

States as ‘Humanitarians’: The Turkish Brand of Humanitarian Diplomacy

‘Yardımsever’ olarak Devletler: Türk Tipi İnsani Diplomasi

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Abstract

Humanitarian diplomacy refers to a distinctive form of diplomatic activity undertaken by various actors to protect human life and dignity in situations where they are under threat. Initially, the concept was more associated with humanitarian non-governmental organizations and some UN agencies. However, today, an increasing number of states adopt humanitarian diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument and portray themselves as global humanitarian actors. Over the last decade, Turkey has also emerged as one of the major actors in the field of humanitarian assistance, and humanitarianism has become a central theme in the discourse of Turkish foreign policymakers. Most notably, the Turkish government has officially placed the concept of humanitarian diplomacy in its foreign policy agenda. Therefore, this article seeks to analyze the recent emergence of Turkey as a global humanitarian actor and explore the main characteristics of the ‘Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy.’ For this purpose, it offers a three-pillar approach to assess the individual state practice of humanitarian diplomacy and discusses how Turkey’s general humanitarian policy resonates with the three pillars of state-led humanitarian diplomacy. It also examines its humanitarian responses to Somalia and the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar as case studies. State-led humanitarian diplomacy has further deepened the politicization of humanitarianism and the standardization of the humanitarian system in the post-Cold War period. In this context, the article concludes that Turkey’s adoption of humanitarian diplomacy has contributed to these two global trends, both by associating humanitarian diplomacy with broader political issues and political goals and by helping the institutional capacity-building of the international humanitarian aid system.

Keywords: Humanitarian diplomacy, Turkish foreign policy, Somalia, the Rohingya crisis, Humanitarian aid

Öz

İnsani diplomasi, tehdit altında oldukları durumlarda insan yaşamı ve onurunu korumak üzere çeşitli aktörler tarafından yürütülen özgün bir diplomatik faaliyet türünü ifade etmektedir. Başlangıçta, bu kavram daha ziyade insani hükümet-dışı örgütler ve bazı BM kuruluşları ile ilişkiliydi. Oysa bugün artan sayıda devlet insani diplomasiyi bir dış politika aracı olarak benimsemekte ve kendilerini küresel

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yardımsaver aktörler olarak tanımlamaktadır. Son on yılda, Türkiye de insani yardım alanındaki ana aktörlerden biri olarak yükselmiş ve insaniyetçilik Türk dış politikası yapıcılarının söyleminde merkezi bir tema haline gelmiştir. En önemlisi, Türk hükümeti insani diplomasi kavramını resmi olarak dış politika gündeminin parçası haline getirmiştir. Bu nedenle, bu makale Türkiye'nin yakın dönemde küresel bir yardımsaver aktör haline gelmesini analiz etmeyi ve 'Türk tipi insani diplomasinin' temel özelliklerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, tekil devletlerin insani diplomasi uygulamasını değerlendirmek üzere üç sütunlu bir yaklaşım önermekte ve Türkiye'nin genel insaniyetçi politikasının devlet odaklı insani diplomasinin üç sütunu ile ne şekilde benzeştiğini tartışmaktadır. Makale ayrıca vaka incelemesi olarak Türkiye'nin Somali'ye ve Myanmar'daki Rohingya krizine yönelik insani müdahalelerini incelemektedir. Devlet odaklı insani diplomasi, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde insaniyetçiliğin siyasallaşmasını ve insani yardım sisteminin standardizasyonunu daha da derinleştirmiştir. Bu çerçevede makale, Türkiye'nin insani diplomasiyi benimsemesinin, hem insani diplomasiyi daha genel siyasal meseleler ve politik hedefler ile ilişkilendirerek hem de uluslararası insani yardım sisteminin kurumsal kapasite gelişimine yardımcı olarak bu iki küresel trende katkı sunduğu sonucuna varmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani diplomasi, Türk dış politikası, Somali, Rohingya krizi, İnsani yardım

1. Introduction

Humanitarian diplomacy has emerged as a distinct form of diplomatic engagement carried out by various types of international actors to protect civilian populations in humanitarian emergencies such as armed conflicts, environmental catastrophes, or natural disasters.¹ The concept initially emerged to define diplomatic functions performed by private humanitarian organizations. It was introduced to describe diplomatic skills and methods that humanitarian practitioners developed in their everyday activities to achieve humanitarian goals and conduct their work (Rousseau and Pende, 2020, p. 258). Hence, the practice of humanitarian diplomacy was originally more associated with humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and several United Nations (UN) agencies. However, as Regnier (2011, p. 1213) notes, today, not only humanitarian organizations but also states and even the private sector use humanitarian diplomacy to raise awareness, negotiate, and mobilize humanitarian assistance in emergencies. The concept has become useful for numerous governments to explain diplomatic activities they conduct for humanitarian purposes. More notably, 'new donor countries' have appeared as 'emerging humanitarian actors' providing humanitarian aid and relief to victims of conflicts or natural disasters abroad through their national humanitarian aid agencies. Such countries as Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have emerged as new major actors that define their foreign policies as humanitarian-oriented and adopt humanitarian diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument (*see* De Lauri, 2018).

State-led humanitarian diplomacy is one of the results of the transformation of humanitarianism. According to Barnett (2005), the scope, scale, and meaning of humanitarianism have been greatly expanded since the end of the Cold War, and two defining features characterize this transformation. First, the purpose of humanitarianism has become more politicized as it

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moved beyond providing life-saving relief and began to include tackling the root causes of conflicts through the promotion of human rights and democracy, economic development, and state-building. Second, the organization of the humanitarian system has increasingly become institutionalized and standardized through the introduction of standardizing codes of conduct such as templates or guidelines or developing accountability mechanisms (Barnett, 2005, p. 725).

Turkey constitutes one of the telling examples of states that officially placed the concept of humanitarian diplomacy on its foreign policy agenda in the 2010s. While Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has undergone a significant transformation under the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) governments since 2002, a normative dimension has been added to its foreign policy rhetoric. Especially following the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, TFP has been increasingly portrayed by the AKP as “idealistic,” “moral-based,” and “value-driven” (Dal, 2013). In this context, humanitarianism has become one of the central themes in the discourse of TFP makers in recent years. Turkey has not only increased its contributions to international humanitarian activities in different parts of the world from Afghanistan and Syria to Somalia and Myanmar but also self-consciously utilized humanitarian diplomacy as a useful concept to characterize the ‘human-oriented’ reconfiguration of TFP. Humanitarian diplomacy has thus become an essential aspect of its foreign policy. Eventually, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has formally defined TFP as “enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy” (MFA, n.d.-a).

There is a small but growing body of literature on the policies and practices of state-led humanitarian diplomacy, particularly examining the overlaps between states’ humanitarian activities and their foreign policy (*for example*, Barakat, 2019; Gökalp, 2020). As part of this burgeoning literature, Turkey’s emergence as a global humanitarian actor has also drawn academic attention (*see* Keyman and Sazak, 2014; Özerdem, 2016; Altunışık, 2019; Kınık and Aslan, 2020). The existing studies have mostly focused on the motivations behind Turkey’s involvement in humanitarian diplomacy. Donelli (2017), for instance, argues that Turkey’s growing engagement with humanitarianism is a result of its rising status toward “a medium-sized global player.” In this regard, humanitarian diplomacy is useful in showing international solidarity and a problem-solving capacity – which is expected from a rising power in international politics – and increasing its political influence through persuasion as a soft power instrument. It is a diplomatic strategy that has strengthened its international credibility and prestige in the humanitarian field.

