REPORT
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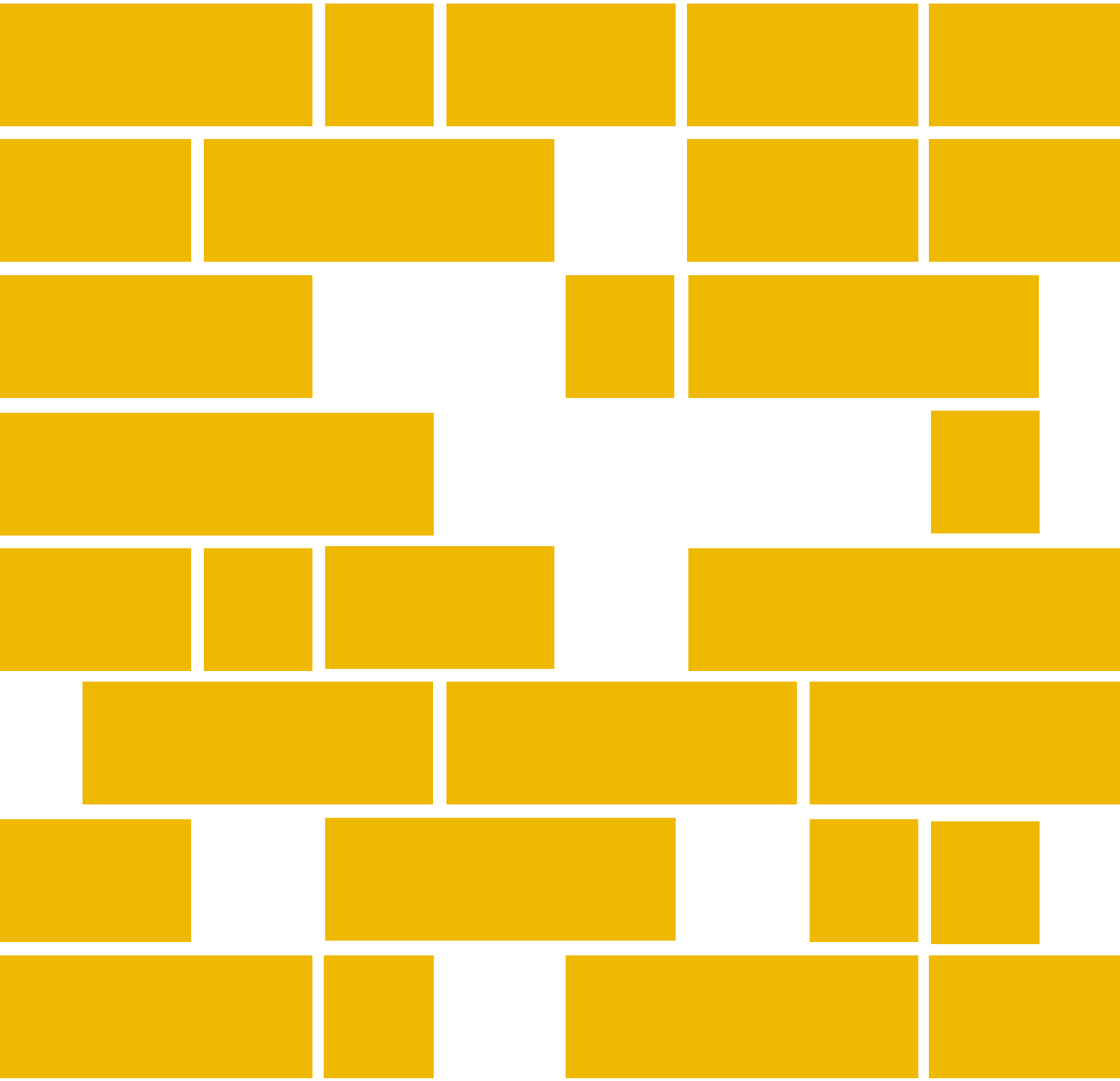
TURKEY'S APPROACH TO STABILISATION
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PEACEBUILDING SECTOR



Peaceful Change initiative

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Note: The Lead Author prefers the use of 'Turkey' over 'Türkiye'.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the early 2000s, increasing multi-polarity in global politics, sustained economic growth in Turkey, and the governing Justice and Development (AK) party's search for a greater role in the international arena intersected to significantly expand the geographic scope and thematic reach of Turkey's foreign policy. In this period, a broad range of interventions aimed at addressing the drivers and consequences of conflict and state-fragility began featuring more prominently in Turkish foreign policy. From the beginning there has been an intimate link between the idea of being a humanitarian actor and Turkey's quest for a new geopolitical identity and status. The idea that only great powers are capable of pursuing humanitarianism, peace and stabilisation efforts in their foreign policy has been a highly motivating factor for decision-makers in Ankara who wanted to see Turkey's status elevated.[1]

For a relatively long time now, Turkey has delivered humanitarian assistance and engaged in activities aimed at stabilisation – reducing violence, ensuring basic security, (re)building governance and institutions, restoring infrastructure and economic activity, and facilitating peaceful political deal-making. Turkey does not have a consistent conceptual framework the goals of stabilisation during or after conflict. Therefore, Turkey's approaches differ from context to context, guided by:

- **Turkey's domestic and foreign policy objectives**. Stability means different things for Ankara in different conflict zones. For example, in Somalia and Libya it means getting the state up and running and modernising the security sector. In Syria it means addressing Turkey's own national security concerns.
- **Turkey's experiences in support of NATO missions in the 1990s and 2000s** have had a formative impact on its approach to stabilisation and peacebuilding. Turkey's approaches are heavily based on security and institution building, with relatively less focus on the social dimension and civilian engagements.

1 Meliha Benli Altunışık (2019), "Turkey's Humanitarian Diplomacy: The AKP Model", Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Nevertheless, clear trends can be seen across this study's three case studies on Somalia, Syria, and Libya:

- **Turkey's stabilisation approaches show substantial 'hardware' strengths**, focusing on establishing or supporting governance and government institutions and the security sector, as well as building or rehabilitating critical resources and infrastructure. The 'software' of stabilisation, such as democratic inclusivity, local agency, and local legitimacy, are less prioritised.
- **Turkey's approach is often bilateral**, preferring direct engagement with state institutions and avoiding multilateral forums and international actors as much as possible. Turkey rarely engages in coordination and collaboration with international agencies and players.
- **Ankara tends to focus on state-centric actions**, with limited engagement with local and international civil society.
- **Turkey has a robust risk appetite**, preferring direct funding support to selected local partners through Turkish government institutions instead of UN agencies or international NGOs.

While Ankara has the ambition to play a greater role in peacebuilding, its capacity to do so will ultimately be limited by a) the tendency of its actions to contribute to a 'shallow' peace that leaves some drivers of conflict potentially unaddressed; b) persistent domestic identity questions; c) a lack of engagement with questions around the legitimacy of the government institutions that are built; d) limited local agency; and e) the potential for conflict-insensitive programming. In addition, the modalities of Turkey's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries may contribute to undermining civil space.

The international peacebuilding community should find ways to engage with the Turkish Government to enhance coordination around strategies and activities, and dialogue on peacebuilding concepts. The most likely effective way of doing so, in the short- to medium-term, is via Turkish embassies in fragile and conflict-affected countries as well as with Turkish NGOs.

