

Features, Aims and Limits of Turkey's Humanitarian Diplomacy

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Several scholars agree that Turkey applied humanitarian diplomacy as part of its global opening, a consequence of which is that it has become a medium-sized global player. However, it is still not clear what Turkey's experience teaches us regarding humanitarian diplomacy. Additionally, what is unique in Turkey's application? In order to provide an empirically-backed response to such research questions, this paper initially studies what Turkey did with humanitarian diplomacy, what Turkey's objectives were in utilizing it, and how Turkey utilized it. The article concludes by moving to debate on the implications of such an application for humanitarian diplomacy literature.

Keywords: Humanitarian diplomacy, Foreign Policy, humanitarianism, track-two, Turkey

During the last fifteen years, after decades of status-quo oriented agenda, Turkey's status and role in the international political system has risen toward a medium-sized global player or multi-regional actor. Behind Turkey's role, there is an increased use of soft power. Turkish soft power has gained importance owing to the involvement of new institutions, state and non-state actors (*agents*), and the adoption of novel frameworks and policy narratives (*behaviour*). In order to better understand Turkey's growing role, one should consider new analytical approaches and concepts. Among these notions, this study chooses humanitarian diplomacy because it is one of the less known features of Turkish foreign policy.

Federico Donelli, Features, Aims and Limits of Turkey's Humanitarian Diplomacy, *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 11, no. 3: 59-83.

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Drawing on the conceptualisation of humanitarian diplomacy given by the limited literature on the subject, this paper addresses the Turkish understanding of it - its narrative and its practical consequences - and tries to analyse its nature and features. It juxtaposes the core tenets of Turkey's humanitarian oriented policy with the general outlook and practices. This research's aim is to lay bare humanitarian diplomacy, a less well-known but nevertheless increasingly vital aspect of the current Turkish foreign policy. The article assumes that Turkey has used humanitarian diplomacy as a tool to increase its political influence and presence by using persuasion and co-optive power. In other words, humanitarian diplomacy has become part of Turkey's soft power toolkit and diplomatic activities. The empirical analysis of case studies shows how the humanitarian-oriented agenda adopted by Turkey is a diplomatic strategy that allowed it to earn trust and increase its reputation in the field, as well as inside international fora. Moreover, it is useful in developing post-conflict mediation and reconstruction. The research aims to improve the literature regarding humanitarian diplomacy, which is still underdeveloped, and to provide the humanitarian actors with a theoretical and operational tool box.

Considering the rising saliency of humanitarian diplomacy in Turkish foreign policy agenda, there is a need for greater attention from scholars on a few pertinent questions regarding the humanitarian diplomacy concept - what does Turkey's experience teach us regarding humanitarian diplomacy?

In order to answer to these research questions, this article presents its arguments in four sections. The next section gives an overview of the humanitarian diplomacy literature and its increasing presence in the international political system. This section also presents humanitarian diplomacy according to different schools of thought and academic sub-fields of the wider discipline of International Relations. In the second section, the research debates humanitarian activities, their political relevance and nexus with foreign policy, whilst introducing the concept of Track Two diplomacy. In the third section, by taking Turkey's Foreign Policy (TFP) as a case study, the paper analyzes the Turkish understanding of humanitarian diplomacy. The analysis is integrated into a wider framework of the TFP novel approach, which was outlined by former Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu who also developed his own conceptualisation of humanitarian diplomacy. Fi-

nally, the fourth section is an empirical analysis of how Turkey has practically translated its humanitarian-oriented approach into an institutionalized inter-agency coordination policy in the field.

Theoretical and Analytic Framework

The conceptual framework for the following insight into TFP deals with one of the less used and debatable concepts of Political Science and International Relations (IR): humanitarian diplomacy. Although an empirical analysis of the interface between humanitarian aid and politics is not new, recent studies have outlined different aspects following different IR perspectives: 1) realists/neorealists pertain to the 'strategic guide policy'; 2) constructivists to the 'norm-guided behaviour'; 3) liberal internationalists to the 'cooperative guide policy'; and 4), finally, scholars of International Political Economy refer to the policy relying on global economic context and domestic coalition preferences. Without adopting a single paradigm, this work aims to analyze the Turkish humanitarian oriented foreign policy by using a holistic approach to humanitarian diplomacy, bringing together some of the diverse works and views from leading scholars on mediation and peacebuilding studies.

Even if this academic sub-field is still evolving, humanitarian diplomacy is rooted in the history of humanitarian action going back to the nineteenth century. Humanitarian assistance has always been a highly political activity, and has never been disbursed solely on the basis of need. Nonetheless, the relationship between humanitarian aid and politics has changed extensively during the last decades. Nowadays, humanitarian aid is an integral part of a donor's comprehensive strategy to transform conflicts, decrease violence and set the stage for liberal development. According to Devon Curtis,¹ this changing role is called 'the new humanitarianism', and is an example of the closer integration of the humanitarian perspective and political objectives.

