

## Foreign Aid in Türkiye-Africa Relations: Past, Present and Future

### Abstract

Türkiye's relationship with African countries come to realize exigency of ameliorating relation over last two decades which has inevitable corollary of Türkiye's belated efforts to expand into Africa. Türkiye's efforts in Africa, slowly but surely, come to fruition, involving from an opening policy to a strategic partnership which eventually has brought a new dynamic to both Turkish orthodox foreign policy and Africa's relations with the outside world. Contrary to most analysts whom interpreted such pace as a temporary enthusiasm just blended with economic consideration, this relationship in fact represent rapprochement after 2008. This article chronologically examines Türkiye's retrospective to strategic partnership with African states in the context of "foreign aid", one of the elements of soft power, and analyses the historical turning points in it's Africa outreach. Moving on to the concrete outputs of Türkiye's increasing aid to the continent, the article compares Türkiye's foreign aid with Russia, China and the United States, while emphasizing the importance of Turkish foreign aid to Africa in the construction of a "benevolence power" policy, which is the most concrete practice of Türkiye's "Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" paradigm. In the final analysis, a forecast of Türkiye-Africa relations in the context of foreign aid is discussed.

**Keywords:** Türkiye-Africa, Foreign Aid, Humanitarian Diplomacy, Turkish Foreign Policy


## Türkiye Afrika İlişkilerinde Dış Yardımlar: Dünü, Bugünü Ve Geleceği

### Öz

Türkiye'nin Afrika ülkeleriyle olan ilişkilerinin son on yılda iyileşme göstermesi, Türkiye'nin Afrika'ya açılmak için gecikmiş çabalarının kaçınılmaz bir sonucudur. Türkiye'nin Afrika projeksiyonu yavaş ama emin adımlarla meyvelerini her geçen yıl vermektedir. 2008 sonrası kurumsallaşma sürecine giren bu ilişkiler, çoğu analistin aksine geçici bir siyasi ve ekonomik beklentinin yansımaları değil, tarihi on altıncı yüzyıla kadar uzanan ve karşılıklı siyasi ve sosyo-kültürel bağlara dayanan bir sürecin yeniden inşası şeklinde kendine alan açmıştır. Türkiye'nin bölgesel güç olma arzusuyla paralel ilerleyen bu alan, beş asır önce kurulan kurumsal bağları güçlendirmek ve ekonomik ortaklığın sunduğu fırsatlardan faydalanmak için diplomatik, kültürel, siyasi, ekonomik ve askeri alanları da şümülü, kapsamı ve derinliği açısından özgündür. Bu makale Türkiye'nin stratejik ortaklığa giden süreci, yumuşak güç unsurlarından "dış yardım" bağlamında ele alarak, tarihi kırılma anlarını kronolojik çerçevede incelemektedir. Türkiye'nin Kıtaya yönelik artan yardımlarının somut çıktılarını değerlendirilerek ilerleyen makale, Türkiye'nin "Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politika" paradigmasının en somut pratiği olan "müşfik bir güç" faktörünün inşasında Afrika'ya yönelik dış yardımlarını, Kıt'ada aktif rol oynayan Rusya, Çin ve ABD'nin dış yardımları ile kıyaslama yapmaktadır. Son tahlilde, Türkiye-Afrika ilişkilerinin gelecek projeksiyonunu dış yardım bağlamında tartışmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye-Afrika, Dış Yardımlar, İnsani Diplomasi, Türk Dış Politikası

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### Makale Bilgileri/Article Information

Tür-Type: Araştırma makalesi-Research article  
Geliş tarihi-Date of submission: 24. 06. 2024  
Kabul tarihi-Date of acceptance: 18. 08. 2024  
Yayın tarihi-Date of publication: 31. 05. 2024

### Hakemlik-Review

Hakem sayısı-Reviewers: İki Dış Hakem-Two External  
Değerlendirme-Review: Çift Taraflı Kör  
Hakemlik-Double-blind

### Etik/Ethics

Etik beyan- Ethical statement: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde etik ilkelere uyulmuştur. Benzerlik taraması- Plagiarism checks Yapıldı-İntihal.net-Yes-İntihal.net Etik bildirim- Complaints [ictimaiyatdergi@gmail.com](mailto:ictimaiyatdergi@gmail.com)

### Çıkar çatışması-Conflict of interest

Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.  
The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest

### Finansman-Grant Support

Herhangi bir fon, hibe veya başka bir destek alınmamıştır.  
No funds, grants, or other support was received.

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### Atıf- Citation (APA)

Turhan, Y. (2024). Foreign aid in Türkiye-Africa relations: Past, present and future, *İçtimaiyat*, 8(2), 775-790.  
<https://doi.org/10.33709/ictimaiyat.1504354>

## **1. Introduction**

Foreign aid is one of the most important soft power elements of modern age in regard to exploring the empirical relationship in-between security and development, as well as institutionalizing the dependency relationship between donor and recipient countries. In the course of history, the use of the concept as both a means and an end has strengthened its position as a fundamental political link between the developed North and underdeveloped South. Indeed, as the global disparity between regions has increased, the meaning and content of the concept has intensified the debate on whether it is a curber of the underdeveloped countries which establishes a dependency relationship between recipient and donor. It's the reason why many scholars pondered to reveal such relationship and so approximately every decade since 1950 alternative approaches came to stage. In this process, whether development is a tool for the hegemony of the global economy or a goal/objective in the context of a human-cantered normative approach has been two most debates in the literature.

In the most general sense, the literature on foreign aid can be categorized under three main headings (Zimmerman, 2007). The first group of literature focuses on the effects of foreign aid on recipient countries. The studies that focus on the question "Does aid work on recipient countries?" ground the methodology and empirical work of studies that focus only on aid inputs and ignore the results (Abate, 2022; Elayah, 2016; Quibria, 2014; Roth, 2016). The second group of literature studies focuses on thematic topics such as the quantitative allocation of aid and the items of aid. (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Burnside & Dollar, 2000). The research question underlying the second group of studies is "to whom and why is foreign aid provided?" The political process of the issue, the motivations of the actors, and the purposes of aid are among the main issues focused on by the second group of academics. The related literature does not actually look at quantitative data such as which actor provides how much aid to where, but rather tries to uncover the unseen political motivation between donors and recipients. The second group of literature gained momentum about 30 years after the concept of foreign aid entered into modern literature. Factors such as the failure of foreign aid to achieve the desired results and the more visible prioritization of countries simply because of their historical, cultural, linguistic and colonial past have inspired the enrichment of this literature.

