

ARTICLE

Humanitarian NGOs: Motivations, Challenges and Contributions to Turkish Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This study focusses on Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carrying out humanitarian assistance abroad. Particular attention is given to their motivations, challenges and contributions to Turkish foreign policy (TFP). Being a product of a larger research project dealing with Turkish humanitarian NGOs (HNGOs), this paper's findings are derived from a bulk of datasets consisting of interviews, observations, and other printed/on-line materials published by these humanitarian NGOs. The primary data used in the article is compiled from more than 25 semi-structured interviews with people who work for Turkish NGOs. What are the main reasons and motivations of these organizations to engage in humanitarian aid activities? What kinds of problems and challenges do they face while carrying out humanitarian aid? What do they think of TFP and to what extent do they affect TFP? If they do, in which ways? Such questions are the central questions this article seeks to address. While verifying some of them, the main findings challenge some of the conventional assumptions about Turkish NGOs and their activities, motivations, challenges and contribution to TFP.

Keywords

Turkish NGOs, Turkish foreign policy, non-state actors, humanitarian aid.

Introduction

This article deals with Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carrying out humanitarian and development aid around the world. Particular

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Received on: 31.01.2019

Accepted on: 01.05.2019

Foreign aid has always been an important tool of soft power for states to generate influence over other states and communities.

ing financial capabilities have transformed the abilities of non-state actors, making them relevant in different contexts within International Relations and other related literature.¹ Foreign aid (both humanitarian and development aid) is no exception, and the balance between state and non-state actors in this field has shifted over the last 20 years. Until the nineteenth century, humanitarianism was viewed as a branch of religious, political and medical sciences and the practice was dominated by church and state.² Yet, the very definition of humanitarianism and the practice of humanitarian aid, as well as the actors in this area have changed significantly. Today a significant share of emergency relief, humanitarian aid, and development assistance is raised by/from private sources, and allocated by non-governmental actors, mostly by NGOs.³ Thus, the area is not exclusively dominated by states anymore and what we can call 'private aid' allocated by individuals, companies, corporations, foundations, NGOs, and community-based organizations merits more systemic analysis.

Foreign aid has always been an important tool of soft power for states to generate influence over other states and communities. There are substantial differences in principles, mandates and priorities for allocating development and humanitarian aid from country to country. These differences gain even more significance when it comes to private domains. Private flows in global development finance, which include private investment, private philanthropy, and remittances, have significantly increased over the last decades. It is now equivalent to over a quarter of all official development assistance (ODA).⁴ According to OECD data, net private grants doubled from \$14,822.6 million in 2005 to \$35,550.6 million in 2015. Private flows are not just created by private entities, but are also allocated by them. For instance, most of the money (more than 60 percent), which equals over half of the estimated private development assistance, is channeled through NGOs. In a similar way, the ODA channeled through private entities has tripled in the same period, rising from \$3,768.3 million in 2005 to \$14,481.2 million in 2015. This amount is equal to roughly 20 percent of total bilateral ODA.⁵ Private donations funding humanitarian action and allocations made by NGOs in order to cope with

attention is given to their motivations, the challenges they face and their contributions to Turkish foreign policy (TFP). This theme reflects a global trend in the field of development and humanitarian aid. Advances in communication and transportation technologies and increasing

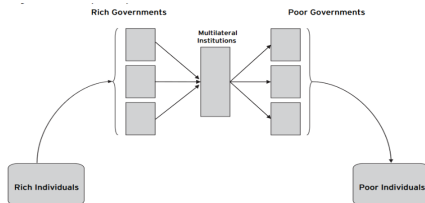
humanitarian crises have become more vital given the fact that public funding for international development and humanitarian assistance has continually decreased and become even more contested in recent years. Yet, even though there is a large literature on bilateral and multilateral foreign aid, there is little about the development and humanitarian aid raised and allocated by NGOs based in Turkey.⁶

In addition to increasing interest in non-state actors at the global level, the role and effects of non-state actors in TFP have increased, which is a parallel development to the processes of deepening and broadening of TFP. Over the last fifteen years, Turkey's growing regional power capacity and global visibility have perhaps manifested most notably in the field of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian aid has become a natural component of Turkey's position in the international arena. As of 2016, more than 60 percent of the Turkish ODA was reported as humanitarian aid. These figures have placed Turkey at the top of the list of the world's most generous countries. Again, as humanitarian and development aid became an important tool in the TFP tool-box, Turkish NGOs functioning in this area have become important non-state actors for TFP. In Turkey, humanitarian aid efforts are usually carried out through collaborative arrangements between the Turkish government, official/semi-official institutions and faith-based charities or foundations. There are several studies that fundamentally focus on Turkish aid practice in different contexts⁷ and the role of official/semi-official institutions such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA),⁸ the Turkey Diyanet Foundation, Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay), the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), and Turkish Airlines (THY). However, there are very few systemic studies that deal with Turkish NGOs carrying out humanitarian and development assistance. Motivated by this gap in the literature, this article draws on a broad set of data acquired from semi-structured interviews with people working for Turkish NGOs to analyze their respective motivations, interests, challenges and contributions to TFP. To this end, the article first looks at the concept of private aid, and the practice of private humanitarian aid in general. Later it connects that discussion to Turkish aid practices. Finally, it presents its empirical analysis of the Turkish NGOs facilitating humanitarian aid by drawing on the data collected from interviews and other primary sources to explain their motivations, challenges and contribution to TFP.

Private Humanitarian Aid

The overall global aid structure has remained stable and simple for a very long time: a few developed countries with the help of several multilateral institutions as the main intermediaries have dominated the field (see the left-hand side of Figure 1 below).

A Simple depiction of the aid Architecture



The reality of intermediating actors in development and humanitarian assistance

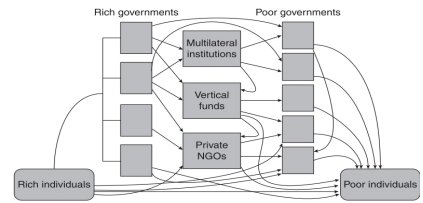


Figure 1: Change in Aid Architecture⁹

However, the general trends in aid flows suggest that the simple aid architecture has been changing fast and becoming very complex and contested (the right-hand side of Figure 1 above). It is contested because of the emerging donor phenomenon. Emerging donors have brought many different sets of norms and practices into the aid architecture relying on their own development agencies, and different sets of multilateral organizations' norms and practices. As a result, there are more multilateral agencies, and a more diverse set of interests, rules and norms governing the practice in the field. Most aid is now allocated on a bilateral basis. In addition to structural changes, non-state actors and private aid have grown into something prominent in the realm of development assistance, making the structure more complex than it has ever been. Today, thousands of international, national and local NGOs, big and small private entities, foundations, and individuals are part of the global aid structure. This is a relatively new phenomenon in the global aid architecture.¹⁰

Alongside the increasing number of actors providing assistance and substantial changes in the aid structure, the volume of humanitarian assistance in particular has also increased significantly since the end of the Cold War. This can be seen from Table 1 below. Humanitarian aid is key to facilitating a return to daily life for people affected by various types of crisis and a preventive measure to address emergency issues. The definition and scope of interventions are based on several principles and constraints. While the principles governing

humanitarian assistance (humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence and accountability) remain constant, the actors, scope and content of the assistance vary across a number of different cases. It can be viewed from the data that humanitarian aid has risen notably faster than

any other ODA input, with the proportion of total aid almost doubling from 6 percent in 2006 to 11 percent in 2016 (See the figure on the left-hand side of Table 1). According to the OECD data, total humanitarian aid accounted for more than \$23 billion in 2017. What is important here is that the share of humanitarian aid in total development assistance is increasing every year for almost every donor. This situation, among other reasons, mainly derives from the fact that people in countries such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Myanmar and South Sudan, have been long in need of urgent and prolonged humanitarian assistance.

