

MONITOR

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

THE ROLE OF NON-TRADITIONAL DONORS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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Turkey's Development Assistance Transformation

Between donor and receiver
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- › In contrast to many traditional donor countries, Turkey has been able to steadily increase its development assistance funding over the past 20 years. In the mid-2000s, Turkey started to give more aid than it received, marking an official transition in its status from aid recipient to net donor country.
- › There is a clear link between Turkish development and security policies in the context of its support for the world's least developed countries.
- › Syria is by far the largest target country for Turkish development assistance expenditure, amounting to 7.2 billion USD in 2019. The majority of this expenditure declared to be for Syria, in fact represents funding for Syrian refugees within Turkey's borders.
- › Although somewhat isolated among its traditional Western partners, a look to Africa and Asia clearly shows that Turkey has never had economic and diplomatic relations with as many countries as it does today.
- › For Germany, intensified cooperation with Turkey, especially in Africa, could translate into increased influence, and by building on Turkey's work, to improved development assistance with greater access to governments and potential project partners.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the world of development assistance has been marked by a transformation in donor structures. Burgeoning emerging economies and regional powers are increasingly utilising development assistance as part of their foreign policy strategies, and Turkey is one of these new emerging players. Although Turkey is one of the founding members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and a close economic and trading partner of the European Union (EU), the nature of its approach to development is different from both traditional donors and non-traditional donors.

Particularly since the early 2000s, Turkey has massively increased its visibility and influence in the field of development assistance, and has become increasingly assertive and strategic in recent years as part of its generally more active approach to foreign policy. Turkey's focus has primarily been on countries that are both geographically and culturally close to it, frequently accompanied by economic interests. The significant broadening of foreign policy objectives, combined with national security interests and regional policy ambitions, also contributes to the diversification of Turkey's economic ties and is a major factor in the country's sustained economic expansion despite its simmering economic crisis. In other words, development assistance serves not only to increase Turkey's visibility globally, but in many cases to also pave the way for strategically relevant bilateral projects in the field of military cooperation and the expansion of Turkish trade relations. Turkish development assistance can consequently be viewed within a more far-reaching foreign policy framework. This is demonstrated, for example, by its support in the form of visa facilitation, improved connectivity through its positioning of the state-owned airline Turkish Airlines in target countries, and its expansion of Turkish television channels for the benefit of the local population in partner countries.

By analysing its approach to development assistance, it becomes clear that Turkey has become an important player and can be a serious partner for Germany and the EU, especially with regard to Africa. Largely unknown to the wider public, the country has become a donor whose official development assistance (ODA) as a proportion of gross national income surpasses that of considerably richer and larger economies, such as Belgium and Spain.¹

This article offers an overview of Turkey's historical development from a recipient of development aid to a donor country. It also analyses the drivers and motivations behind Turkish ambitions and assesses them within the context of the general development of Turkish foreign policy. For this purpose, the distribution of funds and the instruments used by Turkey are explored. Furthermore, it identifies potentials for increased cooperation between Germany and Turkey in the sphere of development assistance.