The third group of literature investigates why aid amounts differ among donor countries, why some countries are far above their targeted level of foreign aid while others with the same income level are far behind, and what are the reasons (such as income level, education, social consciousness, religious and humanitarian factors) that make them subjective in foreign aid? Among these studies, the relationship between the gross national income of donor countries and foreign aid (Breuning & Ishiyama, 2003), the relationship between the welfare level of individuals and the amount of foreign aid (Lumsdaine, 1993), the relationship between the weak and dysfunctional institutional culture of states and the amount of foreign aid (Imbeau, 1989) and the relationship between the ideological views of donor governments (right-wing or left-wing) and foreign aid (Round & Odedokun, 2004) are among the main research topics of the third group of literature.

In the most general sense, the foreign aid activities of donor countries are analysed within the framework of these three groups of literature. The position of Africa in the aforementioned three perspectives is analysed within the framework of its relationship with the donor country. Under three different headings, such as the types of aid to Africa, the motivations behind it,

and the countries which carried out extensive aid flow, Africa is analysed as a mere passive actor: pure recipients. Relatively few articles address the core dimension of why Africa needs aid, what factors have led Africa as pure dependent on aid and structural problem in this aid relationship, and alternatives solutions to get out of this paradox of dependency. Indeed, Africa is today the only continent in the world where the amount of official aid outstrips the amount of private capital by a wide margin. This problematic situation needs to be explored at the heart of the problem, since no country in the world has achieved a significant level of development by relying on aid, and the focus should be on how Africa can make national development possible with its own subjective resources.

This study explains the theoretical perspective and historical process of Türkiye's foreign aid to Africa within the framework of the three different foreign aid methodologies mentioned above. In the light of the available foreign aid data, it situates Türkiye's foreign aid practice in the general typology of foreign aid and underlines the correlation between Türkiye's increasing presence in Africa after 2005 and foreign aid rates. In this respect, the study is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a general framework of foreign aid activities to Africa. It provides an intellectual discussion on the historical outlook of US, Chinese and Russian foreign aid to Africa, and the significance of these actors in Africa's foreign aid, as well as the types of foreign aid that they have provided. The main purpose here is to position Türkiye's foreign aid in comparison with other actors playing a role in Africa. The second section examines Türkiye's foreign aid activities under different thematic headings such as the categorization of official development aid flows, the identification of historical turning points, and the regional distribution of this aid. The final section provides a comparative analysis of the first and second sections and develops alternative recommendations on what kind of foreign aid policy Türkiye should pursue in the future. It analyses Türkiye's potential to carve out a space for itself in Africa through foreign aid, outlining various aspects of the growing relationship between foreign aid and politics, diplomacy and security.

## **2. Global Powers' Foreign Aid to Africa**

Dambiso Moyo's masterpiece "Dead Aid" eloquently underlines the roots of Africa's chronic dependence on foreign aid and seeks why more than 1 trillion dollars of development aid to Africa in the last 60 years has not yet healed Africa's problems (Moyo, 2009). By shedding light on the role of foreign aid as one of the fundamental factors behind Africa's underdevelopment, it pursues the answer to why Africa is subjected to a "vicious cycle of dysfunction" in the specific context of foreign aid. On the one hand, the author emphasizes that foreign aid to Africa is "the worst decision of modern development policy", and on the other hand, she seeks the solution to the vicious circle of "foreign aid-dependency" under four headings (Labonte, 2009): a fair engagement of African countries to global market; building a strong China-Africa nexus by leveraging China's direct financial investments and trade in Africa; establishing a new global free trade system for agricultural products; and building an advanced infrastructure for micro-finance and migrant workers' remittances to the continent.

Undeniably, the most striking factor is that remittances sent by African workers to Africa are seen as a potential way to reduce Africa's dependence on foreign aid. Today, remittances sent to Africa by migrants living around the world serve as a financial leverage for millions of households. Statistic also confirms this. Remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries reached \$550 billion in 2019, surpassing foreign direct investment and official development

assistance (Ratha, 2021). Nigeria alone accounts for nearly half of total remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa. These are only recorded data flows; the figure is much larger when unofficially remitted amounts are included. Remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa totaled \$48 billion in 2019. While it is known that the actual figures are much larger than this, but it is impossible to obtain exact amount. In general, the economies of smaller, poorer and fragile countries also appear to be more dependent on remittances. Among them, South Sudan is the highest dependence on remittances for external financing in the region in 2019, accounting for 35% of GDP. In Lesotho, the figure was 21%. While data is not available for Somalia, it is also known that the country is heavily dependent on remittances from abroad for external financing (Ratha, 2021).

With this background in mind, foreign actors involve in heavy aid activities in Africa needs to be underlined. The first actor is undoubtedly China. Beyond doubt, foreign aid is an important political tool in China's engagement with Africa. In this context, many analysts claim that China has (re)created a new type of African dependency through schemes such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and "debt trap diplomacy" (Gilpin, 2021). Debt trap diplomacy is defined as a method of gaining economic or political leverage over the recipient country when the borrowing country defaults on repaying the money, citing the debt as justification. In this context, aid to Africa is one of the most sensitive issues in China-Africa relations. Between 2013 and 2018, China allocated 270.2 billion yuan (41.8 billion USD) in foreign aid, of which 127.8 billion yuan (17.8 billion USD) were grants, 11.3 billion yuan (1.5 billion USD) were interest-free loans and 131.1 billion yuan (18.3 billion USD) were concessional loans. About 45% of this amount was directed to Africa. Moreover, while Africa received almost 52 percent of China's global foreign aid in 2010-12, this figure dropped to 48.5 percent in 2013-18. Africa's foreign aid from China increased from around USD 2.5 billion per year in 2010-12 to USD 3.3 billion per year in 2013-18. (China's Financial Aid, 2021).

According to Zhang, China's aid to Africa can be divided into three different periods (Zhang et al., 2021). The first period is between 1950-1974. This period known as the phase of political aid which was blended with ideology-oriented engagement. The second period is 1974-1990, when economic motives overtook political motives, centered on adaptation and transformation and gained a global dimension. The third period is the interval from 1991 to the present. In this period, an economic and strategic foreign aid policy is pursued in order to achieve the financial assistance phase and technical integrated objectives.

China's foreign aid to Africa is argued as a challenge to the traditional western-centered understanding of international aid. At the normative level, three key features distinguish Chinese foreign aid from Western-oriented aid. First, the basic principle of Chinese development assistance, according to Chinese officials, is that a country's development should be driven by its own resources. Therefore, given the importance of development aid targeting specific areas for economic growth, such as infrastructure, education, health, public facilities, etc., Chinese foreign aid claims to pursue a foreign aid policy that will enable the establishment of the necessary infrastructure for such development. If these areas are developed, African countries will be able to develop using their own national industries without relying on foreign aid (Pan, 2015). That's why, China's aid to Africa differs from western-centered aid policies by strengthening the infrastructure of recipient countries.

