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Turkey in Africa: Voyeurism,  
Neo-Ottomanism and  
Islamic Humanitarianism

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## Introduction: Turkey Eyes Africa

Turkish influence in Africa has steadily proliferated after 1998. Yet, there is little reflection of the phenomenon in policy or academic circles. In 1998, Turkey's Foreign Ministry drew up the nation's 'Africa Policy' with an Action Plan document.<sup>1</sup> The Africa Policy was aimed at expanding Turkey's footprint on the continent, by cultivating diplomatic relations, and fostering political, economic and cultural cooperation. The Under Secretary of Treasury looked into boosting economic diplomacy in 2003. The Government of Turkey declared in 2005 that the subsequent year would be marked as the 'Year of Africa'.<sup>2</sup> A diplomatic onslaught ensued. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (then Turkish Prime Minister) visited Ethiopia and South Africa in March 2005. Turkey campaigned for and obtained 'observer status' in the African Union (AU) in the same year. Soon after, in 2008, Turkey hosted the first-ever Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit in Istanbul where representatives of 50 African countries participated.<sup>3</sup> High-level bilateral exchanges took place between Turkish President Abdullah Gül and "delegations of forty-two countries."<sup>4</sup> Later that year, the AU declared Turkey as a 'strategic partner.'<sup>5</sup> Turkey became the twenty-fifth non-regional member of the African Development Bank (ADB) in 2008.<sup>6</sup> The 'African Economic Outlook 2011' prepared by the ADB and the Organisation for Cooperation and Development (OECD) portrayed Turkey as one of the new key players in Africa (China, India, and Brazil were also included).<sup>7</sup> Between 1998 and 2011, Turkey's top office-bearers (President, Vice President, Head of Parliament, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and Minister of the Foreign Affairs) have visited African states 43 times, while African states' top officials have visited Turkey 76 times.<sup>8</sup> The number of Turkish diplomatic missions increased dramatically, from 12 embassies in 2001, to thirty-two in 2012. (Twenty-

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<sup>1</sup> Savaş Genç & Oğuzhan Tekin, 'Turkey's Increased Engagement in Africa: The Potential, Limits and Future Perspective of Relations', *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies* 7 (2014), 87-115, pp.88

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 88

<sup>3</sup> Mehmet Özkan, SETA Policy Brief, Seta Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, September 2008, No. 22, url:

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1434740](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1434740), accessed 24 August 2018, pp. 1-2

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 3

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *African Economic Outlook 2011* quoted in Genç & Tekin, pp. 88

<sup>8</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp.100

seven of these embassies were established in sub-Saharan Africa). African states had eight embassies in Turkey in 2001, which grew to 16 in January 2012.<sup>9</sup> More significantly, in 2010, there were 250 trade consultants and commercial attachés in Turkey's African diplomatic missions.<sup>10</sup>

### Why Turkey Joined the New Scramble for Africa

Changing regional architectures of geopolitics are largely responsible for Turkey's growing interest and investments in Africa. Observers argue that stalled EU accession talks in 2005 were a realisation for the Turkish elite that they had to expand their spheres of influence outside traditional geographies.<sup>11</sup> Turkey's deteriorating relationship with the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, and latterly with other Arab regimes (like General el-Sisi in Egypt), thwarted its ambitions in its neighbourhood from 2005 onwards.<sup>12</sup> From 2010, turmoil in the countries affected by the Arab Spring (Tunisia, Libya, Algeria) meant that Turkey's access to some of its most lucrative markets decreased. For instance, Turkish exports to Libya declined dramatically in 2011 from a projected \$2.1 billion to \$747 million on account of the post-Gaddafi turmoil in that country.<sup>13</sup> African economies were also not as thoroughly affected by the Global Financial Crisis of 2008<sup>14</sup>: consumer spending trends did not show great fluctuations. In the political sphere, Turkey needed votes of African nations as it was one of three candidates for the non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2009-10<sup>15</sup>. (It secured a non-permanent seat on the UNSC, with African support)<sup>16</sup>. Turkey has leveraged its position within other international organisations, such as the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 99

<sup>11</sup> Mark Langan (2016): Virtuous power Turkey in sub-Saharan Africa: the 'Neo-Ottoman' challenge to the European Union, *Third World Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2016.1229569, pp. 1-16, pp.2