However, today, it is difficult for states to deal with major crises in various parts of the world. Here, humanitarian assistance provided by private sources with increasing amounts play an important role by offsetting the inadequacy of official humanitarian assistance.¹¹ Non-state or private funding and allocation is therefore growing in importance.¹² The funding from all private donors – individuals, trusts, foundations and corporations – has been rising over the last decade, reaching over \$40 million in 2016 (See Figure 2).

For development and humanitarian aid, many terms are used interchangeably to refer to private development assistance, including international private giving, international philanthropy, voluntary giving, private development aid, and private development cooperation. As such, private development assistance includes flows of private finance channeled through NGOs, foundations and corporate philanthropic activities along with other private flows such as direct investments and remittances. Humanitarian assistance from both official and private funds reaches people in need via multiple channels and transaction chains. Civil Society Organizations (COSs) are one kind of body through which humanitarian aid is raised and allocated or distributed. According to the terminology used by OECD, CSOs can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organizations. However, among these, NGOs play a vital role, and that role increases as their capacity increases, thanks to advances in communication and transportation technologies.

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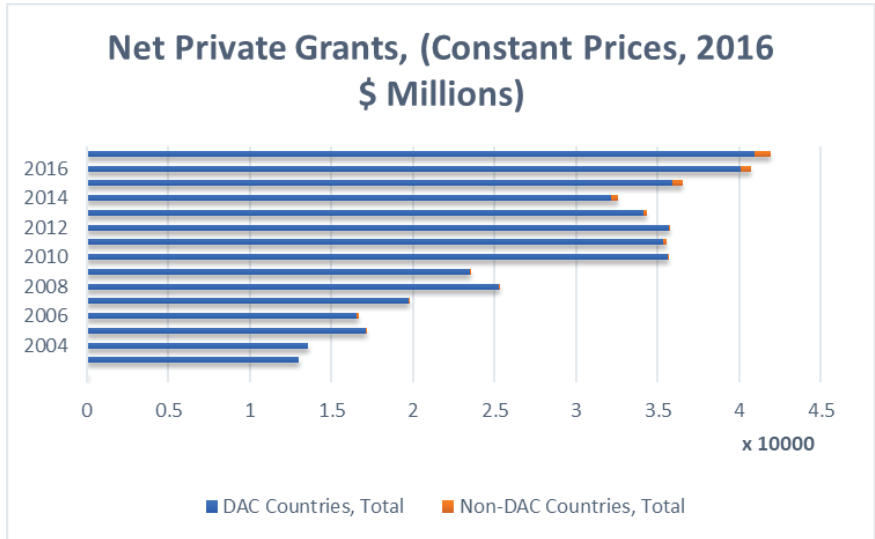


Figure 2: Net Private Grants 2004-2016

Source: OECD, DAC Stat.

Private funding and allocation from and through individuals, trusts and foundations, and companies and corporations are valued not just because of their sheer volume. These types of funding bring speed, flexibility and reliability into the field as they come with less earmarking and a longer time frame than funding from institutional or state donors. In general, it is believed that NGOs may provide better-targeted aid than official donors since the allocation of NGO aid is less distorted by the commercial and political mandates of state agencies, notably the promotion of exports and the formation of political alliances.¹³ NGOs often reach areas that are forgotten or left behind by government agencies. In some cases, governments do not recognize certain marginalized groups, or even render them illegal, while civil society groups reach and support them.¹⁴ Today most of the donor governments appear to share the view that NGOs have an important role to play in aid.¹⁵ Therefore, there is a global trend towards strengthening and encouraging NGOs in allocating both private and official development assistance. Figure 3 shows the official flows channeled to and through NGOs by OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries. Even though, in practice, aid from official flows is still the most important part of the aid structure at the international level, and is still widely allocated through bilateral or multilateral organizations as Figure 3 shows, development assistance channeled to and

through CSOs has become an important factor in the development aid field. From official flows, a vast amount (nearly 60 percent or more) goes to multilateral agencies (primarily UN agencies) in the first instance, while NGOs receive around 20 percent of the total.¹⁶ The majority of the amount going through NGOs goes to international NGOs. Thus, national and local NGOs get a small share of those official flows.

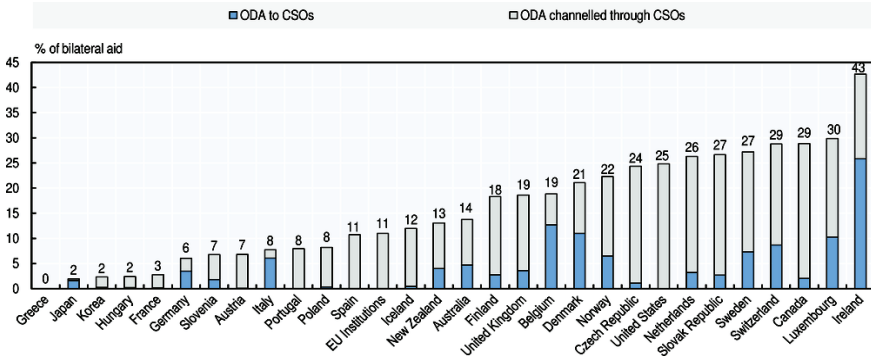


Figure 3: Share of ODA to and through CSOs by DAC Members, 2015.¹⁷ The value at each bar represents the share of aid to and through non-governmental organizations (%).

However, when it comes to private humanitarian aid, the vast majority of funding not only goes to and through NGOs, but is raised and allocated by national and local NGOs. Another important difference between official flows channeled to and through NGOs and private flows channeled through NGOs is the fact that official funds are channeled through NGOs and other private bodies to implement donor-initiated projects while private flows go to the NGO-initiated or private body-initiated projects. For instance, according to OECD data, in 2016, DAC members reported 12 percent of their ODA as aid through CSOs, and only 2 percent as aid to CSOs, i.e. aid for programs initiated by the CSOs themselves.¹⁸

Turkey as a Humanitarian State

Foreign aid plays an important role in the implementation of foreign policy and in the development of bilateral cooperation between countries. As such, it is a vital instrument that provides classical diplomacy with new opportunities in economic, social, cultural and humanitarian fields. Since the early 1950s, a group of developed countries has dominated the field of humanitarian assistance. The interest of developed countries in development aid has increased every year. In the 1950s, the U.S. and France were the leading countries, while

Australia, Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland joined the club in the 1960s, followed by Portugal and Spain in the 1970s. In the 1990s, Greece and Turkey, and in recent years, China, South Korea, India, Brazil and Mexico have been actively involved in development assistance activities.

