, an ecological reserve is mentioned. The ecological footprint can be reduced by a smaller population size for a given area, less consumption per capita, and higher resource efficiency (Schaefer et al., 2006).

The ecological footprint has more than doubled worldwide because of economic activities since 1961 and currently exceeds the planet's regenerative capacity by approximately 50%. This situation is no different for Africa. In Figure 1, the ecological footprint of all African countries increased by approximately 440% between 1961 and 2019. This increase is the result of increasing populations and increasing per capita consumption in a few countries. There was a 39% decrease in animal populations in Africa between 1970 and 2008. The erosion of natural capital endangers future prosperity and undermines efforts to lift Africa's growing population out of poverty (WWF, 2012). Figure 1 also examines Africa's ecological footprint under six different land type categories: carbon, fishing grounds, cropland, built-up land, forest products, and grazing land. Africa, which is largely based on agricultural production in its economy, also has a very high agricultural land footprint. Carbon footprint is the other source that increases the ecological footprint the most.

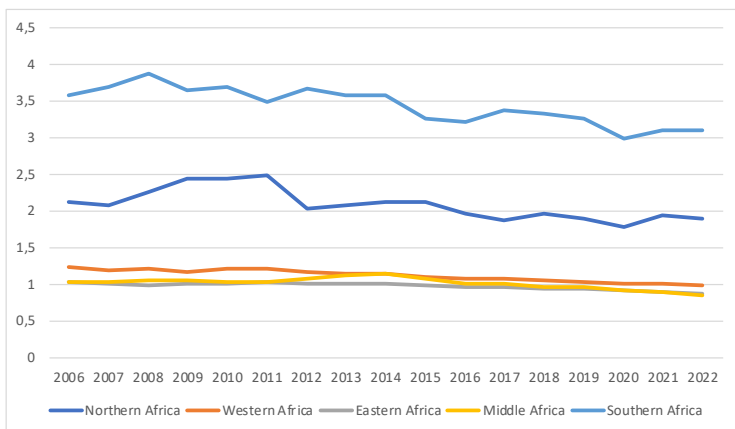
Figure 1: Africa's Ecological Footprint



Source: Global Footprint Network

The ecological footprint varies across regions in Africa. Figure 2 shows the distribution of regional ecological footprint per capita. The figure shows that the southern and northern regions of Africa differ significantly from other regions. Figure 1 shows that the ecological footprint is increasing rapidly in Africa. The downward trend in Figure 2 is because of the rapid increase in population during this period. Just as there are differences in the average footprint per capita between countries, there are also significant differences between individuals within countries. The ecological footprint of many African citizens reflects a level of consumption that is insufficient to meet their needs (WWF, 2012).

Figure 2: Regional Ecological Footprint in Africa



Source: Author's own drawing

For the first three decades of the post-World War II period, foreign aid played a central role in financing infrastructure for development. However, in the mid-1980s, the World Bank became associated with environmental disasters in various regions, which led the Bank to establish environmental departments and require environmental impact assessments for all projects with the potential to cause significant environmental damage. After this date, aid for environmental disasters started to be provided in various countries (Roberts et al., 2009).

Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their high climate sensitivity and relatively low adaptive capacity (Arndt and Tarp, 2017). Although developing and underdeveloped countries contribute less to environmental degradation, they have to contribute to the solution process by reducing carbon emissions. However, this often has to be done at the expense of economic development. Developing countries are already struggling with many problems, such as poverty, lack of adequate health care, food insecurity, high unemployment and gender inequality. Climate change can exacerbate existing development challenges. But climate change requires united and urgent global action. The only way out of this problem is to green the growth process of developing and underdeveloped countries. Foreign aid for the promotion of green growth offers a reasonable solution in that it not only helps developing countries but also supports the interests of developed countries. This aid is particularly necessary to ensure the creation of frameworks that promote green technology transfers and support green growth (Chen and He, 2013). Traditional development and responses to environmental problems, such as expanding the use of various inputs in agriculture, may not be consistent with each other (Arndt and Tarp, 2017). Therefore, environmental problems need to be considered when achieving development.

This study aims to examine the impact of Turkey's official development assistance to Africa on the ecological footprint of African countries. In this context, first Africa as a whole and then the countries receiving the most aid are analyzed for the period 2006-2022. Although the impact of assistance to Africa on ecology was examined, the unique value of the study is that the impact of assistance from Turkey has not been examined empirically before. Turkey has recently significantly accelerated its aid to Africa. In addition, although Turkey is one of the countries that provide large amounts of regular aid to Africa, it is

an important gap that this area is not analyzed in the literature. The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature. The next section will focus on official development assistance to Africa and its effectiveness, and then Turkey's official development assistance will be analyzed. In the following sections, the analysis and conclusion will be emphasized.

## **OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO AFRICA AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS**

Recent shocks and crises have blocked nearly 30 years of progress in poverty eradication. The impacts of the climate crisis and rising poverty and inequalities are cumulative, and where they converge, the situation worsens. The world's poorest people and regions bear the greatest burden and cost of climate disasters, losing their livelihoods and savings. The world's 46 least developed countries are home to around 1.1 billion people and contribute minimally to CO2 emissions. Yet 69% of all deaths worldwide from climate-related disasters in the last 50 years have occurred in these countries. In contrast, countries in the richest 1% produced 15% of global emissions in 2019 (OECD, 2024).

By 2030, extreme poverty is projected to be largely concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that over 450 million people will live below the extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per day and around 850 million people below the absolute poverty line of \$3.65 per day. Sub-Saharan Africa is also home to the largest number of people exposed to high risk from extreme weather events, while African countries are the most vulnerable to climate shocks due to their low incomes, lack of social protection and other dimensions of poverty (OECD, 2024).

Africa is increasingly exposed to the devastating effects of climate change due to rapid population growth and urbanization. According to one estimate, if in 40 years' time Africa's annual per capita emissions reach the current levels of countries such as Egypt (2.5 tons) and Botswana (3 tons), the increase in CO2 emissions on the continent will only be offset by a 60% reduction from current levels in China. Nonetheless, climate adaptation costs in developing countries are rising significantly and are now 10 to 18 times higher than international adaptation finance (OECD, 2024).

The growing gap between developed and developing countries has become a dominant issue in relations between countries. This has led to a steady flow of capital from developed countries to reduce the gap (Andrews, 2009). Official development assistance (ODA), as a stable and reliable source of financing for developing countries, plays an important role in reducing poverty and accelerating development, supporting climate change adaptation, and harnessing the green transformation to promote resilient, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Both official development assistance and climate finance to developing countries have reached record levels despite significant pressure on public budgets. In 2023, they reached \$223.7 billion, setting a record for four consecutive years (OECD, 2024).

Official development assistance to Africa is crucial to fighting both poverty and climate change. A comparison of aid allocations across regions shows that providers collectively allocate the largest share (average for 2020-22) to Sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty and inequality are highest (OECD, 2024). Aid to Africa increased by 2% in real terms in 2023 compared to 2022. However, the aid total represents 0.37% of the combined GDP of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors. This is below the UN's long-term target of 0.7% aid/GDP. In 2021, only five DAC members met or exceeded this target. An estimated additional \$1.3 trillion in annual aid is needed to meet the growing financing gap for the SDGs in Africa. Investment and aid to the agricultural sector fell by 2.69% in Africa. In East Africa, there was a significant decline of 3.58%. Aid to agriculture in Africa increased in the 2015-2020 period but declined from \$5.98 billion to \$4.673 billion at constant prices in 2021 (UNDP, 2024). However, agricultural activities constitute the livelihood of a significant portion of the African population. As can be seen in Figure 1, agriculture is one of the main economic sectors that directly threatens the environment. Activities in this sector can cause environmental degradation through land conversion, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and fragmentation of natural ecosystems (Muchapondwa, 2014).

Official development assistance can improve environmental quality in several ways. First, it can be used to support the development of renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, and hydropower, which reduce dependence on fossil fuels and lower CO2 emissions. In addition, ensuring energy efficiency will

reduce emissions. In addition, training activities, such as raising environmental awareness and providing support for technical issues, can also be implemented with this aid. Therefore, with the human capital provided, individuals become more sensitive to the environment (Barkat et al., 2024).

However, there is evidence that external aid has had little effect on changing the fate of many African countries, most of which currently have low growth rates. This indicates, to some extent, that the problem in Africa is not merely about sending money, as this alone will not reverse the situation. Furthermore, economic growth by itself does not hold much meaning. The achievement of development, which includes economic, social, and cultural components, is the key factor that will change the fate of these countries (Andrews, 2009). Although aid has positive effects, it has not enabled African countries to free themselves from debt and achieve stable growth. Studies have shown that official development assistance is positively and significantly correlated with budget deficits and the increase in public debt. This evidence suggests that most African countries are trapped in an aid syndrome, which leads to either an increase in spending, less effort to mobilize domestic resources, or both. Therefore, official development assistance to African countries needs to be reconsidered if it is to achieve the goal of freeing recipient countries from aid dependency (AfDB, 2024). African countries are so dependent on aid that they can hardly fulfill half of their annual budget commitments without it. This makes them dependent on donor countries. Aid in the form of loans, in particular, forces African countries to continuously pay off debts. As a result, long-term indebtedness makes these countries vulnerable. Additionally, such aid can lead to corruption in some countries (Andrews, 2009). The constant portrayal of the region as being in perpetual need of aid causes moral decay. In addition, developed countries aim to reduce poverty in order to provide a bulwark against terrorism rather than to develop Africa, which obstructs real development (Akonor, 2007).

The impact of external aid necessary for Africa's development depends on both its quantity and quality. Therefore, a targeted aid approach should be adopted. After independence, foreign aid in Africa has been largely wasted, mismanaged, or misdirected. With a targeted aid approach, more focus should be placed on intercontinental projects such as highways, telecommunications, and power plants. Such projects will transform Africa's fragmented infrastructure

and improve the continent's global position (Akonor, 2022). To ensure Africa's development process, the current aid model needs to be reconsidered, and more focus should be placed on supporting investments in sectors that generate growth and employment. International support should focus more on technology and skills transfer, as well as developing the capacity to mobilize local resources. To increase the ability to mobilize domestic resources, more focus should be placed on skills and technology transfer. Donors should also place greater emphasis on ensuring that aid is used effectively and efficiently, which will also be impactful (AfDB, 2024).

Aid can be used very well, but it can also have undesirable consequences. The ongoing problems in Sub-Saharan Africa are not due to external aid, but to all the negative factors and internal problems that come into play. Sub-Saharan African countries are experiencing problems despite aid, not because of it. With all the problems that African countries have had to deal with since their independence, their situation would have been even worse without aid. Indeed, when aid decreases, there is more conflict, political instability, uncertainty, and despair (Park, 2019).

Donor countries are tightening control mechanisms to prevent corruption. On one hand, there is budget support that directly transfers money to recipient governments, while on the other hand, there are large-scale programs such as capacity building, which are either completely under donor control or tightly monitored in terms of fund usage (Park, 2019). The ability of both sides to fulfill their commitments should be closely examined, and a results-based approach with an agreement for tracking outcomes or targets should be adopted. In this process, all key stakeholders, including local people, civil society, and the private sector, should be involved in monitoring commitments to raise awareness. Additionally, monitoring should be designed and implemented globally, regionally, and sub-regionally in a complementary and reinforcing manner (Wangwe, 2006).