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6

<sup>13</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp. 97

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97

<sup>15</sup> Özkan, pp. 5

<sup>16</sup> Harut Sassounian, 28 October 2014, 'Why the UN Rejected Turkey's Bid for a Security Council Seat?', *Huffington Post*, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/harut-sassounian/why-the-un-rejected-turke\\_b\\_6036878.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/harut-sassounian/why-the-un-rejected-turke_b_6036878.html), accessed 27 August 2018

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and OECD to reach out to African elites and present Africa-friendly policies.<sup>17</sup>

Some influential Turkish elites have embraced the portrayal of Turkey as a ‘MINT economy’.<sup>18</sup> The acronym, coined by Fidelity Investments and popularised by Jim O’Neil, refers to Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey, the most populous non-BRICS emerging economies which exhibit similar trends: they are middle-income countries<sup>19</sup> with favourable inner demographics, strategic geographical locations, and diversified markets<sup>20</sup>. As a MINT, Turkey needs raw materials and fuel to further its development. African sources were tapped as a strategy which aimed at decreasing dependence on traditional Middle Eastern trading partners. Africa is an important untapped market for Turkish exports. Turkish trade with sub-Saharan Africa ‘reached \$7.5 billion in 2011, a 72 percent increase from the year before and a tenfold increase since 2000’<sup>21</sup>. (Bilateral trade with Africa reached \$17.5 billion in 2015, while the volume of trade with Sub-Saharan Africa accounted to \$6 billion in 2015).<sup>22</sup> Turkish private sector contractors have undertaken in Africa over 1.150 projects which worth \$55 billion from 1998<sup>23</sup>, and Turkey needed to safeguard their access to African markets.

According to the 2012 figures, steel and iron products have represented the highest share of Turkey’s exports to sub-Saharan Africa (worth nearly \$1 billion), while pearls, valuable stones and jewellery are the main imports from Africa (worth nearly \$813 million)<sup>24</sup>. In 2014, raw materials, minerals and gems remained

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<sup>17</sup> Langan, pp. 8

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9

<sup>19</sup> ‘What are the MINT Countries’, *WorldAtlas*, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-are-the-mint-economies.html>, accessed 27 August 2018

The World Bank in Middle Income Countries,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview>, accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>20</sup> ‘The Mint Countries: Next Economic Giants’, *BBC News*, 6 January 2014,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25548060>, accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>21</sup> Langan pp. 9

<sup>22</sup> Republic of Turkey. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey-Africa relations,

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>, accessed 27 August 2018. [henceforth MoFA.].

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp. 98

Turkey's biggest imports from sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>25</sup> To realise this, Turkey designed two programmes to increase the volume of bilateral trade, firstly between itself and North African states, under 'ATES North Africa,' and secondly between selected states in sub-Saharan Africa, like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Senegal, South Africa, Cameroon, and Ghana, under 'ATES-Sub Saharan Africa.'<sup>26</sup>

### Goodwill Hunting

Turkish development assistance increased dramatically in the period of the Erdoğan governments. A Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) report from 2013, for instance, remarks that Turkish overseas aid rose from \$85 million in 2002 to \$3.3 billion in 2013. Turkish aid to various African countries has reached substantial proportions, standing at \$749.47 million in 2012 and \$782.73 in 2013.<sup>27</sup> In 2014, Turkey's ODA to Africa was \$383.3 million and Sub-Saharan Africa's share in this amount was at \$153.6.<sup>28</sup> By 2016, Turkey's total ODA had nearly doubled from 2013 levels to \$6.2 billion.<sup>29</sup>

Turkey is currently providing personnel and contributes to seven (MONUSCO/DRC, MINUSMA/Mali, MINUSCA/CAR, UNAMID/Darfur, UNMISS/South Sudan, UNOCI/Cote d'Ivoire and UNMIL/Liberia) of the existing nine peacekeeping missions in Africa.<sup>30</sup> In addition, it contributes to a number of capacity building schemes. Turkish National Police provides training in various fields to the personnel of its counterparts in African countries. Turkey has also been providing training to the military personnel from African countries. By the end of

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<sup>25</sup> World Integrated Trade Solution, World Bank, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/TUR/Year/2014/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/SSF/Product/All-Groups>, accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>26</sup> "Afrika ile Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkilerin Geliştirilmesi Stratejisi (ATES)-Improvement Strategy on Trade and Economic Relations with African States" was prepared by the Under Secretariat of Treasury of the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry in 2003 in order to advance relations with Africa, and was revised in 2010. See Genç & Tekin, pp. 98.