Turkey's growing contributions are in line with broader trends reflecting the transformation of the world economy. The structure of foreign aid has undergone a transformation in line with the ascendance of emerging powers to prominent roles in global governance. In this regard, Turkey's growing visibility in this field, first and foremost, is another indicator of the emerging donor phenomenon.¹⁹ Turkey merits study as one of the major emerging donors.²⁰

Among emerging donors, Turkey is an important provider for several reasons. Development aid has two aspects: assistance received, and assistance provided. Turkey was a receiving country until the early 2000s. Thus, its transformation from an aid recipient to a major donor country is a very recent happening. In its transition to becoming a provider, Turkey's first foreign aid program was launched in June 1985 with an aid package of 10 million to the Sahel countries. At the height of the collapse of the Soviet Union from the mid and late 1980s until the late 1990s, Turkey operationalized its foreign aid policies to support its foreign policy objectives in the Caucasus and Central Asia.²¹ Turkey's humanitarian and development assistance was quite minimal until 2002. Since then, Turkey has made its way to becoming a major player in the field. From 2002 to 2017, aid volumes rose from \$67 million to \$3 billion with a nearly sixteen-fold increase as depicted in Figure 4 (See also the figure at the right-hand side of Table 1).

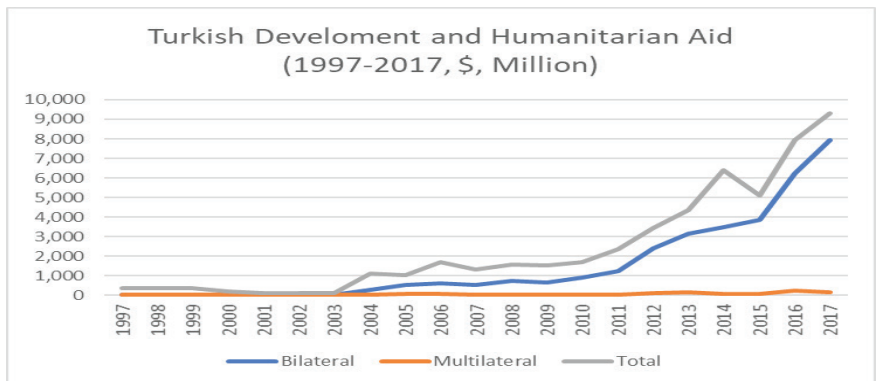


Figure 4: Turkey's Development and Humanitarian Aid (1997-2007)

Source: TIKA

When we look at Turkey’s bilateral aid, its main component has long been humanitarian aid. Turkey’s emergency and humanitarian aid fund was around \$3.2 billion in 2015, \$6.4 billion in 2016, and surpassed \$8 billion in 2017, corresponding to 0.85 percent of the country’s national dividend. With these numbers, Turkey is leading the world in humanitarian aid.²² This increase not only stems from a growing economy and a more international outlook, but also is due to a series of disasters on its doorstep, first and foremost the Syrian crisis. In the recent years, Turkey provided the largest share of its bilateral development co-operation to Syria, Somalia, Kyrgyzstan, Albania and Afghanistan. For almost all of these major crises, Turkey is among the top providers of humanitarian assistance.

The rate of increase in Turkey’s humanitarian assistance is tremendous. Turkey became the largest provider of humanitarian assistance in 2018 according to data gathered from OECD.

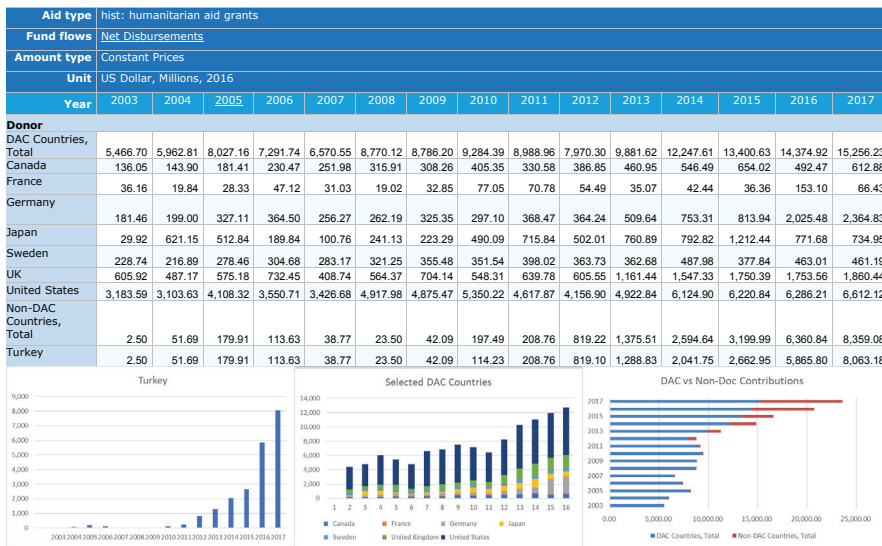


Table 1: Humanitarian Aid (2003-2017)

Source: OECD, DAC Stat.

The rate of increase in Turkey’s humanitarian assistance is tremendous. As shown in Figure 5, Turkey became the largest provider of humanitarian assistance in 2018 according to data gathered from OECD. Turkey is also well ahead of any other country in terms of the GDP-to-humanitarian-aid-giving ratio. As a matter of fact, Turkey has been the most generous country in the

world since 2016. According to recent reports on foreign aid, Turkey is the largest emerging aid donor (the largest non-Western and non-DAC country) and has been the most charitable nation three years in a row since 2016.²³

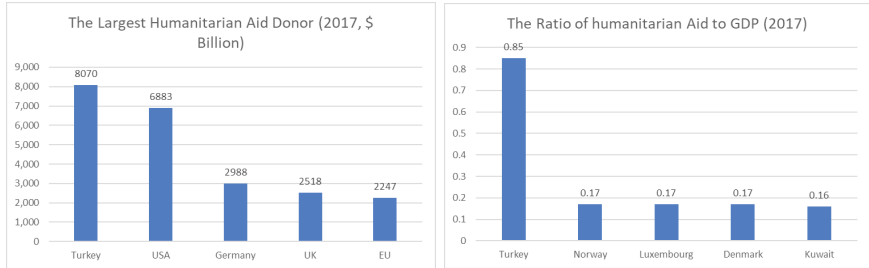


Figure 5: The Most Generous Donor (2017)

Source: TIKA, www.tika.gov.tr

Over the last decade, instruments such as public diplomacy, peace operations, economic interdependence, mediation, and cultural diplomacy, and foreign aid have dramatically expanded in TFP rhetoric and practice. However, Turkey has wittingly made humanitarian aid a defining feature of its foreign policy.²⁴ This has paved the way for a more institutionalized Turkish foreign aid structure, making it more sustainable and more reliable. For Turkey, humanitarian aid is an instrument of expanding its influence and position as a global actor.²⁵ Turkey's mission in providing development and humanitarian assistance as a regional power is to expand its regional and global influence by carrying out its due responsibilities toward particular geographies and the people of those geographies. In this sense, it is not surprising to see that its aid efforts have been characterized as a historical, cultural and ideological mission.²⁶ Turkey's aid goes to the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. At the global level, Turkey has initiated a number of global activities, such as hosting the first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul on May 23-24, 2016, and initiating a network among the national societies of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries to establish a joint humanitarian aid platform in Istanbul to strengthen cooperation, all of which indicate Turkey's high profile in the field. As such, Turkey is conducting a "humanitarian foreign policy" in which a group of governmental bodies such as TIKA, AFAD, Kızılay, YTB and THY, collaborate and coordinate with civilian entities, firms, foundations and NGOs.