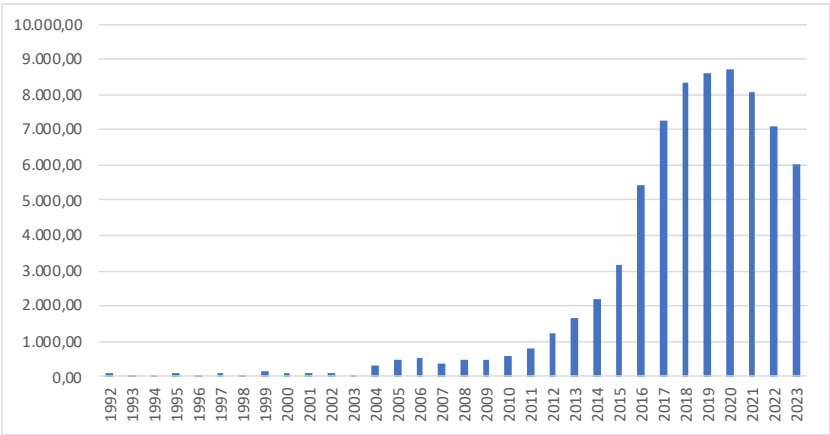
## TURKEY'S OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Turkey launched its own foreign aid program on June 5, 1985, when the State Planning Organization prepared a comprehensive aid package worth 10 million US dollars targeting institutional capacity building in the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. With the establishment of new republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus in the late 1980s, aid programs were also established for these regions. During this period, the primary goal was to support the construction and economic transformation of newly established states. This process was carried out by TİKA, which was established in 1992 and is responsible for the implementation of Turkey's development cooperation policy. TİKA is also responsible for ensuring coordination with international organizations and bilateral donors. In this context, TİKA has carried out nearly 25,000 projects/activities since 1992 (MFA, 2018).

Turkey's total development assistance for the year 2022 amounted to 7,892.61 million dollars. Thus, it ranked among the top five countries in the world with a ratio of official development assistance to national income of 0.79%. Among these assistances, the first five include emergency and humanitarian assistance, assistance to refugees, education, water and water hygiene (sanitation), and other social infrastructure and services. The top ten countries that benefit the most from Turkey's bilateral official development assistance are Syria, Somalia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Azerbaijan (TİKA, 2022).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of development aid provided by Turkey throughout the world over the years. The aid presented here only includes grants, and the loans provided are not included. It is seen that the aid provided gained momentum from the beginning of the 2000s and increased rapidly until 2020. This situation is due to Turkey's aim to be more visible on a global scale and to its multifaceted policy that it has started to follow since the beginning of the 2000s (Tepeciklioğlu, 2018). The increase in aid provided to the region with the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011 had a significant impact on this leap. In 2022, Syria was still the country that received the highest amount of aid by far. However, it is seen that grants decreased from 2020 onwards because of the economic conditions in Turkey.

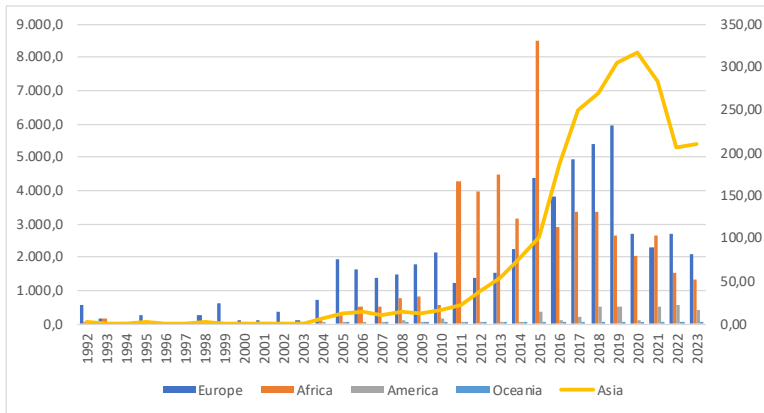
Figure 3: Turkey's Official Development Assistance Around the World



Source: Author's own drawing

Figure 4 shows the distribution of development aid provided by Turkey among the continents. The aid presented here only includes grants, and the loans provided are not included. The Asian continent is shown as a line and represented by the left axis. Europe, Africa, America, and Oceania are shown as a column chart and represented by the right axis. The reason for the division of the chart is that Asia receives significantly more aid than all other regions. The largest portion of this aid is provided to Syria. Apart from this, Turkish states in Asia also benefited greatly from the aid. It is seen that investments made in Africa gained momentum in the 2000s. After being neglected for a long time in foreign policy, the Turkish foreign policy, known as the “Africa Initiative”, aims to increase the country’s visibility on the international stage and become a more effective actor, while also aiming to raise awareness among the peoples of the continent. With the ‘African Initiative Action Plan’ adopted in 1998, political, economic, and humanitarian steps were taken towards Africa (Tepeciklioğlu, 2018). Turkey was accepted as an “observer” to the African Union in 2002. 2005 was declared the “Year of Africa” in Turkey, and the same year TICA opened its first office in Africa in Ethiopia. The “Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit” was held in Turkey in 2008, and the African Union declared Turkey a “strategic partner” in the same year. Turkey operates in the region, particularly in the fields of agriculture, health, education, water and sanitation, vocational training, institutional capacity development, and humanitarian aid (MFA, 2018).

Figure 4: Regional Distribution of Turkey's Official Development Assistance



Source: Author's own drawing

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of official development assistance on the environment has been analyzed in different countries. Various environmental indicators have been used in these studies. Apart from the ecological footprint, the effects of official development assistance on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been studied in developing countries. According to the study, while the aid shows limited effectiveness in reducing emissions in low-income countries, its impact becomes significant in middle-income countries (Barkat et al., 2024). The effect of China's aid to African countries on environmental quality has been studied, and it was found that these aids simultaneously improved local air quality and economic development (Xu and Zhang, 2023). In another study on China's aid to African countries, it was found that in some countries with strong local institutions, the aid helped reduce pollution (Boamah et al., 2022). The impact of economic incentives, such as international transfers targeting biodiversity and tourism revenues, on biodiversity conservation policies in Sub-Saharan Africa has been examined. It was found that, besides international financial aid, tourism also had an impact on biodiversity conservation policies (Amin, 2016). The impact of aid to African countries on combating climate change has been examined, and a comprehensive quantitative mapping of financial flows was made. The analysis revealed that most of the aid focused on agriculture, water supply, and sanitation, while these aids were found to be well below the required level (Savidou et

al., 2021). Additionally, the environmental impact of aid to certain regions of Africa has been examined theoretically (Kahyarara, 2014; Muchapondwa, 2014; Abeselom, 2018).

The effects of official development assistance on the ecological footprint in Africa have been studied in a limited number of studies. The impact of aid on the ecological deficit has been examined for Sub-Saharan African countries. According to the study, aid in countries with good national governance systems and governance capabilities has a much better impact than in countries with weak national governance systems and governance capabilities (Li et al., 2022).

When the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that the impact of aid on the environment cannot be clearly seen. It is seen that the effects vary according to the specific situations of countries. In addition, most of the studies have used indicators focusing on one dimension of environmental quality instead of using a comprehensive index as in the present study. Although there are numerous books and articles on environmental aid to developing countries, most of these studies are based on qualitative case studies or small sample sizes. The lack of comprehensive and reliable data on aid projects from bilateral and multilateral donors also limits this field (Roberts et al., 2009). There are very few empirical studies focused on African countries. Furthermore, studies that specifically examine donor countries are also quite limited. Apart from China, the effects of individual countries' aid to Africa have not been empirically examined. Turkey's aid to Africa has only been analyzed from a political perspective. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature. Both the fact that it focuses on Turkey as an important donor for Africa and the fact that it is an empirical study make the present article unique.

## ANALYSIS

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Turkey's official development assistance to Africa on the ecological footprint of Africa. Two different datasets covering the period from 2006 to 2022 have been used in the analysis. In the first analysis, 27 African countries that Turkey regularly provided grants to each year and for which data was available were examined. In the second dataset, 19 countries, which Turkey also regularly provided grants to each year and for

which the total grant amount during the analysis period exceeded 10 million dollars, were selected. This allowed for the examination of countries that received a significant amount of aid. The list of the countries examined in the analysis is provided in the Appendix. These countries were selected among the African countries for which data were available during the analysis period. Countries with missing data are excluded from the analysis. The variables used in the analysis were selected from those most frequently found in the literature as having an impact on the ecological footprint. Official development assistance includes both loans and grants. In this article, only grants were considered for the analysis. The reason for excluding loans from the analysis is that they are mostly repayable with interest, rather than being direct aid, and although they can contribute to a country's development, they also push Africa into debt. It is thought that this situation may prioritize development and leave environmental conditions even further behind. A detailed explanation of this situation is presented in section 2. In addition, since this data set is organized in a way that includes repayments, it causes very large gaps between periods. Therefore, for the sake of analysis, loans are not included in the data set. All other variables belong to African countries. The logarithms of the variables were taken, and the analysis was conducted using a full logarithmic form. Detailed information about the variables is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables Used in the Analysis

Variables	Definitions	Source
logeco	log of ecological footprint	Global Footprint Network
logoda	log of ODA-grants	OECD
logbirth	log of birth rate, crude (per 1,000 people)	World Bank Data
logelectricity	log of access to electricity (% of population)	World Bank Data
logunemployment	log of unemployment, total (% of total labor force)	World Bank Data
logimport	log of import unit value index (2015 = 100)	World Bank Data

logexport	log of export unit value index (2015 = 100)	World Bank Data
logexpimp	log of export unit value index/ import unit value index	World Bank Data
logempagri	log of employment in agriculture (% of total employment)	World Bank Data
loglife	log of life expectancy at birth, total (years)	World Bank Data
logyeild	Log of cereal yield (kg per hectare)	World Bank Data

In the analysis, the results for the general African countries are presented first. Initially, the stationarity of the variables used in the model was examined. The cross-sectional augmented Dickey-Fuller (CADF) Test developed by Pesaran (2007) was applied. According to this test, the variable is considered stationary at the 5% significance level if the absolute value of the t-statistic is greater than the absolute value of the 5% critical value. The results of the unit root test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Unit Root Test Results

Variables	Level		First Difference	
	t statistic	cv5	t statistic	cv5
logeco	-1.956	-2.150	-4.550	-2.150**
logoda	-3.533	-2.150**		
logbirth	-0.991	-2.150	-2.615	-2.150**
logelectricity	-3.122	-2.150**		
logunemployment	-1.208	-2.150	-3.376	-2.150**
logimport	-1.152	-2.150	-3.232	-2.150**
logexport	-1.985	-2.150	-3.198	-2.150**
logexpimp	-2.353	-2.150**		
logempagri	-1.578	-2.150	-2.620	-2.150**
loglife	-2.244	-2.150**		

Note: \*\* indicates significance at 5% significance level.

According to the unit root test results, it was observed that all variables, except for logoda, logelectricity, logexpimp, and loglife, are stationary at the first difference. Due to the variables being stationary at different levels, the panel ARDL model, which provides consistent results at different levels of stationarity, has been preferred.

For hypothesis testing, the panel-ARDL long-term PMG estimation was used. The fundamental assumption of the PMG estimation method, also known as the error correction method, is the existence of cointegration, and for this, separate cointegration and unit root tests need to be performed on the panel data (Zaidi & Saidi, 2018). Pesaran et al. (1999) did not propose a specific cointegration test, but derived asymptotic properties for estimating the regressors of both stationary and non-stationary series. The PMG estimator is an appropriate technique for forecasting dynamic heterogeneous panel data models. Given that the countries used in the model differ in terms of development levels and ecological footprints, this model is suitable. The PMG approach also provides the error correction coefficient, which validates the existence of a long-term relationship. The coefficient of the lagged error correction term measures the rate at which the dependent variable adjusts to changes in the dependent variable before converging to the equilibrium level. If the coefficient of the error correction term is significantly negative, it suggests the presence of a long-term relationship (Zaidi & Saidi, 2018). The model to be used in the PMG analysis was selected based on the Akaike criterion. Accordingly, the model with the smallest Akaike criterion was preferred. The Akaike criterion graph for each model is presented in the Appendix. Additionally, robustness checks were conducted by setting up different models to examine the direction of the variables. The long-term PMG model results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Panel ARDL Long-Term PMG Model Results

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Statistic	prob
Model 1				
logoda	0.010	0.001	7.595	0.000*
logbirth	0.842	0.057	14.784	0.000*
logelectricity	0.203	0.019	10.646	0.000*
logunemployment	0.038	0.004	9.349	0.000*
Model 2				
logoda	0.016	0.001	18.466	0.000*
loglife	0.643	0.094	6.837	0.000*
logunemployment	0.233	0.008	27.675	0.000*
logexpimp	0.144	0.015	9.505	0.000*
Model 3				
logoda	0.004	0.003	1.395	0.164
logimport	-0.386	0.095	-4.044	0.000*
logexport	0.295	0.066	4.449	0.000*
logunemployment	0.100	0.014	7.299	0.000*
logelectricity	0.057	0.020	2.802	0.005*
Model 4				
logoda	0.003	0.003	0.996	0.320
logunemployment	0.089	0.013	6.809	0.000*
logexpimp	0.368	0.070	5.229	0.000*
logelectricity	0.042	0.021	1.980	0.049**
Model 5				
logoda	0.014	0.007	1.959	0.052**
logempagri	0.382	0.055	6.978	0.000*
logelectricity	0.526	0.124	4.230	0.000*

Note: \* and \*\* denote significance at 1% and 5% significance levels, respectively.