Second, China follows a state-centered development model in foreign aid, which differs from western-style aid, often pursued through the private sector. This is because the neoliberal free-market approach, which in western thought is considered the “invisible hand” without emphasizing the role of the state, was the model imposed on African countries during foreign aid in the 1980s and 1990s. In this context, China is departing from the neoliberal approach by emphasizing state-led investments, especially in infrastructure and agricultural productivity (Rafferty, 2011: 33). Finally, by not interfering in the internal affairs of countries during foreign aid, Chinese government differs from the West in its emphasis on “unconditional” or “conditionality reform” (Rafferty, 2011: 34). Unlike traditional donors, this approach of not imposing political conditions gives recipient countries political room for maneuver to independently choose their own development paths.

Another actor whose presence in Africa's foreign aid arena has been increasing year by year is the United States. Most US foreign aid funding is channeled through the semi-independent US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department. Africa's share of US foreign aid has been increasing over the last two decades. In 2021, total U.S. foreign assistance amounted to 36 billion dollars. Within this figure, foreign aid to Africa amounted to \$7.65 billion. This represents 36% of the total foreign aid funds administered by USAID and the State Department. From just 10% in 2001, these figures rose to 31% in 2011 and 36% in 2021. The top 10 largest recipients of US foreign aid and the amount of foreign aid they received in 2021 are as follows: Ethiopia (\$1.13 billion); Jordan (\$1.03 billion); Afghanistan (\$860 million); South Sudan (\$821 million); Congo (\$814 million); Yemen (\$814 million); Nigeria (\$803 million); Syria (\$774 million); Sudan (\$488 million); Somalia (\$475 million) (Foreign Aid by Country, 2022).

Within US foreign aid, each area of aid has changed proportionally over time. In the last five years, health aid has been by far the most prominent. The United States' official foreign assistance website “ForeignAssistance.gov” lists nine main aid themes. Based on 2021 data, health ranks first with \$13.6 billion; Humanitarian assistance \$10.1 billion; Program assistance \$3.5 billion; Economic assistance \$3.5 billion; Multi-sector \$1.7 billion; Democracy-Human Rights-Governance \$1.2 billion; Education and Social assistance \$1.03 billion; Peace and Security \$544 million; Environment \$257 million. An analysis of the regional distribution of the \$36 billion in total aid shows that certain regions are prioritized, just as the health sector dominates other areas.

US foreign aid has two basic missions in terms of means and ends: The instrumentalization of foreign aid to fulfill America's national interests on a global scale, and the use of foreign aid as a means to global development and service to humanity. In this context, it seeks to fulfill its mission of building a stable, free society through foreign aid, creating new markets and trading partners for the US, while at the same time promoting large-scale humanitarian progress. The list of countries benefiting from US aid shows the strategic, historical and political importance of these countries for the United States. Sub-Saharan Africa benefits the most from foreign aid. North Africa is categorized together with the Middle East and received \$3.9 billion in US aid in 2021. Whether it is an aid project, program, cash transfer, delivery of goods, training course, research project, debt relief operation or contribution to an international organization, the United States carried out foreign aid activities in 210 different countries in 2021 (ForeignAssistance.gov, 2024)

Compared to China and US, Russia is the most passive actor in Africa in terms of foreign aid activities. Indeed, the role of foreign aid in Russia's foreign policy in achieving its strategic goals in Africa is relatively low. This can be explained by historical and economic motives, but this is beyond the scope of this study. On the other hand, Russia's active involvement in international foreign aid after 2007 has been observed. Although Russia does not have a proportional figure in aid, it is known to have been active in discussing and shaping foreign aid policy in organizations such as the UN, G7 (before Russia's membership was suspended due to the invasion of Crimea in 2014), etc. Following Russia's G8 presidency in 2006, Russia significantly increased its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to boost development cooperation efforts and became an active spokesperson for foreign aid policy in international forums such as Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC), G20 and BRICS. In June 2007, Russia declared its national aid strategy "Concept of Russia's Engagement in International Development Assistance", setting out key objectives based on OECD-DAC principles for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as ownership and alignment, predictability and transparency, accountability and monitoring. In April 2014, the "Concept of Russia's State Policy in the Field of International Development Assistance" was adopted, amending the relevant document (Russia and the World Bank, n.d.).

Russia's Official Development Assistance increased from around \$100 million in 2004 to \$1.1 billion in 2017. There is no information on Russia's foreign aid after 2017 in the data of international development agencies. However, Jonathan Robinson's report written in 2022, states that between November 2006 and November 2021, including 40 Russian organizations, Russia has carried out a total of 5,014 aid activities. Of these, 76% were directed to Syria; 12% to Ukraine; 6.5% to Nagorno-Karabakh; and 5.5% to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Robinson, 2022). Russia has also been active in providing humanitarian assistance to some African countries, such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe, in the areas of food security, public health and the effects of climate change. Five key strategies that can be indirectly linked to foreign aid stand out in framing Russian-African relations (Kachur, 2020).

These include an anti-Western, anti-colonial discourse that emphasizes the importance of historical relations; a discourse based on the contributions of Soviet-era trained African leaders to the African liberation struggle and the present; consolidating its presence in Africa with hard power instruments through military cooperation that outshines the United States and China; increasing the level of energy-security relations in the field of nuclear cooperation with the opening of offices in the Central African Republic and South Africa; and building public opinion through the use of soft power elements such as Russia Today, Sputnik and the Internet Research Agency on the ground.

The lion's share of foreign aid flows to Africa by these three countries belongs to the United States. As a matter of fact, the high visibility of the soft power element in the US's Africa policy is directly related to this amount of aid. On the other hand, it is a fact that Russia's hard power will pose a major problem for its positioning in the continent in the long run, and that its military presence, which is not supported by soft power such as foreign aid, media, education, health, etc., will be much more costly to maintain in the long run.

As a result, 2021 Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached an all-time high of USD 178.9 billion in 2021, up 4.4% in real terms from 2020, as developed countries stepped up to help developing countries grappling with the COVID-19 crisis. However, the 2021 ODA total is

equivalent to 0.33% of the combined gross national income (GNI) of DAC donors, still well below the UN target of 0.7% ODA/GNI. Humanitarian aid amounted to USD 18.8 billion. As of 2020, Sub-Saharan Africa received \$66.8 billion in aid out of a total ODA of \$194 billion. According to 2019 OECD data, Ethiopia is the largest beneficiary of ODA, followed by Nigeria, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Uganda. The 10 most generous donor actors in the same report are: International Development Association (IDA), USA, EU Institutions, Germany, UK and France (Aid at a Glance Charts - OECD, 2019).

