The Rise of Turkey as a Non-Traditional Aid Donor in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine Turkey’s engagement with Sub-Saharan African countries in the last decade and elaborate Turkey’s distinctive approach as a donor country. Sub-Saharan Africa was one of the neglected areas of Turkish foreign policy until the AKP era. Turkey’s Africa policy gained momentum with the declaration of Year of Africa in 2005. In addition to increase of high-level bilateral visits, Turkey expanded its diplomatic representations in this region. Turkey’s opening to Sub-Saharan Africa took place at the time of a new scramble for Africa. Southern powers such as China, Brazil, India started to compete with the former colonial powers from Europe for resources of African countries. Turkey used its non-colonial history as an asset and adopted a partnership approach in its relations with Sub-Saharan African countries. Consequently, Turkey acted as a benevolent donor and achieved hundreds of projects and improved African peoples’ life in the different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Turkey, Non-Traditional Aid Donor, Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Global aid landscape underwent significant transformation regarding to the modalities and actors of development aid over the last two decades. Until the 2000s, global development aid policy was shaped and implemented by Western donors that are members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As a neutral and principal committee of development, the DAC of OECD is located at the centre of mainstream development policy. Rather than delivering aid, the DAC defines and monitors standards of development aid and become a main platform for sharing views and exchanging lessons. The members of OECD-DAC 1 delivered around 95 percent of total ODA in the world in the 1990s. Starting from 2000s, the dominance of OECD DAC in global aid politics has been challenged by new donors of global South. In the words of Ngaire Woods, “a silent revolution” took place with the rise of new donors that

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1 DAC has 30 members: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States and the European Union.
entered international development landscape quietly without overturning or replacing the rules of established donors. Unlike the less generous and less attractive aid of established donors, new donors deliver aid more generously with favourable conditions.\textsuperscript{3}

In this context, this paper aims to examine Turkey's evolving donor role in Sub-Saharan Africa in a changing global aid politics. In the first part, it explains the rise of non-DAC donors and South-South cooperation. In the second part, it investigates the features of Turkey's development aid policy and sheds light on Turkey's development and humanitarian aid policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. It argues that Turkey's aid approach is different from both OECD-DAC donors and non-traditional donors from global South. Turkey pursues its own development aid approach in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Changing Global Aid Landscape and the Rise of Non-Traditional Donors

According to OECD Paris Declaration, “South-South cooperation on development aims to observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, equality among developing partners and respect for their independence, national sovereignty, cultural diversity and identity and local content. It plays an important role in international development cooperation and is a valuable complement to North South cooperation”\textsuperscript{4} Development policy is one aspect of South-South cooperation. In the field of development, it refers to donor countries of global South that do not have colonial past. Different terms are used such as emerging donors, rising donors to define the South-South cooperation in development realm. In fact, the term of emerging donor is misleading because most of these Southern donors have had a long history of development partnership. The term non-DAC, which is used to classify countries that are not members of OECD-DAC, is more appropriate.

The definition of non-DAC donors refers to “residual category” since it defines this countries by “what they are not”. The non-DAC donors refrain from labelling themselves as donor since the term donor is usually associated with paternalism, post-colonial hierarchies and superiority of Western norms and ideas and neo-colonial interference and call themselves as partners.\textsuperscript{5} There are at least 23 non-DAC countries including the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs), the Gulf and other oil-rich countries as well as middle

income countries such as Turkey. The rise of the BRICs as aid providers challenges the coherence of conventional aid system. For instance, the BRICs are reluctant to follow aid norms and standards established by the World Bank or the OECD on the ground that they do not participate sufficiently in making of these norms and standards. Instead of being member of the DAC, they prefer to influence development policies through loose multilateral coalitions and international fora, such as the G20. Hence, the BRICs have become an important alternative for Western-dominated aid system.

The rise of the non-DAC donors has made current era as an “age of choice” in which developing countries have more options in terms of the sources of development aid. Therefore, direct aid conditionality is likely to be less effective, though traditional donors have to find other ways of engaging with issues of governance and democracy. To illustrate, the non-DAC donors’ interest to Africa has increased development aid flows to Africa. More African countries are able to receive development aid. However, this situation does not necessarily bring economic and social development in Africa. In many cases, non-DAC donors provide aid for expanding trade opportunities, make use of natural resources and exercising political influence.