Humanitarian diplomacy is an emerging and deeply contested term. Its definition does not completely match with that of conventional diplomacy, whose objective is to manage the international relations of states through negotiation. Instead, humanitarian diplomacy focuses on maximizing support for operations and programs, and building the partnerships necessary if humanitarian objectives are to be achieved.

Some organizations and scholars use other terms that are very similar, such as ‘intervention diplomacy’,² ‘disaster diplomacy’³ or ‘human rights diplomacy’.⁴

The recent theoretical impetus for humanitarian diplomacy came from IR sub-fields such as security studies, peace and conflict studies, and humanitarian affairs. However, there is as of yet no body of literature or specific manual dedicated to humanitarian diplomacy.⁵ A first book was devoted to the subject in 2007, *Humanitarian diplomacy: Practitioners and their craft*, edited by Larry Minear and Hazel Smith, and the expression has since been used with growing frequency by a number of humanitarian agencies. In their edited book on humanitarian diplomacy, the two authors conceptualise humanitarian diplomacy as:

the activities carried out by humanitarian organizations to obtain the space from political and military authorities within which to function with integrity. These activities comprise such efforts as arranging for the presence of humanitarian organizations in a given country, negotiating access to civilian populations in need of assistance and protection, monitoring assistance programs, promoting respect for international law and norms, supporting indigenous individuals and institutions, and engaging in advocacy at a variety of levels in support of humanitarian objectives.⁶

Humanitarian diplomacy is not yet a solidly established concept generally recognized by the international community; there is a big difference between conceiving the idea, using the term itself, and arriving at international recognition for its definition and agreement on how it should be conducted.⁷ In 2009 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) established a new division in charge of promoting humanitarian diplomacy in which they described it as “persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles.”⁸ In an attempt to define the strategic concept of humanitarian diplomacy, the IFRC found that there were eighty-nine different definitions among the relevant agencies and in the grey and scientific literature.

Several humanitarian agencies and states interpret the concept differently. These have developed their own definition of humanitarian diplomacy, which reflects their specific mandate, their diplomatic

practices, and their aims. An example is offered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose definition of humanitarian diplomacy is narrower and consists chiefly in:

making the voices of the victims of armed conflicts and disturbances heard, in negotiating humanitarian agreements with international or national players, in acting as a neutral intermediary between them and in helping to prepare and ensure respect for humanitarian law.⁹

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According to Veuthey, whereby humanitarian diplomacy is primarily a form of dialogue (private or public), it aims, through the representatives of governments, international organizations, humanitarian organizations, as well as NGOs and actors within civil society, to defend human life and dignity in those places where it is under greatest threat.¹⁰

Different organizations have identified distinct priorities for humanitarian diplomacy, and in very different socio-cultural contexts, depending on the geographical location of the crises. At the ICRC, for example, humanitarian diplomacy has precise objectives: providing protection and emergency relief (health and sanitation, food security, shelter, etc.), offering assistance to detainees searching for the missing to re-establish family links, and ensuring the safety of its own staff.¹¹ Even if, as part of its Strategy 2020 stated at the end of 2009, the IFRC identified twelve priority areas of action for humanitarian diplomacy, this remains a delicate and controversial matter. As argued by Holzgrefe and Keohane, humanitarian diplomacy also includes an advocacy and persuasion campaign, as carried out, for example, by Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) on humanitarian interventions.¹²

Humanitarian actions are characterized by a multiplicity of principles, but three are judged as fundamental: *impartiality* (assistance according to the severity of need), *neutrality* (activities without political or other extraneous agendas) and *independence* (the obligation to resist interference with key principles).¹³ According to Régnier, humanitarian diplomacy is 'a multi-level process' because there are several levels of contact and intermediation: internationally, nationally, sub-nationally, locally and on the field.¹⁴ As a matter of principle, humanitarian diplomats do not carry any national political messages and do not promote a particular model of society. Nevertheless, some organizations (especially faith-based ones) have their own specific values and/or a diffuse wish for change, which compounds the already exogenous nature of

international humanitarian work carried out by foreigners. This tendency increases the risk of this form of diplomacy being manipulated by certain actors who are pursuing their interests, and of institutional interests coming before the actual interests of the victims of humanitarian crises. Furthermore, even if ‘the principle of neutrality does not necessarily translate into political inaction, some humanitarian aid agencies do not fully subscribe to it.’¹⁵

The Nexus between Humanitarian Actions and Diplomacy

The end of the Cold War, was followed by the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the financial crisis of 2008, giving rise to the birth of a new age of international uncertainty. By then, diplomacy had also changed. Hedley Bull, a theorist of IR, provides a conceptualisation of the institution of diplomacy that “is the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means.”¹⁶ Therefore, Bull includes both ideas: actors, who ‘do’ diplomacy, and behavior, how and why it is done. Recently, James Der Derian provided a broader definition of diplomacy as the ‘mediation of mutual estrangement between individuals, groups or entities,’¹⁷ allowing the overcoming of the traditional state-centrist conception. In a more polity-oriented conceptualisation of diplomacy, linked with IR theory, Jönsson and Hall argued that ‘communication, representation, and the reproduction of international society constitute the central functions (or purpose) of diplomacy.’¹⁸ Even if, for the authors, each of these concepts will be applied to the actors and processes of diplomacy, communication is a function also to be spotted into humanitarian negotiation or diplomacy.