When the long-term analysis results are examined, it is found that official development assistance increases the ecological footprint in all models. When the literature is examined, the effect of assistance on the environment cannot be clearly demonstrated. While a positive effect is seen in some situations and country groups, a negative effect can be seen in others. However, the fact that the effect increases the ecological footprint in all five models is supportive. Aid provided to African countries has not generally provided sufficient support for the development of the countries. This situation also prevents the incoming assistance from positively affecting the environment (Akonor, 2007; Andrews, 2009). Apart from this, it has been found in the literature that the effect of assistance on the ecological deficit varies according to the governance systems and governance capabilities of the countries (Liv et al., 2022).

Another variable, logelectricity, was found to be positive and significant in all models. The oil and natural gas used in the production of electrical energy are obtained from natural resources, and as the demand for and consumption of electricity increase, the demand for oil and natural gas also increases, leading to environmental degradation (Langnel and Amegavi, 2020). Although renewable energy sources are not analyzed in the present study, on the contrary, it has been determined in the literature that the increase in electricity consumption resulting from green electricity consumption reduces the ecological footprint because it does not harm nature (Dai et al., 2023).

It was found that the logunemployment variable has a positive effect on the ecological footprint. In the literature, there are models where unemployment has both positive (Ayad and Djedaiet, 2024) and negative (Ng., 2022) effects on the ecological footprint of different country groups. An increase in unemployment tends to lower individuals' quality of life and hinders development. This situation prevents the formation of environmental concerns and awareness among individuals. In regions with low development, such as Africa, the difficulties in sustaining life push environmental problems to the background.

In the analysis, the effect of imports was found to be negative, while the effect of exports was positive. Additionally, the ratio of exports to imports also has a positive effect. This could be due to the increase in trade, which stimulates economic growth and raises resource usage. The impact of exports and imports on the ecological footprint has not been clearly defined in the literature. The

effects of these variables vary depending on the country groups and data set. Consistent with the results of this study, there are other studies showing that exports reduce the ecological footprint while imports increase it (Topcu, 2021). There are also studies showing that both variables increase the ecological footprint (Zhou et al., 2024). Furthermore, it has been found in the literature that exports negatively affect biodiversity (Amin, 2016).

The loglife and logbirth variables used in the analysis are both associated with population growth. It is frequently observed in the literature that both variables have a positive effect on the ecological footprint (Aktürk and Gültekin, 2024). Furthermore, the coefficients of these variables are among the highest in the models. An increasing population leads to a rise in the use of natural resources, including vital products such as energy and food. This results in an increased environmental burden, which ultimately leads to the erosion of environmental quality and the intensification of the ecological deficit (Udemba, 2021).

Finally, it has been determined that the increase in the agricultural labor force raises the ecological footprint. This is an expected outcome, especially in African countries, where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. In regions where environmentally sensitive agriculture is not practiced, the increase in agricultural production can lead to deforestation, excessive irrigation, and soil contamination because of fertilizer use (Ozturk et al., 2024).

The cointegration relationship established by the short-term forecast and error correction model is shown in Table 4. In equilibrium, the negative and significant error correction coefficient statistically confirms the existence of a long-term relationship (Zaidi & Saidi, 2018). In all models, the error correction coefficient is negative and significant. Apart from this, it was determined that most of the variables were insignificant in the short term. There was no effect of aid on the ecological footprint in the short term.

Table 4: Panel ARDL Short-Term PMG Model Results

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Statistic	prob
Model 1				
Cointeq01	-0.521	0.144	-3.613	0.000*
D(logeco(-1))	-0.101	0.108	-0.938	0.350
D(logoda)	-0.001	0.006	-0.117	0.907
D(logoda(-1))	0.006	0.006	1.064	0.289
D(logbirth)	2.873	1.890	1.520	0.131
D(logbirth(-1))	-1.418	0.964	-1.471	0.143
D(logelectricity)	0.393	0.600	0.654	0.514
D(logelectricity(-1))	-0.483	0.765	-0.631	0.529
D(logunemployment)	-0.009	0.062	-0.150	0.881
D(logunemployment(-1))	0.198	0.332	0.595	0.553
c	-0.758	0.223	-3.402	0.001*
Model 2				
Cointeq01	-0.246	0.095	-2.583	0.011*
D(logeco(-1))	-0.191	0.069	-2.766	0.006*
D(logoda)	0.001	0.005	0.232	0.817
D(logoda(-1))	0.004	0.006	0.767	0.444
D(loglife)	1.077	1.084	0.994	0.322
D(loglife(-1))	2.772	1.269	2.185	0.030**
D(logunemployment)	0.066	0.204	0.323	0.747
D(logunemployment(-1))	0.280	0.464	0.605	0.546
D(logexpimp)	-0.237	0.163	-1.449	0.149
D(logexpimp(-1))	0.012	0.139	0.089	0.929
c	-0.295	0.115	-2.565	0.011*
Model 3				
Cointeq01	-0.252	0.062	-4.051	0.000*
D(logoda)	0.001	0.003	0.401	0.689

D(logimport)	0.004	0.148	0.029	0.977
D(logexport)	-0.146	0.086	-1.696	0.091***
D(logunemployment)	-0.038	0.083	-0.456	0.649
D(logelectricity)	2.123	1.617	1.313	0.191
c	0.041	0.015	2.673	0.008*
Model 4				
Cointeq01	-0.259	0.058	-4.437	0.000*
D(logoda)	0.002	0.003	0.661	0.509
D(logunemployment)	0.003	0.111	0.028	0.977
D(logexpimp)	-0.165	0.079	-2.091	0.037**
D(logelectricity)	1.553	1.271	1.222	0.223
c	0.004	0.013	0.286	0.775
Model 5				
Cointeq01	-0.200	0.076	-2.651	0.009*
D(logeco(-1))	-0.158	0.079	-1.998	0.047**
D(logoda)	-0.002	0.005	-0.324	0.746
D(logoda(-1))	0.003	0.005	0.567	0.571
D(logempagri)	0.345	0.416	0.828	0.409
D(logempagri(-1))	-1.025	0.583	-1.757	0.080
D(logelectricity)	1.683	1.851	0.909	0.364
D(logelectricity(-1))	0.3503	0.665	0.527	0.599
c	-0.255	0.101	-2.515	0.013*

Note: \*, \*\* and \*\*\* indicate significance at 1%, 5% and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Subsequently, the analyses conducted for the 19 African countries to which Turkey provided the most grants between 2006 and 2022 were presented. First, the stationarity of the variables used in the model was examined. The cross-sectionally augmented Dickey-Fuller (CADF) Test developed by Pesaran (2007) was used. The unit root test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Unit Root Test Results

Variables	Level		First Difference	
	t statistic	cv5	Variables	t statistic
logeco	-1.951	-2.210	-4.741	-2.210**
logoda	-4.177	-2.210**		
logbirth	-1.224	-2.210	-2.739	-2.210**
logelectricity	-2.821	-2.210**		
logunemployment	-1.365	-2.210	-3.496	-2.210**
logimport	-1.424	-2.210	-3.366	-2.210**
logexport	-1.860	-2.210	-3.196	-2.210**
logexpimp	-1.624	-2.210	-2.819	-2.210**
logempagri	-1.604	-2.210	-2.919	-2.210**
logyield	-2.839	-2.210**		

Note: \*\* indicates significance at 5% significance level.

According to the unit root test results, it has been observed that all variables, except for logoda, logelectricity, and logyeild, are stationary at the first difference. Due to the variables being stationary at different levels, the panel-ARDL long-term PMG estimator, which provides consistent results at different stationarity levels, was preferred. In the PMG analysis, the model to be used was selected based on the Akaike criterion. Accordingly, the model with the smallest Akaike criterion was preferred. The Akaike criterion graph for each model is presented in the Appendix. Additionally, for robustness checks, different models were constructed to control the direction of the variables. The long-term PMG model results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Panel ARDL Long-Term PMG Model Results

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Statistic	prob
Model 1				
logoda	-0.006	0.005	-1.182	0.240
logyield	0.080	0.034	2.352	0.021**
logimport	-0.802	0.108	-7.446	0.000*
logexport	0.821	0.081	10.138	0.000*
Model 2				
logoda	-0.060	0.017	-3.487	0.001*
logunemployment	0.287	0.066	4.339	0.000*
logexpimp	1.849	0.245	7.555	0.000*
logelectricity	0.447	0.188	2.384	0.019**
Model 3				
logoda	-0.011	0.004	-2.670	0.009*
logempagri	-0.096	0.034	-2.812	0.006*
logbirth	1.117	0.061	18.180	0.000*
logelectricity	0.336	0.035	9.525	0.000*
Model 4				
logoda	-0.027	0.010	-2.845	0.005*
logelectricity	0.279	0.101	2.763	0.007*
logyield	0.121	0.031	3.922	0.000*
logexpimp	1.328	0.123	10.789	0.000*

Note: \* and \*\* denote significance at 1% and 5% significance levels, respectively.

When Table 3 and Table 6 are compared in terms of results, it can be seen that all variables, except for logoda and logempagri, have the same direction. The most important difference here is that the concentration of aid has a reducing effect on the ecological footprint. This result suggests that if aid is focused on specific countries, regulations can be made to create a difference in those countries. Instead of distributing donors' aid across the entire continent, allocating specific regions to each donor could provide a solution in this regard. This way,

a concentration can be achieved that will reverse environmental degradation in those regions. This concentration even reverses the impact of the increase in agricultural labor on the ecological footprint.

Additionally, the effect of the logyield variable was found to be positive. This result indicates that as crop yield increases, the ecological footprint also increases. Similar results can be found in the literature (Zhai et al., 2021). This situation may have arisen because of the intensification of inputs used in agricultural activities to increase yield in certain regions.

The cointegration relationship established by the short-term forecast and error correction model is shown in Table 7. In all models, the negative and significant error correction coefficient indicates the existence of a long-term relationship. Apart from this, it was determined that most of the variables were insignificant in the short term. There was no effect of aid on the ecological footprint in the short term.