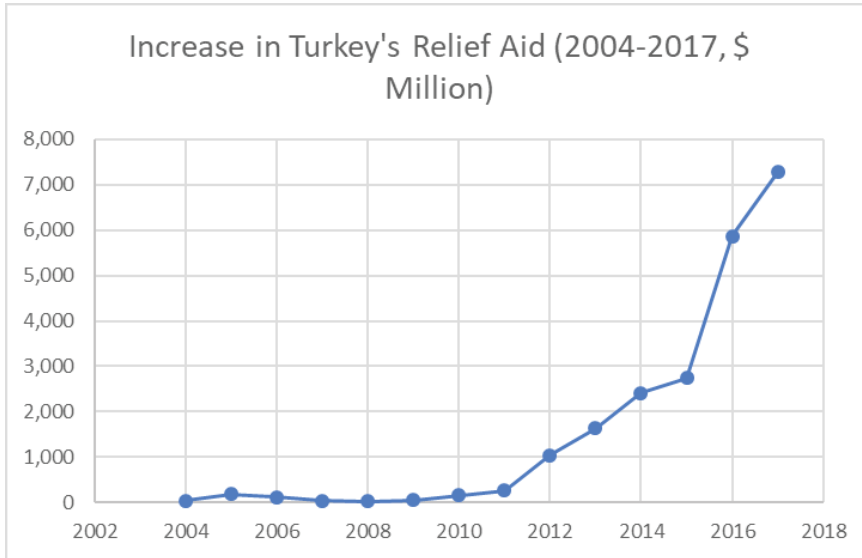


Figure 6: Turkey's Humanitarian Relief Aid (2004-2017)

Source: TIKA, www.tika.gov.tr

In this respect, Turkey offers a new model of foreign aid, a multitrack approach that promotes a greater involvement of non-state actors and resolute and fast implementation.²⁷ In this sense, Turkey's model of humanitarian relief efforts heavily relies on non-state actors, especially NGOs.²⁸ NGOs do not just cooperate and coordinate a "humanitarian approach" through a targeted foreign aid program, they also raise and polish Turkey's humanitarian power brand.

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Turkish Humanitarian NGOs

When it comes to development and humanitarian aid, the role of non-state actors has increased significantly over the last decades. Thousands of NGOs and private foundations work tirelessly to deal with humanitarian and development issues arising particularly in wars, conflicts and crisis situations. They operate in different geographies for different reasons and with different motivations, facing different sets of challenges. Figure 7 shows the trends at a global level with the increasing rate of grants by NGOs.

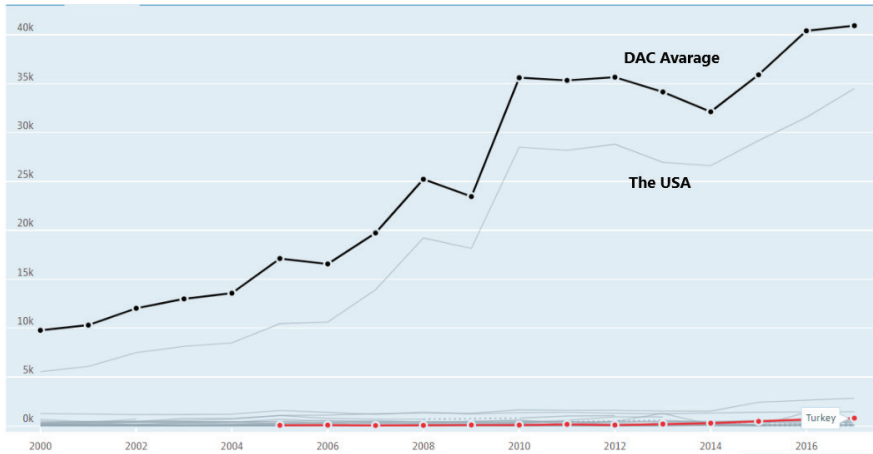


Figure 7: Grants by Private Agencies and NGOs (2000-2017, \$ million)

Source: OECD, DAC Stat.

Turkish NGOs are part of this global trend and their activities and accomplishments have increased in the last decade. However, in comparison to global trends, the development and humanitarian aid provided by Turkish NGOs is still relatively very small. There are several reasons for that and we will address some of them in the following sections.

Turkish NGOs have been involved in humanitarian activities in more than 100 countries around the world, facilitating in many different sectors from training/education and health to water well drilling.

Even though their share is small compared to global trends, from Figure 8, we can see that Turkish NGOs have become important actors in Turkish development and humanitarian aid. 2005 is the year when Turkish NGOs activities began to be reported in TIKA Official Development Reports. Before

2005, we do not have any available/reliable data. The development assistance made by Turkish Civil Society Organizations since 2005 shows a continuous increase. In this context, the amount of assistance provided by Turkish NGOs from their own resources amounted to \$56.7 million in 2005, while the amount reached \$707 million in 2017. From its humble beginnings, the contribution of Turkish NGOs to Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy has increased 12-fold, and it should be noted that these are locally raised funds. The projects realized by Turkish NGOs over the years have been primarily imple-

mented within the scope of education, health, water and water hygiene, social services and shelter, food supplies and emergency humanitarian aid of all kinds. Turkish NGOs have been involved in humanitarian activities in more than 100 countries around the world, facilitating in many different sectors from training/education and health to water well drilling. What is important here is that they have established an important know-how and institutional capacity over the last decade, allowing them to lead even more comprehensive humanitarian projects in the future on behalf of Turkish civil society.

