

TÜRKİYE'S FOREIGN AID TO AFRICA UNDER THE AK PARTY: A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS*

*AK PARTİ DÖNEMİNDE TÜRKİYE'NİN AFRİKA'YA DIŞ YARDIMI:
KONSTRÜKTİVİST BİR ANALİZ*

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Abstract: Türkiye pursued a Western-centered foreign policy from 1923 to the beginning of the 2000s. However, in the early 2000s, the country attempted to restore the Ottoman heritage by turning East under the banner of Neo-Ottomanism. Türkiye's geopolitical and historical characteristics have played a strategic role in pursuing multifaceted foreign policy. Türkiye's relations with Africa improved throughout the 1990s, peaking during the Justice and Development Party's reign. Turkish-African relations have political, economic, military, and cultural dimensions. Foreign aid, on the other hand, is one of the most important components of Türkiye's soft power on the continent. Türkiye now implements humanitarian and development projects in more than 40 African countries through state and non-state entities such as TİKA and İHH.

Using constructivism, this study investigates the driving factors behind Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa during the JDP era. It argues that Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa is defined primarily by the country's humanitarian and benevolent identity, which can be traced back to the Ottoman State. Türkiye's status as the Ottoman Empire's heir and a member of the Islamic Cooperation Organization (OIC), along with 28 African countries, allows the country to interact with the continent on historical, social, religious, and cultural levels.

Keywords: Türkiye, Africa, Justice and Development Party, Foreign Aid, Constructivism.

Öz: Türkiye, 1923'ten 2000'li yılların başına kadar Batı merkezli bir dış politika izlemiştir. Ancak 2000'lerin başında ülke, Neo-Osmanlılık şiarıyla doğuya yönelerek Osmanlı mirasını canlandırmaya çalışmıştır. Türkiye'nin jeopolitik ve tarihsel özellikleri, ülkenin çok boyutlu dış politika izlemesinde stratejik bir rol oynamıştır. Türkiye'nin Afrika ile ilişkileri 1990'lar boyunca gelişerek Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi döneminde zirveye ulaşmıştır. Türk-Afrika ilişkilerinin siyasi, ekonomik, askeri ve kültürel boyutları bulunmaktadır. Öte yandan Dış Yardım Türkiye'nin kitadaki yumuşak gücünün en önemli bileşenlerinden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Türkiye, TİKA ve İHH gibi devlet ve sivil toplum kuruluşları aracılığıyla 40'tan fazla Afrika ülkesinde farklı insani yardım ve kalkınma projeleri yürütmektedir.

Bu çalışma, konstrüktivizmi uygulayarak, Türkiye'nin Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi döneminde Afrika'ya yaptığı dış yardımlarının arkasındaki faktörleri incelemeye çalışmaktadır. Buna göre makale, Türkiye'nin Afrika'ya yönelik dış yardımlarının, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na kadar uzanan insanî ve hayırsever kimliği etrafında şekillendiğini öne sürmektedir. Türkiye'nin Osmanlı Devleti'nin varisi olması ve 28 Afrika ülkesinin de mensubu olduğu İslam İş Birliği Teşkilatı'na üye

* Geliş Tarihi: 30.11.2022, Kabul Tarihi: 30.05.2023. DOI: 10.54132/akaf.1212149

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olması, ülkenin kıta ile tarihi, sosyal, dinî ve Kültürel açıdan ortak noktalarda buluşmasına olanak sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Afrika, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Dış Yardım, Konstrüktivizm.