### **3. Türkiye's Foreign Aid Activities in Africa: Historical Landmarks and Transformations**

It would be erroneous to assume that Türkiye is perceived as a less powerful country in Africa in regard to aid activities, seeing Türkiye's belated interactions with countries of the region. Historically, Türkiye's foreign aid has up-and-down period in historical retrospect. Quite a long period Türkiye has been a recipient rather than a donor. Since the founding of the Republic, Turkish foreign aid, which refers to its evolution from an aid-receiving country to a net donor, can be broadly taxonomized in five periods: The early period (1920-1950), the decline period (1950-1980), the revival period (1985-1992), the institutionalization period (1992-2004) and the expansion period (2004-present) (Turhan, 2022). Each of these five periods includes, to some extent, a number of sub-periods.

1920-1950 period was linked to Türkiye 's progress from the national struggle to nation-state building, from the institutionalization of state organs to the status quo and anti-revisionist approach to foreign policy. In the early years of the Republic, the security environment of Türkiye faced placed a heavy economic burden on it, as well as hardship of War of Independence and the economic depression of 1929, which all made the country more dependent than ever on foreign diect financing. Nevertheless, the geopolitical developments of the 1930s (the footsteps of the Second World War and the race between countries to gain allies) opened up new economic opportunity for Türkiye. In this context, Türkiye pursued a policy of balance by benefiting economically for the competition between Britain and Germany. For instance, the construction of an airplane factory in Kayseri by the Germans in 1925, the presence of Italian companies in Türkiye's foreign trade between 1924 and 1930, Karabük Iron and Steel enterprise of the British Brassert company in 1936 are some of the economic expansions towards Türkiye in this period. In order to weaken the German economic influence, Britain opened a loan of 16.000.00 pounds sterling in May 1938, and Germany responded it by opening a loan of 150.000.000.000 marks in October (Oran, 2020). All these steps established a coded flow of credit to Türkiye throughout the 1930s.

In short, the 1930s and 1940s were a period that made it impossible for Türkiye to provide aid to geographies outside its borders within an economic structure dependent on foreign financing. Nevertheless, Türkiye has carried out foreign aid activities, albeit in very small numbers. In the 1920s, the most well-known of these was sending aid to Afghanistan in the fields of education and health to ensure development cooperation. Therefore, in the early period from the 1920s to the 1950s, Türkiye did not have the capacity and policy to carry out foreign aid activities. Although no relationship could be established in terms of foreign aid, the opening of the Turkish embassy in Addis Ababa in 1926, the correspondence between the Ethiopian Emperor Hayle Silase I and Atatürk, and the subsequent 35 different letters (Şimşir, 1993) and telegrams between Ethiopian leaders and Atatürk are the clearest evidence that

Türkiye pursued a close interest on Africa where Türkiye's struggle against imperialism was closely followed by African societies.

The 1950s can be described as a period of decline for Turkish foreign aid. Among others, a balance foreign policy among global actors (Italy, Germany, Britain and France) right after the years of the War of Independence, aiming to isolate itself from the Second World War, compelled Türkiye to a unilateral foreign policy practice once the Cold War initiated. In other words, Türkiye pursued a passive and western-centric foreign policy in order to consolidate its position in the West's pole. The most specific example of this policy can be seen in the issue of Algerian independence. When the draft resolution on the Algerian question was put to a vote in the UN General Assembly on December 13, in 1958, 28 countries, including Türkiye, abstained from voting. The main factor behind this abstention was not to contradict France at a time two state's foreign policy converged in western hemisphere (Hazar, 2011: 191).

On the other hand, Türkiye's position during the Cold War period has been definite and stable. Türkiye was the "outpost of the Western Bloc" or the "advanced gendarme of the West" and benefited from the strategic and economic advantages that this brought. At the same time, this benefit obliged Türkiye economically to a unilateral model of relations. The main factor that distinguished the 1950s from the previous period was that Türkiye received a large flow of foreign aid from its western counterparts in order to consolidate its position in the political, economic and military way in order not to be excluded from the Western community. In the summer of 1947, Türkiye received 100 million dollars in military aid under the Truman Doctrine (Üstün, 1997, s. 34) followed by 150 million dollars under the Marshall Plan in 1948. In the following years, it received 1,947.7 million dollars in aid from OECD countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, about 70% of the total aid was provided by the US and about 16% by West Germany (Başak, 1977, s. 67) In the same period, extensive technical cooperation was initiated between Türkiye and Germany through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) in different parts of the country (Fidan and Nurdun, 2008: 99). Türkiye's first bilateral aid to Pakistan and Iran in 1971 under the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Regional Cooperation for Development is among the rarest of Turkish foreign aid activities.

On June 5, 1985, Türkiye launched its own foreign aid program, marking a historic turning point in Turkish foreign aid (*Türkiye'nin Kalkınma İşbirliği: Genel Özellikleri Ve En Az Gelişmiş Ülkelere Yönelik Yaklaşımı*, n.d.). Since foreign aid became an instrument of Turkish foreign policy for the first time, this period can be called a "revival period". In the same year, the Organization of the Islamic Conference established a fund to help Sahel countries suffering from drought and Türkiye contributed \$10 million to this project. Under the Sahel project, \$10 million aid has been distributed to help strengthen institutional capacity in Niger, Mali, Burkino Faso, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Senegal and Gambia (Tepeciklioğlu, 2019, s. 25). The program was initially launched in Somalia with food and medicine aid and later continued with technical assistance. It was coordinated by the State Planning Organization (SPO) and implemented by the Development Bank of Türkiye. Delegation visits were organized to countries in Africa and as a result, the half-flow needed by the countries was provided. In this context, an irrigation facility in Senegal, a Turkish hospital in Sudan and a foundry in Gambia were built (Hazar, 2011).

In the following years, while Türkiye was already listed as an aid recipient on the DAC list, the State Planning Organization (SPO, which was responsible for collecting and recording statistics



on Türkiye 's development assistance until it was transferred to the State Statistical Institute in 1996) through the January 24<sup>th</sup> Decision. While the January 24<sup>th</sup> Decree and the pioneering role of President Turgut Özal were endogenous factor, systemic change in global politics were exogenous drivers of Türkiye's development aid projection.