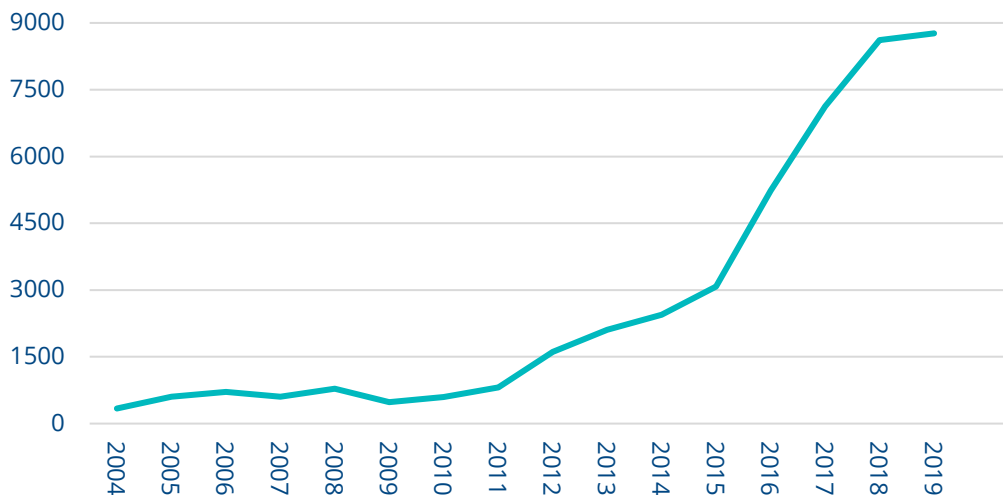
Transition from recipient to donor

Following the end of the World War II, the relatively young Republic of Turkey was still a recipient of development assistance. Development policy projects in Turkey were implemented and capital investments were mobilised, particularly through the support of the United States within the framework of the Marshall Plan. In the decades that followed, Turkey progressively transitioned from a recipient country to a donor country. Despite this, Turkey remains on the list of eligible ODA recipients and continues to receive international development assistance, partly as a result of its status as a candidate country for accession to the EU, but also due to the large number of refugees residing within its borders.

In contrast to many traditional donor countries, Turkey has been able to steadily increase its development assistance funding over the past 20 years.² By the mid-2000s, Turkey began to give more aid than it received, marking an official change in its status from aid recipient to net donor country. As the economy grew, so did the amount of development assistance, increasing almost 18-fold between 2004 and 2019.³

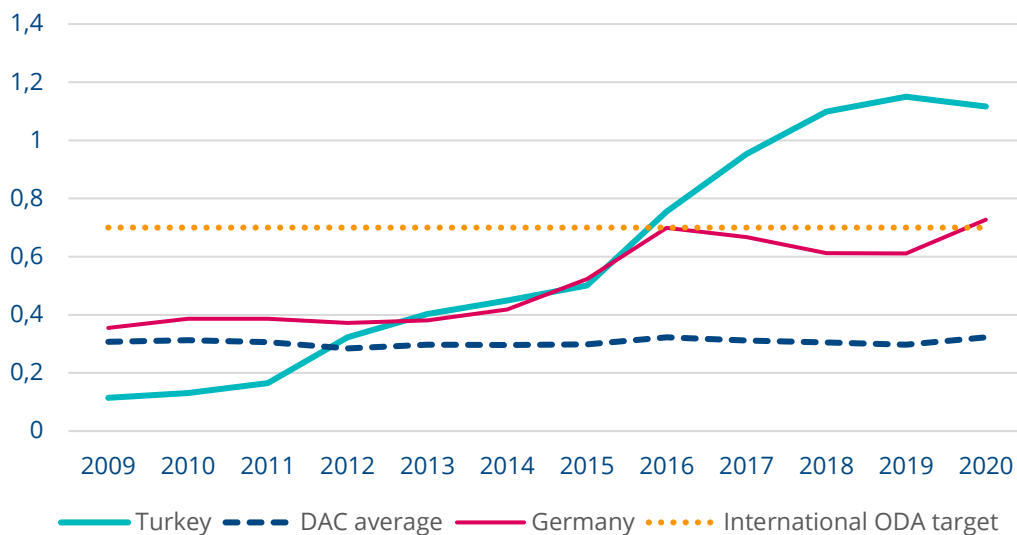
Annually published figures for 2019 and 2020 put Turkey's ratio of official development assistance (ODA) to gross national income at 1.15 per cent and 1.16 per cent respectively. This places Turkey at the top of the list and considerably higher than the average of 0.30 per cent achieved by members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).⁴ The ODA figures for Turkey for 2020 – the most recent available at the time of writing – amount to 8.003 billion USD. The 2019 figure was 8.666 billion USD.⁵ The composition and specific features involved in the calculation of these remarkable sums will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

Chart 1: Turkey's ODA, 2004–2019 (in million USD)



Source: own depiction according to World Bank Data and OECD Development Co-operation Profiles 2021.

Chart 2: Turkey's ODA as a share of gross national income, 2009–2020 (in per cent)



Source: own depiction according to OECD Development Co-operation Profiles 2021.