Table 7: Panel ARDL Short-Term PMG Model Results

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Statistic	prob
<b>Model 1</b>				
Cointeq01	-0.214	0.095	-2.269	0.025*
D(logeco(-1))	-0.163	0.102	-1.591	0.115
D(logoda)	-0.001	0.006	-0.193	0.848
D(logoda(-1))	0.000	0.003	0.079	0.938
D(logyield)	0.033	0.179	0.184	0.854
D(logyield(-1))	0.224	0.319	0.702	0.484
D(logimport)	0.259	0.217	1.195	0.235
D(logimport(-1))	0.427	0.304	1.405	0.163
D(logexport)	-0.302	0.159	-1.894	0.061***
D(logexport(-1))	-0.201	0.169	-1.193	0.236
c	-0.035	0.025	-1.421	0.158
<b>Model 2</b>				
Cointeq01	-0.098	0.048	-2.027	0.045**
D(logeco(-1))	-0.316	0.096	-3.305	0.001*
D(logoda)	0.002	0.007	0.316	0.753

D(logoda(-1))	0.004	0.005	0.895	0.373
D(logunemployment)	-0.236	0.115	-2.052	0.043**
D(logunemployment(-1))	-0.346	0.191	-1.810	0.073***
D(logexpimp)	-0.227	0.145	-1.566	0.120
D(logexpimp(-1))	-0.107	0.188	-0.570	0.570
D(logelectricity)	-0.067	2.011	-0.033	0.974
D(logelectricity(-1))	-0.506	0.631	-0.802	0.425
c	-0.088	0.046	-1.937	0.055***
Model 3				
Cointeq01	-0.587	0.160	-3.669	0.000*
D(logeco(-1))	-0.207	0.129	-1.612	0.110
D(logoda)	0.003	0.005	0.626	0.533
D(logoda(-1))	0.014	0.006	2.176	0.032**
D(logempagri)	0.472	0.414	1.141	0.256
D(logempagri(-1))	0.238	0.523	0.455	0.650
D(logbirth)	4.754	2.286	2.079	0.040**
D(logbirth(-1))	-2.257	1.360	-1.659	0.100
D(logelectricity)	3.077	2.032	1.514	0.133
D(logelectricity(-1))	0.379	1.075	0.352	0.725
c	-1.118	0.331	-3.375	0.001*
Model 4				
Cointeq01	-0.140	0.083	-1.691	0.094***
D(logeco(-1))	-0.281	0.125	-2.250	0.026**
D(logoda)	-0.004	0.008	-0.507	0.613
D(logoda(-1))	0.003	0.005	0.571	0.569
D(logelectricity)	1.249	2.393	0.522	0.603
D(logelectricity(-1))	-0.366	0.404	-0.906	0.367
D(logyield)	0.137	0.104	1.315	0.191
D(logyield(-1))	0.324	0.323	1.003	0.318
D(logexpimp)	-0.158	0.101	-1.555	0.123
D(logexpimp(-1))	-0.193	0.174	-1.109	0.270
c	-0.108	0.069	-1.559	0.122

Note: \*, \*\* and \*\*\* indicate significance at 1%, 5% and 10% significance levels, respectively.



## DISCUSSION

Recently, Turkey has gained significant visibility on the international stage with its official development assistance. These aids, on the other hand, have contributed to the development of bilateral relations and increased its effectiveness in foreign policy. The aid efforts that have gained great momentum in Africa recently are effective in various aspects. Turkey's aid also affects Africa's ecological footprint. According to the results of the study, while aid to Africa in general increases the ecological footprint, it has a reducing effect in the countries where Turkey provides the most aid. This highlights the importance of increasing aid and focusing it on specific regions. The findings suggest that targeted and region-specific aid strategies may enhance environmental outcomes. If donor countries are allocated countries and regions to receive aid, or if aid is distributed in a planned and focused manner by a higher authority, it is expected to be easier to reach the target. According to the results, the increase in the amount of aid decreases the ecological footprint of the countries in the second group. This means that as the amount of aid increases, countries pay more attention to environmental quality. Therefore, concentration is of great importance. Moreover, it is crucial that the aid supports the overall development process. As seen in Table 6, variables such as electricity use and trade, which are indicators of economic growth, increase the ecological footprint. Focusing development aid solely on economic growth would have a destructive impact on the environment. However, it is not possible to put economic growth in the background in these underdeveloped and developing countries. Therefore, it is important that aid both promotes economic growth and be directed towards environmental improvement.

The highest coefficients in the analysis results generally belong to the variables of birth rate and life expectancy at birth, which have a population-increasing effect. The rapidly increasing population causes a rapid increase in demand for natural resources. At the same time, it is expected that the pollution resulting from the consumption of this population will be absorbed by natural resources. Therefore, it is necessary to raise public awareness about the environment, promote recycling, and make waste management more environmentally sensitive. Additionally, the analysis revealed the negative environmental impact of agricultural production. In order to feed the rapidly growing population, there

is a continuous need to open new agricultural land, use more fertilizers and water, and further pollute the soil. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize making agricultural production environmentally sensitive through aid.

The current study has several limitations. Firstly, not all countries to which Turkey provides aid were included; only those countries that receive regular aid each year were included in the analysis. In addition, due to the difficulty of accessing data from African countries, the data set had to start with certain variables from 2006. It was also not possible to find long data sets for other variables. Finally, the lack of sufficient literature in this field also limits the comparison of study results. In ongoing studies, it is aimed to examine specific regions of Africa.

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**Ethics Statement**

This study did not include human participants and therefore did not require ethical approval.

**Use of Generative AI**

The author used ChatGPT to translate the manuscript into English. After using this tool, the content was reviewed and edited by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Author Contributions**

Conceptualization: S.G., E.A.; Data Collection: S.G.; Methodology Design: S.G.; Formal Analysis: S.G.; Software Use: S.G.; Manuscript Drafting: S.G.; Critical Revisions: S.G., E.A.; Supervision: S.G., E.A.

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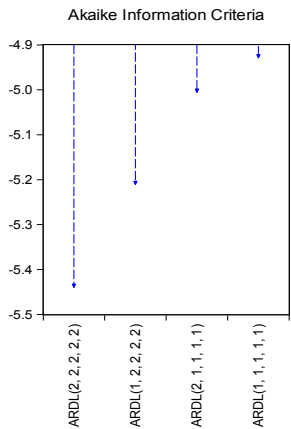
APPENDIX

**General African Countries:** Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Cameroon, Congo, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal

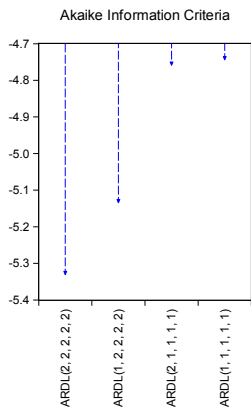
**Selected African Countries:** Somalia, Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Egypt, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Senegal, Algeria, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Ghana, Morocco, Cameroon, Uganda, Tanzania, Burkina Faso

General African Countries Model Selection Akaike Criteria

Model 1



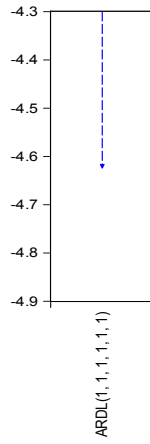
Model 2





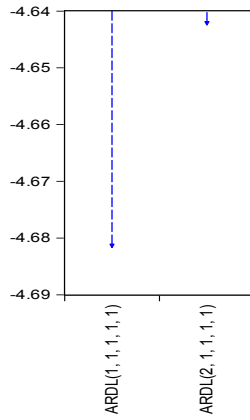
Model 3

Akaike Information Criteria



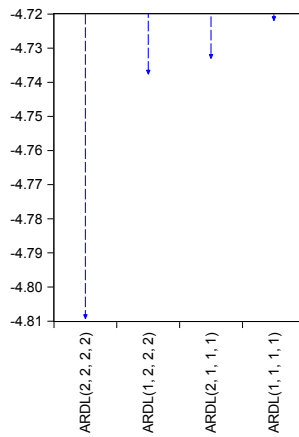
Model 4

Akaike Information Criteria



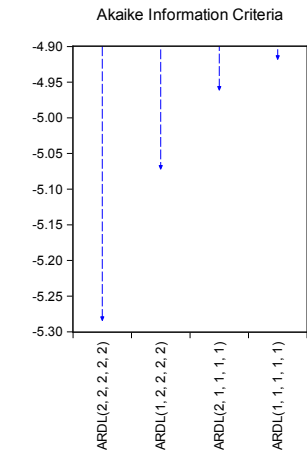
Model 5

Akaike Information Criteria

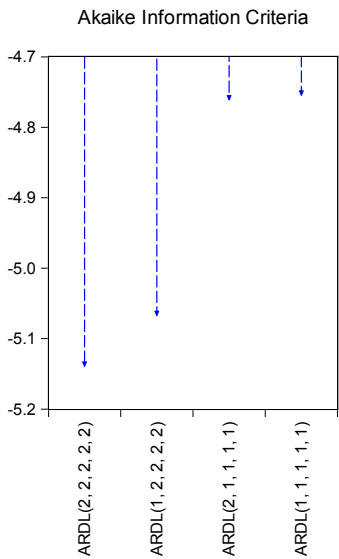


Selected African Countries Model Selection Akaike Criteria

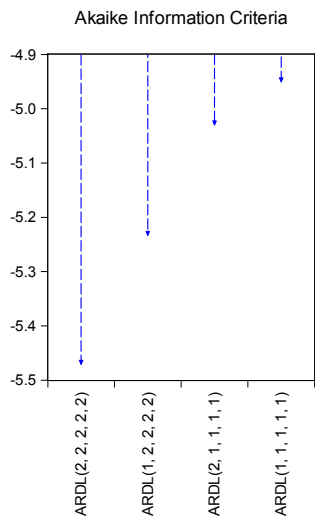
Model 1



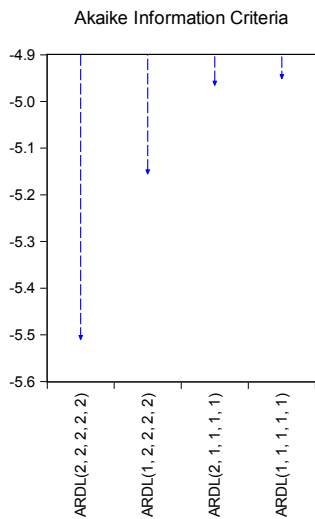
Model 2



Model 3



Model 4





# Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on us: Shattering the Illusion of Climate Security as a Means of Protecting Communities Facing Climate Disaster

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## Abstract:

The climate crisis remains central to international discourse, yet efforts to transition from fossil fuel-dependent economies remain fragmented. Addressing climate disasters as isolated regional events undermines the global, multidimensional nature of the crisis. Climate change continues to expose gaps in human development frameworks, particularly regarding marginalised and vulnerable communities. This article explores Pakistan's struggle to develop a coherent climate security strategy that addresses the educational, health, social, and economic needs of these communities—a challenge shared by many countries worldwide. Using a

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qualitative, interpretative approach, this research draws on the lived experiences of rural communities severely impacted by Pakistan's 2022 floods. It examines the psychosocial trauma faced by children and the broader implications for community preparedness and resilience. Findings reveal how health and well-being are deeply connected to socioeconomic and collective indicators, with entire generations at risk of falling into cycles of underdevelopment. The study highlights critical gaps in current climate solutions that intensify the multidimensional nature of poverty and social injustice. As disasters and conflicts persist across the Global South, community resilience continues to erode. The article argues for innovative, locally grounded climate and human development solutions that emerge from the Global South itself. It advocates for a shift from conventional climate security approaches toward integrated protection and development frameworks that center both planetary and human well-being. The potential of regions such as Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East to shape sustainable futures amid ongoing climatic and systemic challenges is presented as urgent and necessary.

**Keywords:** Climate Disaster, Climate Security, Sustainability, Colonialism, Protection, Pakistan, Global South.

## Introduction

The severity and frequency of human-caused climate change disasters have become a more prominent global topic within the last couple of decades. Much of the research on climate change is loosely connected to pre-existing socio-economic, cultural, geographical, and political inequities. The vacuum that exists in linking climate-related disasters to inequality and issues of justice has skewed accountability measures to be taken seriously. Currently, under the climate change banner, historically high-emitting industrial nations have leveraged global governance structures to their advantage - to use a more colloquial expression, this has been a hand well played. A third of the finance given to the least developed countries (LDCs) comes in the form of loans rather than grants, raising the risk of climate debt traps (Zagema et al., 2023). As of 2021, 17 of the 20 most climate-vulnerable and least climate-prepared countries were LDCs (UNCTAD, 2023). This research article makes links to Pakistan and its struggle to create a comprehensive climate security strategy and the broader challenges that the Global South is facing with an underlining examination of the colonial legacies within global governance.