With the accelerating pace of globalization, a multiplicity of new areas of global diplomatic activity, relating to such issues as climate change, the environment, access to water, culture, health, and knowledge, has developed alongside classic national diplomacy. Nowadays, diplomacy is becoming increasingly fragmented: it is no longer primarily bilateral but also multilateral, no longer simply intergovernmental but also multi-institutional and multi-functional. As a result, humanitarian efforts have been included into a wider idea of diplomatic activity. However, state humanitarian diplomacy differs from humanitarian diplomacy as conducted by humanitarian aid agencies in the way it becomes subordinate to political and security interests that may run

contrary to the fundamental respect for the life and rights of victims.¹⁹ This assumption opens a debate about humanitarian activity and its correlation with diplomacy and political relevance. Often humanitarian aid as an element of states' foreign policy is one instrument among many for working towards peace, mediation and promoting human rights. Minear and Smith explained the nexus between humanitarian action and diplomacy by the introduction of a distinction between 'capital *D*' Diplomacy and 'small *D*' diplomacy. According to the authors, the former involves high-level and professional diplomats, while 'small *D*' diplomacy is 'more terrestrial' and 'it covers a host of humanitarian functions of a more day-to-day sort'.²⁰ They also argued that in the current era of uncertainty and an increased number of crisis, 'small *D*' diplomacy may overlap with Diplomacy, when 'humanitarian practitioners themselves play a role in negotiating the terms of engagement in hot war and post conflict situations'.²¹

Previously it had been Daniel Toole who put emphasis on the significance of 'humanitarian negotiations' or 'humanitarian access negotiation'. Toole argues that 'humanitarian negotiations have been characterized as a process' (rather than outcome-driven processes), 'demanding ongoing communication with local power-brokers, encouraging the building of a long-term relationship that will remain at the core of the implementation of the agreements'.²² Before Toole, other scholars argued that international actors create new forms of networks of influence and fora to engage in informal discussions and consultation processes (third party).²³ The so-called third-party intervention is a process designed to encourage the development of mutual understanding of differing perceptions and needs, the creation of new ideas, and strong problem-solving relationships through the use of informal intermediaries.²⁴ Thus, humanitarian access negotiations can be considered diplomatic activity carried out by informal intermediaries, or unofficial people who work outside official negotiation, mediation, or so-called track one processes.

Third-party actors initiate or facilitate discussions among non-official representatives of the conflicting parties in order to stimulate progress in official negotiation and assist in resolving crisis situations. The involvement is designed to promote relationship and trust-building across people, develop lines of communication, and explore options that could meet both sides' interests and needs.²⁵ The intermediaries' role described above originated with the development of track Two

interventions. Track Two interventions bring together non-official, but influential members of the parties for direct, private interaction with joint analysis of the conflict and joint problem-solving.²⁶ Consequently, contemporary terms such as Track Two diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, multi-track diplomacy, supplemental diplomacy, pre-negotiation, consultation, interactive conflict resolution, back-channel diplomacy, NGOs diplomacy are common among practitioners and in IR vocabulary.²⁷ According to Joseph Montville, who coined the term Track Two, this kind of diplomacy is defined as:

an unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations that aims to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help to resolve their conflict. ... [It] is a process designed to assist official leaders to resolve or, in the first instance, to manage conflicts by exploring possible solutions out of public view and without the requirements to formally negotiate or bargain for advantage.²⁸

The last twenty years have seen Track Two actors (nongovernmental and unofficial groups and individuals) play a wide variety of roles vis-à-vis armed groups and peacemaking. Specific activities of Track Two diplomacy may vary from a one-step action to long-term projects, and include observation, riot control conciliation and negotiation, joint reexamination of historical events, ecumenical prayers, establishing interfaith peace centers, rebuilding clinics, and creating new school curricula on ethnic tolerance or aid distribution, depending on the needs of the specific place, time, and cultural impact. According to Fisher and Keashly, the intermediaries are typically knowledgeable and skilled scholar/practitioners who are impartial and whose training and expertise enable them to facilitate productive dialogue and problem-solving between the parties.²⁹ Among them are also placed a multiplicity of humanitarian actors.³⁰