Introduction

Türkiye and Africa have a long history, but since 2002, particularly during the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), Türkiye's role in Africa has grown, and Africa has become one of the top priorities on Türkiye's foreign policy agenda. Türkiye's influence in Africa has evolved in numerous dimensions, most notably in politics, where it has sought to develop strong strategic partnerships and strengthen safety and stability, as evidenced by the country's initiatives in Sudan and Somalia. Military connections between Türkiye and Africa have also improved in recent years, with Türkiye establishing its first overseas military bases in Somalia in 2017. Later, Türkiye had military and defense industrial collaboration with a number of African countries, including Jibuti, Gambia, Mali, Moritania, Nijer, Nijerya, Senegal, Central Republic of Africa, Sudan, and Libya (Turhan, 2021/3: 478). Economically, Türkiye has been making efforts to expand trade volume with various African countries while also entering new markets. Through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and some international organizations such as the World Health Organization, Türkiye has implemented projects and operations in social, educational, environmental, agricultural, and healthcare domains across over 40 African nations. In fact, aid has been one of Türkiye's most effective softer power components in Africa (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website, 2022). Türkiye lays such a great focus on humanitarian aid because it sees it as both a humanitarian responsibility and a strategy for establishing a presence on the African continent. Another reason for Türkiye's active engagement with Africa is the country's historical, social, cultural, and religious ties with various countries, as the successor to the Ottoman Empire (Kavas, 2006). In fact, unlike the 35 states that gained independence after the Ottoman Empire fell, Türkiye is regarded as the Ottoman Empire's sole descendant and direct continuation (Yurdusev, 2010: 47).

There has been extensive research on Türkiye's foreign policy in Africa, such as those conducted by Çuhadar, Gürkaynak & Özkeçeci&Taner (2004), Kavas (2006), Özkan & Akgün (2010), Oba (2011), Özkan & Orakcı (2015), Wasuge (2016), Donelli (2017), Özkan (2018), Yahya Goudja (2021), and İnaç, Hadji & Benmansour (2022). However, limited research has been conducted to examine Turkish foreign policy towards Africa using a constructivist perspective. One such work is the analysis conducted by Yunus Turhan in 2021. Turhan investigated the impact of the identities of Turkish leaders on the country's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party. Specifically, the author explored how the identities projected by Davutoğlu and Erdoğan over the past two decades have been translated into actual state practice.

The study sheds light on the importance of the construction of identities in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy towards Africa (Turhan, 2021/1: 1340). In his work titled "Turkey's Foreign Aid to Africa: An Analysis of the Post-July 15 Era," Yunus Turhan (2021/2) also investigated the determinants that influenced Turkish foreign aid behaviour in sub-Saharan Africa between 2013 and 2018. Specifically, he examined whether the presence or absence of Gülen-linked schools in recipient states had any agency in the allocation of Türkiye's aid flow. Turhan (2021/2: 795) found that Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa was primarily driven by humanitarian motives, and this commitment to humanitarian aid has remained consistent even after the events of July 15. Therefore, his study concludes that Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa has been characterized by a strong humanitarian orientation.

This study on the other hand, employs a constructivist approach to investigate the factors that have driven Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa during the JDP era. This work is the first to apply constructivism as a theoretical framework to examine Turkish foreign aid to Africa to date. The study aims to fill this gap by arguing that Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa is largely influenced by Türkiye's humanitarian and benevolent identity, which has historical roots in the Ottoman State. The study is structured into four distinct sections. The first section offers an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of social constructivism as a framework for analysing international relations. The subsequent section delves into an analysis of Turkish foreign policy, focusing on the interplay between ideological principles and pragmatic considerations. The third section of the study centers on an examination of the various determinants that have influenced Türkiye's approach to Africa during the Justice and Development Party era. Finally, the fourth section scrutinizes Türkiye's foreign aid policy towards Africa during the JDP era, encompassing an exploration of the key drivers, sectors, and overall impact of Türkiye's aid initiatives.