The construct of climate security is largely a Western-driven agenda entangled with colonial and capitalist interests at heart. Climate security, as a political and policy framework, is shaping mainstream approaches to climate solutions. Within this mainstream apparatus, both the climate and those most affected by disasters are often framed as a threat to the current status quo. The disruption brought about by the crisis infringes on both internal and external capabilities and capacities (Nussbaum, 2000). This research focused on the mental health impact the 2022 floods had on children in two provinces in rural Pakistan. The overarching research question the study looked at is: **What are the rehabilitation approaches for children affected by psycho-social trauma from flood-prone areas in Pakistan?** From the onset, the research adopted a sociological and anthropological approach. The justification for this framing lies in the inequities of a modern capitalist system, where a disaster happens due

to pre-existing vulnerabilities of a people and those territories. As argued by Kleinman (1995, p.101):

There are routinised forms of suffering that are either shared aspects of human conditions - chronic illness or death – or experiences of deprivation and exploitation and degradation and oppression that certain categories of individuals (the poor, the vulnerable, the defeated) are especially exposed to and others relatively protected from.

Current global approaches to resolving climate disasters have no clear impetus for addressing societal inequities. The focal point in climate security is maintaining the status quo on security and peace. Cordoned off are attempts to disrupt economic interests, which seem to take precedence over human development. The question raised is, security and peace for whom – and at what cost?

Pakistan, as a case study, represents a growing trend across other nations in the Global South whose populations are plunged into ongoing humanitarian crises. The colonial legacy of these territories continues to unfold to this day (Kihlström, M., 2025). Historical emissions and the imposition of modernity through compulsive consumption, together with the exploitation of resources and economic growth on fossil fuels, sit on the shoulders of communities that fit the categorisation of poor, rural, and marginalised (Prashad, 2012). This year commemorates the 75th anniversary of the UN and 80 years of the UN Charter (ICRC, 2024). Despite the milestones, inequality continues to underpin international relations. These are not unrelated issues; rather, as argued by Oxfam in their report titled, *Takers not Makers* (2005), the historical and ongoing colonialism continues to dictate both economic and political policy. The report examines how, in 2023, the Global North extracted \$921 billion from the Global South through the financial system; this is four times the amount that is spent on aid (Taneja et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, the impending climate crisis is a phenomenon that has exacerbated the suffering of affected communities. The magnitude of how a disaster is felt varies from place to place. Drawing from the research case study, community robustness is dependent on external factors like economic and social conditions and access to health, education, and transportation. As argued by Friederike Otto, scientists have struggled to discuss climate and politics as interlinked topics; “I believe it is important to



show that both obstacles – the technical and the political – can be overcome; our climate models have become better and better, and we are coming to realise that research cannot take place at a remove from the real world” (Otto, 2025). Building on this idea, this research article not only connects the technical and the political dimensions of climate disasters but also integrates human ethnography to unravel the lived realities of children, their mothers, fathers, and communities.

The literature shows that there is a divide between the statistical representation of climate change that focuses on rising sea level temperatures, carbon emissions, and ecosystem collapse and lived experience, which includes the intentional marginalisation and disablement of communities. Pakistan is listed as the eighth most climate-vulnerable country in the world, according to the German Climate Risk Index (2025). This is a condition not uncommon amongst LDCs (Germanwatch.n.d.). Moreover, children in LDCs have been identified as the most at-risk population when it comes to climate change. Their developing physiologies, together with prolonged exposure to vector-borne diseases, food insecurity, malnutrition, psychological stress, and reduced livelihood opportunities, including their dependency on adults, significantly magnify their risk of climate-induced disasters (Campbell, Holl, Marwah, et al., 2025).

The apocalyptic scenes of the 2022 floods that submerged a third of the country underwater are not isolated incidents. What renders climate change a disaster is the interplay between the exposure to the disaster itself and the set of pre-existing vulnerabilities with which we enter (Otto, 2025). Within this complex web of systems, local, national, and global governance apparatuses are key determinants of whether communities can withstand a disaster and, if so, the capacity for recovery. The enabling conditions to foster human development in the Global South have been systematically undermined by the colonial project of 1492 (Rodney, 1972). As argued by Silvia Federici (2021), capitalism flourished through the enslavement of colonised peoples and the devaluation of women - their bodies and their labour - all of which are hallmarks of an emerging capitalist system. This historical background is key to formulating a holistic understanding of who is most impacted by disasters today and how policy intersects with inequality. These factors contribute to determining the repercussions of recovery. A narrow focus on the mechanics of climate change

undermines the complex interplay of needs that communities face in initiating post-disaster rehabilitation. Policies that are void of participatory methods risk replicating the paternalistic approach within the mainstream humanitarian and development sectors (Shiva, 1999).

A running theme throughout this research article and its methodological underpinning is the involvement of the research participants as equal partners. The vulnerability paradigm, in which affected communities are stripped of agency through top-down global aid programmes, is colonial at its root (Adler, 2024). This restructuring of society by the European colonial expansion, which included the transatlantic slave trade, the witch hunts in Europe, and a woman's forced reproductive labour, made up the foundations of our current capitalist economic system (Federici, 2021). This research article looks to build on the decolonial discourse by linking the historical implications to the contemporary climate security debate. Against this historical backdrop, it is important to distinguish between vulnerability arising from economic, political, social, cultural, and geographical inequalities and the imposition of vulnerability as a fixed identity. With the acceleration of disasters induced by climate change, the crippling of capacity by intentional disablement diminishes all necessary capabilities to withstand uncertainty (Nussbaum, 2000). For instance, Pakistan's current climate crisis and contemporary policymaking practices are modelled by British colonial rule. The two governance practices to this day by successive post-Partition governments are replicates of this archaic governance system. In this political makeup, the centralization of governance and exclusion of local and indigenous communities, their experiential knowledge of soil, land and water, and spiritual ties with coexistence are dismissed (Hayat, 2022). Climate change, as a global issue, is also an opportunity to reset, reintegrate and collectively re-imagine within planetary system boundaries what development ought to be beyond an economic endeavour.

The 2022 floods caused Pakistan an estimated \$30 billion in damages, of which the country was only able to make up a third of the costs for rebuilding efforts. The remaining amount was largely made up of loans that have weighed heavily on an existing debt of approximately \$20 billion from previous climate-change-induced damages (Zaidi, 2022). This segment of the case study reveals a profound domino effect of chronic underdevelopment from micro, meso and macro levels.

The disruption to life – especially for children – is evident in physical and mental health impacts, societal and structural breakdowns, and communal and future frustrations. Globally, children are amongst the most affected and at the highest risk of the consequences of public health emergencies. It is estimated that 50% of the 3.4 million children affected by the 2022 floods showed signs of distress following the 2022 floods (Save the Children International, 2022). The complex nature of children's health and wellbeing is the interlinkage of protection issues that are largely reliant on family and community settings. In addition, children's mental, physical and spiritual health is again sustained by close relations and surrounding societal infrastructure that can accommodate the rights of the child. This research article brings to the forefront the health and wellbeing and societal injustices that have been exacerbated by climate change in society's most vulnerable populations.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research focused on the communities of Dadu and Dera Ismail Khan that were severely affected regions. With a central focus on the psychosocial trauma experienced by children after the 2022 floods and the intricate relationship between health, wellbeing and development. The methods used varied among the participants. The study aimed to examine the coping mechanisms from the community perspective to build on the climate security, humanitarian and development discourse. The research took on a participatory qualitative approach that involved grassroots leaders who were active within these communities. While consultations were held with civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, and first responders, it was the affected families and the children themselves that created the breadth of the data collected. In order to understand the diversity of lived experience, a range of methodologies, methods and theories were woven into the research framework. The break from the strict confines of Western scientific protocol to allow participatory research design involving arts-based mediums and games removed the oppressive structures that can come with strict Western methodologies and methods (Blaak, Openjuru and Zeelen, 2013). The fieldwork conducted in Dadu facilitated the development of a coding and analytical framework then used in the analysis.

The research design comprised two in-person field visits. At each field visit,

sharing circles were conducted with the women from the communities, separate from the men and the children.

## **2.1 Data collection**

### **2.1.1 Sharing Circles and Arts-Based Research Methods**

Sharing circles and arts-based research methods were both culturally and contextually appropriate methods in this region. All the sessions followed the same overall design, in which the participants were asked to discuss life before the floods, during and what their current needs are post-flood. Sharing circles with men and women was held separately to ensure that participants could explore their feelings freely. Similarly, the arts and games-based sessions with the child's participants were also held independently of their parents, with the older children of this study located at two different schools. Within the cultural context, separating the participants was particularly important for the women-led sessions. The various caring roles of women in these communities provided a grounded understanding of the mental and physical health of their children both during the disaster and after. From a decolonial feminist lens, women from rural and marginalised backgrounds are rarely given the space to participate as experts. Key to the data collection process was the acknowledgement and space for women to relay their children's behaviour patterns and their observations as to what support their children needed. The women were vocal, emotive and pragmatic in their responses. As shown in Figure 1, the mapping of cognitive, behavioural and psychosocial consequences emerged from the mother's account of the experience of trauma by their children. This figure ties in with the mainstream guidelines for dealing with these symptoms. This figure depicts the complex nature and diverse behaviour changes experienced that result from climate disasters. To be able to offer child-friendly spaces, therapy, sports and routine, funding is needed.

The women expressed frustration and helplessness following the severity of the destruction. These states of disorientation and exclusion are core to the discussion section of this article. Care was central to healing and was expressed freely, with many of the mothers only able to offer comfort to their children. The women showed a deep sense of understanding, which is discussed in the findings section as a mechanism of support. Similarly, the men expressed guilt

and helplessness seeing their family suffer. The data collection methods allowed the men to gather and express solidarity between them. The varied modalities and sharing circles in the study facilitated deep discussions about lived experience and how members of communities congregate and support one another. The robustness of the community came through in the observation, which is a fundamental method in the ethnographies and distinct narratives captured within this research.

Commonly in sessions with children, the data collection methods were age-sensitive and accommodated for the different levels of comprehension of the child. The child sessions explored feelings of being 'happy, unhappy, safe, and unsafe within their community and environment. Distinct from the adult-run sessions, which allowed for a comparison to life before the floods, during, and after, it was important to understand protection as a core concept, as indicated in Figure 1. In addition to understanding any challenges within surrounding locations, 'body protection' was a vital terminology used in the subsequent sections to identify areas where sexual abuse was caused due to the displacement and disruption to the community safeguarding mechanism by the floods.