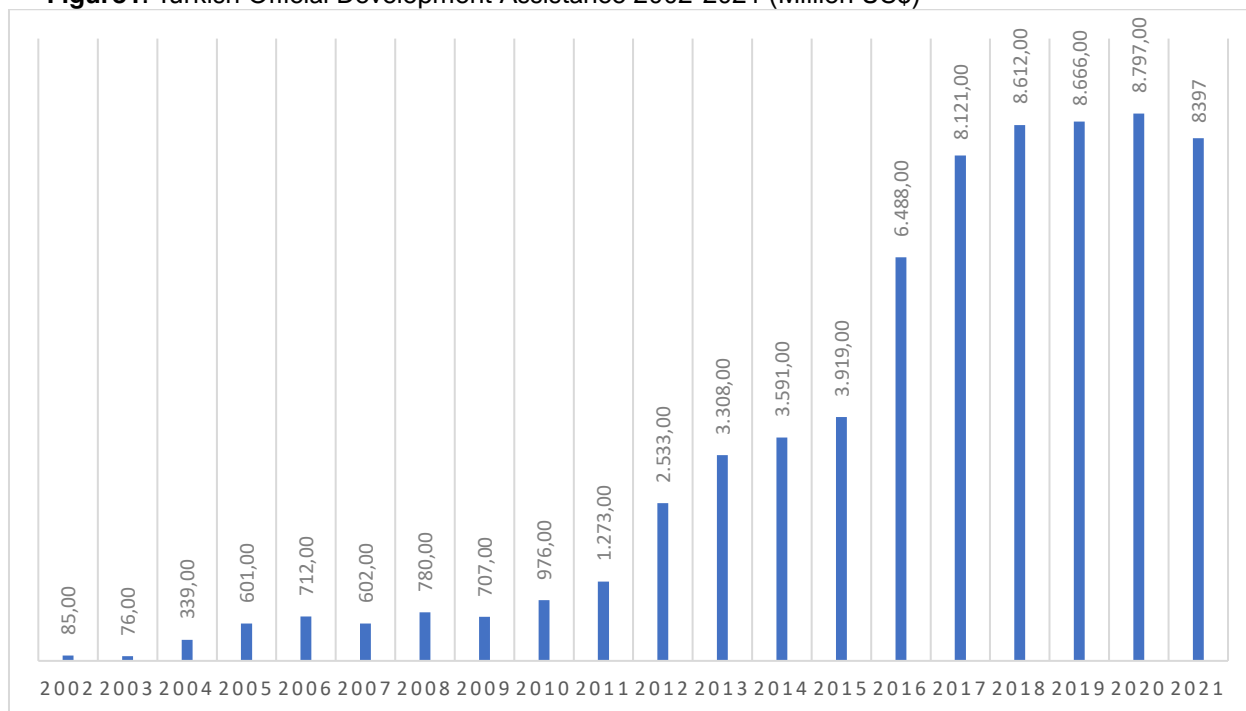
The period 1992-2004 can be referred to as “institutionalization” in Turkish foreign aid. The end of the Cold War was a great relief for Türkiye, and with the slogan “The Turkic World from the Adriatic to the China Sea”, Türkiye started to implement projects to transfer its experience in areas such as education, culture, infrastructure, and state-building in sister countries. Granting 11,000 scholarships, providing military students and diplomats with the opportunity to study in Türkiye, direct flights of Turkish Airlines, Eximbank loans, humanitarian aid to Georgia in February 1992 and 52,000 tons of wheat aid to Armenia in October 1992 are among the activities that document Türkiye's institutionalization in the field of foreign aid.

In the same year, first the State Planning Organization (1992-1996) and then the State Statistical Institute collected and systematized official data on development aid. In all these activities, Türkiye was seen as an actor to spread the norms of the Western world by presenting itself as part of it to the newly independent countries in the post-Soviet space (Turhan, 2022: 336). In 1992, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (later renamed the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency-TIKA) was also established. The initial aim of TIKA was to help the newly established Central Asian states preserve their social structures, build their identity in a sustainable way and address the shortcomings in their technical infrastructure. The recipients of foreign aid during the relevant period were not only Turkic states, but also non-Turkic states such as Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Mongolia also benefited from Turkish foreign aid, albeit at relatively lower levels (Parlak, 2007: 80).

During the institutionalization period, TIKA was the main coordinator of Türkiye 's foreign aid activities. TIKA has gone through three main periods since its establishment (Ipek, 2015: 179) The first period from 1992, when TIKA was established, until May 2001, when its administrative status changed. Second, the transition period from 2001 to 2004, when TIKA was restructured under the supervision of the Prime Ministry and became de facto subordinate to its instructions. During this period, Türkiye determined its development assistance in accordance with the reporting and classification rules of the Development Assistance Committee. Third, from 2005 to 2018, TIKA was mandated by presidential decrees to organize and implement Türkiye's development policy and practice. TIKA's Program Coordination Offices increased from 12 in 2002 to 62 in 2024, and today has the capacity to carry out over 30,000 projects in more than 160 countries.

The post-2004 period can be characterized as the years of expansion. Türkiye's transformation from a passive recipient to a net donor of foreign aid and the expansion of its geographical hinterland are unique characteristics of this period. In fact, the humanitarian aid launched in 2011 to alleviate the tragedy caused by the Syrian crisis has made it the most generous country in the world, later become the source of its “golden age” in foreign aid. In addition to TIKA, other stakeholders such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent (KIZILAY) have increased the visibility, scope and volume of foreign aid. In addition, state institutions and NGOs tasked with organizing and implementing Türkiye's development policy and practice have implemented a multifaceted Turkish foreign aid policy and practice, making Türkiye a major actor in the field of global development assistance.

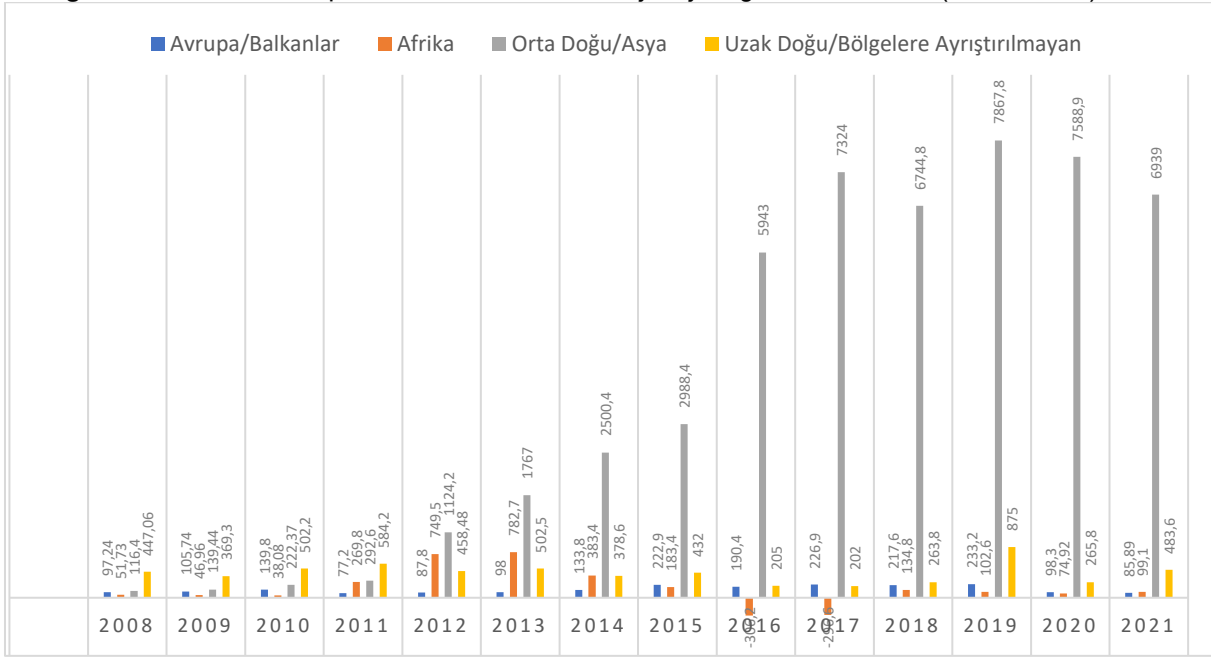
**Figure1:** Turkish Official Development Assistance 2002-2021 (Million US\$)