Social Constructivism as an International Relations Theory

The concept of Constructivism was originally introduced by Nicholas Onuf in his book titled "World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations" (1989), which encompassed various post-positivist viewpoints (Kurki vd., 2007: 183). Subsequently, Alexander Wendt further developed this theory and explored its connections to other approaches in his publication titled "Social Theory of International Politics" (1999) (Wendt, 1999: 90). However, a debate exists regarding whether constructivism should be categorized as a theory or an approach. Some scholars, like Onuf, view constructivism as a means of examining social reality, whereas Finnemore regards it as a social approach for explaining the nature of social life and change. Conversely, scholars such as Alexander Wendt consider constructivism as a theory that endeavours to explain international relations (Turhan, 2021/1: 1331)

As an international relations theory, constructivism places importance on the influence of socially constructed identities and interests in international relations, asserting that the global system is formed via repeated interactions among countries and other actors. It highlights the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping state behaviour. Constructivism posits that ideas, norms, and identities are shaped through historical, cultural, political, or social interactions among states and other actors. That is to say, ideas, norms, and identities are not inherent or fixed, but rather, are constructed through historical, cultural, political, or social interactions among actors. According to constructivism, state behaviour is not solely driven by material interests, but also by the ideas and norms that actors hold about appropriate behaviour in the international system (Wendt, 1999: 370). Therefore, unlike mainstream international relations theories such as Neorealism and Neoliberalism, which prioritize material forces such as power and interest, Constructivism emphasizes the significance of socially constructed processes of facts. Constructivism posits that social facts are determined by the meaning and value individuals assign to them, while anarchy is shaped by states' beliefs and attitudes (Wendt, 1992: 391-396). Nonetheless, the emphasis on socially constructed facts in Constructivism should not be understood as the only factor in international politics. Rather, the point here is that socially created facts, like material forces, play a role in determining international politics.

In the context of Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa, constructivism offers insights into the role of socially constructed identities and norms in shaping state behaviour. Türkiye's humanitarian and benevolent identity, which can be traced back to the Ottoman State, reflects the ideas and norms that Türkiye holds about appropriate behaviour in the international system. As a constructivist theory suggests, state behaviour is not solely driven by material interests, but also by socially constructed processes of facts, including ideas, norms, and identities. Therefore, Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa can be seen as a reflection of its identity and the norms it holds, which emphasize the importance of humanitarian assistance and benevolence.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between Ideology and Realpolitik

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Ankara's African policy, one must consider Türkiye's broader shift in foreign policy during the JDP era. With this, this section will briefly discuss the structure of Turkish foreign policy. The emphasis on the relationship between ideology and realpolitik in Turkish foreign policy is due to the ongoing debate about Türkiye's policy and its ideological motivations, which often neglects the political and economic realities that force Türkiye to take certain positions for the past decade. The JDP's foreign policy appears to be guided by ideological considerations such as Neo-Ottomanism or Islamic humanitarianism, but it is important to recognize that practical concerns ranging from energy security to national security also shape Türkiye's policy choices, particularly given the country's sensitive geopolitical position. This suggests a complementary relationship between

ideology and practical concerns. As Türkiye was compelled by all these factors to emerge as a significant player both regionally and globally. However, this is also made possible by new developments in the post-Cold War era, including globalization and increasing interdependence among nations, which shrunk the world. Therefore, Türkiye must interact both locally and globally to achieve economic progress, maintain security, and fully use the potential of its vibrant population. This Turkish foreign policy approach raises the question of whether the country has abandoned the traditional Western alliance in favour of the Middle East and the Islamic world (Walker, 2007: 32).