<sup>27</sup> Langan, pp.9

<sup>28</sup> MoFA.

<sup>29</sup> This figure reflects the response to the refugee crisis in Turkey and influx of Syrians. Official Turkish ODA figures include the money spent by the government on Syrians in-country. OECD, Turkey's Official Development Assistance (ODA), <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/turkeys-official-development-assistanceoda.htm>, accessed 28 August 2018

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

2014, 2,202 African military personnel have received training in Turkey. These aspects of military cooperation have alarmed many of Africa’s traditional development partners, who questions whether Turkish arms could fall into the possession of radical militias, whether deliberately, or accidentally (Somali pirates, *al-Shabab* and a number of other groups are threats in the regions where Turkey is vying for influence). It is believed that the leadership of the ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (trans: Freedom and Justice) (AKP) party consciously supported Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) forces as a means of destabilising their erstwhile ally, Bashar al-Assad.<sup>31</sup>



FIG. 1. The Ottoman Empire and its main phases of expansion

Source: *Encyclopædia Britannica*,<sup>32</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-II-Ottoman-sultan>

<sup>31</sup> Langan, pp. 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-II-Ottoman-sultan>, accessed 27 August 2018

## Neo-Ottomanism in Turkey's Africa Policy

Kemalism (derived from the philosophy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the Turkish Republic), was the hegemonic political narrative and operational ideology of the state from 1923 to 1998.<sup>33</sup> Secular Kemalist elites of the Republican People's Party or *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP), and of past military regimes, depicted Turkey as a 'modern', liberal society, striving towards Europeanisation; they conducted an internal campaign against what they thought were archaic Islamic socio-cultural practices. During the Cold War, Kemalists presented themselves as moderate Muslims, and allied strongly with the European Economic Community (EEC) and the USA in matters of economics and defence.<sup>34</sup>

The CHP lost its grip on the political scene in 1997, after the military coup. After 1998, Turkish leaders needed to create a new 'personality' for the nation. Langan argues this was both a nationalist and a normative enterprise. The Turkish Republic would be represented as the Ottoman Empire, a nation with a 'moral mission' and a 'civilisational duty' towards others formerly subjected to the Ottoman rule. Turkish elites, ideologues and historians would draw upon Ottoman history to emphasise shared cultural bonds cultivated between divulging groups of geographically distant peoples during the zenith of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup>

"Some African countries were totally or partially subject to Ottoman rule, such as Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, the Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and even Niger and Chad".<sup>36</sup>

This Ottomanisation of history provides justification for Turkey's current focus on certain or *all* territories in Africa:

[In the sixteenth century], almost all of the Muslim population living in Africa was under the Ottoman Empire's power or like Biladu's Sudan, Ghana [Mauritania and Mali], Mali [Mali], Kanim Bornu [Chad and Nigeria], Songay [western Sahel], Timbuktu [Mali], Cano [Nigeria], Darphur [Sudan], Vaday [Somalia and Ethiopia], Hara [Ethiopia], and Zengibar [Zanzibar] sultanates, which remain in the south regions of the Great Sahara Desert where Ottoman Sultan has been accepted as Caliphate and the sermons in mosques began to read on behalf of the Caliphate. The Zengibar sultanate, which was holding the administration of [contemporary] Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and eastern Africa

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<sup>33</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp. 92

<sup>34</sup> Langan, pp. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Langan, pp. 2-4

<sup>36</sup> Özkan, pp. 2



coasts, such as Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Uganda, Ruanda, Burundi, Congo, Malawi, and Madagascar, together with Muslims living in South Africa, carried out their commitments to the Ottoman Caliph. This situation had continued almost four centuries until the beginning of twentieth century.<sup>37</sup>

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, the chief architect of AKP foreign policy, is a pan-Islamist and expansionist, heavily influenced by the German geopolitical theories of the twentieth century. Davutoğlu regards the nation-states of the Middle East created through post-First World War agreements as artificial structures that divide the original caliphate (*Ummah*).<sup>38</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2012 explained the importance of Turkish interventions in Somalia (which were regarded as a huge success in Turkey, and used to justify further interventions and international humanitarianism) by referring to Ottoman expeditions (in reality raids) to the Horn of Africa during the sixteenth century. “We have inherited these [relations] from the Ottomans. They call us neo-Ottomans. Yes, we are neo-Ottomans.”<sup>39</sup> He continued, “we are proud of this ... *culturally, we see ourselves as African*. We do not have a bad memory with Africa, but a good history to share.”<sup>40</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign affairs advertises Turkey as an ‘Afro-Eurasian’ state.<sup>41</sup> President Erdoğan often emphasises the ‘civilisational duties’ of Turkey: safeguarding the *Ummah*<sup>42</sup>’s interests from Somalia and Rakhine to Syria are paramount to the well-being of the Turkish nation<sup>43</sup>. Upon his election as president in 2014, Erdoğan asserted that ‘this nation is the hope of the *Ummah* and the world,’ alluding to Turkey’s eagerness to take up its historical responsibilities.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp. 92