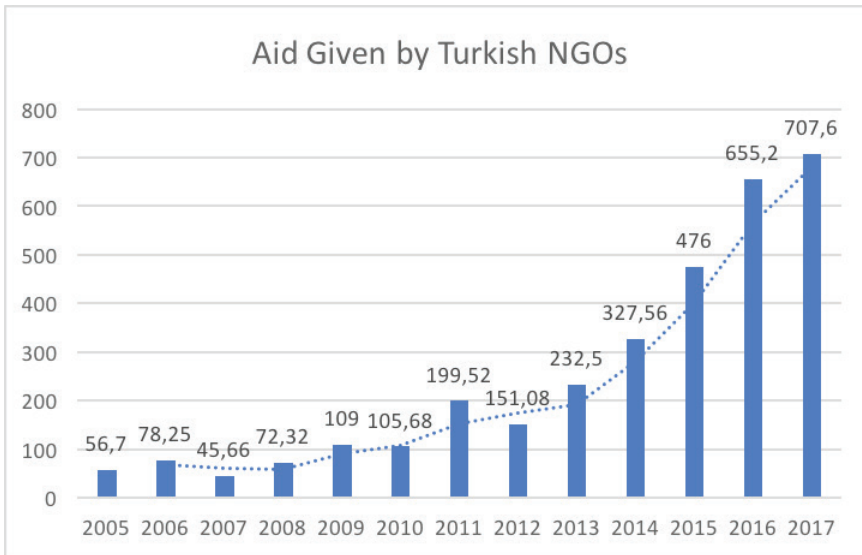


Figure 8: Aid Given by Turkish NGOs (2005-2017)

Source: TIKA, www.tika.gov.tr

Turkish NGOs are recognized by the Turkish government as an important humanitarian and development aid instrument. Therefore, there is significant interaction between official state actors and non-state actors in the field of development and humanitarian aid. As Turkey improved its profile in humanitarian assistance, Turkish NGOs also started to play a vital role. Some studies even suggest that there is a high level of parallelism, if not complementarity, exhibited by the state and Turkish NGOs.²⁹ Indeed, the aid structure in Turkey is a mechanism where state, semi-state and non-state actors collaborate and cooperate in the business of humanitarian aid. Therefore, Turkish NGOs providing humanitarian aid merit more rigorous study. To this end, we brought together data acquired from 25 semi-structured interviews with people work-

ing for Turkish NGOs to analyze their motivations, interests, challenges and contributions to TFP. The rest of the article mainly draws on this data.

Motivations

In the semi-structured interviews, we had a specifically designed part to gather information about the main motivations, interests or drivers of the activities in humanitarian aid. To this end, we posed several questions with rank order scaling options. Among the questions in this part, one was “what is the main driver of providing aid to a particular region/ or country?” with five options: humanitarian and altruistic sentiments, operational limits, religious motivations, national sentiments and financial incentives.

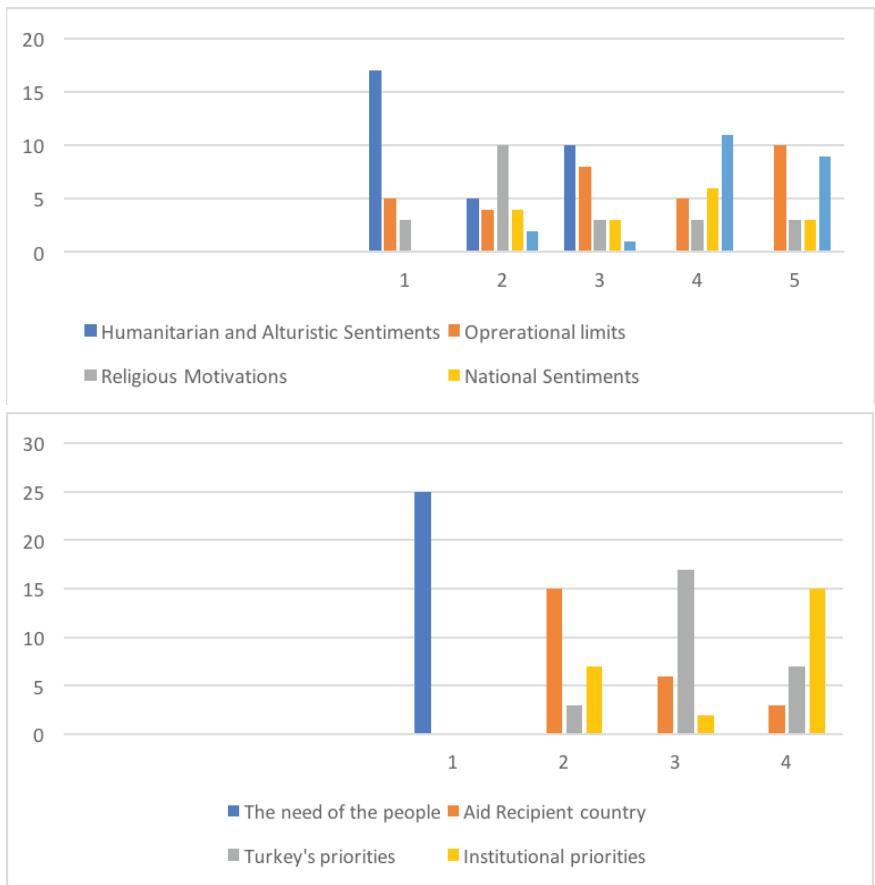


Figure 9: Motivations of providing aid

Interviewees were asked to rank these options from 1-5, 1 being the most important driver, and 5 the least important driver of their activities. The general view about Turkish NGOs is that they are ideologically and religiously motivated since most of these organizations depend on religious grassroots. However, the results (see Figure 8) show that humanitarian and altruistic sentiments rather than religious motivations are the most important drivers of their activities. From the results of the statistical factor analysis on the data, we can argue that religion is, however, a more important factor than national sentiments (national sentiments were explained as Turkey's due responsibilities toward Ottoman geographies, or Turkic relatives in other geographies, while religious motivations refer to Islamic solidarity and *ummah* understanding; these explanations were provided before the interviewees answered the question). The survey shows us that operational limits (whether the activities can be done or not) come as one of the important drivers (more than religious or national sentiments), while humanitarian and altruistic sentiments are the most influential driver for the humanitarian aid activities. These findings challenge conventional assumptions about the role of religion in Turkish NGOs' motivations. However, when we compare our findings from the questions with rank order scaling and open-ended questions, there appears a nuance, which fundamentally derives from the fact that there are three common themes among almost all Turkish NGOs, which we can detect from our notes from the interviews: a) Muslim/Islamic solidarity, b) Ottoman legacy or responsibilities toward the Ottoman lands, and c) the representation of Turkey. Without exception, all of the interviewees mentioned/underlined these themes while answering open-ended questions. These findings suggest that Turkish aid agencies are indeed driven by humanitarian altruistic reasons, yet they also care about Islamic solidarity, the representation of Turkey, and Ottoman legacies, and they reflect these sentiments within their activities.

The second question in the interview is designed to gather information about motivations, interests and drivers. It states, "Which factors, and to what extent, affect the scope of your humanitarian aid activities?" with a ranking option from 1-4, 1 being the most and 4 the least. The factors were the need of the people, the aid recipient country, Turkey's priorities, and institutional priorities. The results derived from the answers to this question actually verify the results of the earlier question mentioned above. All the respondents identified the need of the people as the top

priority while listing institutional priorities as the least important factor. However, this question reveals also that the name/profile of the country (which country they are providing the humanitarian aid) plays an important role in the decision to grant the humanitarian aid. In a similar vein, Turkey’s priorities are considered in making humanitarian aid decisions. This is a very important finding, because it shows us that people carrying out humanitarian aid for these NGOs delicately consider Turkey’s priorities, as set by the government and shared through official statements and speeches. That is also reflected in the open-ended questions.

Challenges

In the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked about the most important limiting factors for their humanitarian aid activities, with a rank order scaling option from 1-5, 1 being the most 5 the least limiting factor.