However, before going more deeply, it may be vital to explain the framework within which this new perspective on foreign policy is taking shape. First, the end of the cold war forced Türkiye to adopt a new global order, which was put to the test in 1991 and 1992 during the first Gulf War. In addition to liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, the United States involved in the war with Iraq due to the need to build a new global order, which emerged as a key slogan following the end of Cold War. The Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Russia, Central Asia, and the rest of the world, including China and Africa, have all been battling a new kind of global order in terms of economic, political, social, and geopolitical factors, among others. However, this new global order never materialized. Then, on 9/11, the already chaotic situation was turned upside down, forcing the United States—the world's only remaining superpower—to take actions that have altered the course of history for more than ten years, affecting every nation, including Türkiye (Hadji vd., 2022: 152). The United States has evolved into a more security-oriented superpower, in addition to relying on soft power components for sustaining peace and security. In contrast, in Europe, there existed an atmosphere of ambiguity with regards to future, identity, and the size and scope of the enlargement. In Türkiye's eyes, Europe still represents a power that is unsure of its future and its multi-culturalism. Despite this, Türkiye maintains a strong relationship with Europe due to historical, economic, and geographical reasons. Historically, Europe is viewed as a symbol of modern civilization by Türkiye. Economically, Europe is a vital economic partner for Türkiye as it represents over half of the country's foreign investment and most of its profitable foreign trade. Geographically, Türkiye wants to be part of every European organization due to its geographical proximity to continent (Walker, 2007: 35). Russia, on the other hand, was making an effort to re-establish itself as a global superpower since the idea of Russia as a great power remained. Russia was dealing with internal economic and political issues from 1990 to the beginning of 2000, but with Putin, it has become an important global actor. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War was an example of such transformation. Then there was China, India, Brazil, and the other emerging economies (Özkan-Akgün, 2010: 542).

In this context, Türkiye rapidly moved into the post-cold war era, embracing globalization in many ways while also addressing problems in the region around it. Türkiye's foreign policy started to adopt a new outlook in terms of substance and style. In recent times, certain policies have taken precedence, such as proactive and rhythmic diplomacy, zero problems with neighbours, and more. These elements are significant for the style of Turkish foreign policy, as policymakers aim to tackle issues through engagement, dialogue, and other soft power methods rather than confrontation (Anaz-Akman, 2017: 307). In terms of substance, there has been a significant shift in Türkiye's perspective on global issues. In dealing with these issues, Türkiye's power is determined by a variety of variables and invariables, including the country's history and geopolitical position, both of which have a considerable impact on the formulation of Turkish foreign policy. As the sole heir and direct continuation of the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye has a long-standing presence in the region and maintains deep connections with several communities in the Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. These factors, encompassing issues of identity, historical relationships, and cultural associations, play a vital role in determining international relations today (Yurdusev, 2010: 47). Türkiye's geopolitical status, as it is physically placed on several continents, is strongly tied to energy and security challenges, the two most crucial security issues for the country. Furthermore, factors such as the Turkish population, economy, democracy, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) form a dynamic environment, in contrast to the country's status in the 1980s and 1990s, when it faced globalization and the end of the Cold War. As a result, one could argue that Türkiye's geopolitical and economic realities drove it to play an active role not just in its own region, but also on a global scale (Oba, 2011). Identity plays a crucial role in Turkish foreign policy. Throughout history, the Turkish identity has been characterized by an ongoing struggle between eastern and western ideologies. Analysis of Mustafa Kemal's detachment from the Middle East, Turgut Özal's reengagement with the Middle East, and Türkiye's cold war alliances have consistently foregrounded the interplay between identity and ideology. As Turkish foreign policy is predominantly influenced by three main identities: official, led by Kemalists and secular groups; Islamist state identities, led by the conservative circle; and international developments that are imposed on the state by external actors (Çuhadar&Gürkaynak-Özkeçeci&Taner, 2004: 44).

Determining Factors of Türkiye's African Policy Under The JDP

As point out by the chief architect of Turkish foreign policy, former foreign minister, and prime minister Ahmed Davutoğlu, one of the main reasons for Türkiye's involvement with Africa is the desire to become a regional and global actor in the midst of "the rapid stream of history." As a rising power, Türkiye intends to take an active role in changing the course of history rather than being a passive observer. While doing so, Türkiye should combine soft and hard power. This means that state and non-state actors should work together. Ahmet Davutoğlu (2009-2014) also

emphasizes Türkiye's geopolitical and historical characteristics as a strategic depth for the country to become a world player and thus adopt a foreign policy that is not limited to the Western sphere but also includes the Eastern world, including Africa. In this regard, Türkiye began to look east with the goal of restoring Ottoman heritage under the banner of Neo-Ottomanism, particularly after being rejected by the EU (Donelli, 2017: 70).