INTRODUCTION

On 22 July 2022, five months after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Turkey oversaw the signing of a landmark agreement between Kyiv and Moscow to unblock Ukraine's Black Sea grain exports – the first major deal signed by the parties.

Ankara's foreign policy triumph provides a potent illustration of Turkey's increased influence in regional conflicts, building on Turkey's game-changing engagements in Syria and Libya over the past decade. Turkey's deep engagements in many regional conflicts and crises illustrates its growing importance in shaping the dynamics of conflicts around it as well as charting the course of peacebuilding processes. Ankara's concepts of and strategies for engaging with and addressing conflict dynamics will influence the evolution and transformation of those crises. This represents a significant departure from previous approaches which have traditionally ascribed the role of conflict management to the 'great powers' – mainly Western ones.

Indeed, Turkey's case illustrates the growing importance of regional powers in charting the course of regional conflicts as well as shaping the dynamics of the stabilisation phase in crisis-stricken countries. Furthermore, this experience represents an approach to peacebuilding – not necessarily a coherent or well-developed one – that is different to those associated with Western actors. Regional powers or non-western actors' ideas and approaches to peacebuilding and stabilisation during or after conflict will be increasingly important as these powers play more prominent regional and global roles. This, in return, necessitates paying more attention to these actors' approach and ideas about peacebuilding.

Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) implements peacebuilding programming in several countries where Turkey is also actively engaged in stabilisation work or as a direct conflict actor. The genesis of this study lies in PCi's recognition in 2020 that, given the decisive impact that Turkey's engagement can have on conflict dynamics, understanding Turkey's foreign policy priorities and stabilisation practices would be critical to understanding shifting geopolitical power dynamics in key areas of operation. It is important for peacebuilding practitioners and policy makers operating in countries where Turkey is also engaging to understand how Turkey's engagements are likely to shape the space for peacebuilding.

Despite the increasing impact of Turkey's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, there is little ongoing dialogue between the peacebuilding community and Turkish diplomats and government agencies. A secondary interest, therefore, was to understand avenues and opportunities for engagement on issues such as coordination around peacebuilding approaches and conflict sensitivity.

Turkey currently does not have clearly articulated frameworks for many of the types of intervention that one would typically see in fragile and conflict-affected countries: conflict management, post-conflict stabilisation or peacebuilding, and so forth. In the absence of these frameworks, this paper, as a methodology, draws on interviews with former and current Turkish officials, as well as with experts in and analysts of Turkish foreign policy. Interviews took place throughout 2021 and 2022. Further, in the absence of publicly articulated conceptual frameworks, this research used 'post-conflict stabilisation' as a maximalist framework, which encompasses a range of interventions from reducing violence, ensuring basic security, (re)building governance and institutions and restoring infrastructure and economic activity, to facilitating peaceful deal-making.

Specifically, this paper explores Turkey's priorities through three case studies:

Somalia, which has been one of the central pieces of Turkey's Africa policy and the first major projection of Turkey's influence in the field of post-conflict stabilisation.

Syria, where Turkey is a direct party to the conflict, and where the domestic political considerations and position of the Syrian crisis within Turkey's wider foreign policy and national security efforts heavily affects Turkey's approach to stabilisation.

Libya, where, in 2019, Turkey's military intervention significantly shaped the course of the conflict in the country. Turkey has deep geopolitical, strategic, and financial interests there.

These case studies were selected to provide a spectrum of contexts, including a context in which Turkey is not itself a party to the conflict (Somalia), as well as contexts in which Ankara is a party to conflict to differing degrees (Syria and Libya).

Based on these case studies, the study explores what these priorities reveal about the approaches, methodologies, and perspectives that Turkey brings to the peacebuilding field. Finally, the paper provides a discussion of the implications of Turkey's approaches for the peacebuilding field and concludes by highlighting the need to find pathways for engagement between international organisations and NGOs, and Turkish diplomatic staff and NGOs, on these issues.

TRACKING TURKEY'S EVOLUTION TO IMPORTANT REGIONAL PLAYER IN STABILISATION

A number of factors have played a crucial role in the emergence of Turkey as a regional player in conflict management and stabilisation. Starting from the early 2000s, Turkey's sustained economic growth for more than a decade provided the country with the means and tools to play a role in the field of humanitarian or development assistance as well as stabilisation activities.[2] As a testament to this, between 2004 and 2019 Turkey's official development assistance (ODA) grew nearly 18-fold[3] Turkey saw humanitarianism as a highly effective way to further its economic and geopolitical interests.[4]

Further, the increasing multipolarity in global politics has created more avenues and opportunities for actors such as Turkey to assume a larger role in regional and international affairs. At the same time, humanitarianism and stabilisation efforts have projected Turkey's search for a role and quest for a heightened status in international affairs. On top of Turkey's material progress, the governing Justice, and Development Party's (AK Party) vision and foreign policy approach have also driven Turkish humanitarian and stabilisation activities. During the AK Party rule, the geographic scope, social constituency, and toolbox of Turkey's foreign policy, have expanded.

Turkish foreign policy has built an ecosystem of governmental institutions to engage in development, humanitarian aid and disaster and emergency management – enabling Ankara to increasingly engage in peacekeeping, humanitarian and development assistance, conflict mediation and stabilisation. Through such activities, Turkey has laid out its claim to be a key humanitarian and political player and demanded more recognition and enhanced status in international affairs. Indeed, there is an intimate link between Turkey's humanitarianism, geopolitical identity and status[5] – the

2 Auveen Woods and Onur Sazak (2016), "Turkey's Approach to Peacebuilding: Principles, policies and practices", Istanbul Policy Center.

3 Yavuz Tüyloğlu (2021), "Turkish Development Assistance as a Foreign Policy Tool and Its Discordant Locations", The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

4 Altunısık (2019) (see note 1).

5 Altunısık (2019) (see note 1). For a broader historical discussion on the subject, see also Michael Barnett (2011), "Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism", Cornell University Press.

idea that only great powers are capable of pursuing humanitarianism and peacebuilding efforts in their foreign policy has been a highly motivating factor for decision-makers in Ankara.

Turkey sought to project its normative and moral influence early on through humanitarianism, development assistance, and stabilisation activities.[6] For example, during its terms as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2009–2010, Turkey initiated a process on peacebuilding, which brought together the Council members in Istanbul from 2010 until 2013 to discuss thematic subjects in the field of peacebuilding, conflict mediation and resolution.[7] In the same vein, in 2010, Turkey and Finland launched the 'Mediation for Peace' initiative.[8] This initiative was designed to support the UN and other regional multilateral organisations' activities in the field of mediation.[9] Peacebuilding and humanitarianism has represented Turkey's search for a new role, geopolitical identity and enhanced status in global politics.

TURKEY'S INSTITUTIONAL ECOSYSTEM

Turkey is able to engage in a range of activities in fragile and conflict-affected countries through the following institutions:

TIKA	The Turkish Government's Development Agency
Kızılay	The Turkish Red Crescent
AFAD	The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
Diyanet Vakf	The Foundation of Turkey's Religious Affairs
YTB	The Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities
Maarif Vakfı	Foundation for Overseas Turkish Schools

However, it has primarily been Turkey's geopolitical influence and hard power that has been projected in Syria and Libya. The lessons learned through engagement in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in countries

6 Altunışık (2019).

7 Woods and Sazak (2016) (see note 3).

8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, "Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts and Mediation" www.mfa.gov.tr/resolution-of-conflicts-and-mediation.en.mfa (accessed on 3 January 2022).