Similarly, Gilley (2015) associates Turkey’s growing humanitarian efforts with the concept of “middle power activism” in global politics. While terms such as emerging donors signal rising international importance and influence, humanitarian diplomacy gives normative consent within the international system and creates opportunities for “international good citizenship.” As an emerging power, Turkey’s embrace of humanitarian diplomacy is thus derived from its desire to pursue active foreign policy and increase its political influence through international good citizenship. On the other hand, some scholars refer to the challenges posed by the Arab uprisings to TFP in the post-2011 period. For example, Akpınar (2013) considers Turkey’s discourse on

humanitarian diplomacy due to the need for the recalibration of TFP in the course of the Arab uprisings. Since its earlier policy of ‘zero problems with neighbors’ became invalid, humanitarian diplomacy has provided TFP with a new discourse to legitimize its engagement with new types of foreign policy actors and dangerous post-conflict zones even in distant regions. Altunışık (2014, p. 337) also argues that Turkey began to use humanitarian diplomacy to justify its response to the Arab uprisings and counter criticisms against its involvement in the Syrian civil war.

There has, however, been little discussion on the main characteristics of Turkey’s approach to humanitarian diplomacy. This article seeks to fill this gap by exploring the central tenets of the Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy. Therefore, it focuses on how the TFP elite has portrayed Turkey’s humanitarian diplomacy. In light of the theoretical debates on the concept, it develops a three-pillar approach to assess its general practice of humanitarian diplomacy. Moreover, the article examines Turkey’s humanitarian responses to Somalia after the 2011-2012 famine and the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar following the 2012 and 2017 incidents as case studies. First, both cases have been represented by TFP makers as the most typical examples of Turkey’s growing humanitarianism in the last decade. Specifically, its humanitarian response in Somalia has been extensively contributed to the emergence of a ‘Turkish brand.’ Second, unlike the Syrian crisis, which presented an imminent security problem to Turkey, its involvement in the selected cases was not overshadowed by national security concerns because Somalia and Myanmar are located in geographically distant regions without causing a direct threat to Turkey. This will enable us to understand better how the Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy is framed in these distant humanitarian emergencies which did not threaten national security.

The article is organized as follows. The first section discusses the conceptual development of humanitarian diplomacy in detail and introduces a three-pillar approach to assess humanitarian diplomacy conducted by a state as a foreign policy instrument. The second section focuses on the general approach of Turkey to humanitarian diplomacy by exploring its key components and main actors and examines in what ways Turkey’s policy, in general, resonates with the three pillars of state-led humanitarian diplomacy. The third and final section analyses Turkey’s involvement in Somalia and Myanmar.

2. Humanitarian Diplomacy

Humanitarian diplomacy is still an emerging concept, and thereby, there is no consensus over its definition and scope. Each actor develops its brand of humanitarian diplomacy based on its activities. A leading organization in the field of humanitarian action, *the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* (IFRC) defines humanitarian diplomacy as a process of “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” (IFRC, 2009). Moreels (1989, p. 43) from Doctors without Borders (*Médecins Sans Frontières* – MSF) notes that humanitarian diplomacy intends to provide (medical) assistance to “all those who are in distress without discrimination as to their political opinion, philosophy or religion.”

Most scholars point out that humanitarian diplomacy refers to negotiation activities and public campaigns undertaken by various actors to raise awareness about and intervene in a situation where humanity is in danger (Fiott, 2018; Rousseau and Pende, 2020). Still, the academic literature offers different conceptualizations. The first distinction can be drawn regarding the type of actors who conduct this form of diplomacy. For example, Minear and Smith (2007) underline its *non-state character*. In this narrower sense, humanitarian diplomacy is only exercised by humanitarian organizations and their personnel. It is distinct from conventional diplomacy conducted by traditional diplomats, even if the latter supports humanitarian activities. Humanitarian diplomacy includes “the activities carried out by humanitarian organizations to obtain the space from political and military authorities within which to function with integrity” (Minear and Smith, 2007, p. 1).

On the other hand, some scholars offer a broader conceptualization. In this sense, an NGO, a government, or an intergovernmental organization can conduct humanitarian diplomacy to raise awareness about humanitarian crises and issues related to international humanitarian law (Fiott, 2018, p. 1-2). Veuthey (2012, p. 195), for instance, characterizes humanitarian diplomacy as a public or private dialogue that takes place between governments, humanitarian agencies, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, and other types of non-state actors, including representatives from civil society. Regnier (2011, p. 1218) also states that the term is used by both non-state humanitarian organizations and state institutions to describe their activities. In its broader sense, “humanitarian diplomacy refers to the policies and practices of national and international agencies active in humanitarian aid work. The term is used not only by humanitarian organizations but also by national co-operational agencies and ministers (foreign affairs, defence, development, civil protection) comprising humanitarian aid departments to respond to domestic or international emergencies” (Regnier, 2011, p. 1212).

Another difference can be made in terms of tasks and activities covered by humanitarian diplomacy. A limited approach draws a clear distinction between humanitarian action and humanitarian diplomacy. “When one talks of humanitarian diplomacy,” Fiott (2018, p. 4) writes, “they should not be talking about the provision of humanitarian assistance.” The limited approach reduces the scope of humanitarian diplomacy to negotiation, awareness-raising, and promoting humanitarianism while excluding the delivery of humanitarian aid such as medical and food supplies or the establishment of refugee camps. On the other hand, a comprehensive approach holds that humanitarian diplomacy involves more than negotiations and aims to achieve greater objectives than simply ensuring access (Minear, 2007, p. 21). It encompasses a wide range of humanitarian actions, including assessing the needs of people in distress, ensuring the protection of human rights, arranging the presence of international institutions and their personnel in a country, negotiating the access to civilians in need, monitoring assistance programs, laying the groundwork for humanitarian activities, promoting respect for international law and norms, supporting local people and institutions, and advocating humanitarian objectives at different levels (Minear and Smith, 2007, p. 1). In other words, the comprehensive approach implies

that, beyond negotiation and awareness-raising, humanitarian diplomacy also includes the mobilization, deployment, and coordination of humanitarian aid in responding to emergencies.

The overarching objective of humanitarian diplomacy is to protect human life and dignity in situations where they are under threat. Humanitarian diplomacy rests on a particular foundation, what Rousseau and Pende (2020, p.255) call *the imperative of humanity*. The imperative of humanity refers to recognizing the other as a human being whose dignity deserves to be protected. It implies both “selfless and indiscriminate assistance to any victim or vulnerable person in a conflict” and “intervening in locations where people are vulnerable because of natural disasters, health, or even social crises” (Rousseau and Pende, 2020, p. 256-257). Along with humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence are defined as the core principles of humanitarianism. Impartiality commands that aid must be based on need, not on the identity or location of people being helped. Neutrality entails refraining from acting in ways that benefit one side or another. Independence requires that assistance must not be connected to any party to the conflict. Humanitarian agencies designed these core principles to depoliticize humanitarianism and create a humanitarian space for themselves (Barnett, 2011).