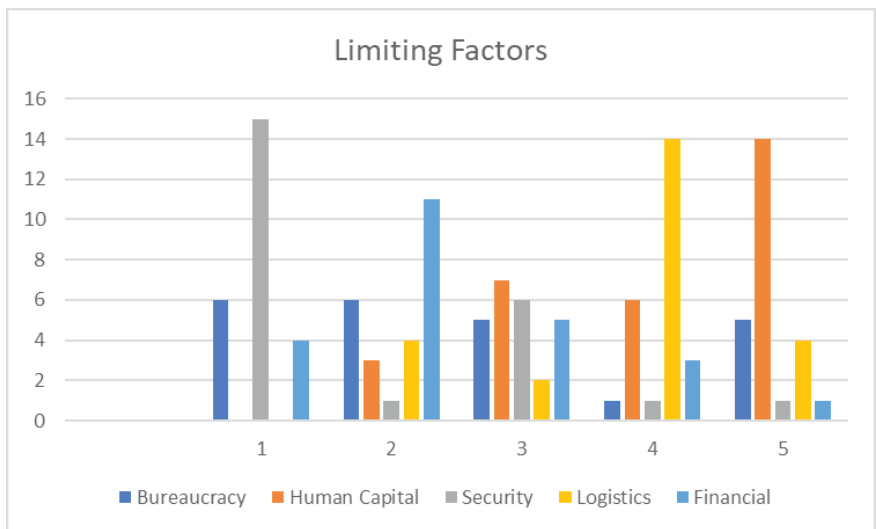


Figure 10: Challenges for NGOs

From the answers to this question, security appears as the most important challenge. Given the fact that Turkish NGOs are working directly in volatile and dangerous environments in distributing emergency relief, it is an expected answer. Bureaucracy comes next, while financial problems, human capital related challenges and logistical limits follow. However, from the open-ended questions part, coordination appears to be another

er important issue, mentioned by almost every participant. Coordination involves vertical and horizontal coordination steps. Vertical coordination means coordination between/among Turkish NGOs. Naturally, the activities of these NGOs significantly overlap both in terms of geography and sectors. Every NGO, except for a very few, does the same type of activities. There is very little specialization in activities among Turkish NGOs. In addition, these NGOs tacitly compete against each other in many cases, due to the fact that they represent different grassroots or communities. This leads to a significant number of duplications which limit the economic scale of their activities. Although not a reliable solution, the only available mechanism to overcome duplication and mismanagement is a personal relationship between NGOs' representatives and workers.

Horizontal coordination refers to coordination efforts between state institutions like AFAD, TIKA, Kızılay and Turkish NGOs carrying out humanitarian aid. When it comes to Syria and efforts to address the Syrian refugee crisis, Kızılay is officially responsible for coordinating these activities, and NGOs are duly responsible to inform and be guided by Kızılay. There is, however, not enough empirical evidence showing how and to what extent this coordination works. Nonetheless, the majority of the participants in our interviews did not prefer a coordination mechanism via state authorities, arguing that it would limit their independence and impartiality. They argued such a mechanism would politicize the Turkish NGOs' activities in humanitarian aid and render them disregarded. Nonetheless, coordination is a problem that has to be addressed in the short and medium terms.

Human capital is another important challenge of the Turkish NGOs. As the nature of their activities involves humanitarian relief, NGOs heavily rely on volunteers. This leads to at least two types of problems: a) inadequate numbers of vol-

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unteers, and b) lack of training; most of the volunteers do not possess the required skills and training for working on the ground. We asked the NGOs whether they provide vocational training for their volunteers; the majority of them said no, or not enough.

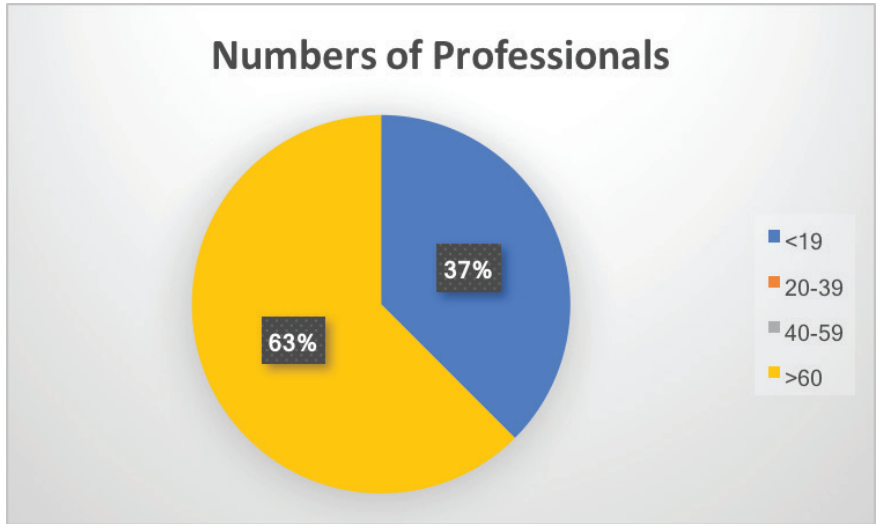


Figure 11: Human Capital

According to the data we acquired during our interviews, the NGOs' professional human capital is very limited. 40 percent of the 25 Turkish NGOs which offer humanitarian relief programs have fewer than 20 professional (paid and permanent) workers, which include board members, managers, accountants, office secretaries and other lower level staff. Interestingly, the rest have more than 60 such professional workers. More than 70 percent of NGOs work with more than 150 volunteers for their operations on the ground. Some of them recognized the lack of human capital. It is our understanding from the interviews that they do not pay due attention to this issue. We infer the number of volunteers to be enough as the scale of the activity is small for the time being. When the scale increases, they generally rely on local NGOs in the countries where they provide aid. However, almost all of them understand the importance of training and capacity-building efforts, and they accept that the state has a vital, irreplaceable role to play here. Several participants underlined the importance of raising the interest of young people in voluntary activities through special courses during primary and secondary education in Turkey. They also suggested that there should be higher level courses on NGOs in the curriculum of social sciences at Turkish Universities and special programs for NGOs at the master and doctorate level. These interpretations indicate an increased awareness of the importance of capacity-building and human capital. During our interviews with the Disaster and Emergency Man-

agement Authority (AFAD) officials, they revealed that they have provided capacity-building programs for NGOs in the past and they are planning to do more with the help of International Organizations in the near future.

Financial Problems are the most enduring and important challenges for the Turkish NGOs. In terms of economy of scale, funding resources, and accountability, Turkish NGOs have a long way to go. As Turkey’s economy has grown, NGOs’ funding resources have also grown, yet they are still not sustainable and remain time- and event-dependent, while their resources rely heavily on domestic donations. Donations increase during special periods such as Ramadan and Eid al-adha (Feast of Sacrifice). However, these types of donations are subject to special activities like distributing food for fast breaking or Eid-meat. Even though Turkish NGOs reach millions of people worldwide, such activities become contested from time to time. In addition to special periods on the calendar, Turkish NGOs launch humanitarian aid campaigns during crisis situations such as the ones occurring in Somalia, Syria, Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan or the Philippines. Here one of the main problems is that many Turkish NGOs have a core support base due to their constituency, which generally consists of a small community. However, this limits their actions, forcing them to focus only on one crisis at a time. In an era of a growing number of simultaneously acute humanitarian crises, that limitation is a vital one that can only be overcome by a larger donation and funding base.