9 Ibid. See also Woods and Sazak (2016).

such as Somalia and Kosovo have been on clear display in Turkey's approaches towards stabilisation and peacebuilding. Since the 1990s, Turkey has even become a training centre for non-NATO countries such as the UAE (training the UAE's air force) and Tunisia.[10] This experience has largely informed Turkey's approach to stabilisation during and after conflict, and Turkey has borrowed many of its concepts and protocols from NATO.[11] This hard-security based approach focuses on the modernisation of the security sector (both of the army and the police), institutional capacity building (or state-building) and economic recovery. Though this approach nominally includes a dimension of social peace as well, this dimension is largely missing in Turkey's approach, particularly in the form of including local social NGOs.

DISCERNIBLE ELEMENTS OF TURKEY'S APPROACH

Turkish humanitarianism and stabilisation are still a work in progress and a learning process. As will be described in more detail in the three case studies that follow, there are certain clearly identifiable features of Turkey's approach, but there is no overarching framework linking together objectives, theories of change and methodologies. Nevertheless, key preferences, priorities and methodologies can be discerned. From Somalia, to Syria, to Libya, Turkey's stabilisation efforts follow a similar pattern: meeting basic humanitarian needs, establishment or modernisation of a functioning security sector, state-building and/or administrative capacity building, and rehabilitation of critical infrastructure. In this regard, priorities can be seen to be drawn from NATO's approaches.[12]

STABILISATION GOALS

The concept of stability means different things in different conflict zones in which Turkey is involved. In Somalia and Libya, it has meant getting the state up and running and modernising the security sector. However, in Syria, it has usually denoted addressing Turkey's national security concerns. The place of the respective crisis in Turkey's foreign and security policy is what primarily shapes the way in which Turkey defines stability vis-à-vis the subject conflict.

10 Interview with researcher Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

11 Ibid. Also, interview with a Turkish diplomat, 2022.

12 Interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

HARDWARE VERSUS SOFTWARE

The strength of the Turkish approach lies in its ability to undertake modernisation efforts in the security sector, get things up and running, improve the conditions of the necessary infrastructure, and get the economy functioning. Therefore, Ankara is a capable player when it comes to the hardware side of stabilisation efforts. However, consultation with different local stakeholder groups about their needs and aspirations in a conflict setting is inconsistent within the Turkish approach; nor does it appear that concepts of "inclusion" and "consultation" feature significantly in its bilateral governance and security sector reform support to governing authorities. As the Syrian case study will clearly illustrate, when the conflict zone features heavily in Turkish national security, then Turkey filters its whole approach and concept through its national security prerogatives, rather than through the needs of local communities. Therefore, there is a deficit in the software side of Turkey's stabilisation effort – a direct result of Ankara's conception of its national security.

PREFERENCE FOR BILATERAL AND DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

Turkey's approach is direct and bilateral, focusing on working directly with the authorities in place.[13] Ankara prefers to avoid multilateral forums and international actors and agencies as much as possible. Ankara views the UN system as inefficient and bureaucratic and, therefore, tends to work around it rather than with it.[14] While Turkey does work with a number of Turkish NGO partners, these have been encouraged to work with the local government directly.[15] Where it has not been possible to work with the government directly, Turkish NGOs have been more inclined to work with local NGOs than with their international peers.[16] Turkey engages in only very limited coordination and collaboration with other international actors.

PARTNERSHIP AND AGENCY

Turkey's approach is highly state-centric, and stabilisation activities are largely geared towards supporting and helping establish government and state institutions. However, the degree of autonomy that Turkey affords its governance partners is highly context dependent. For instance, in Somalia,

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13 Interview with former and current Turkish diplomats. See also Onur Sazak and Auveen Woods (2017), "Thinking Outside the Compound: Turkey's Approach to Peacebuilding in Somalia" in de Coning and Call (eds), Rising Powers and Peacebuilding, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies, Palgrave Macmillan; Tüyloğlu (2021) (see note 4); and Ozkan (2014), "Doğu Afrika Jeopolitiği ve Türkiye'nin Somali Politikası" (Geopolitics of East Africa and Turkey's Somalia Policy).

14 Interview with former and current Turkish diplomats, 2021 and 2022.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

Turkey's key priority was getting the state up and running. As a sign of the scale of support to the central state, Turkey began, in 2013, to provide direct budget support to Somalia, transferring money into the Somali Central Bank. When the Central Bank did not have the human resources to administer these funds, Turkish staff would sit on bank premises and disburse funds through the bank.[17] This demonstrates a significantly higher risk appetite than many other states who were providing support to Somalia at the time and who preferred to transfer funds (and risk) directly to the UN system or through international NGOs.

In the operations areas that Turkey controls in Syria, Ankara has built governance and economic structures and put in place a security architecture. Ankara relies on local Syrian actors to run these government functions. By contrast to the Somalia case, Turkey's relationship with its Syrian partners is highly hierarchical. These local actors are almost completely dependent on Turkey and enjoy very limited autonomy. Where Turkey's national security is perceived to be at stake, Ankara is more focused on achieving its desired results than cultivating societal legitimacy for the administrative and security structures it has been instrumental in establishing.

DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Across the case studies, Turkey has sought to play a role in dialogue and conflict resolution between local conflict parties. In Somalia, for example, Turkey undertook several efforts aimed at building local capacities for dialogue, bringing parties together for talks, though with limited results. Structurally, Turkey struggles in deep peacebuilding engagement across the case studies – because it is a clear conflict actor in Libya and Syria, and because, at least in the case of Syria, it prioritises its own security needs over other features of the Syrian context. Furthermore, Ankara's own struggles with domestic identity questions – more specifically, Turkey's Kurdish issue and the almost-four-decades-old conflict with the PKK, and the collapse of the once-promising Kurdish peace process (2013–2015) – limit Turkey's ability to tackle identity-linked issues in the Syrian context.

These themes will be explored in more detail in the following three case studies on Somalia, Syria, and Libya.

17 Interview with former Turkish diplomat, 2021.

SOMALIA THE DEVELOPMENT OF TURKEY'S APPROACHES

The motivation for Turkey's more extensive involvement in Africa came under the Africa Action Plan, which was conceived in1998, but began implementation in earnest when the AK Party came to power in 2002. On the top of an economy-driven foreign policy, the values represented by the Action Plan were to present Turkey as a moral actor on the international stage, one worthy of enhanced status and recognition. For a long time, the Africa policy was an embodiment of the governing AK Party's multi-dimensional (i.e. not solely security-centric) foreign policy, a policy and approach that was particularly associated with associated with former Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.[18] Humanitarianism, peacebuilding and a normative language occupied a large place in this policy.[19]

Of all regions, the governing AK Party's Africa policy has arguably been its most successful. For example, Turkish Airlines flies to 61 locations in 40 African states.[20] Istanbul is a major hub for flights to Africa. Turkey's Development Agency- TIKA - has 22 offices on the continent and Turkey has 175 Turkish schools in 26 different countries.[21] Finally, the overall trade volume with the continent went from over $5 billion in 2003 to over $25 billion in 2021.[22]

18 Ahmet Davutoğlu (2012), "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring", The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV).