It was in 1985 that Ankara began operating as a donor in the field of development assistance. That year, Turkey formally launched its first international aid programme amounting to 10 million USD. The programme focused on institutional capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶ This move came as part of a new and more active approach to foreign policy under the then Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who began to recognise and utilise Turkey's historical and cultural ties as a foreign policy tool.

With the independence of the Turkic republics in Central Asia, and the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, new opportunities opened up for Turkish foreign policy. Turkey began to support these fledgling nation-states through its development policy, both as potential new markets for the growing Turkish economy and as nations within Ankara's historic spheres of influence. With targeted development assistance, Turkey initially sought to improve its bilateral relations with its neighbouring states by means of economic interdependence. Turkey's foreign policy – which during the Cold War was defined by almost one-sided relations with the West – has since been gradually replaced by a more multi-dimensional and increasingly autonomous approach.⁷

Ankara's desire to broaden its political, cultural and economic relations with Africa and to establish a foothold on the African continent became clear in 1998 with the launch of an "Opening to Africa Action Plan". This opening was driven forward in the context of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) coming to power in 2002 and the strong economic growth in the early 2000s. Following the declaration of 2005 as the "Year of Africa" and its attainment of observer status in the African Union in the same year, Turkey began a rapid ascent in development cooperation.⁸ The African Union declared Turkey its strategic partner in 2008 and the same year the first Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit was held in Istanbul with representatives from 50 African countries. Turkey is currently preparing for the third Turkey-Africa Summit to be held at the end of 2021, following on from previous summits in 2008 and 2014.⁹

A look at various figures provides a good illustration of Ankara's increasing foothold on the African continent. In 2002, there were only twelve Turkish embassies on the African continent – now there are 43.¹⁰ The continual expansion of diplomatic missions on the African continent is a priority of Turkish foreign policy.¹¹ The destinations served by the state-owned operator Turkish Airlines are also indicative of the importance Ankara attaches to Africa. Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Turkish Airlines offered 60 destinations in 39 African countries. In October 2021, the first direct flight from Istanbul to Luanda in Angola became the 61st destination.¹² No other airline serves as many destinations in Africa as Turkish Airlines. For many developing countries, this Turkish policy offers a link – and sometimes the only link – to the rest of the world. Furthermore, chambers of commerce of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK) have been established in more than half of all African countries.¹³

In addition to this, there have been dozens of bilateral and multilateral visits and conferences. Since the beginning of his first term as prime minister in 2003 and later as president, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has travelled to 30 different African countries a total of 39 times as of October 2021, making him the most frequent visitor to the continent of any head of state in the world.¹⁴

Irfan Neziroğlu, the current Turkish ambassador in Khartoum, Sudan, describes Turkey's Africa policy as a continuously evolving one that pursues humanitarian and developmental goals and is shaped by the state, in partnership with representatives of Turkish civil society, academia, the media landscape, and business.¹⁵ The focus in Africa is primarily on the least developed countries.¹⁶ What can be observed is that development policy engagement is usually followed by a deepening

of bilateral relations and an expansion of Turkey's diplomatic and economic activities in the respective countries.

While Africa is, as has just been shown, accorded an important role within Turkish foreign and development policy, the regional distribution of ODA allocations still reveals a clear focus on the Middle East region, which receives the largest share of official development assistance. Coming in after the Middle East are the countries of South and Central Asia – which have close historical and cultural links with Turkey – and the countries of the Balkans. After that comes Africa, as a result of the expansion that began in 2005. While in 2005, aid directed to Africa amounted to 11.76 million USD, this figure rose to 153.37 million USD in 2017. A breakdown by country shows that Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan were the countries that benefited most from Turkish development assistance in 2019.¹⁷

Table 1: Top 10 recipient countries of Turkish ODA (2019)

No.	Recipient country	ODA (in million USD)
1	Syria	7,202.4
2	Bosnia and Herzegovina	59.8
3	Iraq	42.2
4	Palestinian Territories	38.2
5	Afghanistan	32.9
6	Somalia	28.2
7	Kyrgyzstan	24.1
8	Kazakhstan	22.3
9	Bangladesh	15.2
10	Sudan	13.3

Source: own depiction according to OECD Development Co-operation Profiles 2021.