Humanitarian diplomacy often depends on the needs of a particular context at any given time, which leads to an improvised and *ad hoc* approach marked by urgency (Minear 2007, p. 10). Thus, it involves a wide range of practices undertaken at the international, national, or local levels to address the needs of victims of natural disasters or armed conflicts. The most typical form of humanitarian diplomacy is *advocacy* and *awareness-raising* directed at international actors, states, and civil society to inform them about appropriate crisis responses and issues related to international humanitarian law (Regnier, 2011, p. 1227). Public awareness campaigns mostly aim at raising attention about a particular humanitarian issue or crisis. Humanitarian diplomacy can also entail diplomatic engagement with governments to raise attention and encourage political action for a specific humanitarian crisis. This would involve putting pressure on states and international organizations to provide humanitarian relief in emergencies (Fiott, 2018, p. 2). Humanitarian diplomacy also involves *operational tasks*, including day-to-day practices that humanitarian officials need to carry out their work on the ground. It can be geared to mobilizing and coordinating the resources to respond to humanitarian crises. It can also work to persuade governments to allow access to victims through creating humanitarian corridors or safe zones in order to deliver humanitarian relief in war-torn regions. Humanitarian diplomacy can take the form of providing expertise and information to communities, governments, or international organizations (Fiott, 2018, p. 2). Operational tasks of humanitarian diplomacy also include negotiation activities such as obtaining access to victims in need of assistance or harmed; ensuring that civilians receive enough protection and assistance; negotiating visas for humanitarian workers; negotiating the establishment of logistical, financial, and legal mechanisms for humanitarian aid; ensuring the safety of humanitarian officials, local staff and civil population; and coordinating humanitarian activities among relevant actors. Finally, humanitarian diplomacy entails promoting humanitarian norms and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and human rights (Veuthey, 2012).

Actors involved in humanitarian diplomacy have recently diversified in kind and expanded in number. As noted above, humanitarian diplomacy was originally more associated with the work of international humanitarian organizations and agencies. In this regard, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and IFRC are at the forefront of international humanitarian activities. Other humanitarian NGOs such as the Caritas, MSF, Oxfam, or World Vision also engage in humanitarian diplomacy either publicly through international awareness-raising activities and participation in the negotiation and implementation of international treaties or practically through operational diplomatic practices such as negotiating with governments, delivering food, or obtaining visas for humanitarian workers (Rousseau and Pende, 2020, pp. 257-262). Intergovernmental organizations are also involved in humanitarian diplomacy. The UN plays a fundamental role in global governance for addressing humanitarian crises. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is responsible for coordinating humanitarian activities. The humanitarian work of the UN is carried out at the operational level by its specialized agencies such as UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) or UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) (Rousseau and Pende, 2020, p. 264). One of the largest aid donors, the European Union also undertakes activities under the banner of humanitarian diplomacy through its department for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (Fiott, 2018, p. 4).

What makes humanitarian diplomacy more complicated is the rise of states as humanitarian actors in international politics. As Barnett and Weiss (2011, p. 88) emphasize, the role of states has been a constant feature of humanitarian action. However, since the end of the Cold War, the growing involvement by states in the delivery of humanitarian assistance has been especially more evident as governments became more open to the idea of humanitarianism for several reasons. First, in an interconnected world, the emergence of complex humanitarian emergencies created serious regional and international consequences, demanding new sorts of interventions. Second, many states discovered close links between humanitarian action and their security interests, such as the partnership of humanitarianism with counterterrorism since September 11. Third, they began to view humanitarian action as a way of convincing local populations of the goodness of their armed interventions. Last, humanitarian assistance enabled states to avoid costlier political actions (Barnett and Weiss, 2011, p. 89). Thus, in the post-Cold War era, states are more willing to provide funding, advance humanitarian causes, and even deploy military troops to deliver assistance, increasingly treating humanitarian action as a strategic instrument. As a result, the purpose of humanitarianism has been more politicized, and humanitarianism itself has become more firmly and self-consciously political (Barnett, 2005).

As part of this growing trend, an increasing number of states have officially adopted humanitarian diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument in recent years. Numerous governments have found the concept useful in defining the activities that they conduct in the name of humanitarianism. They work to secure financial pledges from other governments for a particular humanitarian crisis, shape the humanitarian agenda based on their priorities, and raise awareness about humanitarian issues in novel ways such as hosting summits (Fiott, 2018). Diplomacy in its conventional sense is already an essential function of a state that refers to the management of its external

relations by its official agents through peaceful means. Humanitarian diplomacy is not a rival to conventional diplomacy. However, the former differs from the latter because conventional diplomacy essentially pursues and protects state interests. In contrast, humanitarian diplomacy should advocate a 'universal interest,' i.e., promoting humanitarianism (Smith, 2007, p. 54). Although self-interest is not the only motive for states to be interested in the suffering of others, Barnett and Weiss (2011) underline that they are more willing to act when their security interests might be served by humanitarian action. Despite several advantages of governments' involvement in humanitarian diplomacy, such as raising greater awareness about humanitarian issues or mobilizing their financial and military capabilities in the provision of relief aid in emergencies, this raises the risk of subordinating humanitarian diplomacy to political and security interests at the expense of fundamental humanitarian principles (Regnier, 2011, p. 1218). Barnett (2005) points out that principles rendering humanitarianism apolitical have already crumbled during the 1990s, and working with states has potentially undermined humanitarian agencies' neutrality and impartiality. Therefore, the impartiality and neutrality of state-sanctioned humanitarian diplomacy can be questioned since governments may use the concept to convey their foreign policy objectives or link humanitarian diplomacy to broader political issues (Fiott, 2018, p. 3).

In light of these theoretical discussions, this article adopts the broader and comprehensive approach and offers an analytical framework for assessing humanitarian diplomacy conducted by a state as a foreign policy instrument. First and foremost, state-led humanitarian diplomacy must be based on the imperative of humanity. As such, while conducting humanitarian diplomacy, a government should seek to achieve a humanitarian objective, and its main goal must be to protect human life and dignity in situations where they are under threat. Second, although activities under humanitarian diplomacy can vary due to its context-specific nature, the implementation of state humanitarian diplomacy rests upon three pillars. The first pillar of humanitarian diplomacy refers to *operational activities* such as negotiation practices and other similar daily tasks undertaken by governmental institutions and agencies to coordinate the provision of humanitarian aid and relief operations on the ground. The second pillar is *humanitarian advocacy* which entails awareness-raising by governments about a humanitarian crisis or issue. This can take the form of raising attention for a particular humanitarian crisis at international meetings or persuading other governments and international organizations to respond to humanitarian emergencies. The third pillar of humanitarian diplomacy is *norm-setting and capacity-building*, which involves the efforts of a government to promote humanitarian norms and increase humanitarian capacity at the global level. Such activities can include establishing, developing, or sharing best practices, procedures, and principles in humanitarian action, enhancing tools of humanitarian diplomacy, training humanitarian officials and workers, and supporting international initiatives designed to build and improve the institutional capacity of the global humanitarian system. Finally, after interrogating how humanitarian diplomacy is portrayed and used by a government, it can be normatively judged how far state humanitarian diplomacy adheres to the principles of impartiality and neutrality and whether humanitarian diplomacy becomes instrumental in promoting broader foreign policy agendas.

3. Turkey's Humanitarian Diplomacy

Turkey is one of the countries that has self-consciously adopted humanitarian diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument. Former Foreign and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, the chief architect of the AKP's foreign policy until his resignation in 2016, first used the term in 2013 and defined humanitarian diplomacy as “[o]ne of the key explanatory principles of Turkish foreign policy – probably the most significant one in this period-” (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 865). Davutoğlu himself introduced Turkey's official approach and interpreted humanitarian diplomacy in a relatively 'unique' way. According to this official interpretation, Turkish humanitarian diplomacy has three key dimensions. The first dimension is concerned with the Turkish citizens and aims at facilitating their lives and solving their problems through opening new consulates to serve their needs and implementing a liberal visa policy to ensure their global mobility. The second dimension is defined as Turkey's “human-oriented attitude in crisis zones,” which indeed resonates more with the general definition of humanitarian diplomacy. In this regard, Turkey's humanitarian response to crises in Somalia and Myanmar, its open-door policy towards the Syrian refugees, and its support for the reconstruction in Afghanistan are considered the most significant and visible examples of its humanitarian diplomacy in conflict-affected regions. The third and final dimension of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy is related to the promotion of an inclusive humanitarian perspective at the global level. This specifically aims at the creation of a more inclusive UN system as Turkey considers that the UN has been failing to respond to humanitarian crises in countries such as Syria due to the distorted voting system within the UN and the existing structure of the UN Security Council (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 867-868).