The period from the 1950s to the end of the Cold War was the lowest point in Türkiye-Africa ties; however, after being isolated by Western powers concerning the Cyprus crisis in the 1970s, Türkiye turned to the Non-Aligned Movement and African states. Türkiye's endorsement of what is known as the 'Opening up to Africa' plan, which was first introduced in 1998 by the ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem, who was a neo-Ottomanist, was a turning point in the bilateral relationship. The policy, however, did not witness effective implementation until the early 2000s when the Justice and Development Party (JDP) assumed power and adopted an eastern-oriented multifaceted foreign policy (Turhan, 2021/1: 1335). In this regard, Türkiye's engagement with Africa can be categorized into five stages (each characterized by a unique level of comprehension towards the continent), with the first stage occurring from 2002 to 2005 when the JDP party came to power and designated 2005 as the "Year of Africa." During this stage, Turkish officials supported Africa's economic and political development and held lower-level meetings with African leaders in various locations. During the second stage of Türkiye's African policy under the JDP regime, spanning from 2005 to 2008, the focus was on diversifying the bilateral relationship, particularly in the areas of politics and the economy. The relationship progressed faster than anticipated, and both parties gained familiarity with one another, particularly with countries sharing historical or religious ties, such as Sudan, Egypt, and Somalia. Notably, the first Türkiye-Africa Summit was held during this phase (Özkan, 2018: 567). The third phase started with the 2008 summit and lasted until Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Somalia in August 2011. During this period, Türkiye opened several embassies in various African countries, and bilateral trade expanded sixfold, from \$3 billion in 2000 to about \$23 billion in 2012. This phase represents a multifaceted aspect of the bilateral relations (Özkan-Orakçı, 2015: 345). The fourth phase, which began with Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Somalia in August 2011 and continues to the present day, marks a shift towards a more politically oriented relationship. During this period, Türkiye sought to establish new strategic allies and partners while promoting security and stability in African countries such as Sudan and Somalia (Yahya Goudja, 2021: 122). During this period, Türkiye actively participated in various areas such as economic ties, humanitarian and development aid, and educational and cultural exchanges with Africa. As a result, Türkiye has emerged as a significant player in Africa, alongside other major powers such as the EU, Spain, Norway, the UK, and the US, thereby gaining a pivotal position that cannot be ignored by these nations (Wasuge, 2016: 6). Türkiye-Africa relations entered the fifth phase at the end of 2014, when relations were "normalized" and institutionalized. This period

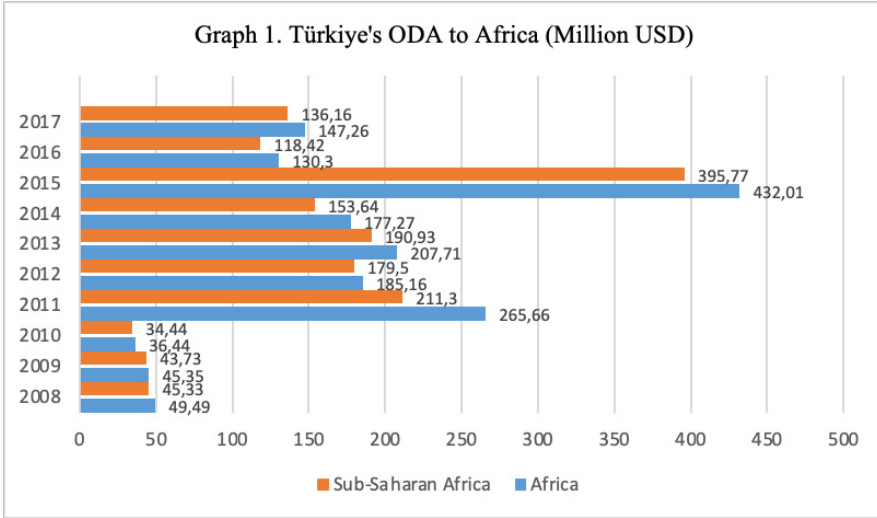
is especially important for establishing a more systematic approach and building on previous successes. First and foremost, the second Türkiye—Africa Partnership Summit, which took place in Equatorial Guinea in November 2014, set the path for a full normalization of the relations, and so addressed some serious concerns and doubts regarding Türkiye’s sincerity in the continent. Second, the phase has greatly contributed to the strengthening and broadening the relationships. Most importantly, it was during this period that institutions such as the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı), and even Turkish Airlines (Türk Hava Yolları) as a company entered the continent and began active operations. The trend has directly contributed to Türkiye’s efforts to expand and diversify its relations with the continent (Özkan, 2018: 568). Overall, the Türkiye-Africa relations have progressed significantly over five phases since the JDP took power in 2002. As time passed, new actors and institutions from both sides have actively participated in the process, resulting in the normalization of relations in many fields. As a result, the Türkiye-Africa relationship can now be considered fully developed, and Türkiye has become an established partner with Africa rather than a “new” entrant.