Holistic and consolidated development policy?

The foundation of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) in 1992 marked the beginning of a consolidated official development policy.¹⁸ The vast majority (97.7 per cent) of development expenditure is allocated bilaterally,¹⁹ primarily through or in coordination with TİKA. TİKA has served as the main instrument for Turkish development policy since 1992, emphasising Turkey's self-portrayal as a donor country. Throughout the 1990s, domestic political instability and economic problems limited the extent of the work the agency could undertake, however, and activities were primarily concentrated in countries directly neighbouring Turkey.

After the AKP came to power in 2002, it went about upgrading and strengthening TİKA, the equivalent to Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), transforming it into a global aid organisation with an extended area of activity beyond Turkey's neighbouring regions from 2003 onwards.²⁰ This was done under the leadership of the current head of the Turkish intelligence service MIT, Hakan Fidan, who served as the head of TİKA between 2003 and 2007. A centralisation of development policy arose under his leadership and TİKA was formally designated as

the sole state institution entrusted with the task of ODA coordination. It was also given the task of taking over the collection and reporting of all ODA data from the Turkish Statistical Institute in order to ensure compliance with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) standards for development assistance.²¹ At the time, the agency – initially established as a department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – came under the control of the Office of the Prime Minister. Since then, there has also been an intensification of coordination between TİKA and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a means of public diplomacy and soft power endeavours.²² Since Turkey's transition to a presidential system of government in 2018, TİKA has been under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.²³ At present, TİKA is coordinating 62 overseas offices in 60 countries and is implementing development cooperation projects in 150 different countries around the world by engaging the administrative capacity of all the relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations.²⁴

The objectives of Turkish development assistance, according to official information, are "development of social infrastructures and services, development of economic infrastructures and services, development of productive sectors, development of infrastructures in cross-cutting sectors and development of institutional capacities".²⁵

In this context, there is a noticeable strategic orientation towards areas of interest for Turkey within its spheres of cultural influence, with a particular focus on Muslim countries or countries with an Ottoman past, especially underdeveloped nations in the Middle East.²⁶ There are, however, also some projects being undertaken in South America, for example. In the Balkans, Turkey continues to play an active role in building schools and hospitals and in helping to restore and preserve Ottoman heritage. TİKA is also involved in the construction of mosques and the protection of Muslim cultural heritage sites in both Africa and the Balkans.²⁷

Characteristics of the Turkish approach to development

Turkey is endeavouring to separate its development assistance approach from that of more traditional donor countries and to generate a "Southern provider" narrative of its own.²⁸ Although Turkey is one of the founding members of the OECD and still a candidate country for membership of the European Union, the country presents itself as a representative of the Global South. As such, the Turkish government views its development policy in the context of South-South cooperation.²⁹ With its intentionally anti-colonial rhetoric, Turkey is seeking to distance itself from the established donors, particularly those from Europe. There is regular criticism of French colonialism³⁰ and praise of Turkey as an alternative to "Western Orientalist approaches" unfettered by discrimination. Turkey therefore seeks to use its non-colonial history to its advantage and, by its own account, is pursuing a collaborative approach in its relations with Sub-Saharan Africa that aims to achieve a "win-win situation" for all the countries involved.³¹

Ankara argues that the international economy and assistance programmes implemented by traditional donors as part of aid to Africa are creating new colonial and abusive relationships. In contrast, Turkey claims that its open pragmatism and interest-driven development assistance establishes fair and appropriate relationships and partnerships.³² However, some observers regard Turkey's development activities in Africa as "part of a Neo-Ottomanism approach to foreign policy".³³

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that "in line with the enterprising aspect of her foreign policy, Turkey uses several complementary political, economic, humanitarian, and cultural tools and conducts a diplomacy that thinks globally but also acts locally in every corner of the world."³⁴ The official position is that Turkey wants to improve its relations with all countries on the

African continent and pursue a mutually beneficial policy based on the principle of shared interest.³⁵

The clear link between Turkish development and security policy is not disputed in Turkey. Security concerns and economic interests can be seen as the main motives for Turkish development assistance, according to Hakan Fidan, the former head of TİKA and current head of MIT.³⁶ Underlining the close link between development and security, the Turkish Foreign Ministry also describes support for the world's least developed countries as a "collective and shared responsibility".³⁷ From a Turkish point of view, development is achieved through security and progress in security policy.