In Turkey's official conceptualization, as Altunışık (2019, p. 2) notes, the need for humanitarian diplomacy has emerged from a particular historical context which marks the rise of a new world era. In other words, Turkey's embrace of humanitarian diplomacy has been a result of its search for adaptation to a new international environment which requires states to develop a new language of diplomacy that moves beyond sharp distinctions such as the realist-idealist divide or the hard-power versus soft-power dichotomy and upholds the dignity of all human beings. For Turkey, humanitarian diplomacy addresses such a need and offers “a critical equilibrium between conscience and power” (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 865-866). As such, Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy has arisen from its determination to become an active international actor in this rapidly changing historical context because humanitarian diplomacy is more than humanitarian aid, having a capacity to symbolize both its power and conscience in a wide geographical area. Thus, the ruling elite considers the concept a helpful framework for portraying Turkey as both “a compassionate and powerful state” (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 866). In this sense, it has a double function in the discourse of TFP. On the one hand, the TFP elite finds humanitarian diplomacy suitable for achieving Turkey's regional and global leadership aspirations since it provides an efficient way to exhibit its growing influence and power capacity not only in its immediate neighborhood but also in distant regions such as Myanmar or Somalia. On the other hand, it also contributes to reconstructing Turkey's identity as a country that fulfills its moral responsibility towards people in need, especially those living in the Muslim world or the former Ottoman territory (Altunışık, 2014, p. 336).

More specifically, the need for humanitarian diplomacy in TFP has been associated with the particular historical conditions created by the Arab uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, especially by the Syrian civil war. Turkey's policy of supporting the demands of the Arab people was represented as the reflection of its humanitarian diplomacy. In the context of the Arab uprisings, humanitarian diplomacy was conceptualized as the best tool to facilitate political transitions and support reforms and popular demands in its neighborhood. On the other hand, in the Horn of Africa, humanitarian diplomacy was linked to supporting conflict resolution and reconstruction processes in countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 867-870).

A distinctive feature of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy is the diversity of state and non-state actors involved in its conduct. Thus, Davutoğlu (2013, p. 867) describes this aspect of humanitarian diplomacy as multifaceted and multi-channelled since both governmental institutions and NGOs contribute to Turkish humanitarian activities. As such, the organizational structure of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy currently involves mainly three types of institutions: state ministries and agencies, quasi-governmental organizations, and NGOs (Guo, 2020). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı* – TİKA) and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (*Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı*-AFAD) stand out as the key state institutions in Turkey's international humanitarian assistance. The MFA is mainly charged with the political aspects of humanitarian aid. It is a principal governmental body that plays a substantial role in shaping decision-making regarding Turkey's humanitarian policy (Guo, 2020, p. 125).

On the other hand, TİKA is concerned with the technical coordination of foreign aid. Having been established in 1992 to provide development assistance to the newly-independent former Soviet republics in Central Asia, TİKA has been transformed during the AKP era and has become a crucial foreign policy instrument, particularly in providing Turkey's humanitarian and development aid. Its activities have increased dramatically, and its geographical reach has expanded from Central Asia to the globe. In this regard, its transformation is seen as a reflection of Turkey's shift from an aid recipient to a donor country in international politics (Altunışık, 2014, p. 334-335). Founded in 2009 as an umbrella organization for domestic disaster management, AFAD is also charged with coordinating large-scale international humanitarian aid operations and launching domestic fundraising campaigns for humanitarian emergencies (Guo, 2020, p. 127). Other state institutions such as the Ministries of Interior, Education and Health, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, and the Housing Development Administration of Turkey are also involved in Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy. The state-owned English-broadcasting international news channel, TRT World, is also crucial in raising awareness about humanitarian emergencies worldwide through programs such as *Africa Matters*.

The Turkish Red Crescent (*Kızılay*) and the Turkish Diyanet Foundation (TDF) are quasi-governmental organizations actively engaged in Turkey's humanitarian activities. Besides its domestic tasks, *Kızılay* is a leading humanitarian organization that has been very active in Turkish international humanitarian assistance, providing aid to 78 countries including Palestine, Sudan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Somalia, and Pakistan last decade. The organization operates closely

with the government and follows governmental policy priorities in delivering humanitarian aid abroad (Binder, 2014). Operating under the auspices of the Presidency of Religious Affairs as a charity organization, the TDF has also become an important institution in international humanitarian aid operations during the AKP era and has provided assistance to humanitarian emergencies in countries such as Myanmar (Rohingya), Indonesia, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen (TDF, n.d.). Another significant characteristic of Turkey's emergence as a humanitarian actor in recent years is the active involvement of NGOs in its humanitarian diplomacy. Although the involvement of Turkish NGOs in international humanitarian assistance systemically began during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars in the 1990s, the AKP governments encouraged and supported the expansion of international activities of humanitarian NGOs mainly created by religious communities and business associations. As a result, humanitarian NGOs such as IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, *Cansuyu* Foundation, Doctors Worldwide Turkey, and *Deniz Feneri* Association are the most active organizations in Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy (Aras and Akpınar, 2015).

Humanitarian activities carried out by Turkey broadly resonate with the three pillars of humanitarian diplomacy. Operational activities probably constitute the most visible aspect of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy since Turkish state institutions and NGOs are very active in conducting large-scale humanitarian aid operations in countries affected by natural disasters or conflicts. As such, Turkish humanitarian assistance takes a variety of forms, ranging from establishing tent camps, delivering health and shelter services, and distributing medical supplies, clothing, and food aid to building hospitals, houses, and schools and providing professional expertise through training programs on disaster management in countries with humanitarian crises such as Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine, Somali, Syria, and Yemen. Particularly in the context of the Syrian crisis, in addition to the provision of humanitarian aid, Turkey has also been facilitating the cross-border deliveries of international aid agencies and hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world. Turkish humanitarian aid officials, as well as humanitarian NGO workers, demonstrate and use diplomatic skills in humanitarian crises to carry on their day-to-day activities on the ground, including negotiating with local authorities, obtaining access to victims, providing expertise, and mobilizing, deploying, and coordinating resources in responding to such emergencies.

Humanitarian advocacy has also become an essential part of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy. Either working through international meetings or directly engaging with other governments and international organizations, Turkey makes considerable efforts to raise global awareness about particular humanitarian crises. Turkey's humanitarian advocacy encompasses mainly three forms of activity. First, TFP makers frequently use multilateral forums such as UN General Assembly sessions to increase awareness about humanitarian emergencies in Syria, Palestine, Somalia, and Myanmar. In some cases, Ankara also hosts international conferences focusing on particular humanitarian issues to mobilize an international response to ensure the protection of victims of natural disasters or conflicts. Second, organizing high-level official visits of Turkish leaders to crisis zones tends to be a standard method of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy that also brings attention to humanitarian crises

at the international level. Third, Turkey also carries out bilateral diplomatic engagement with other governments or international organizations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid and access.