<sup>38</sup> Nihat Çelik & Emre İşeri (2016) ‘Islamically oriented humanitarian NGOs in Turkey: AKP foreign policy parallelism’, *Turkish Studies*, 17:3, 429-448, DOI: 10.1080/14683849.2016.1204917, pp. 431

<sup>39</sup> See Bilgic, Ali and Daniela Nascimento, (2014). ‘Turkey’s new focus on Africa: causes and challenges’. Oslo: NOREF, <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/26668>, pp.1-5, accessed 27 August 2018, pp.2

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> MoFA.

<sup>42</sup> The term is used to denote the Commonwealth of Believers. It has been employed to refer to the territories which are the successor to the original caliphate founded by Prophet Muhammed and its descendants, encapsulating the early Islamic World.

<sup>43</sup> Çelik & İşeri, pp. 432

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 433



FIG2: History Map of Africa, 1453-1648

Source: Ancient Civilizations of the World, East Africa<sup>45</sup>

[https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s\\_Ancient\\_Civilizations\\_of\\_the\\_World/East\\_Africa\\_and\\_Swahili\\_Culture](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/East_Africa_and_Swahili_Culture)

(Map shows African states which have been incorporated into the current Neo-Ottoman discourse as vassal states or allies which accepted the Ottoman Caliphate's primacy in the Islamic World).

As Langan argues, Turkish virtuosity and benevolence, scripted in line with a religious duty bearing historical antecedents, is constantly framed against perceived pitfalls of European 'exceptionalism'.<sup>46</sup> Turkey's intervention in Africa is framed as a moral mission, on the grounds that its citizens alone can intervene meaningfully in the lives of certain (Muslim) populations in vulnerable countries

<sup>45</sup> 'Ancient Civilisations of the World/East Africa and Swahili Culture'

[https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s\\_Ancient\\_Civilizations\\_of\\_the\\_World/East\\_Africa\\_and\\_Swahili\\_Culture](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/East_Africa_and_Swahili_Culture) accessed 28 August 2018 AND History Map of Africa, 1453-1648,

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/355151120592356484/> accessed 28 August 2018

<sup>46</sup> Langan, pp. 1-3

where Euro-Americans are socially and culturally inept.<sup>47</sup> With reference to Africa, a special emphasis is placed on its past as a non-colonial power – as well as its humanitarianism and apolitical approach based on mutually beneficial economic relations – in foreign policy discourse especially for the case of involvement in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>48</sup>. Turkey is also keen to portray itself as benevolent partner in African development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) webpage reported that: “according to a report published in October 2015 (Financial Times), Turkish investment in Africa creates the largest number of jobs in Africa (16,593 in 2014) compared to the other foreign direct investments in the continent”.<sup>49</sup>

### The *Ummah*'s Moral Mission: Islamic Humanitarianism

Nowhere is the nature of Turkey's moral mission more visible than in the disbursement of official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian aid in Africa (activities for which TIKA is mainly responsible). TIKA was founded in 1992, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR) with the aim of bolstering Turkish influence in the central Asian Turkic republics<sup>50</sup>, with whom Turkey shared a common culture and closely intertwined history.<sup>51</sup> After 2005, TIKA opened three offices in Ethiopia (2005), Sudan (2006), and Senegal (2007), although it operated in 37 countries on the continent<sup>52</sup>. In 2008, TIKA initiated an African Agricultural Development Program in order to help develop agriculture in Africa. According to TIKA President Musa Kulaklikaya, this project will last from 2008 to 2010 and be implemented in 13 African countries, namely in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Comoros, Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda (countries that have been constructed in Turkey's neo-Ottoman imagination as its hinterland).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bilgic and Nascimento, pp. 2