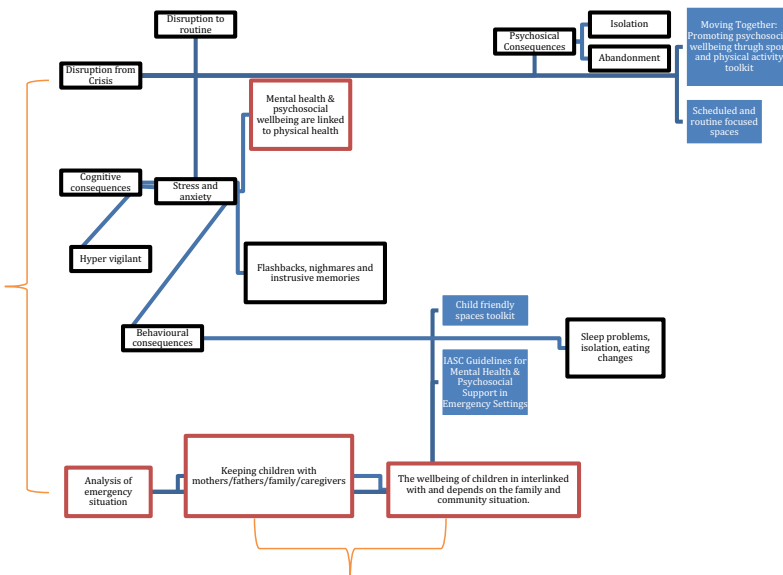


Figure 1: Mapping of disaster outcomes and guidelines (authors own)

The children’s sessions started with an icebreaker. To understand children’s cognitive development and impact on situations and experiences, the sessions were crafted around play. The children were asked to shout out what their favourite games and activities are and what makes them happy. The ability of the child to situate themselves confidently with emotion and experience highlights the child’s capacity for comprehension. Basic emotions like happiness, anger, fear, surprise and sadness are intrinsic to humans at birth (LoBue et al., 2019). The study broadly involved four categories of research participants as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Research Participants Overview

Group One:	Interviews and structured discussions and observations with local staff	10 participants
Group Two:	Interviews and structured discussions with relevant stakeholder organisations and teachers	5 participants
Group Three:	Sharing circles with flood-affected men and women in Sindh and KP	60 participants
Group Four:	Interactive sessions designed specifically for Pakistani, flood-affected children from 4 – 15 years of age of both genders.	50 participants

The role that humanitarian aid and development programmes need to play before, during, and after a disaster has to emerge from the collection of narratives of communities struggling to recover. The robustness of women, men, and children within these communities is also subject to the existing infrastructure and funding that has been allocated to the areas affected. The destruction of essential services like healthcare , education, and access to roads for communities that are already at the margins of society further limits their ability to cope. What emerged within the data collection were key findings that interlinked the unattended needs from a health, educational, and economic perspective before the 2022 floods.

### 3. Results

The themes that emerged through thematic analysis showed patterns within the rich data set. For the purposes of this article and the broader global discussion on climate disasters, a focus on development and crisis through two overarching umbrella themes is presented. Within the thematic underpinning that ties over to the discussion section, there is a bare minimum of the standards that marginalised communities have been routinised to survive.

#### 3.1. Marginalisation

The key findings from the case study of Pakistan highlight the degree of impact that poverty-stricken communities and children face. Marginalisation is the consequence of a neglected territory and its people. The existing power concentration that is not unique to Pakistan has created swaths of underdevelopment and poverty for millions. The accumulation of capital that comes with power has not trickled down wealth to those on the margins of society but rather has absorbed it. Inequality as a phenomenon is presented in a plethora of ways (Taneja et al., 2025). The visited districts had a poorly functioning school before the floods, with some semblance of lessons that teachers were able to attend. The Sindh district is remote, with many teachers reluctant to take posts in far-out locations. Nonetheless, it was observed by the researchers and confirmed by the mothers of the community, who relayed that after the floods their local school had been destroyed. The red brick building had missing walls and an open roof. The building that once seated the children of this remote village was derelict. The mothers talked about the boredom of the children and how some of them were discouraged altogether from attending school. The education crisis in Pakistan was palpable during our field visits. It is reported that more than 36% of children are out of school, the equivalent of 25.3 million children aged 5 to 16 (The Express Tribune, 2025). Drawing from the research findings and the first comprehensive analysis of out-of-school children (OOSC) done in Pakistan, it is reported that 74% of the figure are children from rural areas. Where reports summarise the challenges to increasing enrolment in these regions due to social barriers, poverty, and limited infrastructure and access, a different picture is painted on the ground. One can gloss over these issues as they become repetitive and common throughout different countries within the Global South. It is quite another matter when the schools available

are long distances away, cramped classrooms in scorching heat, with no food or ventilation. The desire to learn is the same from child to child, but discrimination sets one against the other. As education becomes ever more an accepted commodity, the development of children and their wellbeing is a privilege that can only be afforded by the elite ruling class. As shown in Figure 1, child-friendly spaces allow a sense of normalcy through play and routine. It is incredibly difficult in a crisis setting to facilitate these spaces. During our visit to Dadu, we came across a tent-shift structure that still had the worn-out logo of a prominent INGO. It had been taken over by a local teacher who was using it to give informal teaching. The scorching sun intensified the temperatures inside the tent to over 51°. In the analysis, marginalisation is discussed as barriers to access but experienced as torturous attempts to offer affected communities a semblance of dignity.

It is on this basis that the author argues against a bare minimum standard status quo. The systems of accountability in rural communities are largely nonexistent, and at best, fragmented. The consequence of a global impetus for exponential economic growth that defies planetary and human flourishing boundaries is a rise in exploitation. This is directly consequential to violence, which in turn requires security measures and militarisation. Global military spending has soared, reaching \$2.7 trillion in 2024, a 9.4% increase from the previous year (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2025). The global trend for compulsive consumption is caused by the increase and severity of extreme weather events inflicted upon the least contributing populations of carbon emissions (Kihlström, 2025). As argued by Ivan Illich (1978), the erasure of essential human skills that comes from underfunding social services in a needs-service economy sets dependency across all critical areas of human life (Illich, 1978).

An overarching commonality within the findings of both the sharing circles between women and men, was a shared feeling of abandonment by the state and the international community. In the analysis, affected communities are denied meaningful mechanisms by which they can shape humanitarian and development efforts. The experience of aid and development by the participants was that only one organisation that had a strong presence on the ground really listened to their needs. Still, the speed at which permanent housing and



sanitation were being implemented was painfully slow. The dependence on donor governments and funding dictates the speed and efficiency at which the needs of affected communities are addressed. Despite the sophisticated international legal frameworks, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Pakistan is a signatory to, all children are not protected equally. Articles 19 and 27 refer to protection from harm. As discussed in the introduction, the pounding of crises in already deprived sectors erodes the community's ability to fully recover and maintain robustness. When examining the pre-existing vulnerabilities of a community, international relations, despite seeming far removed, are interlinked. The IMF, for example, has been pushing Pakistan to privatize state-owned enterprises (SOEs) since 1991, with little progress in solving its budget deficit and slow long-term growth. The IMF's notorious austerity measures indiscriminately impact the poorest in society, depriving them of any governmental social-economic safety net (CADTM, 2024). This, in turn, sets the wheels in motion to determine who becomes a victim of the climate disaster. As long as human development and sustainability agendas ignore the root issues of exploitation and marginalisation, larger sways of communities will be left to suffer the consequences of a global issue, with little to no meaningful solutions.

### 3.1. Displacement and Protection Issues

The disorientation of communities after a crisis reverberates across all dimensions of their lives. The mothers in between tears recounted how their children still feared thunder and rain. The mothers went on to discuss how, for days, they were stranded as a third of the country was underwater. Forced to drink stagnant, contaminated water after the floods as they held their children ill from high fevers due to waterborne diseases. According to media reports, all the deaths caused by diarrhoea, malaria and gastroenteritis were reported in southeastern Sindh province, where more than 300 people died of flood-related illness (Hussain, 2022). The feeling of abandonment and helplessness corroborates with the length at which these communities were exposed to the enormity of destruction and disease. A key finding is the interconnectedness between the mother's health and that of the child - which is also dependent on community health at large. From a medical anthropological lens, the social suffering of these communities significantly debilitated their ability to withstand another hazard. The feeling of destitution characterises the descriptive accounts of what displacement felt like. The accounts of the flood

and the helplessness to control natural hazards bring forth a crucial analysis of the so-called Anthropocene epoch. As argued by Vandana Shiva, the concept of the 'Anthropocene' – a proposed geological epoch that positions human activity as central to shaping the Earth's environment and geology, is problematic. In her critique, she argues that the generalisation of humans for ecological destruction conceals the specific role of corporations, unsustainable systems and capitalism driven by a minority. Rather, she advocates for local and organic systems and the importance of biodiversity and global commons to reverse ecological destruction (Shiva and Shiva, 2019). If bees were to become extinct, it would have devastating consequences for ecosystems, dramatically declining crop production and heightening food insecurity. On the other hand, the extinction of humans would not have a devastating effect on the ecosystem; rather, biodiversity would flourish. The worldview that positions humanity as supreme and separate from nature has paved the way for a skewed understanding of our very own nature (Jayawickrama, 2022). We are interconnected, both to each other and the planet. This sobering reality was what sustained the affected communities in rural Pakistan and allowed them to survive as they shared the little resources they had.

Health outcomes are at the intersection of the individual, collective and societal experience, meshed within a cultural context (Kleinman, 1995).

The guidelines and toolkits specialise in dealing with child trauma occurring from disasters, and advice on ensuring that children remain close to their mothers, fathers and community members. Families are often in need to relocate, with many of them losing their homes. When the women and men recounted the floods, they spoke about the mud homes, traditionally known as 'Kuchha' houses. All the families that were part of the research had lost their homes. The physical displacement also brought about the loss of cattle for men, which was their main source of income. With many of the communities' landless peasants and sharecroppers. The economic situation of the men after the floods had severely worsened. Selling their cattle at a much lower value due to desperate deprivation has further pushed many of them into severe debt. Within these settings and as part of the data collection, displacement following a disaster impacts community protection mechanism.

Disasters have a profound negative effect on children's mental health, aside

from the long-lasting trauma and fear that children experience. One of the more sensitive topics is the heightened risk of sexual abuse for children, physical abuse and domestic violence for women. In keeping with cultural norms, the term 'body protection' was adopted. The disruption to schools which can act as a safeguarding institution and longer distances to reach water points create insecure settings for children. The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that around 1 billion children between 2 and 17 years of age are exposed to physical, psychological or sexual violence annually. Research has further shown that a direct link between soaring temperatures increases the propensity for violence and conflict (FUFSE, 2022). These are the multi-dimensions of the climate change debate that can be overlooked through mechanistic frameworks that exclude lived experience. Care, compassion, faith and collaboration were core qualities that emerged from the research findings. The sustainability discourse predominately has an externally driven agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals 2030, born out of yet another set of international development goals that did not come to fruition, are an indication of a disregard to foster internal transformational skills at scale. In this, a broader analysis into the shift for the development sector transformative skills and the link with collective being was an overarching thread. Similarly, spirituality and faith were a source of hope for these communities.

## 4. Discussion

Climate change and security interventions are an increasing area of interest. As global policy takes on varied approaches to dealing with this global issue, it is important to acknowledge that as a collective we are at a crossroads. High-level discussions on deepening knowledge of why climate-related security risks arise and the mitigation process fall within meeting the Sustainable Development Goals 13 and long-term sustainable Peace Goal 16 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2025). This discussion section seeks to raise some fundamental questions to prompt an exploration into measures that can bring about sustainable futures. The findings of a Groundswell report estimate that by 2050 there will be up to 216 million internal climate migrants globally (Voegelé, 2021). The competition for resources is first and foremost a domestic challenge. The nexus between climate change, migration and conflict is a growing phenomenon. As with most situations of crisis, it is difficult and

perhaps inaccurate to attribute the escalation of displacement solely to climate change. The core focus of this article brings forth the relevance of addressing societal inequities and systematic degradation of core human development functionalities, which cause a perfect storm for human suffering. It is, therefore, just as relevant to examine to what degree climate change is being pushed by political elites as a cover-up for manmade and induced disasters (Otto, 2025). By this, what is being argued is that shifting the focus to climate change as a sole factor whilst failing to address existing vulnerabilities can relieve political accountability. Whilst natural hazards and climate change are ecological realities, it is the disaster, the lingering suffering and the inability of affected communities to recover that are highlighted in this research article.