As Turkey’s economy has grown, NGOs’ funding resources have also grown, yet they are still not sustainable and remain time- and event-dependent, while their resources rely heavily on domestic donations.

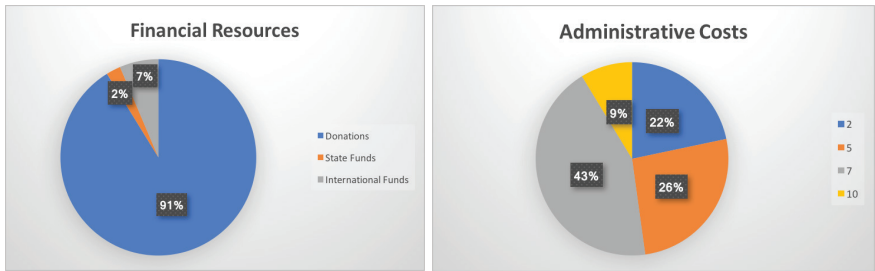


Figure 12: Financial Limits

The bilateral and multilateral funds originate from developed countries, private entities, individuals, and multilateral organizations are the biggest sources

of funds to international NGOs. They also rely on their own fundraising campaigns. Nonetheless, Turkish NGOs principally rely on funds and donations while receiving little from the conventional project base funding schemes of multilateral organizations for NGOs. That may increase their independence, yet it certainly curtails their economy of scale. As seen in Figure 11 above, Turkish NGOs raise more than 90 percent of their financial resources from their own domestic fundraising capacities. During interviews, participants overly emphasized that they do not see this as a problem because funds from developed countries and multilateral institutions are project-based and come with particular conditions attached. However, the conventional examples and importance of bigger funds for creating a larger impact on the ground is obvious, and Turkish NGOs have to adopt project base humanitarian activities, which would also introduce accountability. Accountability is one of the most important problem for Turkish NGOs. They tend to be responsible to their own constituency for their actions, yet we have witnessed several fraud and mismanagement allegations in the field. Turkish NGOs are in a better shape compared to their peers in developed countries in terms of administrative costs. On average, they spend 7 percent or less on administrative operations. However, we think that this phenomenon hugely intersects with the fact that their professional human capital is very limited.

Institutionalism/professionalism is another and well-averred problem among Turkish NGOs carrying out humanitarian aid programs. When we look at institutional design, many of the Turkish NGOs undertaking humanitarian aid missions are Islamic-oriented grassroots organizations established for the purpose of charity and supported by pious people. Therefore, there is an ideological similarity between the ruling AK Party, and Turkish NGOs relying upon Islamic grassroots movements. Even though they are independent, some of the NGOs in Turkey, due to their ideological links with the governing party, are characterized as GONGOs, (government-sponsored non-governmental organizations).³⁰ As can be seen from figure 11 above, according to our data derived from the interviews, they use little or no public funds, and when we asked why they did not, they underlined their independence. Even though there are similarities in terms of ideology and constituencies between the ruling government and Turkish NGOs, there are substantial differences when it comes to policy implications. This suggests that the majority of Turkish NGOs initiating substantial outcomes in the field of humanitarian aid are aware of the importance of independence as civil society entities.

Besides their lack of financial sustainability, these NGOs are very young. Some of them were established in the 1990s, (like IHH 1992, Deniz Feneri 1992, Yeryüzü Doktorları 2000); the majority were established in the 2000s. In this sense, the majority of Turkish NGOs are relatively very new civil society entities. Therefore, they still lack institutional consolidation and sustainability. In addition, many of the NGOs' workers, even among the highest level of managers, actually have other full-time jobs and do humanitarian aid work on a part-time base. Very few Turkish NGOs have a board of management relying on a professional division of labor. Many lack conventional managerial divisions such as CEO, COO and organizational planning. That constitutes a huge gap in terms of professionalism in the field. However, there are very good examples in terms of professionalism, and there is a fast-adaptation process through socialization and social learning among Turkish NGOs. This is likely to bring more professionalism in the near future.

Developed countries carry out most of their projects, programs and technical cooperation in recipient countries through NGOs. However, the support provided to Turkish NGOs by public institutions and organizations in Turkey remains limited. In addition, except for some exceptional foundations, the understanding of institutional cooperation between NGOs and the public has not yet been achieved. Turkish NGOs have incredible advantages in addressing emergency humanitarian crises. Yet the full potential of NGOs cannot be realized in terms of developmental and humanitarian assistance until they are supported by the public through capacity-increasing trainings.

Contributions to TFP

Foreign aid decisions are not taken in a vacuum. There are a number of factors and actors effecting it. In the Turkish case, state entities such as the Presidency, the current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, himself and related AK Party officials along with the foreign ministry are the most important actors. Under that upper level state body, there are several other state entities functioning at the lower level, such as related bodies from different ministries, TİKA, Diyanet, AFAD, Foreign Trade Directories, and the Turkish General Staff. TİKA functions as the coordination agency between different state entities at different levels. Public discourse and public opinion are also important drivers in making humanitarian aid decisions. Along with the public, non-state actors such as foundations, NGOs, private entities, business associations, and labor unions play an important role. These actors have a variety of different views about the nature and practice of humanitarian aid, including where

to provide, how to provide and what to provide. All of these different views affect each other in an environment where events at the international level continuously unfold. Along with the understanding and practice of other international actors such as states and organizations, crises, wars, and natural and manmade disasters have substantial ramifications for the humanitarian aid decisions taken at the domestic level. From that complex calculus, which is reflected in Figure 12 below, a foreign aid decision is constructed.

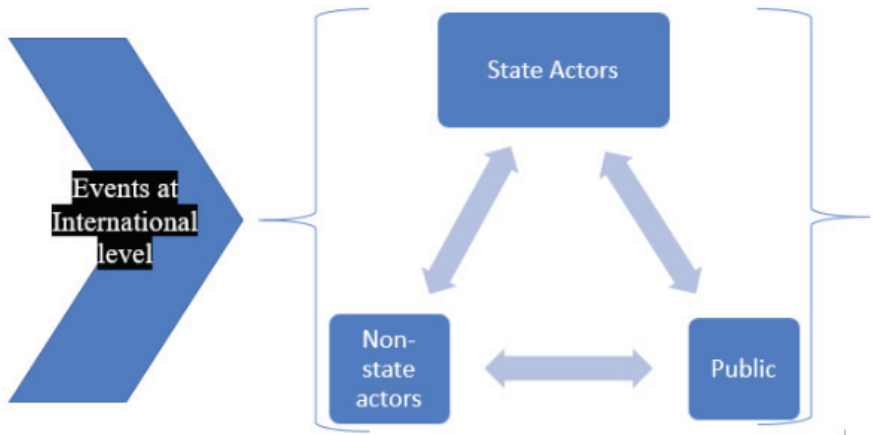


Figure 13: Actors effecting Humanitarian Aid policy

The role of non-state actors is recognized in the foreign policy literature.³¹ Yet this role is generally characterized as primarily discursive in nature when it comes to humanitarian aid policies.³² However, we think that at least in three areas, Turkish NGOs carrying out humanitarian aid make practical contributions to TFP.