In recent years, Turkey has also increased its efforts to support the normative development and institutional capacity of humanitarian diplomacy. As such, the country has hosted important international meetings and co-sponsored UN initiatives that seek to promote humanitarian norms and build and improve the capacity of the international humanitarian aid system. Among such initiatives, the hosting of *the World Humanitarian Summit* (WHS) in Istanbul in 2016 probably stands out as the most remarkable example of Turkey's norm-setting and capacity-building activities. Convened by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to reaffirm the international commitment to humanity and to build a more effective international humanitarian aid system, the WHS brought together 9000 participants – including 55 Heads of State and Government – representing various types of stakeholders in the field of humanitarian assistance such as member states, international organizations, NGOs, private sector, academia, and affected communities (Agenda for Humanity, n.d.). One of the significant outcomes of the WHS was the mobilization of the international support and action for the promotion and implementation of the UN Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity, a five-point roadmap for preventing and reducing human suffering (OCHA, 2017). Through hosting the WHS, Turkey thus helped provide a forum to promote new ideas and solutions for addressing humanitarian challenges, such as the creation of the online *Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation* (PACT). In addition, Turkey has individually pledged a set of commitments developed at the Summit to achieve the Agenda for Humanity and has been submitting annual self-reports on the progress in implementing its commitments. The holding of the first-ever WHS in Istanbul also shows the acknowledgment of Turkey's emerging global humanitarian actor status by the international community.

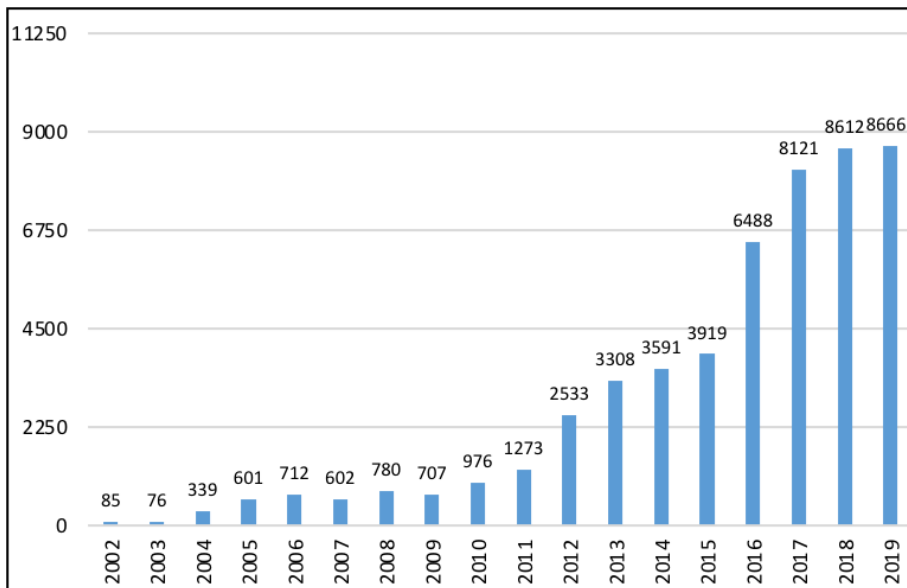
Another significant example of Turkey's contribution to the international humanitarian agenda was the hosting of *the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries* (LDCs) in May 2011 in Istanbul, where the Istanbul Program of Action was adopted to outline the international strategy for sustainable development of LDCs (Kınık and Aslan, 2020, p. 380). Furthermore, within the context of Turkish policy to attract UN organizations to Istanbul, in June 2018, the UN Technology Bank for the LDCs was also established in Turkey to help LDCs build their science and technology capacity (Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2019).

TFP makers also represent their policy of promoting mediation at the global level as a significant component of the country's humanitarian diplomacy (*see* Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 868). Turkey's leading role in raising awareness and building capacity for mediation at international organizations as well as its international conferences and training programs on mediation thus form the essential part of its humanitarian norm-setting and capacity-building activities. Since 2010 Turkey has pioneered several international initiatives for the development of mediation norms, procedures, tools, and capacities at three international organizations – namely UN, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Akçapar, 2021). In September 2010, Turkey and Finland jointly launched *the Mediation for Peace Initiative*

at the UN. Since then, two countries have been co-chairing the UN Group of Friends of Mediation that played a leading role in adopting several UN resolutions and developing the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation (UN Peacemaker, n.d.). In 2014, a similar *Group of Friends of Mediation* was formed at the OSCE by Turkey and Finland, along with the then Swiss Presidency of the organization. Turkey also contributed to capacity-building efforts at the OIC, particularly with creating a *Contact Group of Friends of Mediation* in 2018. In addition, Turkey carries out its role in norm-setting and capacity-building through hosting annual *Istanbul Mediation Conferences* since 2012 and *OIC Member State Mediation Conferences* since 2017. Finally, training programs on mediation for foreign diplomats-such as the launch of the *Mediation for Peace Certificate Program* for junior diplomats from the OIC Secretariat and OIC countries in 2018 – also form a significant part of Turkey's humanitarian capacity-building policy (MFA, n.d.-c).

In addition, at the domestic level, to enhance its legal and institutional capacity regarding its humanitarian and development cooperation policy, the 10th Development Plan of Turkey has launched the "Program for Improving the Infrastructure of International Cooperation for Development" (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development, 2014). Furthermore, the 11th Development Plan also states that the country aims to adopt a development cooperation law to strengthen its human, legal and institutional infrastructure and set out the principles and priorities of its foreign assistance (Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2019). Still, its efforts in humanitarian norm-setting and capacity-building remain primarily technical and logistical and, compared to its activities under the first two pillars of humanitarian diplomacy, relatively limited.

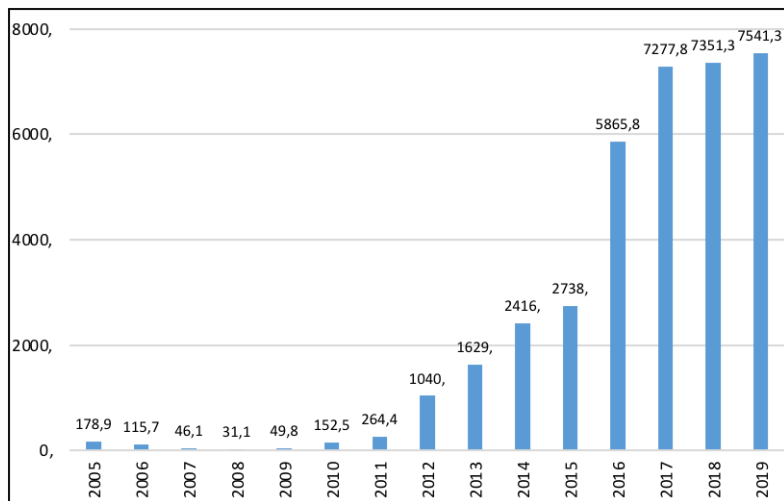
Figure 1: Turkish Official Development Assistance, 2002-2019 (Million Dollars)



Source: TIKA, Turkish Development Assistance Report, 2016 and 2019

Statistical evidence also supports that Turkey has emerged as a global humanitarian actor. For instance, according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report of 2018, Turkey's contributions made the country the largest donor in the world (Development Initiatives, 2018). Official data provided by the Turkish government also confirm Turkey's growing engagement with development and humanitarian assistance. Figure 1 shows that total official development aid (ODA) increased from \$85 million in 2002 to \$8.66 billion in 2019. In addition, Turkey's official emergency and humanitarian aid constitutes the majority of its ODA. As Figure 2 shows, Turkey delivered \$7.541,3 billion official emergency and humanitarian aid in 2019, which excluded emergency and humanitarian aid provided by Turkish NGOs in the same year. The official data confirm that Turkey prioritizes humanitarian assistance in its entire ODA (Keyman and Sazak, 2014, p. 6). For example, the 11th Development Plan notes that in 2018 humanitarian aid accounts for 86% of its development aid (Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2019, p. 27).