The proposition that marginalisation and underdevelopment are the inevitable characteristics of a dominant global capitalist economic system takes root in a separation and devaluation process (Smith, 1984). Why is one type of labour monetarily remunerated and valued and another devalued? Productive (waged) labour, an inextricably Western colonial construct that rose out of industrial capitalism, classified reproductive (unwaged) labour as non-existent (Federici, 2004). Amidst this process of devaluation, the invisibility of women, colonies and their enslaved populations were normalised. Shattering the illusion of a developed and just system is the beginning to decolonise our minds. The anecdotal accounts from the affected communities in Pakistan provide a human account of what disaster feels like. In a small community room, the women gathered listening to one another, some with tears in their eyes knew that what helped them survive was one another. Disaster is defined by Rebecca Solnit, as a rupture to the order of things. Within this framing, Solnit (2009) marks a renaissance attached to crisis. The opportunity that arises from destruction is in the form of human solidarity and mutual aid. The ugliest part of a disaster is the exposition of institutional failures. This breakdown and breakthrough, where the large majority of affected people look to one another for life-saving support defies the imposed narrative of human self-centredness. Compassion, care and collaboration are recurrent qualities that shine through. For example, in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, when the government mobilised the protection of private property over the lives of civilians, local residents dug with their bare hands survivors that were trapped under the rubble. The improvised grassroots mobilisation led to long-term political activism (Solnit, 2009). Similarly, after the

terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, boaters formed an impromptu evacuation fleet. In the direst of states, the participants of this research discussed how neighbours shared the little food and clean water they had with one another.

The sophisticated apparatus that has been built around the modern era entices one to render core capabilities for compulsive consumerism, comfort and entertainment (Illich, 1977). Its result is the passive participation of the masses. Thus, in times of disruption, the active and pragmatic mobilisation of communities emerges. The success of the current global governance and economic system is not only attributed to its global reach and monopoly but also its entrenched grip on defining worldviews where we fail to re-imagine outside of this construct. Thus, the imaginability of capitalism is perhaps its biggest success. Stemming from the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who argued that governments existed to protect individual rights because human nature was self-interested and chaotic, they have implanted an intrinsically individualist culture, shaping much of modern Western political paradigms (McGregor 2021).

In a modern era where we witness suffering through media outlets that feed collective helplessness, collective action has been crippled. Accumulation by dispossession is part and parcel of an extreme individualist culture. The dispossession of people from land to mine and exploit is allowed with impunity. The privatization, debt and global neoliberal policies permit a further devaluation process that is rapidly driving species, ecosystems and biodiversity to the brink of extinction at alarming rates. A global analysis which examined nearly 100,000 sites across all continents found that the number of species at human-impacted sites was almost 20% lower than at sites unaffected by humans (Weston, 2025).

The process of decolonisation on a global scale is a conscientisation of these two fundamental axes: the individualist and the collective. Both have positive and negative attributes. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the limitations of a largely individualist society and whether it is the basis for which, as a collective, the complex issues around climate change can be solved through these mechanisms (Weston, 2025). Can the notion of 'individual uniqueness' be forsaken for a different framing that shapes our identity in conjunction with our role to one another and the planet? The mitigating impact of collective action is readily accounted for in mainstream policy frameworks. If this were not the

case, strengthening community bonds through citizen participation would be supported by government-led disaster management, like in the case of Cuba (Keck and Reed, 2012). It is within this stripping away of 'being' that a deeper analysis of how entrenched the individualist mindset is. The collective notion, as altruistic as it is, requires a restructuring of values. Against this backdrop, the capacity for developed and industrial societies to lead the way in framing collective-driven approaches would be futile. Thus, at the core of this argument is the inconsistency of modern society to become sustainable without an overhaul of its current set-up. Rather, these are the spaces which need to be highlighted that reposition collective communities as leaders in innovative disaster management approaches. Indigenous and ancient philosophies, like 'Ayni' – originating from the Andean Mountain region, are a concept, now a common saying in South America 'today for you, tomorrow for me', that pierces the veil of individualism.

The imposition of vulnerability as a fixed identity on communities in the Global South, as argued in the introduction of this article, devalues the methods and concepts of these communities, replicating their invisibility on global platforms. A famous quote by Desmond Tutu said; 'When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible, and they had the land.' A global emergency that is projected to intensify so long as business as usual continues and security and militarisation increases sets us on a pathway to more violence. Figure 2 depicts the nexus between developments within the current landscape. Within this conceptual framework, the de-escalation of violence happens when economic and human development operate within the Planetary System Boundaries. For the purposes of this article, the author has coined the term 'parasitic development' to mean the extractive processes in which people, planet and separation generate an accumulation of economic gain for a few. This in turn heightens tensions, and amplifies vulnerabilities that cause disasters after hazards. The submission of humans to nature brings forth a further dimension to collectivism. The active participation of society is defined through critical expression and creational nature. Pockets of social unrest have erupted and are projected to as vulnerable nations see mass migration triggered by food and water crises (Hegazi, 2024). Already, hostility across most of Europe and the USA's Trumpian policy is indicating a move towards

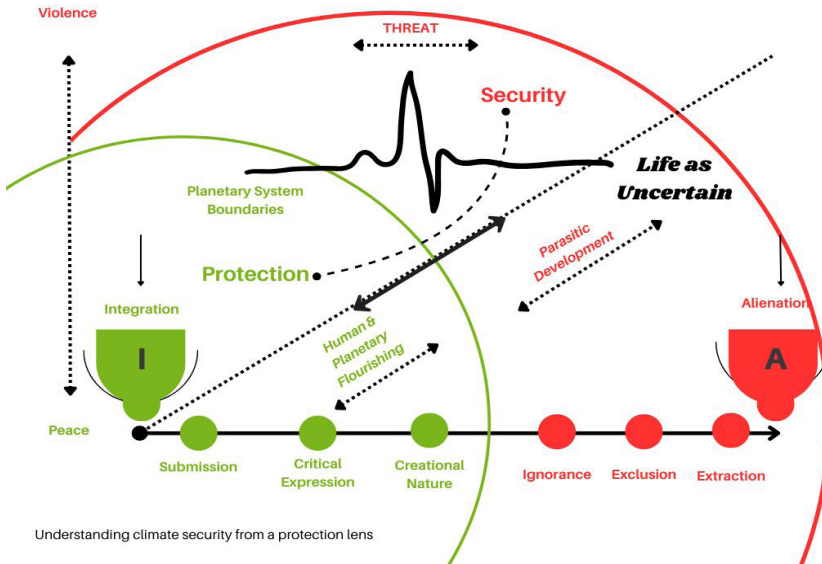


Figure 2: Understanding Climate Security from a Protection Lens (authors own)

## 5. Conclusion

The title of this article is meant to provoke an awakening to the layers by which oppressive systems have also demised a collective responsibility. In order to shift mindsets and shed the shackles, a degree of transition and discomfort is expected. The Capitalist system emphasizes ownership and responsibility for private property. But, what if, in redefining economic models around planetary bounds and human flourishing, ownership transformed into stewardship of the planet? The paternalism in global governance ridicules notions of peace and dignity as fanciful. As men in suits educate the rest on what the 'real world' is - one that requires more weapons and geo-engineering to secure peace - they craft a reality where walls are built and land is viewed as a mere resource. Care and compassion are relegated as irrelevant. How a threat is created, perceived and de-escalated requires a step back. Currently, increased funding for military arsenals has not paved the way for a more sustainable world. Climate-induced disasters are not universally experienced in the same manner. Nonetheless, the local is becoming global. Mass migration due to conflict and inhabitable

territories will exacerbate host communities and local systems. In the current landscape, opportunities for further exploitation have been the preferred way, and funding loans to already vulnerable territories have become common practice. The growing political demand for climate security needs to be aligned with public demand for peace and climate protection, without exception of race, creed and sex. Unprecedented challenges will require new and brave transformative skills that dare to venture into the spiritual, the connected, and the dimensions that evoke love, compassion and empathy. This article invites the reader to reflect and locate oneself within their collective surroundings to move within the direction of transformation.

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### **Ethics Statement**

This study involved human participants. Interviews and focus groups were conducted. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by the Ethics Committee of the University of York and was approved by the University of York Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Andrew J. Williams and  
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# Conflict and Development

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*Conflict and Development*, authored by Andrew J. Williams and Alasdair Gordon-Gibson, and published in its third edition in 2025 by Routledge, remains one of the most up-to-date contributions in the *Perspectives on Development* series. Initiated alongside the UN's Millennium Development Goals in 2000, this series has produced development-focused texts across multiple social science disciplines, including anthropology, economics, geography, and sociology. The book continues to garner attention from students and scholars interested in the intersections between conflict and global development processes. The third edition of this work benefits significantly from the collaboration between the two authors. Williams offers a strong theoretical framework, while Gordon-Gibson contributes nearly two decades of extensive field experience in

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humanitarian and development sectors. Together, they aim to provide a more robust understanding of contemporary conflicts and development challenges. As they explain in the preface, the new edition offers a “deeper dive into the history of conflict and the emergence of new theories and policy guidance about present and future options” (p.1).

Initially published in 2009, the book was notable for being one of the first to engage directly and comprehensively with the relationship between conflict and development. Over time, the evolving dynamics between security, conflict, and development have been more thoroughly integrated, making the current edition more nuanced and analytically layered. Structurally, the book consists of six core chapters along with an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter includes boxed case studies, thematic highlights, summary points, discussion questions, and curated reading lists, giving the book an accessible, pedagogical format well-suited for classroom use.

The introduction offers a comprehensive overview of theoretical approaches, ranging from modernization theory to postcolonial and critical perspectives. The authors stress that conflict and development are not discrete phenomena but are deeply interwoven. Their theoretical framing emphasizes the “triple nexus” between human security, development, and peace, asserting that conflicts often stem from internal structural weaknesses within states (pp.1–3). In this view, global power structures and institutions play critical roles in sustaining or exacerbating underdevelopment and instability.

Chapter One explores the root causes of conflict, focusing particularly on poverty and competition over natural resources. The authors assess a variety of theoretical models and give special attention to the limitations of economic determinism in explaining conflict. For instance, while Collier’s “greed and grievance” model is acknowledged, it is deemed insufficient in isolation. Williams and Gordon-Gibson argue that political, historical, and identity-based factors are equally significant in understanding how and why conflicts erupt. They highlight how resource-based grievances, development inequalities, and identity politics feed into violent unrest. The authors also demonstrate how local conflicts are entangled with global systems, stating: “combatants and civilians in the midst of civil wars are often closely connected with the globalized international economy” (p.50).

Chapter Two investigates the roles of key institutions in shaping development and conflict outcomes. Here, the authors divide institutions into two categories—

hardware (e.g., states, the UN, IMF) and software (e.g., ideological frameworks such as neoliberalism, globalization, and liberal peace). This framework allows for a dual-layered analysis of the ways institutional structures and their ideological underpinnings influence conflict zones. A central claim in this chapter is that “international organizations are not neutral” (p.76). They often act in their own strategic interest, and this tendency can significantly shape reconstruction and development agendas (p.80)

In critiquing the liberal peace model, the authors argue that, although it purports to offer a universalist vision of peace and development, it often leads to illiberal outcomes—such as the suppression of local governance models or the marginalization of non-Western actors. Despite exploring alternatives, the authors stop short of proposing a concrete alternative paradigm, instead presenting a pluralistic but still predominantly system-internal critique. The rise of China is also discussed in this chapter as a counterpoint to Western dominance, but the treatment is brief. Similarly, regional organizations such as NATO, the African Union, and ASEAN are mentioned, though the analysis remains focused on their structural form and geopolitical positioning rather than their specific roles in development or conflict mitigation.

This lack of depth weakens the connection to the book’s central conflict–development axis. Considering the brevity of this section, the omission of deeper analysis regarding how these institutions operate within specific conflict environments constitutes a notable analytical gap. A more focused, grounded analysis could have strengthened the book’s coherence.

Chapter Three turns the spotlight to the human dimensions of conflict and development, highlighting issues of civic participation, representation, civil society, and gender. The authors argue that participation and representation have become rhetorical tropes in development discourse, often lacking substantive engagement with affected populations (p.122). Civil society, when defined through Western liberal standards, tends to be disconnected from the socio-political realities of local contexts (p.117). Gender equality is discussed with sensitivity to local resistance; efforts to integrate gender frameworks into peace negotiations and development programs may face backlash when they challenge prevailing cultural norms (p.131).