Türkiye’s Foreign Aid in Africa During the JDP Era

The Republic of Türkiye provided foreign aid to Africa for the first time in 1985, when the country offered a 10 million US dollar aid package, consisting of food aid, to six African nations (Guinea, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Senegal, and Gambia) through the State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı) (Turhan, 2021/2: 797). However, during the JDP era, Türkiye’s foreign aid to the continent took a new turn, particularly after 2004, when Turkish non-state organizations entered the picture. The transformative changes that took place in Türkiye’s economic, social, and political development after JDP rose to power in 2003 have further strengthened the role of Turkish NGOs and civil society in Africa and worldwide. Notably, the total number of Turkish NGOs rose by 150% (from 61,000 to 97,578) in 2013. Therefore, as a result of Türkiye’s increasing engagement in Africa, Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started to gain an important place in the continent. In fact, non-state Turkish organizations collaborate with state entities to execute a range of projects throughout the continent. For instance, İHH, which is widely regarded as the largest and most prominent Turkish NGO in providing humanitarian aid globally, collaborated with TİKA to execute diverse projects in Africa, including establishing agricultural schools in Gambia in 2012 and Somalia in 2013 (Siradag, 2015: 10-17).

Türkiye continues to support Africa through Turkish state and non-state organizations including but not limited to Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH), Turkish Religious Foundation (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), the Disaster and Emergency Management