Figure 2: Turkish Official Emergency and Humanitarian Aid, 2005-2019, (Million Dollars)



Source: TIKA, Turkish Development Assistance Report, 2016 and 2019

Regarding Turkish humanitarian assistance, two points should be noted. First, Turkey prefers bilateral aid rather than multilateral contributions. For instance, in 2016, Turkey contributed \$ 6.237,5 billion in bilateral aid while its multilateral assistance was only \$ 250.2 million (TIKA, 2016). As Tank (2015, p. 2) points out, bilateral aid is more advantageous because it allows countries to pursue their own foreign policy agenda. Second, the growth of Turkey's ODA since 2011 is closely associated with the outbreak of the Arab uprisings. The Syrian civil war has led to a tremendous increase in Turkey's humanitarian aid due to the refugee crisis. Turkey has been the largest recipient of Syrian refugees as the number of registered refugees living in Turkey was more than 3.7 million people as of September 2021 (UNHCR, n.d.). Therefore, Turkey provided the most significant amount of its official emergency and humanitarian aid to Syria, followed by Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, and Myanmar (TIKA, 2016).

A 'Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy' has been increasingly institutionalized over the recent decade. Both policy discourse and academic literature have already depicted Turkey's growing international humanitarian activism as the emergence of a "Turkish model of aid" (Sazak and Woods, 2017; TIKA, 2019). Bayer and Keyman (2012, p. 84) also state that Turkey's activism focusing more on humanitarian assistance has been crystallized in recent years, and the country has developed its brand of humanitarian internationalism. Several elements characterize the Turkish brand. First, Turkey has adopted a comprehensive approach that goes beyond humanitarian aid and helps the country define broader roles such as mediation and peacebuilding under the banner of humanitarian diplomacy (Akçınar, 2013, p.740). Defining Turkey as a "humanitarian state" that provides official and private relief to reconstruct institutions and infrastructure critical for people in emergencies, Keyman and Sazak (2014, p. 6) emphasize that state-building constitutes the essence of Turkish assistance. Second, the Turkish brand is based on bilateral aid rather than the traditional preference for multilateral aid. In this regard, Turkey's preference for bilateral aid resembles the global trend of shifting away from multilateral to bilateral assistance since the 1980s. The bilateral delivery of aid on the ground, on the one hand, enables the direct engagement with national and local actors and thus ensures more visibility of Turkey in the field of humanitarian assistance (Sucuoğlu and Sazak, 2016, p. 74-75). On the other, as Barnett (2005, p. 731) notes, the bilateralization of aid can mean that state interests – rather than the principle of relief based on needs – dictate how and where the assistance will be used and thus potentially undermines the impartiality of humanitarian aid. Third, the involvement of both state and non-state actors also characterizes the Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy. However, despite the close cooperation among them, the government dominates the decision-making process regarding humanitarian aid policy, and the impact of NGOs on decisions is minimal. As such, both non-governmental and quasi-governmental organizations are inclined to follow official foreign policy goals and priorities (Guo, 2020, p. 123). Fourth and final, strong adherence to the principle of non-conditionality is also one of the defining features of the Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy. As Turkey does not attach its aid to any political and military conditions or governing principles, this sets the Turkish brand apart from traditional donor countries (Keyman and Sazak, 2014). Moreover, delivering humanitarian assistance without any economic and political conditions strengthens the government-to-government partnership (Sucuoğlu and Sazak, 2016, p.73-74).

4. Case Studies

4.1. The 2011-2012 Famine in Somalia

Turkey's engagement with Somalia has become one of the most visible examples of its humanitarian diplomacy since the heavily publicized visit of the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, now President, to the country in August 2011 when the famine led to a severe humanitarian disaster that caused the lives of nearly 260,000 people and forced hundreds of thousands to flee to neighboring countries (UN, 2013). Turkish humanitarian intervention in 2011 sought to achieve

a dual purpose of providing humanitarian assistance to people in need and raising international awareness about the humanitarian situation in Somalia (Karahan, 2020). The operational aspect of its humanitarian commitment has remarkably expanded since the 2011 visit. The initial phase of Turkish assistance included mostly emergency aid such as delivering food, clothing, sheltering equipment, medical services, and supplies (Sazak and Woods, 2017, p. 178). While Turkey delivered \$77.72 million in emergency aid in 2011 and \$47.54 million in 2012, Turkish humanitarian NGOs provided \$57.84 million in assistance in 2011 and \$26.41 million in 2012 (Sucuoğlu and Stearns, 2016, p. 22). However, particularly since 2013, Turkey's involvement has also included development assistance and capacity-building in Somalia, mainly focusing on infrastructure, health, and education. These were primarily in the form of enabling access to clean drinking water, providing medical assistance such as health services by Turkish health teams on the ground or building a training and research hospital, rebuilding infrastructures such as the rehabilitation of Mogadishu roads and airport, and providing educational opportunities such as the construction of the Mogadishu Agricultural School or offering state scholarships to Somali students to study in Turkey (Karahan, 2020, p. 73-75). In addition, Turkey's engagement has also expanded into helping restore peace in Somalia as the Turkish government has been involved in mediation efforts between various conflicting parties. The most remarkable example of these efforts facilitated by Turkey took place between the Somaliland government and the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu (Akpınar, 2013, p. 745).

A range of Turkish state institutions, quasi-governmental agencies, and humanitarian NGOs have been involved in Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy in Somalia. Turkey promptly established its diplomatic presence with the re-opening of the Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu, thus helping Somalia end its international isolation. Moreover, in September 2011, a TIKA Program Coordination Office (PCO) was also opened in Mogadishu to coordinate humanitarian assistance operations carried out by Turkish humanitarian actors. Under the umbrella of TIKA, several state ministries in the areas of defense, education, health, and interior, as well as humanitarian agencies such as AFAD and some Turkish municipalities, have also actively engaged in delivering emergency assistance and conducting development projects. In addition, *Kızılay* and various Turkish humanitarian NGOs, including IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, *Cansuyu* Foundation, and the Worldwide Doctors, have expanded their activities to provide humanitarian assistance and conduct development projects, especially in the fields of education and health (Sucuoğlu and Stearns, 2016, p. 22).

From the very outset, Turkey has extensively concentrated its humanitarian advocacy efforts into raising international awareness about the ongoing crisis in Somalia through repeated high-profile visits to the country, making efforts to mobilize international organizations for humanitarian action and making statements at their meetings, and hosting and participating multilateral conferences. Together with a large delegation of cabinet members, businesspeople, journalists, celebrities, and his family members, the 2011 visit of Prime Minister Erdoğan to Mogadishu at the height of the famine was itself a telling example of Turkey's humanitarian advocacy. This visit not only made him the first non-African leader visiting the country in nearly two decades, but

also the primary goal of the delegation was to draw the attention of the international community to the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Somalia directly from the ground (Karahan, 2020, p. 69-70). Likewise, the repeated visits of Erdoğan in 2015 and 2016 after he became President also confirmed the continuation of Turkey's humanitarian commitment to Somalia (Sazak and Woods, 2017, p. 180).