Because official contacts among the conflicting parties are often tense, 'un-official policy dialogue' or Track Two diplomacy has gained currency in conflict resolution and security policy circles. Scholars in the field of post-conflict studies point to additional limitations of traditional diplomacy that informal intermediaries are particularly well suited to address. For instance, the humanitarian actors – NGOs, foun-

dations and members of civil society - have greater freedom than the states to approach non-state actors, because governments often fear that any opening towards non-recognized groups will confer legitimacy on them.³¹ Hundreds of unofficial policy dialogues have taken place, focused on a variety of regional security issues. Track two actors, including humanitarian ones, are less threatening to armed groups, and find it easier to work flexibly, unofficially, and off-the-record, and have less to be concerned about in terms of conveying official/legal recognition. Many unofficial dialogues are either bilateral or multilateral attempts to address or simply to define regional and local problems. The main goal of such efforts is usually not formal conflict resolution through contributions to peace settlements, but rather conflict management, tension reduction, confidence-building, and the formation of regional or sub-regional identities that allow actors to frame and approach problems in similar and preferably cooperative ways. Normally, informal intermediaries are non-governmental actors, such as religious institutions, academics, former government officials, NGOs, humanitarian organizations, and think tanks, among others. In some cases, such as Turkey's, however, governments or government officials can act together as informal intermediaries.

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To sum up, what emerges in the existing literature is that humanitarian diplomacy represents a growing field in diplomacy and it is, as a rule, considered part of wider state public diplomacy. The term is used not only by humanitarian organizations, but also by national co-operation agencies and ministries (foreign affairs, defence, development, civil protection) comprising humanitarian aid departments in order to respond to domestic and international emergencies. Humanitarian agencies have a genuine interest in participating in Track Two diplomacy, which enables them to shape opinions on humanitarian matters before official negotiations take place. Informal diplomacy supplements rather than replaces intergovernmental fora, and helps humanitarian agencies facilitate contact and dialogue that might be extremely difficult to establish otherwise. In other words, humanitarian diplomacy does not reject traditional bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. On the contrary, to be as efficient as possible, it has to be coordinated with conventional diplomacy in capital cities and in the field, without thereby becoming subordinate to the latter.

Turkey's Humanitarian Oriented FP after the Arab Upheavals

CEJISS
3/2017

Turkey's discourse on humanitarian diplomacy emerged at a time when its 'zero-problems with neighbors' policy came under severe criticism. The events of 2011 and the drama of the Syrian civil war have increased the debate surrounding Turkey's foreign policy, in particular on the validity of the zero problems policy.³² Several scholars have judged the 'zero problems' as a failed strategy, defining it as obsolete and unable to deal with the changes and challenges that emerged from the Arab upheavals.³³ Although the term 'zero problems' appears abused and has been inappropriately used to summarize the whole TFP, it represents only one of the principles that form Ahmet Davutoğlu's wider geopolitical doctrine defined as 'central country' or 'central power'. The central country concept is used by the former Prime Minister to explain Turkey's international positioning in his academic writings. Davutoğlu believes that Turkey's unique geographic and geo-cultural position gives it a special central-country (*merkez ülke*) role, and therefore Turkey cannot define itself in a defensive manner. This approach imagines a wider territorial base than the nation-state, a transnational identity that revolves around Turkey.

Turkey is still currently redefining its international identity from being a passive regional state to a constructive global actor. Turkey is identified both geographically and historically with more than one region and one culture, enabling the country to have a central role and maneuver in several regions simultaneously.³⁴ Davutoğlu stated that Turkey possesses a 'strategic' depth and it should act as a 'central country' and break away from a static and single-parameter policy.³⁵ The multi-directionality of its foreign policy has made Turkey a hub of a wider region defined as 'Afro-Eurasia', stretching from Central Asia to the Caucasus and sub-Saharan Africa via the Middle East.³⁶ Kardaş argues that while the 'zero problems' policy has drawn wide scholarly attention and media coverage, the 'central country' concept is more important to understand Turkey's foreign policy before and after the Arab turmoil.³⁷

The post-Arab uprisings environment has partly invalidated Turkey's ambitious policy, forcing Ankara to review and adapt its assertive approach. Following the 2011 events, TFP has been modified in its content, instruments and mechanism, but the 'central country' doc-

trine remains the main framework. In light of the post 2011 events, TFP agenda has assumed a more liberal, value-based approach due to a new space of opportunity to get in direct contact with people. As a result, there has been an increase in Turkey's civilian capacity through the involvement of non-state actors in the policy-making process, and in its use of new soft power tools in cultural and public diplomacy.³⁸ At the same time, the growing number of non-state actors activities beyond the border has led Turkey's policy-makers to attach greater importance to the humanitarian discourse in some crisis countries, such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and Somalia.³⁹ Thus, TFP has adopted the approach of humanitarian diplomacy to tackle both regional crises and issues, and challenges in the wider framework.⁴⁰ This is because, as Davutoğlu said, Turkey's influence is felt in a wide geographical area (Afro-Eurasia), 'not only symbolizing its power but also symbolizing its conscience',⁴¹ and "Turkish foreign policy is based on securing and nurturing a peaceful, stable, prosperous and cooperative regional and international environment that is conducive to human development".⁴² In other words, after the Arab upheavals, humanitarian action became an important tool for promoting particular aspects of Turkey's identity and values and in so doing projecting a particular image of Turkey as a global actor. Therefore, as Akpınar highlighted, Turkish discourse on humanitarian diplomacy emerged as 'a result of an ongoing recalibration process of its own foreign policy agenda'.⁴³