<sup>48</sup> Çelik, & İşeri, pp. 432

<sup>49</sup> MoFA

<sup>50</sup> Uzbekistan, Khazakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

<sup>51</sup> TIKA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency,

[http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/about\\_us-14650](http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/about_us-14650), accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>52</sup> Özkan, pp. 5-6

<sup>53</sup> Özkan, pp. 5-6

In 2016, a TIKA brochure advertised Turkey as “the Second Largest Donor of Humanitarian Assistance in the World in 2015” with a total Assistance of \$3.2 billion, and the largest “Donor of Humanitarian Assistance” in terms of the ratio of assistance to national income.<sup>54</sup> It continued, “according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016, Turkey was the most generous country in the world that provided the largest humanitarian assistance in terms of its ratio to national income”. (Sweden, UK, Germany and USA came after Turkey).<sup>55</sup>

Between 2005 and 2007, Turkey’s official development aid to Africa averaged \$22.1 million annually.<sup>56</sup> Between 2008 and 2010, it increased to \$45.5 million. African share in Turkey’s official development aid increased from 3.5 percent to 5.7 percent during the same time span. The highest shares of Turkey’s allocation are given to Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, in decreasing order, in Africa<sup>57</sup>. In 2015, the top 10 recipients of Turkey’s bilateral official development assistance were Syria, Somalia, Kyrgyzstan, Albania, Afghanistan, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kazakhstan and Sudan.<sup>58</sup> In 2015, the least developed countries (LDCs) which most benefited from Turkish bilateral aid were Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Mauritania, Gambia, Niger, Senegal, Djibouti, Myanmar and Bangladesh respectively – most of them were in Africa.<sup>59</sup>

TIKA’s activities are in line with the priorities of the Conservative Islamism of the AKP. A brochure from 2017 details the *Iftar*<sup>60</sup> programmes that were organised in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Ghana, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Turkey’s aid is directed at Islamic countries, or regions with a strong Muslim demographic.<sup>61</sup> At the *Eid al-Adha* operations of the Red Crescent in 2015, 2,990 cattle and 1,932 sheep were sacrificed in a total of eighteen

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<sup>54</sup> TIKA, *All for a Smile*, December 2016,

[http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika\\_annual\\_reports-22](http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika_annual_reports-22), accessed 27 August 2018, pp. 9

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>56</sup> Genç & Tekin, pp. 104.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> TIKA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Turkish Development Assistance Report, [http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika\\_annual\\_reports-22](http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika_annual_reports-22), 2015, accessed 27 August 2018, pp. 27

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Meals during the holy month of Ramadan

<sup>61</sup> TIKA 2017, Annual Report, [http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika\\_annual\\_reports-22](http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika_annual_reports-22), accessed 27 August 2018, pp. 87

countries and 21 regions including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Niger, Iraq, Palestine, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal, Mauritania, Chad and Syria, and a total of 96,558 meat packages were distributed to those in need.<sup>62</sup> Turkey has undertaken infrastructural projects in Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. The 150-bed Turkish-Sudanese Research and Training Hospital in Nyala which became operational in 2014 was built by TIKA. In Somalia, (a country labelled as failed state by the Western powers) Turkey has built and equipped the biggest hospital in Mogadishu, the 200-bed Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Hospital in Digfer, operational since 2015. Turkey thus fills in the void left by the former western allies of Somalia.

Included in TIKA's activities is developing social infrastructure, and renovating mosques, and structures of Islamic interest in order to stimulate religious and casual tourism. A 2017 annual report describes the renovation of the tomb of the King of Habesh Ashame in the Necash village of the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. It states; "...with the project, it is aimed to take the sepulchres of then King Ashame and our companions who played the role in the first introduction of Islam to Habeshistan under [our] protection and to make this sacred place eligible for the memory of these honourable people whose sepulchres are located there and to make this place favourable for the visits"<sup>63</sup>

Çelik and İşeri argue that an emergent Islamic humanitarianism is visible in the activities of the four most influential Turkish NGOs: (1) Deniz Feneri, (2) Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH), (3) Cansuyu, and (4) Yeryüzü Doktorları.