19 Ahmet Davutoğlu (2013), "Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy: objectives, challenges and prospects", Nationalities Papers, The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity.

20 Abdinor Dahir (2021), "The Turkey-Africa Bromance: Key Drivers, Agency, and Prospects". Insight Turkey www.insightturkey.com/commentaries/the-turkey-africa-bromance-key-drivers-agency-and-prospects

21 Serhat Orakçi (2022), "The Rise of Turkey in Africa", Al Jazeera Centre for Studies.

22 Dahir (2021) (see note 21).

THE ROLE OF SOMALIA IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY

Somalia was one of the central pieces of Turkey's Africa initiative and, at the time, it represented Turkey's biggest overseas operations, comprising both peacebuilding and state-building efforts. At a time of famine and drought and thus a deepening humanitarian crisis, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited the country in 2011 with a large delegation to mark Turkey's humanitarian intervention in the country and to draw international attention to Somalia's plight.[23] This was a turning point. Erdoğan was the first non-African leader to visit the country in two decades.[24]

Later, this humanitarianism came to acquire geopolitical, economic, and strategic aspects. In 2017, Turkey opened its largest overseas military training base, the Turkish Military Training Centre, in Mogadishu.[25] This base has the capacity to train over 1,500 soldiers at a time. Furthermore, Somalia is one of the contexts in Africa in which Middle Eastern countries have vied for influence. For example, during the Gulf Crisis of 2017 in which a number of countries cut their ties with Qatar, many African states including Somalia were pressured to do the same by the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mogadishu did not bow to this pressure: a reflection of its close relations with Turkey and Qatar.

THE TOTAL PERFORMANCE PRINCIPLE[26]

One of the central elements of Turkey's Africa policy can be described as Muslim humanitarianism: solidarity with and aid for fellow co-religionists. Turkey has provided aid and undertaken humanitarian efforts in non-Muslim countries (e.g., Kenya), but the bulk of Turkish humanitarian efforts are focused on Muslim countries in Africa. The Islamic roots of the governing AK party have provided normative, emotional, and ideological motivations for this policy.

However, Turkey's Africa policy – and, for that matter, its Somalia policy – cannot be solely accounted for through humanitarian motivations.

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23 Deutsche Welle (2011), "Turkey pledges aid to famine-stricken Somalia" www.dw.com/en/turkey-pledges-aid-to-famine-stricken-somalia/a-15331391

24 Ozkan (2014) (see note 14). See also BBC (19 August 2011), "Somalia famine: Turkish PM Erdogan visits Mogadishu" www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14588960 (accessed on 27 December 2021).

25 Anadolu Agency (30 September 2017), "Turkey opens its largest military academy in Somalia" www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkey-opens-its-largest-military-academy-in-somalia/923598 (accessed on 28 December 2021).

26 A term associated with the former Foreign and Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Ankara has significant economic and geopolitical interest on the continent – a humanitarian policy and language serve these interests well. As expressed by the 'total performance principle' articulated in Turkish foreign policy at the time, the Turkish state, its NGOs, and business cooperated closely.[27] For example, in 2018, Ankara and Mogadishu signed an economic partnership agreement.[28] Turkish firms played a significant role in the running of the Mogadishu Airport. Similarly, in 2020, a Turkish firm was awarded a new mandate to rehabilitate and operate the port of Mogadishu for 14 years – the first deal between the company and Somali government was signed in 2014.[29]

As its efforts moved out of the strictly humanitarian phase, Turkey's programming priorities in Somalia spanned the full gamut of a maximalist definition of stabilisation, covering institution building, support to the security sector, reconstruction and development, and support to international communal peacebuilding and reconciliation effort.

STATE-BUILDING AND SECURITY

When Turkey went to Somalia, a government existed nominally, but in many respects, it was not operational. Ankara tried to empower the government by working with and through it. Over time, Turkey's activities were largely geared towards propping up the government and state institutions. For example, in 2013 Turkey started budget support to Somalia. It implemented this policy by transferring money into the Somali Central Bank and disbursed it through the Bank. At one point Turkish officials were deployed to work in the bank, filling a human resource gap, and disbursed funds directly on behalf of the bank.[30]

Of the state-building activities, Ankara attached a central importance to the security-sector reform. It focused on the training of the police, military, and other security personnel. The rationale for prioritisation of the security sector was straightforward: without a degree of security, very few people would have risked investing in Somalia. As mentioned above, in 2017, Turkey opened its largest overseas military training base, the Turkish Military Training Centre, in Mogadishu.

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27 Federico Donelli (2015), "Turkey's presence in Somalia: a humanitarian approach" in Alessia Chiriatti, Emidio Diodato, Salih Dogan, Federico Donelli and Bahri Yilmaz (eds), The Depth of Turkish geopolitics in the AKP's foreign policy: From Europe to an extended neighbourhood, Università per Stranieri Perugia, Perugia.

28 Anadolu Agency (12 January 2018), "Turkey, Somalia sign economic partnership pact" www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkey-somalia-sign-economic-partnership-pact/1029413 (accessed on 28 December 2021).

29 Anadolu Agency (12 October 2020), "Somalia: Turkish company to manage Port of Mogadishu" www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/somalia-turkish-company-to-manage-port-of-mogadishu/2004042 (accessed on 28 December 2021).

30 Interview with a former Turkish diplomat, 2021.

Turkey tried to cultivate relationships with different sides of the identity spectrum in Somalia. Ankara also sought to promote local legitimacy for its own presence in Somalia through humanitarianism – or, more precisely, religious humanitarianism – and development projects.

POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Turkey focused on essential infrastructure and basic needs such as rehabilitating or constructing hospitals, roads, and educational institutions, and activating airports.[31] Turkey displayed considerable depth in the number of state institutions that it was able to deploy to provide support to post-conflict stabilisation in Somalia. TIKA, the Disaster Management and Relief Agency (AFD), its Red Crescent (Kızılay), and the Foundation of Turkey' s Religious Affairs (Diyanet Vakfı) were all mobilised to support efforts in Somalia.[32]

In addition to (re)building infrastructure, Turkey initiated programming to support the development of Somalian human resources to operationalise and run the infrastructure and development projects that Turkey was working on.[33] First, Turkey worked to train the necessary human resources in Somalia.[34] For instance, Turkey built a hospital in Mogadishu as a training centre for health professionals. Second, Turkey brought many Somali students or professionals to Turkey for education and training purposes.[35] These training and educational programmes were not only necessary for providing basic infrastructure and services, but they were also needed to get the Somalian state up and running, which was a central element of Turkey's Somalia policy.

Attracting investment in Somalia, particularly by the Somali diaspora, was a central element of Turkish policy and a goal early on.