The link between development assistance and the areas of foreign, economic and security policy³⁸ is particularly well illustrated by the example of Somalia. When famine broke out in Somalia in 2011, Turkey mounted an extensive relief campaign. On 18 August 2011, as Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the first non-African leader to visit Mogadishu in almost two decades, accompanied by a delegation of business people, politicians and development workers.³⁹ Following Erdoğan's visit, a Turkish relief effort began under TİKA's coordination, in which numerous other institutions and organisations participated. Relief supplies were distributed, reconstruction measures initiated, and field hospitals established.⁴⁰ The example of Somalia also shows that Turkey, beyond acting as a donor, is also striving to become a political player in Africa.⁴¹ The establishment of a military training centre in Somalia in 2017, which is engaged in reforming and training the Somali army, showcases these efforts.⁴² Right from the outset, Turkey's development policy towards Somalia, besides easing the humanitarian crisis, sought to consolidate Somalia's political stability and assist in the establishment of effective state structures. More recently, Turkey designated a special envoy for Somalia in 2018 – a first in Turkish foreign policy – and tasked him with renewing reconciliation efforts between the Federal Government of Somalia and the breakaway region of Somaliland.⁴³ Its strong support for the East African state may also be yielding economic rewards for Turkey: in January 2020, Turkey was invited by the Somali government to explore for oil in Somali waters.⁴⁴

Over the past few years, this kind of interlinkage and interdepartmental foreign policy can also be observed in other crisis-stricken countries such as Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. In Afghanistan, Turkey is positioning itself to maintain a supporting presence under the Taliban-led government. The Turkish ambassador in Kabul stated recently that Turkey has "contributed to stabilisation and development efforts in Afghanistan since the 1920s and that today Turkey provides humanitarian aid through the Turkish Red Crescent."⁴⁵ In October 2021, a Taliban delegation headed by the Taliban-appointed foreign minister, visited the Turkish capital to ask for Turkey's support in the areas of humanitarian aid and development assistance.⁴⁶ Turkey's involvement in Libya is primarily geared towards establishing political stability, building strong state institutions and reconstructing the country, which has been engulfed in civil war.⁴⁷ There are also financial resources flowing into Syria, namely into the areas where Turkey has established a "safe zone" and started to (re)construct infrastructure and provide humanitarian assistance shortly after taking control.⁴⁸

A further distinctive feature and characteristic of Turkey's emergence as a donor country is the increase in state and non-state actors involved in aid since the 2000s. Among the state actors, TİKA and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Dİ-YANET) stand out as the main players. The main non-state actors are the Yunus Emre Institute and the Maarif Foundation. One aspect of Turkey's work in Africa and the intensification of its efforts on the ground that should not be underestimated in this context is the involvement of conservative religious NGOs and business associations,⁴⁹ which had a major role to play in Turkey's opening up towards Africa. The largest player involved in the Turkish presence in Africa was the

network of business, educational and humanitarian organisations established by the Fethullah Gülen organisation – an organisation that has since been designated as a terrorist group (Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation, FETÖ) by the Turkish government after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and has subsequently been pursued and prosecuted. Efforts have since been made by the Turkish government to dissolve FETÖ-affiliated organisations and replace them with new entities, most notably the Maarif Foundation.⁵⁰ To date, the Maarif Foundation has 393 educational institutions and 42 student residences in 67 different countries around the globe, providing education to more than 44,018 students. While 45 per cent of the schools and universities run by the Maarif Foundation are in Africa, the focus of their activities remains on the Balkans. Other supporters of the educational and cultural work that complement the activities of TİKA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs include the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), which coordinates Turkey's diaspora policy, and the Yunus Emre Institute, which is comparable to Germany's Goethe Institute⁵¹.