Summing up, global aid politics was established and conducted by the pattern of asymmetrical relationship between North and South. However, global aid structure changed dramatically with the rise of new donors in the 2000s. The new aid architecture is quite different from the old one established by a few bilateral and multilateral donors. Non-DAC donors consisting of countries of Global South, Arab donors and other regional emerging powers deliver substantial amounts of aid. Consequently, new age of development is made of both OECD-DAC donors and non-traditional donors.

**Turkey’s Evolving Donor Role in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Compared to the OECD-DAC donors, Turkey’s emerging donor status is a relatively new phenomenon. During the Cold War era, Turkey was a aid

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9 Morazin, op.cit, p. 4.
11 Kragelund, op.cit, p. 580.
recipient country receiving aid from various international organizations. As a EU candidate country, Turkey is still receiving pre-accession aid from the European Union. In the mid-2000s, Turkey started to deliver more aid than it receives and changed its status from aid recipient to net donor country.

Although Turkey is a newcomer donor in global aid politics, institutional structure of Turkish development cooperation was established in the post-Cold War period. Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) was established in 1992 to help state-building of processes newly-independent states of Central Asia. Turkey's early efforts of aid giving were limited in terms of aid volume and geographical scope. Central Asia and Caucasus countries became main recipients of Turkish aid between 1992-1997. The dissolution of former Yugoslavia and ethnic wars in Bosnia and Kosovo led to shift of aid resources from Central Asia to Balkans in the late 1990s. Hence, Turkey's aid activities concentrated in the areas that had close cultural and historical ties with Turkey in the 1990s. Turkey's provision of aid to its neighborhood in the 1990s was explained by Turkey's interest in orderly transition in its neighborhood and Turkey's shared identity and history with these regions. According to Altunisik, the interest and identity has continued to be elements of discursive aspects of Turkish development aid policy.

In the mid-2000s, Turkish development and humanitarian aid underwent significant changes. Turkey's steady economic growth and new foreign policy orientations enabled Turkey to restructure its development aid policy. Turkey increased its aid steadily and became one of active donors in global development politics. In addition to the provision of aid delivery to neighbouring countries, Turkey began to give aid in different parts of the world, including Africa and Asia. TIKA has around 40 offices in the world, 8 of which are located in sub-Saharan African countries. Currently, Turkey has aid coordination offices in Senegal, Niger, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Namibia and Cameroon in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The expansion of Turkey's aid activities to Sub-Saharan Africa was to some extent motivated by Turkey's new foreign policy under the AKP era. Africa was one of the neglected of Turkish foreign policy until 2000s. The 1998 Turkey's Africa Opening Action Plan aimed to foster the relationship between Turkey and Africa. It was prepared by under the guidance of Ismail Cem, a social democrat politician who served as foreign minister in a

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12 Pinar İpek., “Ideas and Change in Foreign Policy Instruments: Soft Power and the Case of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA)”", Foreign Policy Analysis, 2014, p.7
13 Ibid., p.8
three-party coalition government. Yet, this action plan was not put into practice due to the political instabilities and 2001 economic crisis.\(^{15}\) Turkey’s Africa policy gained momentum with the declaration of “Year of Africa” in 2005. In addition to increase of high-level bilateral visits, Turkey expanded its diplomatic representations in this region. Turkey started to open embassies in 2009 and sent its first ambassadors to Tanzania and the Ivory Coast. While there were only 12 Turkish Embassies in African countries in 2000, 5 of them were in North Africa, Turkey increased the number of its diplomatic embassies and reached 39 embassies and 4 Consulate Generals in Africa in the continent\(^{16}\). As a result, Turkey became one of the few countries that have strong diplomatic presence in Africa.

Turkey’s development and humanitarian aid policy is one of the main pillars of Turkey’s opening to Africa. According to former TIKA president, Turkey’s aspiration to become a regional power added impetus to expansion of Turkey’s development aid activities. In addition to this political aim, Turkish ODA was used to expand Turkey’s export market in developing countries.\(^{17}\) Starting from 2004, TIKA’s coordination with Turkish Foreign Ministry have become intensified. Turkish development aid policy has been promoted by state agencies as a means of public diplomacy. Furthermore, Turkey started to select particular projects to increase visibility of Turkish aid\(^{18}\) TIKA’s activities was rearranged to be supplementary of Turkey’s new initiatives in foreign policy. Ministry of Foreign Affairs is given role in political coordination of development aid and setting major policy decisions, TIKA is charged with technical cooperation of aid\(^{19}\) In this regard, Turkey’s Development Policy played a decisive role Turkey’s “opening-up” to Africa policy. TIKA opened up coordination offices in different parts of Africa and facilitated the consolidation of diplomatic ties between Turkey and sub-Saharan African countries.