The aftermaths of this shift toward a more 'humanitarian' oriented foreign policy has been seen clearly in the growth of Turkey's official development assistance (ODA) since 2011. Turkey, a founding member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is also an observer to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). However, when compared to the 28 OECD-DAC donor countries, Turkey has provided more assistance than traditional donors such as Italy. The 2017 Global Humanitarian Assistance report highlighted that Turkey expenditure on humanitarian aid in 2016 comes only second after the U.S., which spent \$6.3 billion.⁴⁴ Indeed, as illustrated in Table 1, Turkish ODA reached \$6 billion in 2016, and in terms of the ratio of ODA to Gross National Income (GNI), Turkey emerged as the most generous donor with a figure of 0.75 percent. Turkey provided the largest share of its bilateral development co-operation to Syria, Somalia, Kyrgyzstan, Albania and Afghanistan. The main sectors for Tur-

key's bilateral development co-operation were humanitarian aid and refugee support, governance and civil society, and education, health and population.

CEJISS
3/2017

Turkish Conceptualisation of Humanitarian Diplomacy: Principles and Aims

A feature relevance of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy is the discourse and the use of highly popular-yet often misconstrued-concepts that impart meaning to its practical efforts. New concepts and rhetoric all founded and promulgated by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the chief architect of the Turkish international agenda. Although Davutoğlu left the political set in May 2016, his resonance is still prevalent, especially on Turkish foreign policy-makers and academia outlook. According to him, Turkey's approach to humanitarian diplomacy emerges from its determination to become a regional and global actor within 'the rapid stream of history'.⁴⁵ In the face of history's inflow, there are three positions that can be taken: resist change; float in this flux as far as possible; and take an active stance. In the last few years, Turkey's preference has been for the third position, moving as an actor who can change the course of history, rather than be an ordinary and passive component of it. As evidence of these changes, humanitarian diplomacy was the main theme of the Fifth Annual Ambassadors' Conference held in Ankara and Izmir between 2 and 7 January 2013. Even if Turkey's humanitarian policy was designed before the Arab upheavals,⁴⁶ Davutoğlu posed a new notion of humanitarian diplomacy to explain and legitimize Ankara's involvement in different regions affected by crisis and political instability. As pointed out by Akpınar, the discourse on humanitarian diplomacy emerged as a result of Turkey's recalibration process, in particular to explain the widening of focus and scale of its foreign policy, which went beyond the immediate borders toward distant regions such as Africa, Latin America and East Asia.

As shown in the first section, there is no single definition of humanitarian diplomacy in the literature. Currently there are almost 89 different definitions,⁴⁷ but none of these are completely suitable to the Turkish understanding.⁴⁸ This point makes Turkish conceptualisation particularly interesting for the theoretical study of the topic. Turkey's definition of humanitarian diplomacy resonates with Reigner's definition that the term [humanitarian diplomacy] is used not only by hu-

manitarian organizations, but also by national co-operation agencies and ministries (foreign affairs, defense, development, civil protection) comprising humanitarian aid departments to respond to domestic or international emergencies.⁴⁹ Indeed, Turkey emphasizes the role of state as a humanitarian actor, highlighting a type of diplomacy that is multi-track in nature. In this perspective, Turkey's view underpins both the role of the state and the non-state actors in humanitarian diplomacy.

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In Davutoğlu's perspective, humanitarian diplomacy or the rise of a human-oriented diplomacy represents the beginning of a more enlightened foreign policy. Davutoğlu believes that a new international system requires an approach based on a 'critical equilibrium between conscience and power,' and Turkey is determined to be a leader in establishing such an understanding on a global scale.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the former Prime Minister believes that Turkey should be a compassionate (soft power) and powerful (hard power) state. According to him, one will be compassionate 'if one's conscience dictates where one should go and to whom one should reach' and, at the same time, one will need to have power, 'so that one has the ability to reach where needed'.⁵¹ This approach, which can help move beyond the hard-power versus soft-power dichotomy, requires that NGOs and state apparatus act in coordination as 'a combination of power and compassion' because 'if either of them is missing, the result will be either cruelty or weakness'.⁵² Davutoğlu's holistic meaning of humanitarianism is multi-faceted and multi-channeled. The multi-channeled or multi-levels idea has been operationalized by Turkey in the field within an inter-agency coordinated policy useful in the management of crisis situations.

Operationalize Turkey's Inter-Agency Policy

During the last ten years, the Turkish government has welcomed being called an 'emerging donor'⁵³ because the status of 'emerging', and thus increasingly significant and influential, plays a decisive role in Turkey's identity as a self-confident international actor.⁵⁴ Indeed, in a global context, Turkey's humanitarian-oriented approach is used as a way to live up to the expectations of international solidarity and problem solving initiatives that come with the status of being a 'rising power'. As a result, Turkey's humanitarian engagement has grown and its reputation as a 'humanitarian state' rings louder over all Afro-Eurasia.