TURKISH ENGAGEMENT IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Turkey also pursued conflict resolution, peace-making and communal reconciliation policies. For example, on the Somalia–Somaliland dispute, Ankara attempted to broker a deal, to no avail. To aid reconciliation efforts,

31 Ibid.

32 Interview with a former Turkish diplomat, 2021.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

for instance, Turkey trained diplomats from both Somalia and Somaliland and tried to facilitate several rounds of dialogues between the sides, again with no discernible success.[36] To supplement these efforts Ankara tried to create more practical connectivity between the two sides by starting air travel. Turkey hoped that the combination of dialogue and practical steps would prepare the ground for potential unification. Leadership changes on both sides played a major part in the failure of these talks. In addition, Ankara had few diplomats with appropriate training and experience to sustain a complex dialogue and negotiation process through its inevitable ups and downs.

At the intra-Somalia level, Turkey pursued a policy of societal reconciliation between antagonistic clans and tribes – seeing the Somalian body politic as the extension of a tribally structured society. Ankara was successful in building trusted relationships between its diplomats and different stakeholders across most conflict divides in Somalia and regarded these activities as a precursor to political reconciliation. Not only did Turkey try to facilitate conversations and compromises amongst the Somali clans/tribes, it also reached out to prominent figures from the Somali diasporic community to exercise their constructive influence in the country.[37] These intra-Somalia efforts yielded some modest successes. For instance, as a result of this effort, Turkey brought together prominent figures from Somali diaspora and clans, representatives of Somali civil society organisations, and political actors in Istanbul in 2012 in order to facilitate reconciliation between them and chart a future roadmap for the country.[38]

PARTNERSHIP AND AGENCY IN THE TURKISH MODEL

Turkey has had a very state-centric approach in Somalia. Ankara worked with the state and through the state, and its activities were largely geared towards propping up the government and state institutions. It preferred to avoid both international and UN agencies as much as possible. In fact, Ankara saw the UN system as highly inefficient and bureaucratic, and hence avoided it as much as possible.[39] Turkey encouraged other states to work directly with the Somalian government. This was beyond the risk appetite of most donor states, who preferred to deliver support through international NGOs and UN agencies.[40]

36 Ibid.

37 Sazak and Woods (2017) (see note 14). Interview with former and current Turkish diplomats, 2021 and 2022.

38 Interview with a former Turkish diplomat, 2022.

39 Interview with former and current Turkish diplomats, 2021 and 2022.

40 Interview with former Turkish diplomat, 2021.

Ankara has encouraged its partner Turkish NGOs to work with the government directly.[41] When it was not possible to work with the Somali government, Turkish NGOs have been more inclined to work with local NGOs than their international peers.[42] From interviews with Turkish diplomats with direct involvement in Somalia it appears that while Turkey was able to build relationships with Somalian civil society as implementing partners, these partnerships did not include broad consultation with Somalian civil society about overall priority setting for stabilisation efforts.

OUTLOOK

Albeit uncontested domestically, Turkey's Somalia policy is highly personalised. President Erdoğan and his governing AK party have been committed to this policy. In a post-Erdoğan period, it is questionable whether Turkey would remain as committed to and as involved in Somalia. Further, in the event of a change of government in Turkey, the secular opposition is unlikely to have the same degree of commitment to Muslim humanitarianism.

Overall, the weight of humanitarianism and the emphasis on soft power in Turkey's Africa policy is on a relative decline. Turkey's budget for humanitarian expenditure abroad is shrinking, due to the need to spend substantial funds domestically to support Syrian refugees and Turkey's deepening economic downturn. Looking forward, it is likely that Turkey will seek to cultivate influence in Africa more through geopolitical activism including weapon sales (most importantly armed drones), military training activities, trade, and air connectivity, and only then through humanitarianism and engagement in stabilisation.

41 Interview with former and current Turkish diplomats, 2021 and 2022.

42 Interview with Turkish diplomat, 2022.

SYRIA A HARD-POWER APPROACH TO STABILISATION

Whereas Somalia was the country where Turkey first developed its approaches to post-conflict stabilisation, Syria has been the site of Turkey's most extensive experience with its post-conflict stabilisation ideas and approaches.

THE ROLE OF SYRIA IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY

The domestic political agenda and positioning of the Syrian crisis within Turkey's wider foreign policy and national security efforts heavily affects Turkey's approach to the conflict and to stabilisation and peacebuilding. The same factors also inform the flexibility or inflexibility of Turkey's strategy and approach. Syria has become the site of Turkey's deepest experience, with its increasingly militarised foreign policy and coercive diplomacy. Syria represents a multidimensional crisis and challenge for Turkey. Syria has also had far-reaching domestic political implications, most notably on Turkey's Kurdish issue. Syria has a sizeable Kurdish population and the dominant Kurdish actor there, the Democratic Union Party/ People's Protection Units (PYD/YPG), is closely affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Turkey and the US–EU designate as a terrorist organisation. The heavy burden of the unresolved nature of the Kurdish issue in Turkey weighs heavily on Ankara's policy towards Syria. All the political, identity and ideological divides that are present in the Syrian conflict have also had their own reverberations inside Turkey - be it ethnic, sectarian, or ideological. In a sense, the Syrian crisis has accentuated Turkey's identity fault lines.

THE EVOLUTION OF TURKEY'S SYRIA POLICY

Turkey has not had a static Syria policy to date. Instead, since 2011, it has adopted different policies, pursued different goals, and prioritised different threats:

Early on in 2011, when the protests broke out in Syria, Ankara, enjoying very close relations with Damascus at the time, tried to mediate between the Syrian opposition and the regime. When this effort failed, Turkey then

threw its full support behind the opposition and emerged as the most vocal champion of the Syrian regime's overthrow.[43] Ankara believed that these protests would ultimately result in instituting a Turkey-friendly domestic political order in a post-Assad regime in Syria. This aspiration formed the main goal of the then Turkish policy. As corollary to this, at the initial stage, Turkey wanted the Syrian opposition to operate as a government-in-waiting, gain international acceptance, and offer an alternative form of governance to the Syrian people. To that end, according to a former senior member of the Syrian opposition, Turkey's then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu suggested the opposition establish local councils, which they did.[44] This practice soon spread to all the opposition-held areas. The main idea behind the establishment of the local councils was for the Syrian opposition to offer an alternative model and governance to that of the regime.

The September 2014–February 2015 siege of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani by ISIS proved to be a turning point in Turkey's Syria policy. The YPG, an offshoot of the PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey as well as by the EU and the US, put up a fierce resistance against this siege, gained wide international sympathy and support, and received direct military assistance from the US. The Kobani siege became the birthplace of the US partnership with the Syrian Kurdish YPG/PYD, which would later be known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The PYD/YPG showed increasing capacity for political and territorial control and built up some form of an autonomous region of its own. This became the main driver for Turkey's subsequent military operations inside Syria. To further aggravate the matter for Turkey, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq in 2014 saw Western policy shift more and more towards anti-terrorism/ anti-ISIS operations and away from anti-Assad activities. In the same vein, ISIS waged a systemic campaign of terrorist attacks inside Turkey between 2014 and 2016, further heightening Turkey's sense of insecurity.[45]

Preventing the emergence of an autonomous or federal Kurdish entity in Syria now became the main goal of Ankara's policy.[46] The focus of this era was largely on security, in Ankara's view of the term, not on stability in the wider meaning of the concept.