*Source: Compiled by the author from the Development Assistance Reports of Türkiye.*

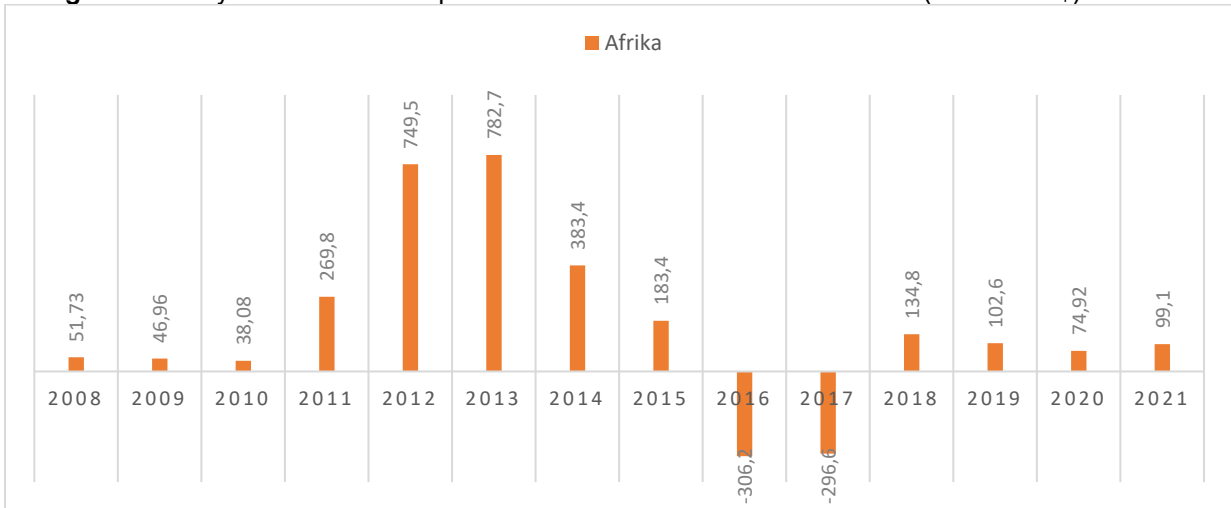
Figure 1 shows the evolution of Türkiye's foreign aid over the period 2002-2021. Starting from 85 million dollars in 2002, Türkiye 's ODA reached 8.3 billion dollars in 2021. As can be seen in the data for the last 4 years, Türkiye 's foreign aid has hovered around 8 billion dollars. However, in the field of humanitarian aid, Türkiye has been the most generous state in terms of ODA pledged as a percentage of gross national income in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In 2020, Türkiye committed 1.14% of its Total National Income (GNI) to foreign aid, second only to Sweden and well above the UN target of 0.7%.

**Figure 2: Official Development Assistance Of Türkiye by Region 2008-2021 (Million US \$)**



Source: Compiled by the author from the Development Assistance Reports of Türkiye

**Figure 3: Türkiye's Official Development Assistance in Africa in 2008-2021 (Million US \$)**



Source: Compiled by the author from the Development Assistance Reports of Türkiye

As seen in Figure 3, foreign aid to Africa, which started in 2008 with 51.73 million dollars, increased rapidly after the 2009-2010 period when it relatively decreased and reached 782.7 million dollars in 2013, the highest level in the history of the republic. The reason for this increase in 2013 was Türkiye 's efforts to smoothly advance the regime changes in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia (Altunışık, 2014: 334). In this context, Türkiye utilized the material opportunities that would allow it to consolidate itself as a regional actor.

Since 2013, there has been a general decline in the amount of foreign aid to Africa, falling to -306.2 and -296 million dollars in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Although the bulk of Türkiye's official aid to Africa in the form of grants amounted to \$143.8 and \$153.4 million in 2016 and 2017, respectively, the net aid amount is negative, as the OECD-DAC rule calculates net aid by deducting the total volume of repayment of concessional loans. In 2018, it turned into a positive levels, but still remained well below the 2012-2013 levels. In 2021, aid to Africa persisted at

USD 99.1 million. In the same year, aid to the Balkans/Europe amounted to \$85.9 million, the Americas to \$19.1 million, Oceania to \$0.6 million, Aid Not Broken Down by Region to \$483 million and Asia/Middle East to \$6.9 billion. Among the existing regions, Africa appears to be moving in parallel with the Balkans/Europe. Africa's population of 1.3 billion compared to the Balkan region's 60 million inhabitants, yet the same amount of aid to both regions is a manifestation of the geographical congestion of Türkiye 's foreign aid policy. In fact, this congestion prevents Türkiye's soft power elements, which act as a dynamo in Türkiye's African vision.