Branding Turkey, Public Diplomacy, and Soft Power

Even though there is very limited literature on the interaction between nation branding, soft-power, public diplomacy, and foreign aid, they are significantly interconnected.³³ Both official development aid at the state level and development and humanitarian aid at the civil society level have a direct effect

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on Turkey’s image as a regional and humanitarian power. All of the activities of Turkish NGOs are perceived as “Turkey’s helping hand” even though they do not officially represent the country. Turkish

NGOs use badges with Turkish flag along with their logos. In our interviews, we asked interviewees whether they feel that they represent Turkey: all of them without exception said yes. They said, “We provide aid abroad thanks to the donations coming from our nation, and we provide aid on the behalf of this nation and the Turkish people. Everyone knows that it comes from Turkey independent of who we are.”³⁴ Or they said, “Sometimes there were rifts between states, and state bodies could not freely go to places where we can go. But, even in such places, when we work and provide humanitarian aid, no one says thank *you*, everyone says thanks to Turkey. Therefore, we represent Turkey every time we are on the ground.”³⁵

Turkey has kept its position as being one of the largest aid providing countries, and the largest humanitarian aid providing donor with respect to national income. Especially, the increase in relief aid provided by Turkey (official and private flows) since 2004 is a showcase for Turkey’s profile in the realm of humanitarian assistance. Turkey has launched several relief efforts from Syria to Somalia and from Myanmar to Bangladesh and the Philippines. In some instances, Turkey’s assistance is purely motivated by humanitarian considerations. Yet, like many other middle powers, Turkey also tries to find a niche diplomacy area³⁶ in its foreign aid programs by focusing on carefully selected individual countries and regions.³⁷ Turkey as a middle power willingly makes humanitarian and development aid a niche diplomacy area by branding itself as a humanitarian/virtuous power.³⁸ Turkish NGOs execute humanitarian aid campaigns that yield public diplomacy outcomes,³⁹ and those activities support Turkey’s soft power in recipient geographies and increase Turkey’s nation branding efforts to be known as a “humanitarian power.” Turkish NGOs are quite probably one of the biggest contributors to that notion in TFP.

Awareness of Local Factors and Experience towards Geographies

A second important foreign policy contribution by Turkish NGOs is that they bring local knowledge and awareness back to foreign policy practices. NGO volunteers and staff work in very different and very difficult environments, and they bring back awareness of local factors and first-hand experiences from little-known geographies. Foreign missions are generally not able to contact local populations due to security issues, whereas people working for NGOs are always on the ground with locals. Their interaction yields several useful insights. This critical information, if it is allowed to be shared, is very valuable in terms of foreign policy planning and im-

plementation. During our interviews, we heard a number of stories that illustrated such cases. However, when we asked whether they have channels to share their practical experiences with the foreign policy decision makers, the answer was generally “not really” or “partly” through personal relations. Officials at TIKA and AFAD noted that from time to time they gather NGOs in conferences or workshops, or they request reports of their activities to take their views on several issues.

New Alignments and New Tools and Scopes

Breaking with the traditional inward-looking approach, Turkey has expanded its foreign policy ambitions beyond its immediate neighborhood. With a combination of new ideational, political and economic alignments, Turkey has become an important player in regional and global affairs. While Turkey’s relations with the U.S., EU and NATO have maintained their traditional importance, Turkey has initiated serious political openings toward the Middle East, the Balkans and Africa, while deepening relations with Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia. Especially on the African continent, in the Far East Asia and Latin America, Turkey’s efforts at the state and non-state levels can be regarded as South-South cooperation, which is a new horizon for traditional TFP. Turkey’s humanitarian aid policy can be read as a new expression of a new foreign policy outlook with numbers of new dynamics, tools and scopes.⁴⁰ All of Turkey’s missions and capabilities, including state apparatuses from the military to the Turkish Red Crescent, from the Ministry of Economics to TIKA, from Diyanet to Turkish Airlines, along with Turkish civil society are on the ground for the purpose of increasing Turkey’s foreign policy influence through development and humanitarian aid. As a rising power, Turkey has been clearly seeking to use foreign aid in its quest to become a regional power by establishing linkages beyond its immediate geography. The cohesion and cooperation in the formation and implementation of foreign policy between different foreign policy actors is a very new phenomenon for traditional TFP that paves the way for Turkey’s reorientation with a broader international outlook. NGOs’ efforts and coordination contribute greatly to this new outlook. In this sense, Turkish NGOs are an important factor in writing Turkey’s new story in recent decades. Although not reflected in the literature, numbers of Turkish NGOs have done spectacular things, primarily in terms of emergency humanitarian assistance, education and health care.

Conclusion

In the foreign aid (both humanitarian and development aid) area, one of the important global trends at least for the last 20 years is that the balance between state and non-state actors has shifted in favor of the latter. Private aid and non-state actors have grown in prominence in the development aid field. Especially, humanitarian aid channeled to and through NGOs has become a truly global trend. Turkey is no exception to these developments. Indeed, when it comes to Turkey, humanitarian aid and NGOs are even more important.

In parallel with Turkey's economic growth and increasing foreign policy ambitions, Turkey's contribution to humanitarian and development aid has significantly increased, which has allowed Turkey to deepen its ties with different countries in different regions. In more than 150 countries from Afghanistan to Haiti, Turkey continues to provide development and humanitarian assistance for the purpose of enhancing its bilateral economic, commercial, technical, social, and cultural relations. Within this context, humanitarian aid has become one of Turkey's most important forms of aid. Turkey has steadfastly addressed various crises, atrocities and natural disasters in countries including Somalia and Syria, and has extended its helping hand to other regions. Turkey's way of implementing and allocating aid reside in the collaborative relationship between the government, official/semi-official institutions and faith-based charities and NGOs. Therefore, Turkish NGOs have become more active and important as humanitarian and development aid has emerged as a significant tool in the TFP tool-box.

This study draws on a broad set of data acquired from semi-structured interviews with people working for Turkish NGOs to analyze their respective motivations, interests, challenges and contribution to TFP. From that comprehensive study, we can assess that conventional assumptions about the role of religion in Turkish NGOs' motivations is not verified. While Turkish NGOs use a rhetorical attachment to Islamic solidarity, Ottoman legacy or Turkish identity, the first and foremost motivation behind their humanitarian aid activities is humanitarianism/altruism. Human capital, institutionalization and professionalism, financial limits, along with security and bureaucratic drawbacks are the common challenges faced by Turkish NGOs. In addition to these challenges, both vertical and horizontal coordination is an important issue slowing down NGOs, which they cannot solve alone without state

assistance. When it comes to contributions to foreign policy practice, we think that at least in three areas, Turkish NGOs carrying out humanitarian aid make a practical contribution to TFP: 1) branding Turkey, public diplomacy, and soft power; 2) awareness of local factors and experience toward geographies; 3) new alignments and new tools and scopes. Their activities in humanitarian assistance have directly and indirectly contributed to TFP in these areas.

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