Offering assistance in the wake of humanitarian crisis provides important opportunities to demonstrate solidarity and to demonstrate material resources. This is particularly important both in regions where Turkey was negatively perceived, such as the Middle East and the Balkans, as well as where it had almost no presence such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, Turkish efforts in the humanitarian field resonates its image as a 'humanitarian state'. According to Keyman and Sazak, the phrase 'humanitarian state' signifies a distinctive attribute of the Turkish aid model from that of both established and emerging donors. The concept of humanitarian state is not just a matter of semantics; it is rather a strategically crafted idea that demarcates state building and nation building, and it reveres the former over the latter.⁵⁵ However, following the realists' approach to humanitarian diplomacy, normative discourses such as that on humanitarianism may act as tools for legitimizing strategic state interests in regions beyond their sovereign borders. The case of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy has showed how Turkish humanitarian efforts have been used to expand its ideational power and to acquire more leverage in some regions. Indeed, humanitarian initiatives provide important opportunities to Turkey for strengthening bilateral relations, increasing political weight and building up a new reputation. As noted by Gilley 'the so-called emerging powers', like Turkey, 'make humanitarian assistance a priority because it fits well with their active diplomatic agendas that seek to increase influence through such good international citizenship'.⁵⁶

Following Davutoğlu' conceptualisation, Turkish humanitarian diplomacy has three dimensions, or refer to Régnier work, three levels of action: the first level concerns the citizens of the Turkish Republic; the second dimension concerns a Turkish human-oriented attitude in crisis zones; and the third sphere concerns an inclusive humanitarian perspective at the global level, most importantly in the UN system.⁵⁷ These three levels of action are linked to the main goals of the Turkish humanitarian diplomacy framework: 1) improving peoples' lives; 2) action in crisis regions; 3) and cultivating humanitarian sensibilities within the UN system.⁵⁸ In the Turkish understanding of humanitarian diplomacy, three levels of action are not conceived of as separate parts, but as interrelated pieces of an inclusive and comprehensive strategy. This multidimensional model offers a holistic approach to humanitarian diplomacy, suggesting the importance of mobilization

on multiple levels and the promotion of this understanding on multiple platforms.⁵⁹

An important trait of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy is civilian capacity building. The term civilian capacity in this context refers to ‘non-uniformed civilian individuals or groups deployed overseas to crisis or post-conflict settings by (or coordinated through) their respective governments.’⁶⁰ The term includes personnel from the public sector or private sector, including civil society organizations that are in some way coordinated under government aegis.⁶¹ Turkey’s multifaceted and multi-channeled understanding of humanitarian diplomacy means that “there have been contributions from several of Turkey’s public institutions and NGOs, ranging from Turkish Airlines, to TİKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent), and TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey).”⁶² Since the early 2000s, Turkish commitment to post-conflict scenarios seems to have shifted from military missions to civilian capacity assistance and management of sporadic armed conflict, and also to conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

The involvement of NGOs and civil society organizations in the field boosts the quality and quantity of Turkish humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, in order to allow the quickest and most effective action, Turkey’s holistic approach requires coordination between various public and private institutions, and civil society organizations. Several studies highlight that coordination emerges as a fundamental problem for both traditional and emerging donors.⁶³ Indeed, the mobilization of resources is frequently laid down in precise national security and emergency management plans, which include established procedures for mobilizing resources and defining areas of responsibility for delivering relief supplies.

Turkish humanitarian diplomacy tries to go beyond this problem through a coordination of state and non-state actors in conflict-affected and disaster-stricken situations. In practice, this inter-agency coordinated policy is provided with an institutional framework, at the top of which are various state institutions from the Prime Minister’s Office (The Disaster and Management Presidency, AFAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Development. As evidenced by several crisis situations in which Turkey is involved, domestic crises (refugees from Syria) and international crises (Somalia, Afghani-

stan, Myanmar), a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy is the coordination of activities and actors on the ground. The Turkish humanitarian effort brings together key agents of Turkish bureaucracy (AFAD, TİKA, Directorate of Religious Affairs) with influential NGOs (İHH, Yeryüzü Doktorları, Dost Eli Foundation, Türkiye Dyanet Foundation, Deniz Feneri, Sema Foundation, Cansuyu).⁶⁴

Therefore, we can see how Turkish humanitarian commitments reflect Davutoğlu's understanding of humanitarianism and underpin both the role of state institutions and civil society organizations as actors in humanitarian diplomacy within an inter-agency coordinated policy. This interagency cooperation is linked with the multi-dimensionality or multi-track approach⁶⁵ which corresponds to the ability of operating on different levels and on different fronts - from 'official' diplomatic relations, within international and regional organizations, to trans-national relations or 'people to people', developed by non-state actors, such as NGOs, charities and business associations. Moreover, if we consider, as argued by Règnier, humanitarian diplomacy as multi-functional due to the fact that it is used by different type of actors, whether official or not, we could argue that Turkish humanitarian diplomacy expresses that character through an institutionalized inter-agency coordination policy. As enlightened by Özkan, from Turkey's experience in Somalia, its own 'policy makers have learned that regularly held coordination meetings are not enough. A maximized level of coordination and a well-planned vision are essential requirements for a successful enterprise'.⁶⁶