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18 Ipek, op.cit.p.10.
19 Altunisik, op.cit.p.3.
### Turkey ODA by top 10 recipients in 2015 (Millions USD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ODA (USD)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic</td>
<td>2694,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>314,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>98,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>85,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>56,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>West Bank and Gaza Strip</td>
<td>29,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>26,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
<td>25,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>24,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>22,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Memo:** Share of gross bilateral ODA

- Top 20 recipients: 85%
- Top 10 recipients: 82%
- Top 5 recipients: 79%

Source: OECD Development Cooperation Report 2017

In addition to intensification of political and economic relations with Sub-Saharan African countries, Turkey engaged with problems of African people such as poverty and hunger. Turkey hosted and participated multilateral summits on issues of Africa and sought to increase its role in African politics. The first Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit was made in Istanbul in 2008 with the participation of 49 African countries. Turkey covered travel and accommodation expenses of participant countries. Except for Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho, all members of the African Union took part in Summit and "Cooperation Framework for Turkey-Africa Partnership was accepted.

Turkey attached special importance to the African Union in its policy. Turkey became an observer country in 2005 and strategic partner in 2008. Since 2009 Turkey provided financial contribution of 1 million US dollars for supporting the institutional capacities of the African Union. Hence,

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Turkey defended the rights and interests of Africa. In 2010, Turkey hosted the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries and put the problems of least developed countries to the international agenda. The Second Turkey-Africa Summit was held in 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. President Erdogan underlined the strategic Partnership between Turkey and Africa as a "true and genuine relationship between reliable partners" on the basis of "equality, fraternity, mutual respect and benefit."21

Figure 1: Turkey ODA by Region, 2015.

In terms of aid allocation, Somalia has been main beneficiary of Turkish aid. Following the outbreak of famine in Somalia in 2011, Turkey organized aid campaign. Prime Minister Erdogan visited Mogadishu with a delegation of businessmen, politicians and aid workers and became the first non-African leader who visited Somalia over the past two decades. Turkey provided significant amount of humanitarian aid to emergency crisis in Somalia. Furthermore, Turkey built Mogadishu airport and gave education scholarships to the thousands of Somali students.

Turkey's development aid policy towards Somalia aimed at political stability of Somalia. In this respect, Turkey supported nation-building process of Somalia. Having been aware of different political groups in Somalia, Turkey initially established relationship with the Federal Government in Mogadishu. Turkey became part of the Djibouti Peace process in 2008 and hosted conference in Istanbul in 2010. In May 2012, Turkey hosted second conference on Somalia with the participation of main political groups in Somalia, regional leaders, businessmen, civil society organizations and tried to put Somalia on international agenda. Turkey played a facilitator role in talks between the Federal Government and authorities from Somaliland.


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21 Speech by President Erdogan, II.Turkey-Africa Summit, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea 21 November 2014.
Hence, Turkey wanted to support reconciliation and confidence building talks between two political groups.\(^{22}\)

Security became another realm of Turkey-Somalia cooperation. Prior to President Erdogan visit to Somalia in 2015, Al-Shabaab attacked Turkish aid convoys and targeted Turkish officials. Turkey viewed Al-Shabaab as main threat to Somalia’s stability and security. Turkey prioritizes improvement of Somalia’s military and security forces for combating the threat of al-Shabaab. Turkey provided training programs for Somalia police and financially supported Somalia’s security sector reform. Recently, Turkey opened its largest overseas military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers.