**Table 1: Panorama of Türkiye's Bilateral Official Development Assistance in Africa**

|              | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015   | 2016   | 2017   | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cezayir      | 0.5   | 1.1   | 2.2   | 3.3   | 1.6    | 2.9    | 5.2    | 1.44  | 1.87  | 2.16  |
| Mısır        | 3.5   | 503.9 | 536.6 | 5.3   | -199.9 | -398.8 | -396.5 | 0.3   | 2.23  | 2.21  |
| Libya        | 53.1  | 3.1   | 4     | 12.9  | 0.9    | 0.5    | 2.9    | 18.77 | 0.63  | 1.46  |
| Fas          | 0.8   | 1.4   | 2.8   | 2.7   | 0.6    | 1.6    | 2      | 0.17  | 0.87  | 0.77  |
| Tunus        | 0.6   | 60.4  | 36.2  | 200.7 | -48.7  | -37.7  | -47.4  | 1.12  | 2.08  | 7.37  |
| Angola       | 0     | 0     | 0.1   | 0.1   | 0.1    | 0.1    | 0      | 0.05  | 0.12  | 0.11  |
| Benin        | 0.1   | 0.1   | 1.2   | 0.6   | 0.3    | 0.7    | 2.2    | 0.53  | 0.66  | 0.54  |
| Bostwana     | 0.1   |       | 0     | 0.1   | 0      | 0.1    | 0.1    |       | 0.05  | 0.06  |
| Burkina Fa   | 1.9   | 0.8   | 0.4   | 4.2   | 0.9    | 0.7    | 1.1    | 0.29  | 0.89  | 0.43  |
| Burundi      | 0     | 0.1   | 0.5   | 0.7   | 0      | 0.4    | 1.3    |       | 0.62  | 0.42  |
| Kameron      | 0.4   | 0.5   | 2.5   | 2     | 0.3    | 1.9    | 2.6    | 0.35  | 1.45  | 1.3   |
| Orta Afrika  | 0.1   | 0.1   | 1     | 1.5   | 0.4    | 0.5    | 0.8    |       | 0.29  | 0.22  |
| Çad          | 0.1   | 0     | 1.1   | 1.4   | 0.5    | 1.3    | 2.5    | 0.67  | 3.59  | 2.82  |
| Koromos      | 0.3   | 4.1   | 0.4   | 0.4   | 1      | 0.3    | 1.1    | 0.4   | 0.62  | 0.31  |
| Kongo        | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.3   | 0.3   | 0.1    | 0.3    | 0.7    | 0.16  | 0.43  |       |
| Fildişi Sahi | 0.3   | 0.5   | 0.8   | 1.2   | 0.2    | 1      | 1.4    |       | 0.67  | 0.49  |
| DKC          | 0.1   | 0.1   | 1.5   | 1.4   | 0.2    | 1      | 2.5    | 0.02  | 0.89  | 0.82  |
| Cibuti       | 0.1   | 0.2   | 1.4   | 3     | 3.9    | 1.8    | 3.5    | 14.68 | 5.4   | 0.57  |
| Eritre       | 4.4   | 1.9   | 2.2   | 0.1   |        | 0.2    | 0.5    | 0.08  | 0.25  | 0.14  |
| Etiyopya     | 1.4   | 3.8   | 3     | 3.7   | 0.7    | 4      | 5.8    | 0.63  | 3.06  | 2.08  |
| Gabon        | 0     | 0.1   | 0.4   | 0.4   | 0.1    | 0.2    | 0.3    |       | 0.11  | 0.05  |
| Gambiya      | 0.3   | 0.4   | 1.1   | 1.8   | 12.7   | 1.2    | 2.1    | 3.16  | 1.47  | 0.69  |
| Gana         | 0.4   | 0.8   | 2.1   | 3     | 0.3    | 1.6    | 4.5    | 0.12  | 1.25  | 0.8   |
| Gine         | 0.2   | 0.3   | 0.8   | 0.9   | 0.5    | 4.3    | 1.5    | 3     | 3.44  | 2.15  |
| Gine Bissa   | 0.1   | 0.6   | 1.2   | 1.2   | 0.2    | 0.4    | 1      | 0.38  | 0.38  | 0.41  |
| Kenya        | 2.1   | 1.1   | 5.1   | 3.3   | 0.2    | 2      | 2      | 0.65  | 1.4   | 0.83  |
| Liberya      | 0.1   | 0     | 0.2   | 0.8   | 1.3    | 0.2    | 0.6    |       | 0.35  | 0.19  |
| Madagask     | 0.7   | 0.2   | 0.4   | 0.6   | 0.1    | 0.4    | 1.2    | 0.05  | 0.46  | 0.32  |
| Malawi       | 0     |       | 0.2   | 0.4   |        | 0.2    | 0.5    |       | 0.23  | 0.15  |
| Mali         | 0.2   | 1     | 6.1   | 1.5   | 0.7    | 2.5    | 1.7    | 0.28  |       |       |
| Moritanya    | 0.4   | 1.6   | 4.7   | 4.5   | 12.7   | 0.8    | 1.2    | 0.53  | 0.57  | 0.49  |
| Mozambik     | 0.1   | 0.1   | 0.7   | 0.8   | 0      | 0.2    | 0.7    | 0.35  | 1.54  | 0.24  |
| Namibya      | 0     | 0     | 0.1   | 0.2   | 0.7    | 0.8    | 0.6    | 0.44  | 0.82  | 0.44  |
| Niger        | 2.6   | 3     | 9.6   | 4.1   | 8.9    | 11.9   | 9.6    | 5.54  | 5.4   | 1.62  |
| Nigerya      | 0.5   | 0.7   | 1.3   | 1     | 0.1    | 0.7    | 1.1    | 0.01  | 0.74  | 0.74  |
| Rwanda       | 0.3   | 0.2   | 0.5   | 0.6   |        | 0.4    | 1.3    | 0.03  | 0.82  | 0.65  |
| Senegal      | 1.92  | 2.2   | 5.1   | 2.9   | 7.5    | 0.8    | 1.2    | 0.51  | 0.63  | 0.89  |
| Sierra Leo   | 0.1   | 0.1   | 0.2   | 0.5   | 0.6    | 0.2    | 0.6    | 0.06  | 0.27  | 0.37  |
| Somali       | 93.4  | 86.6  | 115.7 | 74.4  | 314.8  | 59.6   | 60.6   | 29.12 | 28.21 | 25.98 |
| Güney Afr    | 0.2   | 0.1   | 0.6   | 1.1   | 0.4    | 0.5    | 0.1    | 0.92  | 0.84  | 0.16  |
| Güney Suc    | 0.1   | 0.4   | 1.1   | 1.5   | 0.7    | 0.4    | 1.3    | 0.47  | 1.12  | 0.99  |
| Sudan        | 21.3  | 62.3  | 6.3   | 9.4   | 22     | 9.4    | 7      | 25.1  | 13.31 | 4.17  |
| Tanzanya     | 0.3   | 0.5   | 1.4   | 1.7   | 0.4    | 1.1    | 1.7    | 1.05  | 1.13  | 1.27  |
| Togo         | 0.1   | 0.1   | 0.4   | 0.3   | 0.1    | 0.4    | 0.8    |       | 0.3   | 0.27  |
| Uganda       | 0.7   | 1.6   | 1.7   | 2     | 0.3    | 1.1    | 2.5    | 0.29  | 1.31  | 0.96  |
| Zambiya      | 0     | 0     | 0.5   | 0.5   | 0.1    | 0.5    | 1.3    | 0.1   | 0.65  | 0.43  |
| Zimbabwe     | 0     | 0     | 0.3   | 0.5   |        | 0.8    | 1.2    | 0.05  | 0.53  | 0.47  |
| TOPLAM       | 269.8 | 749.5 | 782.7 | 383.3 | 183.4  | -306.2 | -296.7 | 134.8 | 102.6 | 74.92 |

Source: Compiled by the author from the Development Assistance Reports of Türkiye

#### 4. Looking Ahead: The Future of Turkish Foreign Aid to Africa

As a result, Türkiye's foreign aid has increased more than 100 times in the last 20 years. It's motivation, willpower and effort to become a model in the field of foreign aid, especially "humanitarian aid" is evident. Türkiye's aid carried out within the framework of a benovolunce foreign policy far beyond its national capacity, allows it to be positioned as a "humanitarian and

philanthropic” actor. There are two main factors that requires as basis to continuity of it’s aid-leader position: the first one is “willpower” to carry out the aid policy and the second is economic capability. These factors have the potential to determine the future of Turkish foreign aid to Africa.