Moreover, Turkish development and humanitarian aid efforts are considered as functional conflict resolution, or conflict sensitive development responses.⁶⁷ Turkey's practices as a humanitarian state and its humanitarian diplomatic strategy allow it to overcome one of the main problems encountered by humanitarian aid and assistance in the field: establishing relations of trust and reputation between donor and recipient. In some situations, humanitarian efforts 'are perceived as external intervention by national and international stakeholders'.⁶⁸ Few studies have shown how this fear is harmful for both the donor and the recipient country; trust and reputation are conducive to successful operations, and most importantly, may also save the lives of the aid workers. This *impasse* could be overcome through a bottom-up humanitarian diplomacy, which means an inclusive approach of all

the indigenous components of the recipient country, such as national NGOs, social networks, local communities, and the private sector. The ongoing experience in Somalia shows that Turkish policy seeks to involve local actors. Indeed, unlike the approaches often taken by Western and non-Western countries and organizations, Turkey's initiatives involve local people in their activities with long-term projects.⁶⁹

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Within Turkey, a strong humanitarian rhetoric helps to mobilize and sensitize Turkish public feelings, as ensuring public support is essential for an assertive foreign policy. Until ten years ago, Turkey's humanitarianism aimed to restore the bond between Turkey and Muslim countries, and it was articulated in relation to a Turkish perceived responsibility toward Muslim communities outside of its borders (the *ummah*). In recent years this *ummah focus* has been replaced by an Islamic internationalism that suggests having cross-border humanitarian engagement as a holder of Islamic religious identity,⁷⁰ without distinguishing between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.⁷¹ Even though Turkish NGOs do not discriminate on the basis of religion and ethnic origin in their aid activities, a strong Islamic identity shapes their approach. Indeed, NGOs autonomy is limited by the bond of conditional donations imposed by private donors, particularly sensitive toward Muslim communities. Conditional donations mean that donors can choose where, and in some case also how, their money will be spent. Therefore, as pointed out by Çelik and İşeri, 'NGOs are totally dependent on donations, rather than financial support by the state, conditional donations limit their areas of activity'.⁷² Together with the value-based and humanitarian political narrative that has an Islamic tone, it can be argued that Turkey has been able to improve the trust-building process in different crisis situations. Therefore, Turkey feeds its own soft power through the use of new instruments such as humanitarian diplomacy.

Limits and Dilemmas

The rising role of Turkey as a humanitarian actor has been accompanied by scrutiny of Turkey's humanitarian practices from other actors and from the international community. For instance, a particularity of Turkey's humanitarian assistance is its strong bilateral rather than multilateral asset when it comes to its development co-operation agenda. Indeed, between 2011-16 Turkish multilateral contributions were

considerably smaller (around 2 percent of its total ODA) compared to a DAC average of 30 percent. This means that Turkey has allocated its ODA to specific countries rather than to multilateral organizations, following a specific agenda and a wider foreign policy strategy. The incorporation of humanitarian diplomacy into a state's foreign policy can generate ambiguity and doubts, such as the question of the actual political neutrality. Therefore, Turkish humanitarian efforts rather than being considered as an expression of humanitarian diplomacy, which according to Régnier should be 'politically-neutral' and 'value-free' in order to be classified as such, more likely risks being considered a kind of humanitarianism or humanitarian oriented foreign policy, as a mechanism to protect and promote state's interests.⁷³ Furthermore, it should be considered that the increase in Turkey's ODA is mostly related to Turkish response to the refugee crisis in its neighboring country, Syria.⁷⁴ Indeed, the unusual rise of Turkish ODA between 2015 and 2016 (+63.8 percent) is connected to the domestic refugee crisis. In order to face the emergency, Turkey allocates around 65 percent of ODA to Syrians. However, as pointed out by Parlar Dal, owing to these efforts or the so-called 'refugee effect', Turkey has earned a great deal in terms of international reputation.⁷⁵

At the discursive level, the Turkish model of humanitarian diplomacy points to an idealized form of diplomacy that exists holistically for the sake of human beings. A clear limit related to Turkey's recent internal swings is a mismatch between rhetoric and reality. Indeed, from one hand for a decade Turkey has tried to carve out an image of itself as a moral state or a state of conscience, representing global values. However, on the other hand, following the elections of June 2015 all these efforts have been jeopardized by the drift from democratic standards toward a more autocratic regime. The significant restriction of freedoms and rights have relentlessly damaged Turkey's image outside, increasing the doubts on the effectiveness of its policies. Therefore there are notable limits to Turkey's idealized discourse about humanitarian diplomacy, especially at a practical level. As Pinar Akpınar underlined, 'humanitarian diplomacy is an idealized conception of peace-building,' but in addition to humanitarian intentions, 'Turkey's policy also has dimensions of interest and power'.⁷⁶ Therefore, Turkish efforts should be evaluated in light of the fact that Turkish policy presents several limits. The first limit is ascribable to the so-called relative material capabilities, which means how Turkey is able to handle its ma-