All of them were established in the 1990s and early 2000s, mostly with the aim of providing humanitarian aid to Bosnia. Yeryüzü Doktorları (Doctors Worldwide Turkey), specialised in providing medical services, provides support such for cataract operations, urgent treatment and circumcision in conflict zones. Cansuyu, is associated with the rival Felicity Party which does not endorse the AKP. However, their common Islamist background and shared political leanings allow them to concur on matters concerning the scope and nature of international aid.<sup>64</sup> Most Turkish NGOs are involved in activities ranging from drilling wells,

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68

<sup>64</sup> Çelik & İşeri, pp. 440

banking, food, building mosques and clinics, and providing *qurban/udhiyah* (sacrificial) meat, orphan care and education.<sup>65</sup> The activities of these NGOs were regulated after the 1997 coup, with the Turkish Aviation Society (THK) and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) being prioritised.

After the AKP's ascent, a new legal framework made up of modifications to the Law on Associations adopted in 2004, which fostered the growth of Turkish humanitarian NGOs. They were able to form partnerships with NGOs in other countries and to receive donations from abroad. They also enjoyed tax-free status for expenditures, infrastructure and logistical expenses. For donors, annual tax credits for donating to humanitarian NGOs could total as much as five percent of their income, advertised as part of their obligatory *zakat* payments.<sup>66</sup> Terms such as 'oppressed Muslims' and 'oppressed geographies' were commonly describe the target locations of this aid, indicating that Turkey frames itself as a saviour in the Muslim World. Donors can more generally choose where their money will be spent, for example, Gaza or an African country.<sup>67</sup>

### The Economic Crisis of 2018

Turkey's ODA and humanitarian aid to Africa has grown out of a complex mix of economic voyeurism, ideological Neo-Ottomanism and Islamic humanism. But the future of Turkish ODA and aid to Africa look insecure. Turkey has been engulfed by the refugee crisis, war in nearby Syria and widespread instability in the Middle East. It is host to more refugees than any other nation. It has spent \$30 billion on hosting 3.5 million 'Syrian guests' since 2011, at a time when most countries of West have closed their borders and fortified themselves.<sup>68</sup> The current economic crisis<sup>69</sup>, which has seen the Turkish Lira fall in value, high levels of inflation, rising borrowing costs with Turkey unable to finance its foreign currency debts, amid

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 434

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 435

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 435

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Sabah*, 14 February 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2018/02/15/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-surpasses-35-million>, accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>69</sup> Jerome Roos, 26 August 2018, 'Turkey's Lira Turmoil Could Herald a Global Financial Crisis', *Al Jazeera Business & Economy*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/turkey-lira-turmoil-herald-global-financial-crisis-180825165156035.html>, accessed 27 August 2018

increasing authoritarianism displayed by President Erdoğan<sup>70</sup>, means that Turkey may have to rethink its position on the international stage in the immediate future.

In Africa, Turkey's ODA and humanitarian aid are concentrated in two 'fragile' states, Somalia and Sudan. Somalia is a highly 'aid dependent' nation, receiving \$1.3 billion in ODA in 2016, with an unhealthy ODA to GDP ratio of 21 percent.<sup>71</sup> In 2016, Turkish ODA to Somalia amounted to a fourth of this figure at \$314.8 million.<sup>72</sup> If Turkey's influence and economic clout in the region dwindle, the humanitarian effort in the Horn of Africa may suffer (Somalia has experienced drought-like conditions from 2011, which have adversely affected food security). This could also have challenging implications for the security situation in the broader region, where groups like *al-Shabab* are active. Sudan received \$22 million from Turkey.<sup>73</sup> This aid is used to support 770,000 refugees from South Sudan, displaced by the internal conflict in that nation. The UN and its humanitarian partners have recently reminded the international community of the necessity of continued funding, issuing an appeal in 2018 for \$1 billion for Sudan for provision of basic facilities such as water, food and basic sanitation<sup>74</sup>. A drop in Turkish humanitarian assistance here, could be acutely noticed.

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<sup>70</sup>Fadi Hakura, 20 June 2018, 'Turkey is Heading For Economic Meltdown', *Time*, <http://time.com/5343999/turkey-erdogan-economic-crisis/>, accessed 27 August 2018

<sup>71</sup>Aid flows in Somalia: Analysis of aid flow data, Relief Web, 22 May 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/aid-flows-somalia-analysis-aid-flow-data-april-2017>, accessed 28 August 2018

<sup>72</sup> OECD, Turkish Official Development Aid, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/turkeys-official-development-assistanceoda.htm>, accessed 28 August 2018

<sup>73</sup> 'Sudan: After years of conflict, millions require aid. But is the World paying attention?', 21 February 2018, *UN news*, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1003251>, accessed 28 August 2018

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

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