Trend towards convergence despite sharp rhetoric

In many ways, Turkey holds a special status in development cooperation. On the one hand, it has recorded a massive increase in public funding for development assistance in recent years and its spending – both in terms of net ODA and the ODA ratio as a share of gross national income – is significantly higher than that of other established donor countries such as Spain or Belgium.⁵² On the other hand, as a candidate country for EU membership, Turkey has continued to be a recipient of substantial financial support from abroad. Furthermore, since the beginning of the so-called refugee crisis, there has been a massive inflow of multilateral and bilateral aid to Turkey. This included the re-establishment of support from Germany following the previous suspension of bilateral development cooperation in 2008. This renewed support was provided to assist in the care of refugees residing in Turkey as a result of the civil war in Syria. According to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), "Germany's bilateral cooperation with Turkey is additional to the European commitment within the framework of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan of November 2015 and the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016."⁵³

Although Turkey has distanced itself rhetorically from traditional donor countries, there is still an indication of a trend towards convergence.⁵⁴ Turkey is a founding member of the OECD and has been in accession negotiations with the EU since 2005, although these are at present largely frozen. Turkey has not yet joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), but voluntarily reports and shares its data with the body as part of its role as an observer.⁵⁵

The focus of Turkish development assistance also largely coincides with that of the EU, as both are oriented towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In many respects, the work is similarly also aligned with the EU in the context of Turkey's accession process.⁵⁶ This has been mentioned repeatedly in the European Commission's annual country reports, and the degree of legal alignment in the field of development policy and humanitarian aid has been declared to be satisfactory.⁵⁷ One key difference to the EU is that Turkish development funds are not overtly linked to political, especially normative, conditions.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, its proximity to the DAC and the EU clearly distinguishes Turkey from most other non-traditional donors.

However, despite these facts, its observer status in the DAC and its voluntary reporting to the DAC, Turkish development assistance remains relatively non-transparent in terms of publicly available information.⁵⁹ According to the Aid Transparency Index 2020, TİKA's performance in terms of aid transparency is "very poor". The only institution that performs worse in the index is its Chinese counterpart.⁶⁰

Against this backdrop, the figures cited at the beginning of the text on the magnitude of Turkish development aid warrant a somewhat deeper analysis. The largest share of Turkish ODA spending by far is funding for the target country Syria – 7.2 billion USD in 2019. Actually, this spending which is declared as being for Syria, in fact represents the funds for Syrian refugees in Turkey. The inclusion of "in-donor refugee costs" in the ODA calculation is not unusual in principle, but since Turkey still remains on the DAC list of ODA recipients, support for refugees in Turkey is reported as "project-type interventions" and not as "in-donor refugee costs", according to the OECD.⁶¹ The "project-type interventions" amounted to 8.176 billion USD in 2019. This means that if total ODA spending in 2019 is offset against spending on Syria or Syrian refugees in Turkey, just under 1.4 billion USD in ODA is left for all other countries in which Turkey is active. This puts the official figures into perspective, as most of the money is spent domestically.

Potentials for a common approach to development policy

In order to explore the potentials offered by a common development policy approach, it is important to take into account and respect both historical and cultural links as well as national circumstances when engaging with Turkey and the approach it takes to development.

In light of the close economic and political ties between Germany and Turkey, cooperation in the field of development policy is entirely conceivable and in many respects also makes good sense. Following the formal cessation of Germany's development cooperation with Turkey in 2008 (with the exception of support provided in the context of the so-called refugee crisis), such cooperation can now be achieved on an equal footing.

An outstanding point of conflict that may impede closer cooperation with European donors is the repeated criticism and sharp rhetoric from the Turkish side – especially from the incumbent Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – regarding the EU's development policy and the provision of humanitarian aid that builds on its colonial heritage, as already mentioned above. In a statement preceding his most recent trip to Africa, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan once again underlined what he sees as the difference between Turkey's policy and that of other donors, stating that Turkey "never approaches cooperation with African countries from a short-term and interest-oriented perspective".⁶²

Despite these points of conflict, joint donor projects undertaken between Germany and Turkey, or support for contracts awarded to German-Turkish joint ventures, may provide possible starting points for a sustainable and solution-oriented development policy in the target countries. The many different economic ties and the fact that Turkey is closely linked to Germany as a NATO partner and a candidate for EU membership, make Germany and Turkey viable potential partners to pursue a joint development policy in third countries.