From 2016 onwards, Turkey's approach to Syria evolved again, with direct military interventions aimed at countering what Ankara perceives as security

43 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

44 Interview with a senior member of Turkey-based Syrian opposition, 2021.

45 Galip Dalay (2016), "From sporadic to systematic ISIL attacks in Turkey", Al Jazeera www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/8/22/from-sporadic-to-systematic-isil-attacks-in-turkey

46 For an evolution of Turkey's Syria policy, see Galip Dalay (2021), "Turkish-Russian Relations in Light of Recent Conflicts: Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh", The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

threats, which have included ISIS and the YPG and Idlib as an area of military confrontation with different actors.[47] Setting aside military confrontations in Idlib, Turkey undertook three major military operations inside Syria: Operation Euphrates Shield which covered the area between Jarablus, Azaz and Al Bab in the North-western part of Syria (August 2016– March 2017), the Afrin Operation (January–March 2018), and an offensive into North-eastern Syria (October 2019). With the former, it aimed to clear the presence of ISIS from the Turkish border. Though clearing ISIS from these areas formed the operational goal of this policy, preventing the PYD from capturing this area and creating a territorial contiguity between its enclaves in the East and West of the Euphrates formed the strategic goal of this operation.[48] The operational and strategic goals of the latter two operations (Afrin and North-eastern Syria) were to terminate the presence of the SDF-led governance in the West of the Euphrates, and to roll back the overall territorial and political gains of the SDF in both the West and East of the Euphrates.

In the lead-up to 2023 elections in Turkey, Ankara has signalled a change in approach to Syria, with Turkish President Erdogan apparently seeking some normalisation in relationships with Damascus in order to create conditions for and facilitate the return of 3.7 million Syrian refugees from Turkey. Since the second half of 2022 there have been a number of meetings between high-level Turkish and Syrian officials, including ones facilitated by Russia. Some steps have been taken by Turkey to lift economic sanctions on Syria, but very significant issues remain between the two countries as indicated by limited progress of talks. It is not clear how this new foreign policy approach will evolve post-elections.

A SECURITY APPROACH TO STABILISATION

Turkey has built a form of security architecture in the areas that it controls.[49] In the management of these structures, Ankara relies on the local Syrian militias and links them with the Turkish military.[50] The idea is to establish security structures that primarily aim to prevent security threats to Turkey. Turkey often emphasises the importance of stability. However, it uses stability and security interchangeably. The concept of stability usually comes to mean addressing Turkey's national security concerns.[51]

47 Dalay (2021) (see note 48).

48 Dalay (2021) (see note 48).

49 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

50 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

51 Interview with a senior member of Turkey-based Syrian opposition, 2021.

To state it differently: whether by design or by default, Turkey's governance model in Syria operates in a way that meets Turkey's security needs rather than local residents' needs – at least, the latter is secondary to the former. This governance model relies on local security actors while the civilian side remains weak. Turkey leans heavily on armed actors to run governance bodies and administrative functions.[52]

NO UNIFIED APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE

Turkey has built governance and economic structures, along with security structures. However, there does not appear to be a unified governance vision for all the areas that it controls. It applies different visions to different zones.[53] Different legal frameworks are applied in different areas – creating a patchwork of Syrian and Turkish administrative systems and frustrating the Syrian Political Opposition's attempts to emphasise the unity of Syria.[54] Each zone is linked to the adjacent Turkish governorate and answers to them (more precisely, to the assigned deputy governors): the Euphrates Shield area is under the control of Gaziantep[55] and Kilis governorates, Afrin under Hatay's governorate, and Turkey-controlled areas in North-eastern Syria are under the control of Şanliurfa governorates. On the Syrian side, there are Syrian local councils functioning as governing bodies. These councils are nominally under the control of the Syrian Interim Government, yet Turkey is the ultimate authority in these areas.[56]

As was the case in Somalia, providing humanitarian assistance and addressing the basic needs of local people loom large in Turkey' s concept of stabilisation. Turkey has been capable in getting the local governance up and running, getting the economy functioning, and getting the environment cleared of hostile forces swiftly. Again, similar to Somalia, Turkish public institutions such TIKA, AFAD and Kızılay all play a major role in restoring food-producing sectors and improving basic infrastructure needs, e.g. by restoring or repairing schools, hospitals and sports facilities.[57] In the same vein, Turkey has also constructed mosques and religious learning centres through the Diyanet Foundation, which is an organisation that falls under the umbrella of Turkey's presidency of religious affairs.[58]

52 Ibid.

53 Interview with a Syrian researcher and NGO activist, 2021.

54 Ibid.

55 Haid Haid and Asya El-Meehy (2020): "Mapping Local Governance in Syria: A Baseline Study", Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

56 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

57 Interview with a Turkish official, 2021.

58 Ibid.

LACK OF SYRIAN EMPOWERMENT IN GOVERNANCE

Turkey's relationship with its Syrian partners is highly hierarchical. These local actors are almost completely dependent on Turkey and enjoy very limited autonomy. In line with this approach, the local councils are effectively appointed rather than elected. This lack of local autonomy for local partners prevents Turkey-created administrative and security structures from developing genuine societal roots or developing deeper societal ownership or legitimacy. The local/Syrian ownership of this model is feeble. At this stage and in a conflict context, where much is at stake for Turkey, Ankara is more interested in achieving its desired security results rather than cultivating societal legitimacy for its administrative and security structures in Syria. Furthermore, there is no shared political nor ideological framework that binds Turkey-allied Syrian opposition groups together.[59] The extent to which Turkey's partners in Syria are operating in line with Turkey's concerns and priorities rather than with their own can be seen in the way they have served as proxy fighters in different conflict zones such as in Libya. [60]

NO ACCOMMODATION FOR IDENTITIES

In terms of identity groups, there is a gap of Kurdish presence and Syrian ownership in these structures. Part of Turkey's security concerns are obvious, such as preventing terrorist attacks on its soil and borders; however, these concerns also partially result from what can only be defined as Ankara's identity insecurity. The cultural and linguistic hostility that the Kurds have experienced in places like Afrin, such as the erasure of the Kurdish language in public places, which is under pro-Turkey militias, is a case in point. In fact, the reason that Turkey's governance model has had limited success and that Ankara has not achieved stability in its controlled areas is not Turkey's capacity deficit, but rather the nature of Turkey's security and identity concerns. Unless Turkey finds a way to deal with its own Kurdish issue, it will not be able to solve the inconsistency of its Syria policy.[61]

59 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

60 Interview with a senior member of Turkey-based Syrian opposition, 2021.

61 Galip Dalay (2021): "Türkiye'nin bir Suriye politikasının olabilmesi için öncelikle bir Kürt politikasının olması lazım" (For Turkey to have a Syria policy, it first needs to have a Kurdish policy), Serbestiyet serbestiyet.com/featured/galip-dalay-turkiyenin-bir-suriye-politikasinin-olabilmesi-icin-oncelikle-bir-kurt-politikasinin-olmasi-lazim-71248/

PARTNERSHIP IN THE TURKISH MODEL

In Turkey-controlled areas, there is very limited involvement from the UN and international NGOs. Three factors are key for this. First, Turkey perceives the activities of international NGOs or institutions with suspicion, and therefore it adopts a very restrictive approach towards their activities in the areas under its control.[62] In their place, Turkey works through certain Turkish agencies such as TIKA, AFAD and Kızılay, and a few other vetted Turkish or Syrian NGOs. Second, in the areas of education, health and sport, the UN and some of the other international organisations and NGOs are not very forthcoming, mainly for political reasons. The UN, for example, is concerned that if it provides aid to Turkey-controlled areas, then Damascus as well as Russia may restrict its work in the rest of Syria.[63] Third, many organisations avoid places such as Afrin and Idlib. The gross human rights violations committed against the Kurdish population of Afrin by the militia groups running the city is one of the major factors that motivate many organisations to avoid this city. Similarly, many organisations avoid Idlib, because it is largely run by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (HTS), which is designated as a terrorist organisation by the UN. Finally, Turkey is the ultimate decision-maker in the Turkey-controlled areas in Syria. Therefore, any international organisation that aspires to operate in these areas has to be vetted by Ankara, a factor that might not be appealing for many international NGOs for different reasons.