With respect to aid modality, Turkey gives importance to technical cooperation as aid modality. Turkey allocates approximately 53% of the funds to social infrastructure projects in health, water and sanitation. For instance, Turkey has built and equipped the biggest hospital in Mogadishu. The Turkish-Sudanese Research and Training Hospital (150-bed) in Nyala was built by TIKA. In addition to health, education is another priority of Turkish aid to Africa. Turkey provided 1239 scholarships for the education year of 2015-2016 for students from Africa. Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizes number of exclusive training programs for individual African countries (Somalia, Madagascar, South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria and Namibia). Turkey has also been providing training to the military personnel from African countries. Turkey provided special training program for 2202 military personnel in 2014.\(^{23}\)

Besides projects and technical aid, Turkey started direct budget aid in 2013. Turkey provided US $ 15 million direct budget support to Somalia upon the request of Somalia President to meet emergency needs of national budget of Somalia.\(^{24}\)

Although Turkey’s engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa took place at the times of high competition, Turkey did not follow the path of emerging powers in its relations with Sub-Saharan African countries. The rise of Southern powers such as China, Brazil, India started to challenge the traditional donors in Africa. Southern donors have become competitors with the traditional donors in terms of market access, influence and the provision of development aid.\(^{25}\) For instance, Africa has become the second most important region for China after Asia. China’s growing engagement with Africa is similar to that of Europeans who came Africa several centuries ago.

\(^{23}\) TIKA Africa Report, available at www.tika.gov.tr
\(^{24}\) TIKA Activity Report, available at www.tika.gov.tr
\(^{25}\) Lundsgaarde, op.cit., p. 228
earlier. China seeks to make use African energy resources and mineral wealth for its booming economy. As well as investing billions of dollars in mineral projects and building massive infrastructure projects, China provides impressive development assistance to African countries.\textsuperscript{26}

Turkey differentiated itself from rising powers of Global South on the basis of its purposes and priorities. Despite the fact that Turkey is not a resource-rich country, Turkey did not compete with China or Brazil for natural resources and involve "new scramble for Africa". Turkey emphasized its non-colonial historical background and criticized former colonial powers of Europe. For instance, President Erdogan noted that "Africa belongs to Africans, we [Turkey]\textsuperscript{27} are not here for your gold". Turkey emphasized mutual partnership and underlined that Turkey's approach was different from political or economic domination. Non-colonial past was used to justify Turkey's involvement and helped to frame Turkey as a "benevolent country". Turkey described its engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa as a "mutually reinforced political-economic partnership which promoted the rights and interests of African people. Turkey's this ideational approach was suggested as an example of humanitarian diplomacy that" embraces the whole of mankind and aims to shoulder the responsibility of dealing with the full range of issues occupying the minds and consciences of mankind".\textsuperscript{28}

**Conclusion**

Turkey has progressively changed its status from an aid recipient country to a net donor over the last decade. Economic growth and political stability of AKP governments enabled Turkey to increase its development aid steadily. Unlike many traditional donors that cut aid budgets, Turkey aid volume increased sharply. In 2016, Turkey's aid spending reached its highest level due to the Syrian refugee crisis and amounted 6.2 billion US dollars. Hence, Turkey allocated % 0.79 of its Gross National Income as aid and became of the one of most generous donors of global politics.\textsuperscript{29}

Initially Turkey delivered aid to neighbouring countries and Central Asian countries that have close historical and cultural ties with Turkey. In the past decade, Turkey not only increased its aid allocations but also expanded its geographical scope towards Balkans, Middle East and African countries. Unlike traditional Western donors that deliver aid in a vertical relationship


\textsuperscript{27} Remarks of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Speech addressed to parliament of Gabon in January 2013

\textsuperscript{28} Ahmet Davudoglu, "Turkey's New Foreign Policy Vision," Insight Turkey, Vol.10, No.1, 2008,

\textsuperscript{29} OECD Development Cooperation Report 2017, p.295.
of donor-recipient, Turkey views development aid as a horizontal relationship of partnership, which is beneficial to both sides. In this regard, TIKA became main actor of Turkish development aid politics.

In recent years, Turkey has become one of leading donors of Sub-Saharan African countries. Turkish development aid policy played a significant role in Turkey’s opening towards Africa and helped Turkey to deepen its ties with impoverished countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Turkey’s development aid policy is mainly driven by altruistic motives such as solidarity, religious ties and social justice, rather than opportunistic interests. Turkey’s increasing aid to fragile states of Africa such as Somali indicate Turkey’s delivery of aid for humanitarian purposes. In this regard, Turkey’s aid policy is differentiated from that of other rising donors of global South such as China, Brazil and India since these rising donors, especially China, provide aid for accessing natural resources and expansion of markets and use aid as means of political influence.

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