A prerequisite for German-Turkish cooperation in the field of development assistance – and indeed in all aspects of the relationship – is that it takes place on an equal footing as partners working to pursue common goals and acknowledging and utilising the merits and characteristics that each country can bring to the table.

Both Germany and Turkey's experience in supporting refugees in their own countries and the decades of cooperation in the field of modernisation could conceivably be transferred to joint projects in third countries. Additionally, Turkey could benefit from financial and logistical support by Germany in the expansion and intensification of its existing development assistance projects. Over the past two decades, Ankara has gathered valuable experience, established trust and

gained access, most notably in the least-developed countries, all of which could be further enhanced through the sharing of experiences and potential joint approaches. The comparative advantage for Turkey arising from linguistic and cultural links in Central Asia, or the religious connection it shares with many states in the Middle East and Africa, should be regarded as an opportunity for Germany. In view of Turkey's wide-ranging interests in these target countries, serious cooperation is also to be expected. The possibility for Ankara to cooperate with one of the largest and very well-established development players like Germany would help raise its own standing in both recipient countries and within the international community.

For Germany, intensified cooperation with Turkey, especially in Africa, could translate into increased influence and, by building on Turkey's work, development cooperation with greater access to governments and potential project partners. Furthermore, if Germany wants to be a player rather than just bear the consequences of the developments in the states of the Near and Middle East, cooperation with Ankara in Turkey's neighbouring states is vital. It is thus in Germany's interest that the good bilateral relations with Turkey be used to both identify and subsequently advance common interests. The same applies to Turkey, which despite (or perhaps because of) the expansion of its foreign policy ambitions and the diversification of its partners continues to have good and strong relations with Germany.⁶³ Cooperation in the area of development assistance would serve to further improve and enhance this relationship. Germany could also encourage Turkey to assume more responsibility within its direct neighbourhood and in the broader region.

Outlook

The emergence of Turkey in recent decades as a non-traditional but now established donor is obvious, and impossible to ignore. Approaches that reflect Turkey's own national interests, but are also aligned with approaches of Western donors and the EU, make it not only feasible but also sensible for Germany and Turkey to pursue a cooperation in the broader field of development assistance, especially in the Middle East and Africa. In spite of or perhaps even because of the clear correlation between foreign, security and economic policy interests and development goals, Turkey's development assistance activities should not be underestimated. In line with the motto "development through security", humanitarian activities are accompanied by security policy measures at an early juncture.

Moreover, Turkish development work can help contribute to the EU's collective foreign policy interests, given that Turkey is still a candidate country for EU membership. With the ratification of the Paris Agreement and the will for stronger cooperation with the EU within the framework of a green transition, the common interests become even more apparent. A German-Turkish cooperation, or even better a European-Turkish cooperation in the common neighbourhood, focusing on the nexus of climate change, security, and stabilisation becomes even more realistic.

The mutual interests of Turkey and the EU within the European Neighbourhood are also apparent with the adoption of the Joint Action Plan on migration that was activated on 29 November 2015 and the agreement with the EU of 18 March 2016 covering migration cooperation between Turkey and the EU. The implementation of the plan continues to be a top priority in Turkey-EU relations with a view to addressing the common challenges posed by displacement and migration. On this basis, increased cooperation on reconstruction, stabilisation and socio-economic development in the refugees' states of origin can take place to make effective use of synergies stemming from the experience gained from previous cooperation.

The analysis also underscores the fact that the predominant Western narrative of Turkey's diplomatic and economic isolation is distorted and simplified. In spite of the exclusion and a certain isolation among its traditional Western partners, a look to Africa and Asia clearly shows that Turkey has never had economic and diplomatic relations with as many countries as it does today.

Building on the traditionally close relations between Germany and Turkey, and making use of synergies can also serve to discourage Turkey from continuing to go it alone. A return to multilateral rather than unilateral action by Turkey is both in Germany's and Europe's interest, and acknowledging and recognising Turkey as an important regional player in development and as an equal partner are important steps in achieving this.

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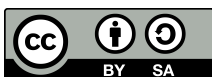
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