62 Interview with a Syrian researcher, 2021.

63 Interview with a Turkish official, 2021.

LIBYA A CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF SECURITY-FOCUSED APPROACHES

Turkey has been closely involved in the Libyan transition process after the overthrow of the former Libyan autocrat Muammar Qaddafi from 2011 onward. Ankara signed a security partnership deal as early as 2012. The UN's stabilisation efforts served as reference for this deal.[64] To a degree, Turkey has been aligned with the policies of other international actors, including the EU.[65]

TURKEY'S LIBYA POLICY: MEANING AND EVOLUTION

Since contested elections in 2014, Libya has remained effectively divided between the Tripoli-based administrations and successive rival administrations, largely aligned with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA). Turkey aligned itself firmly to the Tripoli-based government early on. Between 2011 and 2014, the aim of the international community was to support capacity-building actions, especially in the security sector such as the unification of the army and dismantling of the militias.[66] Turkey's support initially incorporated training of the military and other security forces such as police and firefighters, and the modernisation of the security sector.[67]

64 Official Gazette (2012), "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ile Libya Hükümeti Arasında Askeri Eğlitim İs Birliğli Mutabakat Muhtırası", (The protocol on military training between Turkish and the Libyan governments) www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/06/20130605M1-2-1.pdf (accessed on 22 December 2021). Also, interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

65 For instance, Italy and the UK signed similar deals. To cite one example, "Libyan cadets arrive in UK for training" www.gov.uk/government/news/libyan-cadets-arrive-in-uk-for-training. Also, interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

66 Interview with Tarek Megerisi, 2021.

67 Official Gazette (2012) (see note 66).

Turkish goals in Libya are multifold.[68] Financially, Turkish companies (particularly construction firms) were highly active during the Qaddafi era in Libya.[69] There are, however, many frozen contracts from this era. The question of who controls Tripoli and the rest of the country is, therefore, decisive to whether Turkey and Turkish companies will receive payments under these contracts. Furthermore, Ankara covets a share of Libya's future reconstruction, including a presence in the country's energy and financial sectors.

In addition to this, regional political and geopolitical divides that were born out of the Arab Spring are fully on display in Libya, where Turkey has long been engaged in a fierce rivalry with anti-Arab Spring forces such as the UAE, Egypt and, to a lesser degree, Saudi Arabia. There is currently a level of de-escalation between Turkey, Egypt and the UAE and all sides are refraining from escalating the tension.

Libya is also the site of a geopolitical confrontation between Turkey and France as both actors support different sides in the conflict. Whereas Turkey has supported the Government of National Accord (GNA) and its successor, the Government of National Unity (GNU), France tacitly supports the LNA, and projects influence in Libya, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Through its Libya policy, Ankara is eagerly trying not to lose ground in this multi-layered power struggle.[70] Arguably most importantly, Turkey sees the Libyan imbroglio through the lens of a broader power play and geopolitical rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean.[71] In recent years, Ankara has felt that a new energy and security order is emerging in this region, which is centred on close cooperation between Egypt, Israel, Greece and Cyprus, and from which Turkey is being excluded. In recent years, Ankara has felt that a new energy and security order is emerging in this region, which is centred on close cooperation between Egypt, Israel, Greece and Cyprus, and from which Turkey is being excluded. With its Libya policy, Turkey is therefore trying to disrupt and undermine this emerging framework.[72]

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68 Ibid.

69 Ece Göksedef (2019), "Libya, Türkiye'nin yeni dışpolitika önceliği haline mi geliyor?" (Is Libya becoming the new priority of Turkish foreign policy?), BBC Türkçe (BBC's Turkish service) www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-48844835

70 Galip Dalay (2020), "Turkey's Libya gambit is paying off – for now," Middle East Eye www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/turkeys-libya-gambit-paying-now

71 Galip Dalay (2020), "Libya Conflict: Turkey Is looking for a 'Third Way' in Sirte", Middle East Eye www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/libya-conflict-turkey--options-

72 Dalay (2021), "Turkish-Russian Relations..." (see note 48).

Therefore, in 2019, when Khalifa Haftar and the LNA launched a large-scale offensive on Tripoli in an attempt to control all of Libya, Turkey chose to intervene decisively and militarily in support of the Tripoli-based administration. Inaction would have meant defeat for both the government and for Turkey's goals in Libya.[73] Turkey and Libya therefore signed two agreements: military cooperation and maritime demarcation deals.[74]

The GNA needed the security cooperation deal. The maritime demarcation deal, which extended Turkey's economic exclusive zone (EEZ) from Turkey's southern Mediterranean shore to Libya's northeast coast,[75] was the price the GNA paid for Turkish military cooperation.[76] Needless to say, many actors including Greece, Egypt and the EU objected to this deal on the grounds that it disregards major Greek islands such as Crete. The security cooperation, among other things, involves arms sales, military training, military build-up, security consultations, planning and intelligence sharing.

STABILISATION IN LIBYA

Turkey has been involved in peacekeeping operations within NATO's framework in places as far-flung as Somalia and Kosovo. Since the 1990s, Turkey has even become a training centre for non-NATO countries such as the UAE (training the UAE's air force) and Tunisia.[77] This experience has informed Turkey's approach to stabilisation. Turkey's hard-security based approach focuses on the modernisation of the security sector (both the army and the police), institutional capacity building (or state-building) and economic recovery. Turkey aims to empower the Libyan military. The idea is that an empowered military can either bring militias under its control or dismantle them. In Libya, Turkey borrows from NATO's playbook.[78] The modernisation of the security sector (or military), state-building and administrative/institutional capacity building are some of the core elements of Turkish policy.