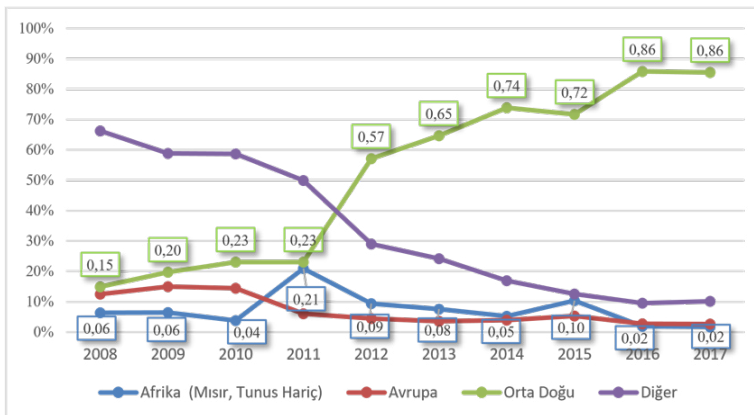
Presidency (AFAD), Yunus Emre Institute, Maarif Foundation, Anadolu Agency, and Turkish Airlines (Türk Hava Yolları). TİKA, for instance, currently operates 22 Program Coordination Offices across the continent. Established in 1992 and later transformed into a global relief organization in 2003, TİKA now works in more than 40 African countries on a variety of projects and initiatives in the fields of social welfare, education, environmental preservation, agricultural development, and healthcare. Turkish Airlines, on the other hand, has played a critical role in improving relationships with the continent by offering direct flights from Istanbul to numerous capitals and significant cities. While Türkiye scholarships awarded by the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) to African students are expected to have a multiplier effect in strengthening Türkiye's African relationships in the long run. As Türkiye has provided undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral scholarships to over 15,000 African students since 1992 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website, 2022). Türkiye's state and non-state organizations have not only increased Türkiye's presence on the continent but have also improved Türkiye's image in the eyes of other nations and cultures. In short, Türkiye sees supporting Africa as a moral obligation and has so provided direct development assistance to a number of African countries (Anaz-Akman, 2017: 308). As previously stated, Turkish aid operations intensified during the 2000s, and the country began to provide foreign aid to Africa. Türkiye provided \$383 million in 2014, one-third of its total development assistance to Sub-Saharan African countries (Hadji vd., 2022: 156). Furthermore, Türkiye has been extending assistance to African countries through global aid agencies such as the World Health Organization, the Red Crescent, and the World Food Program (WFP). For example, more than 7.5 million USD has been contributed to diverse African countries through these organizations. These aids have primarily been employed to address environmental issues and natural disasters such as droughts and floods (Özkan, 2018: 571). According to OECD DAC data, as shown in Graph 1, Türkiye's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Africa rose significantly from around 50 million USD in 2008 to 147 million USD in 2017. ODAs to the continent saw one-year increases in 2011 and 2015 due to the emergency and humanitarian aid given to Somalia, which totalled US\$ 93 million in 2011 and US\$ 314 million in 2015. However, the total amount of ODA provided to the continent between 2008 and 2017 was approximately 1.9 billion USD (OECD, 2022).



Source: (Oruç, 2022: 117).

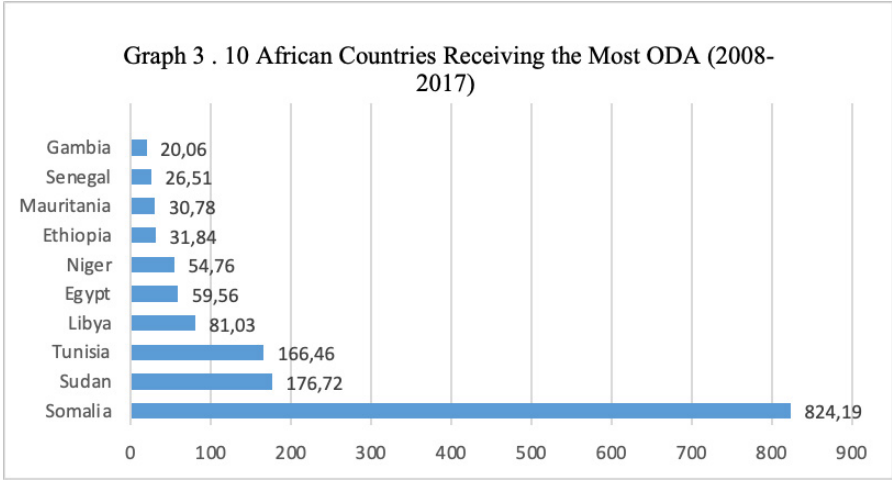
When looking at the distribution of aid within the continent, more than 90 percent of Türkiye’s ODAs go to Sub-Saharan African countries. This shows that Türkiye is observing the imbalance in the continent against Sub-Saharan Africa and accordingly directing its aid to this region. Despite the positive picture painted by aid over the years, the same cannot be said for the African continent’s share of Türkiye’s total ODA. As shown in Graph 2, while the share of African countries in Türkiye’s total ODA was 6.34 percent in 2008, this ratio is gradually decreasing, except for one-year increases due to aid provided to Somalia in 2011 and 2015. The reason for this was that, following the Syrian crisis, Türkiye directed most of its aid to Syrian refugees.

Graph 2. Regional Distribution of ODAs Made by Türkiye



Source: (Oruç, 2022: 118).