Chapter Four shifts from “conflict resolution” to “conflict transformation,” a concept the authors favor for its emphasis on grassroots peace initiatives.

The authors assess hybrid peace models that have emerged in the post-Cold War era, many of which blend top-down institutional efforts with bottom-up community-based practices. While the chapter offers valuable insights into alternative conflict strategies, it largely omits the development dimension central to the book's overarching thesis. This thematic deviation results in a slight misalignment with the book's structural integrity.

Chapter Five critically examines post-conflict reconstruction, focusing on the limitations of technocratic and externally driven development strategies. The authors analyze how concepts like nation-building, democratization, and institutional reform have been deployed not only as tools for recovery but also as instruments of geopolitical influence. Drawing from case studies in Iraq and Sierra Leone, they show how externally imposed models often fail to yield sustainable or inclusive outcomes. These cases reinforce the authors' broader argument that development must be context-specific and informed by local realities.

Chapter Six, the final chapter, deals with development aid and its complex entanglement with conflict. The authors argue that traditional development paradigms fall short in volatile environments. Humanitarian aid, while ostensibly neutral, is often politicized and may inadvertently reinforce inequalities or prolong conflict (p.245). They present the "triple nexus" model—combining humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding—as a more integrated and potentially effective intervention strategy. This chapter is particularly informed by Gordon-Gibson's fieldwork and challenges the assumption that foreign aid is inherently constructive. On the contrary, local reactions are frequently ambivalent or even hostile, reflecting the contradictions of externally driven recovery.

Across all chapters, the book is structured to facilitate learning and critical engagement, employing discussion prompts, practical case studies, and further readings. The writing style is accessible without sacrificing analytical rigor, making it suitable for undergraduate and postgraduate audiences alike. The interdisciplinary methodology, combining security studies, development theory, and peacebuilding literature, contributes to a holistic understanding of complex global issues.

Nevertheless, the book is not without limitations. Its broad scope sometimes compromises the depth of analysis. Given the scale and diversity of contemporary



conflicts—over 70 active conflict zones globally—the authors’ attempt to address such vast terrain in a single volume leads to uneven coverage. While introductory and intermediate readers will find the book valuable, advanced scholars may require more granular, region-specific analysis.

A further critique involves the book’s partial reliance on Western frameworks. While the authors provide critical perspectives on liberal peace and Western development ideology, their exploration of alternative approaches—such as those emerging from China or Russia—remains superficial. A deeper engagement with post-Western paradigms, or a more pronounced inclusion of decolonial theory, would have expanded the scope and critical power of the book. One example illustrating this limitation is the statement on page 231: “it is now designated as a terrorist organization, especially after the attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023.” This phrasing reflects a Western-centric interpretation, omitting the fact that several states had designated the group as such before this date, while others view it as a resistance movement. The lack of pluralistic perspective here reveals the constraints of the book’s analytical framing.

A more detailed discussion of recent conflicts—particularly the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the (in)action of global institutions—could have enhanced the book’s contemporary relevance and critical strength. Despite these critiques, *Conflict and Development* remains a valuable text, especially for students and practitioners seeking an accessible yet critical entry point into the field.



COMMENTARY

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# Development Cooperation as a Tool of International Engagement: The Distinctive Case of Türkiye

*\*M. Cüneyd Düzyol*

Development problems have been at the center of efforts to eliminate the development gaps that emerged in different parts of the world after the Industrial Revolution. In addition to being one of the important agenda of international organizations, the elimination of development problems also concerns the relations between states and has become an important foreign policy objective. The efforts of states to address development challenges are conceptualized as international development cooperation.

International development cooperation refers not only to the unilateral aid activities of donor countries but also to long-term cooperation based on mutual benefit and partnership. Such cooperation allows for deepening political dialogue between donor and partner countries, institutionalizing economic relations and promoting regional stability. International development cooperation (IDC) projects to support the development efforts of developing countries are no longer just related to providing technical assistance or humanitarian support,

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but have also become an important instrument for building political, economic and diplomatic spheres of influence. By bringing together the normative and strategic dimensions of foreign policy, development cooperation mechanisms enable countries to become more effective actors in global governance. Indeed, development cooperation demonstrates that foreign policy can rely not only on hard power instruments but also on soft power strategies based on shared development visions. Development cooperation policies, shaped by security and foreign policy priorities during the Cold War, have become a field in which some countries have distinguished themselves. The countries which started to be called traditional donors are largely OECD members and members of the Western world. These countries have developed their activities around certain principles and have become the norm-setters in this field. In the post-Cold War period, countries that have made a level of progress in the race for industrialization, albeit lagging behind, have also started to provide development assistance, and thus a new approach and new actors have emerged in the field of development assistance. Türkiye is considered among such emerging donor countries.

Against this background, Türkiye's development cooperation practices offer an approach that is different from traditional donor models; flexible, highly visible and based on historical ties. In recent years, Türkiye's development cooperation activities have become an important tool reflecting the humanitarian and multidimensional character of Turkish foreign policy. Development projects carried out through various institutions, notably TİKA, not only support economic and social development, but also enhance Türkiye's diplomatic influence, strengthen political dialogue and reinforce its foreign policy objectives. Development cooperation, especially in the Balkans, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, is shaped by cultural affinity, historical ties and shared values, and strategically strengthens Türkiye's soft power capacity at the regional and global levels. In this respect, development cooperation is a holistic instrument that carries both normative discourse and pragmatic interests simultaneously in Turkey's foreign policy.

## The Structure and Actors of the IDC Mechanism

International development assistance is carried out through the institutional structures of donor countries. USAID of the USA, JICA of Japan, DANIDA of Denmark and TİKA of Türkiye are examples of these structures. These

organizations do not only provide financial assistance, but can also operate in different areas such as technical knowledge transfer, provision of experts, in-service training projects, scientific and cultural cooperation, capacity building, social support, education, training and research scholarships, and emergency humanitarian assistance. Although traditional and emerging donors focus on different aspects of these topics, they are seen as common areas of activity as they are the leading development challenges.

IDC projects serve as a means of expanding the political, economic and diplomatic influence of donor countries while supporting the development processes of developing countries. The target areas of these projects can be summarized as follows: Social problems such as poverty, unemployment and crime; environmental crises such as drought, climate change and disasters; epidemics and public health threats; political instability and institutional weaknesses. In this context, IDC is not just a development tool; it is a foreign policy method that can intervene in issues that are part of the international agenda. The transboundary nature of these issues in a globalizing world makes international cooperation even more important in solving these problems.

## Türkiye's Approach to IDC

In the last two decades, Türkiye's understanding of development cooperation has undergone fundamental changes. New economic dynamics and a growing sense of responsibility for promoting world peace and stability through contributing to global sustainable development have enabled Türkiye to emerge as a new and dynamic actor in the international development cooperation structure. Another important change is that in the early 2000s, TİKA-led projects in Türkiye's multilateral aid have been moving on a different axis from the classical donor-practices.

The differentiated dimensions can be broadly categorized under four headings. In line with the brotherhood and common history articulation, Türkiye emphasizes the discourse of "equal partnership" by emphasizing common religious, cultural or historical ties, especially in regions such as the Balkans, Central Asia and Africa. Hence, Turkic-speaking and culturally/ethnically close regions are more prominent. In fact, this is in line with the general trend in the world. Countries providing development assistance primarily focus on geographies with cultural affinities, which are regions with greater soft power potential.

In the context of promotion and public diplomacy, TİKA projects are not limited to technical assistance, but are also supported by ceremonies, media visibility and visits by heads of state. In state-society cooperation, civil society organizations, universities and private sector actors are also actively involved in development cooperation projects. In terms of flexibility and rapid response, Türkiye's development assistance is often more flexible and quicker to organize than that of Western donors.

Türkiye's development cooperation is generally demand-driven in the context of ad-hoc projects, in the belief that it is more responsive to the needs of beneficiary countries rather than being a deliberate project covering specific issues and countries. This approach involves risks alongside a positive outlook. While prompt response to demand and flexibility in spending bring favorable perception among local communities and administrators in recipient countries regarding the Türkiye's image, this approach may miss the opportunity to address the needs of the recipient country within the framework of holistic development objectives. Moreover, the demand-driven approach carries the risk of deviating from Türkiye's long-term foreign policy plans and of inefficient use of resources. In order to minimize such risks, the demands of the beneficiary countries on a programmatic basis that takes into account Türkiye's experience in various fields. In doing so, Türkiye should ensure a transition to a long-term strategy and program-based cooperation model, taking into account Türkiye's comparative advantage. Thus, the principle of mutual benefit, Türkiye's comparative advantages and multidisciplinary political, economic and social analysis should be taken as a basis. Similarly, while responding quickly to the needs of the beneficiary countries, the alignment with Türkiye's foreign policy priorities for that country and the region should also be kept in mind.

One of the most important thresholds in the implementation of these projects is the permanency of their effects, in other words, the sustainability of the positive results. Failure to carefully examine sustainability measures from the outset may lead to a failure to create a lasting impact on the beneficiary countries, as well as a waste of donor country resources. To address such issues, it is useful to organize in-service trainings and to take measures to ensure the permanence of the personnel trained in these programs, to maintain their competencies and to transfer them to the next generation of staff. This kind of participatory approaches play a major role in projects of such quality. Clarifying

the problems, needs, expectations and objectives of the project through direct communication with the beneficiary is crucial for the ultimate success and sustainability of the project. Since capacity building is a crucial aspect in ensuring sustainability, strengthening the qualities of participants in projects is a complementary element in achieving lasting results.

## **Conclusion: Türkiye's Development Cooperation as an alternative**

The field of international development cooperation is usually defined by normative frameworks historically institutionalized by Western donors and implemented through platforms such as the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). However, Türkiye operates outside this established donor paradigm within a development cooperation model that is both historically, geographically and politically differentiated. Türkiye's approach in this area differs from traditional donors on three fundamental levels: normative motivations, operational flexibility and regional focus.

Whereas Western donor countries usually base their aid mechanisms on normative "liberal development values" (democracy, market economy, governance), Türkiye's discursive framework is based more on concepts such as equal partnership, religious and cultural affinity, and historical responsibility. This discourse facilitates its perception as a soft power alternative to Western aid actors, especially in regions such as Africa, Central Asia and the Balkans.

While OECD-DAC donors often operate with complex bureaucratic processes and conditional aid mechanisms, Türkiye's development cooperation is relatively more flexible, fast and demand-driven. TİKA mostly conducts projects in line with the recipient country's request and without technical conditions. While this provides Türkiye with pragmatic advantages in the short term, it leads to structural problems in terms of long-term impact measurement and accountability.

Unlike Western donor countries, Türkiye's development cooperation map is shaped by geographical proximity, cultural ties and geopolitical priorities. This makes Türkiye a "neighborhood-based donor". The intensity of its engagement in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and the Balkans coincides not only with its development objectives but also with its foreign policy strategies.

Türkiye's approach to development cooperation is bilateral and often involves limited integration with multilateral development organizations. While this allows Türkiye to be a more independent development actor, it can create disadvantages in terms of global norm production and visibility.

While Türkiye's discourses such as "unconditional aid" and "anti-colonial development" emphasize equality in the donor-recipient relationship, in practice, the integration of aid into foreign policy objectives creates an area of tension between discourse and implementation. While Türkiye's visibility has increased in certain regions, the level of institutionalization or transparency of aid remains questionable. This is also an important issue in terms of efficient use of resources.

Türkiye's development cooperation model is remarkable to the extent that it offers an alternative to the classical Western aid approach. However, the sustainability of this model should be supported not only by humanitarian aid in times of crisis, but also by institutional capacity, long-term strategy and impact measurement. While offering an alternative approach in these respects, Türkiye should also seek to engage more with global norms and diversify multilateral cooperation mechanisms.