Willpower is an indispensable factor for the continuity of the above-mentioned argument. Indeed, if foreign aid is not seen as significant soft-power instrument, if foreign policy decision-makers give it secondary importance, and if the instruments of Turkish foreign policy change, the willpower eventually disappears. Compared to previous aid behaviour, willpower felt towards aid flow is, to a certain extent, very strong among ruling elites. In this regard, we can see that Türkiye has maintained its willpower to be a pioneer in the field of foreign aid. The aid policy is not isolated from Türkiye’s overall Africa policy, emphasising that Türkiye -Africa relations have evolved from “opening up to strategic partnership” in the last 20 years and reached a geography much beyond it’s hinterland. During this period, diplomatic missions (44 embassies by the year of 2024), economic expansions (35 billion dollars by 2023), social and military relations network built its own autonomous institutionalization and left behind a difficult (but still possible) process of going back in Turkish foreign policy. While not disregarding a likely conjunctural halt in relations, it can be argued that a possible stalemate will be more of a rupture than a total disengagement.

Another important factor that might affect the foreign aid relationship with Africa is about a recession in the Turkish economy and the leveling down of Turkish currency against foreign currencies. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine war deeply affected the global economy and created financial strains across the globe. However, the net result of such event on unerdeveloped and developing countries become more clear. The decline in revenues, the decrease in voluntary donations as households prioritize their own livelihoods have led to a numerical decline in the amount of foreign aid to Africa, eventhough the amount of aid Türkiye provides abroad was the same. In particular, the most important source of income for NGOs is individual voluntary donations, so economic crisis directly affect’s people’s donations to the NGOs, so does on civil-society’s aid activities.

Türkiye’s economy faced a huge shrinking from 2018 to 2024 which impacted on its Africa aid practice. Eliminating foreign aid activities from a foreign policy practice is an explicit step, expected to be maintained in coming years. This does not mean Türkiye wholly withdraws all it’s aid activities, but rather more strategic counties, urgent aid-recipients and regions will be prioritised. On top of that, Türkiye 's aid policy has been passing a process of being the main leverage of Türkiye 's Africa policy to secondary factors. Security and defence relationship, development-oriented aid activities and political engagements are more prominent foreign policy activities of Türkiye towards Africa. Therefore, aid policy will be unorthodox practice of Türkiye in Africa. Economic situation has just reset this process earlier time.

When we look at China's foreign aid to Africa, it has been continuing year by year, reached approximately 3.3 billion dollars in 2013-2018. The US, on the other hand, provided 7.65 billion dollars in 2020. Compared to Türkiye’s figures of 99 million dollars in aid to Africa in 2021, global actor’s aid activities are numerically advanced. Nevertheless, when we compare Türkiye's GDP with that of the countries mentioned above, it is clear that Türkiye 's overall aid is considerable significant. Moreover, the possibility that Türkiye's income level that would rise in the coming period will accelerate individual aid activities and and it’s aid flows, too.

Another factor that might affect the future of foreign aid is the deeply divergent aid flows of Türkiye among countries in Africa. In other words, in Türkiye's aid flows, some African countries receive more aid while others receive little or none. For instance, the African countries that benefited the most from Türkiye's bilateral official development assistance in 2021 were: Somalia \$51.80 million, Libya \$11.69 million, Gambia \$4.01 million and Sudan \$3.36 million. Strategic reason is main factors in choosing some country in future. Other big donor's also have similar foreign policy priorities (Israel, Egypt and Ukraine are always at the top of the list in US foreign aid), but one of the distinguishing factors that makes Türkiye differ from other actors is that Türkiye claims its aid policy based on humanitarian and moral grounds, regardless of the identity, race or religion of the recipient countries. Therefore, diversification of recipients will allow it to reach more people and countries. The diversification of recipient in foreign aid by reaching of aid to wider geographies, countries and peoples will contribute brand-name of Türkiye's "Benevolence country" image.

On the other hand, it is more than wishful thinking to predict that the current flow of foreign aid will rapidly spread to alternative regions once humanitarian crises in Syria is over as the latter represents the most important recipient group of Turkish aid. In such situation, Africa will be the most looked up continent to receive aid. First, 33 of the 46 countries in the UN's least developed country category are located in Africa. Second, the mutual political, economic, diplomatic and social momentum that Türkiye has achieved with Africa in the last 20 years will influence in direction of Turkish foreign aid to Africa.

Another factor that will shape the future of foreign aid is a possible establishment of joint management mechanism among stakeholders. In the absence of a pre-distribution evaluation mechanism, there are problems of institutional coordination among Turkish aid giver in flowing aid. The frequent occurrence of duplicate aid in the field and the inability of some regions to benefit from foreign aid due to the lack of coordination stemming from absence of joint mechanism, cause huge problem for Turkish aid capacity. TİKA has long represented a leading institution in the coordination and cooperation of Türkiye's development assistance. However, as of 2018, TİKA has transferred its legal binding to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and adopted a power-sharing strategy with other stakeholders such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent. This allows for branching out with the logic of a task-sharing policy, but it makes difficult to establish and manage a common mechanism. Post-assistance analysis, reports, and data review are also among the shortcomings of institutions engaged in foreign aid activities. Pre-assistance preparation, rapid response and mobilization capabilities are among the most productive capabilities of foreign aid agencies and NGOs, but post-assistance follow-up and measuring the impact of the aid are among the neglected points.

In a nutshell, when the data up to 2021 is analysed, it is seen that the gap between countries' GNI and the amount of foreign aid has widened. However, Türkiye's foreign aid in proportion to its national income has made it one of the most generous countries in the world compared to other donor countries. Along with the increase in the amount of aid, the methodological differentiation of Turkish foreign aid from other actors is one of the most important differences presented in recent years. This methodology, embodied in the Turkish-type Development Assistance Model claims to offer a new model of foreign aid for Türkiye. In line with Türkiye's "virtuous, compassionate power" paradigm, there are four main features that distinguish this

concept from other aid practices: a multi-channel approach; a people-based approach; proximity with recipient countries; and the construction of a new foreign aid discourse. Nevertheless, the fact that the theoretical underpinnings of these points have not yet been fully theorized which bring about a debates on whether Türkish aid model is a real “Aid Paradigm” or just a “practical way”. In the final analysis, the concept is likely to become a model in the long run if the relevant studies are increased and concentrate upon on this topic.

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