When looking at the countries that receive the most aid on the African continent, as shown in Graph 3. Somalia and Sudan come first with a significant difference, despite the cumulative aid given to continental countries between 2008 and 2017. These two countries received most of the aid during these years because they were in emergency and humanitarian situations.



Source: (Oruç, 2022: 119).

Based on the data presented above, one can conclude that Ankara's relationship with the African continent is primarily centered on foreign aid, particularly humanitarian assistance, which Türkiye views as both a humanitarian obligation and an entry point into the continent (Hadji vd., 2022: 158). Foreign aid is also an important component of Türkiye's soft power strategy on the continent, considering that Türkiye, as the Ottoman empire's heir, has profound historical, social, cultural, and religious ties with many African countries (Ali, 2011: 65).

Conclusion

Türkiye began seeking a new role in global politics in the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War. However, due to a plethora of domestic political crises, Ankara has been unable to form a comprehensive foreign policy with the rest of the world. In the late 1990s, after being denied membership by the European Union, Türkiye looked for new partnerships outside of the Western world by renewing ties with the Middle East and regions that were once under Ottoman control, such as Africa, the Balkans, and Central Asia. Therefore, Türkiye began to develop a comprehensive binary foreign policy with Africa, especially with African countries with deep historical ties to Türkiye. However, Türkiye's modest opening plans have become

more apparent since the Justice and Development Party took power in 2002, as there has been massive transformation in many fields, including economy and politics.

Foreign aid, on the other hand, has been regarded as one of the most important components of Türkiye's soft power strategy in Africa. Recent data show that Türkiye's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the African continent increased dramatically from around 50 million USD in 2008 to 147 million USD in 2017. The main destinations of Türkiye's ODA are Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Niger, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Senegal, and Gambia, respectively. Türkiye supports Africa through state and non-state organizations such as Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), Turkish Religious Foundation (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Yunus Emre Institute, and Maarif Foundation, among others. These organizations have not only increased Türkiye's presence on the continent but have also improved Türkiye's image in the eyes of other nations and cultures. Türkiye, which regards humanitarian aid as a humanitarian obligation to the continent with which it has a common historical, social, cultural, and religious background, has made a direct contribution to the development of many African countries. Constructivism, as an international relations theory, attempts to explain the relationships between countries by highlighting the role of norms, identities, discourse, ideas, and values in the relationship. Constructivism posits that the social dimension of the international system holds greater significance than the material dimension. This social dimension is constructed and molded by the ideas, norms, and values that are shared by individuals or groups within a specific temporal and spatial context.

Constructivism, therefore, rejects the one-sided material focus advocated by Realism and Liberalism. In this regard, Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa can be seen as an expression of its identity as a responsible and humanitarian actor, reflecting its historical legacy and cultural norms of providing aid and assistance to those in need. Therefore, a constructivist approach can provide insights into how Türkiye's identity as a humanitarian actor has influenced its foreign policy behaviour towards Africa and shed light on the broader role of identity and norms in shaping international relations. In this way, Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa is not solely driven by material interests, but also by the ideas and norms that actors hold about appropriate behaviour in the international system.

This article's findings suggest the need for further studies to explore the role of identity and norms in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy towards Africa, specifically its foreign aid efforts. A constructivist approach could be employed to investigate how Türkiye's identity as a humanitarian actor has been constructed and contested in

different contexts, and how this has influenced its foreign policy behaviour towards Africa. Future research could also focus on exploring the extent to which Türkiye's foreign aid has been driven by its identity as a humanitarian actor and how this identity has evolved over time. Furthermore, comparing, and contrasting Türkiye's approach to foreign aid with other rising powers in the global South, such as China and India by using constructivism, could provide valuable insights into their respective strategies and motivations. Such research would contribute to the broader debates in international relations theory and shed light on the complex dynamics of Türkiye's foreign policy in the African context. Türkiye, as a unique country with a natural geopolitical position and a historical background with both the Eastern and Western worlds, serves as a model for many African countries not only in terms of economy and democracy, but also as a rising power among Muslim countries.

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