terial resources allocated to the humanitarian agenda. The main risk of Turkey's policy is the danger of overstretch. The current internal political and economic turmoil and security risks as well as the regional developments tied to Syria might lead to a diversion of resources and attention away from humanitarian scenarios. This is something that has already happened in Afghanistan but also in Myanmar, both countries in which Turkey has invested heavily in economic and credibility terms. Moreover, in light of the recent domestic developments and growing autocracy threats to the rule of law a dilemma remains about the real autonomy of Turkish civil society. The main risk is the shift of several non-state actors, mainly humanitarian oriented NGOs, under the tutelage of the state. A development that may threaten NGOs' independence from governments is becoming more an Islamic model of⁷⁷ government-organized NGOs (GONGOS). As Bülent Aras and Pınar Akpınar also rightly pointed out, 'at times, they [NGOs] become subsumed by the discourse, priorities and policies of the government and develop an interest in shaping official policies which carry the risk of politicizing aid'.⁷⁸ Another critique to Turkey's humanitarianism revolves around the low level of professionalism and knowledge of Turkish practices. As Akpınar has noted, despite the political pay-offs, the effort has been constrained by Turkey's lack of capacity and expertise. In addition, the fact that the Turkish humanitarian agenda has been set up by the Prime Minister's office (AFAD) rather than by an autonomous and professionalized agency, together with the lack of any institutionalized status, makes Turkey's humanitarian assistance too personalistic.⁷⁹

Finally, among the limits we have to consider the clash between the Turkish government, specifically the ruling party AKP and the Gülen movement, currently labeled as FETÖ (Fethullah Terror Organization). During the last decade Turkish businessmen and NGOs affiliated either with the Gülen movement or close to the AKP government have subsequently become the leading implementers of Turkey's public diplomacy. Indeed, the movement, accused by the Turkish government of being responsible for the failed coup attempt of July 2016, has worked in the field of humanitarian diplomacy since the beginning of the new millennium in different sectors. For all these reasons, nowadays the consequences of the domestic political warfare between the ruling party and the Gülen movement have affected Turkey's image abroad and the effectiveness of its humanitarian efforts.

Conclusion

CEJISS
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The humanitarian approach is used by the Turkish government to present its efforts to the eyes of the local people as genuine and detached. Turkey has worked to gain the confidence of all the actors by having the humanitarianism's creed of neutrality as a core principle.⁸⁰ Humanitarian discourse has been used to legitimize Turkey's engagement. At the same time, providing comprehensive humanitarian aid creates an umbrella on the ground under which Turkish assistance can appear transparent and neutral. In the Somali multifaceted scenario, the role of civil society organizations has become crucial for their ability to create links through visible assistance which facilitates trust winning. The presence of non-state actors (NGOs, charities and businesses), in coordination with official diplomacy (ministries and state institutions), fosters interpersonal dialogue and engagement with local actors. In other words, inter-agency cooperation simplifies the access negotiation, useful for the role of mediator assumed by Turkey.⁸¹

In Turkish mediation efforts, non-state actors help foster the inclusiveness of all conflict parties and increase mutual trust, which are central aspects of Turkey's conflict sensitive method. The activities of civil society organizations allow the access to local channels and agents that the State officials cannot or do not want to reach. The NGOs' ability to build mutual trust and dialogue leads to the inclusive approach of all factions during talks and negotiations. Furthermore, this approach provides Turkish donors with access to the areas that are off limits to traditional donors.⁸² Consequentially, during the mediation process Turkey's officials are then able to use links and credibility gained by its own non-state actors, which help to pursue the commitments made at the negotiating table. These dynamics developed by Turkish non state actors are good examples of humanitarian access negotiation as well as Track Two diplomacy.

As shown, Turkey's humanitarian oriented policy emerged after the Arab uprisings (2011-12), at a time when its previous foreign policy was no longer able to meet the requirements of regional and global developments. Therefore, such discourse and in a wider perspective the Turkish idea of humanitarian diplomacy has been stressed so as to overcome its foreign policy quagmire as well as a tool for legitimizing Turkey's efforts to build a new regional and global order. Theoretically, the case of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy and assistance con-

tributes to a rethink of the nature of humanitarianism, emphasizing the centrality of the state and its role of coordinator of private and public non-state actors on the ground. Turkish humanitarian oriented foreign policy has good odds of being an example of niche diplomacy useful to increase Turkey's popularity and activism at the global level. However, in order to achieve this, Turkey needs to get back its democratic performance, revitalizing the liberal nature of its institutions.

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The author would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Türkiye Bursları (YTB) Research Scholarships and the Center for Modern Turkey Studies of the İstanbul Şehir University.

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