As part of its humanitarian diplomacy towards Somalia, Turkey has also increased its efforts to mobilize international organizations for raising awareness about and encouraging an international humanitarian response to the crisis. In the midst of the famine, Turkey had already called for an emergency summit of the OIC in early August 2011 before Erdoğan's visit. Upon the call of Turkey, an emergency meeting of the OIC Executive Committee was convened in Istanbul, where the financial pledges of the OIC governments on providing Somalia with \$350 million in aid were secured (Karahan, 2020, p. 69). Since 2011, Turkey has also used international forums such as the UN meetings for raising awareness about Somalia. The TFP elite has frequently called for a humanitarian initiative on the crisis in Somalia in their addresses to UN General Assembly sessions. For example, just one month after his visit, Prime Minister Erdoğan devoted a large part of his speech to Somalia during the 66th UN General Assembly in September 2011 to help draw international attention to the humanitarian tragedy in the country. Defining Turkey's aid campaign for Somalia as a result of its humanitarian responsibility, he stated in his address to the UN General Assembly:

“Last month in Somalia, for instance, I personally witnessed how the United Nations and the international community remain helpless in the face of today's pressing problems. It is impossible for me to put into words the poverty and suffering I saw in Somalia... The tragedy of Somalia, where tens of thousands of children have died for the lack of a mere piece of bread and drop of water, is a matter of shame for the international community and cannot be dismissed in a few words. The civil war that has gone on for the past 20 years has wiped out all of Somalia's resources and livelihood. The Somali people are being gradually dragged to their death as the world looks on. The international community is watching the suffering in Somalia as if it were a movie. It is urgent, however, that we face this situation, which is a test of our humanity” (Erdoğan, 2011).

In the following years, the TFP elite repeatedly brought up the humanitarian situation in Somalia to the international agenda through their statements at the UN General Assembly meetings and thus reiterated Turkey's commitment to Somalia. At the 68th UN General Assembly in 2013, the then President Abdullah Gül, for instance, represented Somalia as an exemplary case of Turkey's humanitarian assistance and, in this context, explicitly defined humanitarian diplomacy as a key objective of TFP (Gül, 2013).

In addition, Turkey has actively supported multilateral initiatives, particularly regarding peacebuilding issues in Somalia, in coordination with the UN and other donor countries. Through sponsoring and hosting international meetings, Turkey has tried to help draw international attention to the conflict in Somalia. Turkey's efforts to support the peacebuilding process had

begun before Erdoğan's 2011 visit with hosting the first *Istanbul Conference on Somalia* during May 21-23, 2010. One of its significant outcomes was international awareness-raising about the peace process as the Conference sent strong messages to both Somalia's neighbors and the international community to support peace in Somalia (Akpınar, 2013, p. 741). *The Second Istanbul Conference on Somalia* was also held in mid-2012, under the theme of "Preparing Somalia's Future: Goal 2015", with the high-level participation including the UN Secretary-General, representatives from fifty-seven countries, and eleven international organizations such as the Arab League, African Union, and OIC as well as the Somali government, civil society organizations and the Somali diaspora (MFA, 2012).

These initiatives have allowed Turkey to raise not only an international awareness and call for more active roles on the ground in Somalia but also to boost its image as a rising humanitarian actor in global politics. Overall, the Somalia experience has specifically been utilized as a reference point by the TFP elite for the identification of a 'distinctive brand' of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy as President Erdoğan underlines the importance of Somalia in the Turkish approach to humanitarianism by stating that "[w]ith Somalia, Turkish model of aid has gained recognition in literature" (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2016).

4.2. The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar

Another prime example of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy in the last decade was the Turkish humanitarian assistance towards Myanmar to help the victims of violence in the Rakhine State (a.k.a Arakan), particularly the Rohingya Muslims. The Rohingya are a stateless Muslim minority that has suffered decades of systematic discrimination and persecution, including denied citizenship rights and restrictions on movement, marriage, and employment in a predominantly Buddhist country. In June and October 2012, inter-communal violence between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims caused deaths and forcible displacement of predominantly Muslim communities. A more brutal crackdown on the Rohingya population occurred in August 2017 when Myanmar's army launched a military campaign, destroying Rohingya villages and killing civilians. Army attacks also triggered the largest refugee influx into Bangladesh. According to the UN data, as of April 2021, over 884,000 Rohingya live in refugee camps around Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh (UNHCR, April 2021). Therefore, the Rohingya population in Myanmar dropped dramatically, and only around 600,000 stateless Rohingya remain in the Rakhine State, of whom 144,000 are internally displaced (UNHCR, March-April 2021). As such, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has labeled the latest violence against the Rohingya population as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (UN, 2017), while the UN's fact-finding commission describes the crimes in the Rakhine state as committed with "genocidal intent" (Human Rights Council, 2018).

Turkish humanitarian response to the Rohingya crisis has been characterized by its extensive operational activities on the ground and by its intensive humanitarian advocacy at the

international level. The situation in Myanmar drew Turkey's interest when the Rohingya became the target of violence in 2012, and since then, its humanitarian operations have intensified remarkably. After the 2012 incidents, Turkey became the first country granted permission by the Myanmar government to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the region aside from the UN (MFA, 2012-b). Under the coordination of AFAD, both state and non-state humanitarian agencies, including TIKA, *Kızılay*, TDF, and Turkish humanitarian NGOs, launched a rapid emergency aid operation, including the provision of food and other materials such as clothing, blankets, kitchen utensils, and medical supplies to address the humanitarian crisis in 2012. To support the country's development, TIKA also opened a PCO in Yangon in 2013. Before the 2017 exodus, Turkish humanitarian assistance was mainly concentrated within Myanmar, primarily responding to the needs of IDPs due to the 2012 violence. As the TIKA reports indicate, the total amount of Turkish official emergency and humanitarian aid to Myanmar between 2012 and 2014 Turkey was \$ 16,97 million (TIKA, 2012; 2013; 2014).

Following the atrocities of 2017, Turkey has expanded its humanitarian operations, and its emergency relief efforts have primarily focused on the needs of Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh. At the operational level, AFAD, TIKA, *Kızılay*, TDF, and Turkish humanitarian NGOs such as IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation and *Yardımcı* Association have actively involved in Turkey's humanitarian operations to address the basic needs of the victims, such as constructing bamboo houses to provide shelter for refugees, providing food parcels and hot meals, enabling their access to clean water, and distributing non-food items. In addition, one of the most important missions undertaken by AFAD – with the support of the Turkish Ministry of Health – was the establishment and maintenance of a field hospital in Cox's Bazar to provide healthcare services to the refugees (AFAD, 2021).

A striking aspect of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy since the very beginning of the Rohingya refugee crisis has been the active presence of Turkish humanitarian agencies on the ground. As such, AFAD established an office in Cox's Bazar to oversee aid delivery regularly and coherently. Moreover, AFAD workers in the field not only fulfill daily functions such as conducting need assessments, coordinating humanitarian missions, and managing the field hospital but also carry out crucial diplomatic engagement with Bangladeshi authorities, the UN, and other local and international NGOs. Similarly, TIKA, *Kızılay*, and TDF have their own offices in Bangladesh to lead their field operations in refugee camps (AFAD, 2021). Even though Turkish humanitarian efforts have recently concentrated on refugees living in Bangladesh, Turkey continues its activities within Myanmar by supporting development projects of the country and providing humanitarian aid to both Buddhists and Muslims (Karahana, 2020, p. 139).

From the very beginning of the Rohingya crisis, Turkey has conducted active humanitarian advocacy to raise international awareness about the Rohingya crisis. The first dimension of its advocacy of the Rohingya issue at the international level is the high-profile visits of Turkish government members to refugee camps both in Myanmar and Bangladesh to draw international attention to the sufferings of the victims of the conflict. For instance, the official visit of Foreign

Minister Davutoğlu in August 2012, the first high-level one from Turkey to Myanmar in history, aimed not only to boost bilateral relations between the two countries but also to raise international awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine. The Turkish delegation led by Davutoğlu, which included Prime Minister Erdoğan's family members, journalists, deputies, and members of charity organizations, was probably the first foreign mission visiting Rakhine to monitor the conditions of the Muslim and Buddhist IDP camps and distribute Turkish humanitarian aid (MFA, n.d.-d). The second visit of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu to the Rohingya camps took place in the following year together with an international delegation included the Secretary-General of the OIC and representatives from its Contact Group on Rohingya Muslims, one of the few international teams that were allowed to have access to Rakhine (MFA, n.d.-e).

Similarly, the Turkish government swiftly sent an official delegation to the region shortly after the 2017 crisis. Accompanied by a delegation including Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and heads of state humanitarian agencies, First Lady Emine Erdoğan visited refugee camps in Bangladesh hosting Rohingya Muslims who had fled violence in Myanmar (MFA, 2017). Furthermore, the visit of the then Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım to Bangladesh in late 2017 also aimed at addressing the Rohingya crisis, making him the first Prime Minister who visited a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazaar (TRTWorld, 2017). These high-level visits not only served to supervise the situation and delivery of aid on the ground, but more importantly, they contributed to highlighting the plight of the Rohingya Muslims on the global level.

The second dimension of Turkish humanitarian advocacy includes the efforts of the Turkish government to put the Rohingya issue on the international agenda, particularly by working through international organizations. In this regard, the sessions of the UN General Assembly provide a helpful forum for drawing international attention to the Rohingya crisis. In his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2012, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu (2012, p. 48) stressed that “the people of the Rakhine region, especially the Rohingya Muslims, are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.” Especially since the atrocities of 2017, the sufferings of Rohingya refugees have been voiced by the Turkish leaders at the UN more loudly. In his statement to the UN General Assembly in September 2017, President Erdoğan (2017, p. 24) defined the massacre of Rohingya Muslims as “what almost amounts to ethnic cleansing” and highlighted the poor living conditions of refugee camps in Bangladesh. Moreover, he criticized the international community for its failure in responding to the Rohingya crisis, calling for more international assistance to victims. Two years later, referring to the report of the UN Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar that notes ‘genocidal intent’ behind the atrocities in Rakhine, President Erdoğan (2019, p. 23) ensured that Turkey would undertake initiatives for “the security and fundamental rights of the Rohingya people” in addition to its humanitarian relief activities.

Besides being one of the members of the OIC Contact Group on the Rohingya Muslim Minority, Turkey has also increased its diplomatic efforts within the OIC to raise awareness about the Rohingya crisis, urging the organization itself to take a leading role in keeping the issue on the international agenda (MFA, n.d.-f). Immediately after the atrocities of 2017, for instance,

President Erdoğan took the initiative of convening a Special Session on Rohingya Muslims on the sidelines of the OIC Summit of Science and Technology in Astana in September 2017 (OIC, 2017). Furthermore, joining the meeting of the OIC Contact Group in New York at the margins of the 72nd UN General Assembly, President Erdoğan also called for an action to end the Rohingya crisis and underlined Turkey's determination to continue its humanitarian approach (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2017).

The third dimension of Turkish humanitarian advocacy of the Rohingya issue involves direct diplomatic engagements with the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh. In the wake of the events both in 2012 and 2017, the Turkish government intensified its efforts to persuade the Myanmar government to allow humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict. For instance, following a phone call between President Erdoğan and Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2017, TIKA was allowed to provide assistance to northern Rakhine. In addition, after people fled violence in Myanmar in August 2017, Turkey's call for Bangladesh to "open the door to Rohingya Muslims" was decisive because the Turkish government pledged its financial support to Bangladesh for hosting the Rohingya refugees (Karahan, 2020, p. 136-137).

5. Conclusion

This article has shown that Turkey has become one of the major global actors in the field of humanitarianism in recent years. While hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world, the country has expanded both the amount and geographical scope of its humanitarian assistance in the world. More importantly, the Turkish government has officially deployed the concept 'humanitarian diplomacy' to describe its growing activity in foreign policy. The TFP elite has found humanitarian diplomacy useful to portray Turkey as both a compassionate and powerful country in a rapidly changing international context, particularly following the Arab uprisings. As such, a Turkish brand of humanitarian diplomacy has been institutionalized over the last decade. While the Turkish brand is defined by a set of characteristics-including the bilateral delivery of assistance on the ground and cooperation between state and non-state actors – its design and content broadly resonate with all three pillars of state-led humanitarian diplomacy introduced in the first section as an analytical framework. As the case studies in this article clearly illustrate, operational tasks undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental humanitarian institutions form the most visible aspect of Turkish humanitarian diplomacy. Besides, Turkish humanitarian advocacy about a particular humanitarian issue involves awareness-raising activities at multilateral forums such as UN General Assembly, hosting international meetings or organizing high-profile visits to crisis zones, and directly engaging with governments or international organizations to encourage humanitarian response. Finally, Turkey also makes considerable efforts to promote the normative development and institutional capacity of humanitarian diplomacy at the global level through hosting international conferences and co-sponsoring multilateral humanitarian initiatives.

State-led humanitarian diplomacy itself is a natural result of the transformation of the humanitarian system after the end of the Cold War. However, more importantly, this article highlights that state-led humanitarian diplomacy has reinforced two defining trends in this transformation as identified by Barnett (2005). First, it has further deepened the politicization of humanitarianism as states expand the meaning of humanitarianism by linking it to broader political issues and tasks or using it to convey foreign policy objectives. Second, state-led diplomacy has caused the further institutionalization and standardization of humanitarianism through creating similar bureaucratic units, developing standardized rules and procedures, and issuing universal templates and guidelines.

Turkey's adoption of humanitarian diplomacy as an official foreign policy tool has also contributed to these two trends. First, its approach to humanitarian diplomacy has been pragmatic and instrumental as the use of humanitarian diplomacy has been based on its possible contributions to achieving the goals of TFP. The TFP elite has considered humanitarian diplomacy as an effective way of gaining more power and increasing political influence even in distant regions. In this regard, the concept of humanitarian diplomacy provides a narrative reinforcing the image of Turkey as a powerful international actor that can exert its influence beyond its immediate neighborhood, such as Somalia or Myanmar. At the same time, it helps justify its growing involvement in other countries by serving as a reference point for portraying Turkey as a country fulfilling its moral responsibility. In other words, humanitarian diplomacy is conceptualized as a normative framework that only adds some moral substance to foreign policy rhetoric. Besides, humanitarian diplomacy has been linked to broader political issues and policy objectives. Davutoğlu, for instance, specifically used the idea of humanitarian diplomacy to call for the creation of a more inclusive UN system or to facilitate political transitions in Arab Spring countries and support conflict resolution processes in Africa. However, linking humanitarian diplomacy to foreign policy ambitions and broader political issues raises significant questions. Some scholars, for instance, state that using humanitarian diplomacy to convey the foreign policy objectives of governments, such as the call for UN reform, challenges the impartiality and neutrality of humanitarianism (see Fiott, 2018). Similarly, conceptualizing humanitarian diplomacy as an instrument facilitating regime change also risks undermining humanitarian principles. Second, in terms of the normative development and institutional capacity of humanitarian diplomacy, Turkey's efforts have also accelerated the standardization and institutionalization of the humanitarian system.

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