73 Ibid.

74 Reuters (2019), "Turkey signs maritime boundaries deal with Libya amid exploration row" www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-libya-idUSKBN1Y213I

75 Luke Baker, Tuvan Gumrukcu, and Michele Kambas, "Turkey-Libya maritime deal rattles East Mediterranean", Reuters, 25 December 2019 www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-libya-eastmed-tensions-explain-idUSKBN1YT0JK

76 Dalay (2020) (see note 72).

77 Interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

78 Ibid.

Turkey's activities are not confined to the security sector. Turkey's aid agency TIKA provided vocational training for Libyan teachers.[79] Likewise, Turkey and Libya signed up to intra-ministerial cooperation for capacity building in the educational field.[80] Moreover, Turkey's military hospital in Tripoli treated more than 30,000 people.[81] Institutional twinning, capacity building in the governance and security sector, improving infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, and economic revitalisation form the central component of Turkey's approach in Libya. Questions regarding local inclusivity and the local legitimacy of local security sector institutions have largely been outsourced to Turkey's soft power institutions such as TIKA and Yunus Emre.[82]

GOVERNANCE

In Libya, Turkey's role in governance has been extremely limited.[83] This field belongs to Libyan actors – it is Libyan actors that set up governance structures. In the end, there is a UN-recognised government in the west. But Turkey continues to closely engage in institution-to-institution and state-to-state relations in order to improve the governance capacity of its allies. Therefore, institutional twinning (e.g., between the Turkish and Libyan Central Banks), capacity building in the governance and security sector, improving infrastructure, and economic revitalisation form the central component of Turkey's support in the field of governance. Through scholarship programmes for Libyan students to study in Turkey, Ankara aims to cultivate a social constituency for itself in this country, similar to what it does with many other countries.

PARTNERSHIP AND AGENCY

In 2019, Turkey intervened militarily at the request of Libya's UN-backed government. At this point, Ankara's Libyan allies' dependency on Turkey was at its highest level. Since then, as the Libyan crisis has shifted towards a more

79 Anadolu Agency (2018), "Turkey provides vocational training for Libyan teachers" www.aa.com.tr/en/culture-and-art/turkey-provides-vocational-training-for-libyan-teachers/1264783

80 The Libya Observer (2021), "Libya, Turkey ink cooperation agreement in the educational field" www.libyaobserver.ly/education/libya-turkey-ink-cooperation-agreement-educational-field

81 The Libya Observer (2022), "Turkish Armed Forces Hospital in Tripoli treated more than 30,000 people" www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/turkish-armed-forces-hospital-tripoli-treated-more-30000-people

82 Interview with a Turkish diplomat, 2022. Also, interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

83 Interview with Tarek Megerisi, 2021.

political phase, particularly after the political deal in 2021, Turkey's dependency on the local allies has increased. Libyan actors have significant agency, due to mutual dependency. Just as they were dependent on Turkey in rolling back the Haftar offensive, Ankara is dependent on them to maintain its influence and attain its goals in Libya. By placing a premium on the UN-recognised government, Turkey has fashioned its relationship with Libya as a state-to-state relationship. In comparison with Syria, Turkey is more flexible in its approach to its local partners. On-the-ground realities play an important role in defining the nature of relations between them. Local actors are not passive. Instead, they have a significant level of agency in this relationship.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Turkey was very friendly towards the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups. Yet the Libyan political and military scenes were extremely fragmented. In response, Turkey has tried to cultivate relations with more actors amongst the western Libyan tribes, and local notables. Ankara historically has maintained good relations with Misratan groups (a major city in western Libya, and a major security actor), with many Misratan residents claiming Turkish ancestral roots. Turkey is currently working to diversify its source of engagements and cultivate relations with the Eastern Libyan actors and former regime elements. In fact, Ankara reportedly played a role in the release of Muammar Qaddafi's third son and several other former regime remnants from jail.[84] In spite of the significance of these steps, thus far, Turkey's efforts have not yielded significant results.

ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

As is the case in other contexts, Turkey's engagement in Libya is almost entirely bilateral. For example, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) reforms are normally undertaken as multilateral initiatives. However, Ankara is working on these issues directly with the Tripoli-based administration, with a very limited level of international cooperation and engagement. This is a major weakness of Turkey's DDR efforts, including in Libya.[85]

84 Daily Sabah (2021), "Gadhafi's son came to Turkey after prison release: Reports" www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/gadhafis-son-came-to-turkey-after-prison-release-reports

85 Interview with Nebahat Tanrıverdi, 2021.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the peacebuilding community should welcome Turkey's interest and willingness to invest in stabilisation during and after violent conflict. Turkey has demonstrable capacity in post-conflict reconstruction, particularly in areas such as supporting government institutions to get them up and running, and training and equipping a functioning security sector. Turkey also has a risk appetite for direct financial engagement with counterparts in fragile and conflict-affected countries that, in principle, could foster greater partner government leadership than afforded by many other donor governments. These experiences and capacities are important assets within the broader international peacebuilding effort.

The potential of Turkey's contribution to peacebuilding, however, is undermined by several limitations to Turkey's approaches:

ABSENCE OF CLEAR FRAMEWORKS AND CONCEPTS

The lack of clearly articulated Turkish frameworks for stabilisation and peacebuilding, and a reliance on lessons learned from NATO missions, appear to drive Turkey to focus overwhelmingly on the material and security aspects of peacebuilding. This means that Turkey's efforts will most likely contribute to a "shallow" peace characterised by the absence of large-scale violence but leaving some drivers of conflict and conflict-relationships potentially unaddressed. Ultimately, this undermines long-term peace and stability.

UNADDRESSED DOMESTIC IDENTITY QUESTIONS

Turkey's own domestic Kurdish issue demonstrably limits Turkey's ability to address legitimate identity contests that may exist in a post-conflict context in Syria, and need to be negotiated in governance, reconstruction, and security sector programming. At best there is an absence of flexibility to address these issues as Turkey views these issues through the lens of its own political and security needs. At worst, as demonstrated by the actions

of pro-Turkey Syrian armed groups, Ankara's approach contributes to human rights violations and deepens identity problems.

LEGITIMACY QUESTIONS LEFT UNADDRESSED

Turkey's approach to institution building focuses on important elements around equipping and training staff, ensuring that 'jobs get done'. However, the approach appears to rely on an implicit assumption that enhanced effectiveness of post-conflict institutions alone will build the legitimacy of those institutions. In fragile and conflict-affected countries, legitimacy is likely to be highly contested and intersect with potential conflict drivers around participation in, access to, and leadership in governance processes. Not focusing on these dimensions of legitimacy may weaken institutions and make them less stable.

LIMITED LOCAL AGENCY

A related reflection is that there is a lack of agency within the governance institutions that Turkey supports and props up, not least in Syria. For instance, in Syria, local administrations in Turkey-controlled areas have been entirely dependent on Ankara. This further undermines legitimacy and diminishes sustainability.

STATE-CENTRIC FOCUS

As a result of its state-centric focus, it appears that Turkey does not have the opportunity for strong consultative engagement with a broad range of civil society actors within fragile and conflict-affected countries. This potentially makes Turkey less receptive to the needs or priorities of a wide range of stakeholder groups in the fragile and conflict-affected countries in which it operates. There is, therefore, a gap between Turkey and its allies' security priorities and the local communities' aspirations for stability, participation, and good governance, as is the case in Syria. Those priorities may, in fact, be heavily contested within the subject countries and the lack of attention to this may further undermine the concerned government's or the governance institutions' legitimacy. In a post-conflict environment, significant elements of the social contract often need to be gradually (re)negotiated. If a new governance and security apparatus is established without the inclusion of different stakeholder groups, then these groups may come to perceive this as a grievance, which can set up cycles of future conflict.

CONFLICT-BLIND PROGRAMMING

Turkey's state-centric focus and concern with the rapid delivery of services and infrastructure runs the risk of leading to 'conflict-blind' programming. In other words, there is a risk that Turkey does not develop the consultative relationships outside government actors to build up a nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics in the country, and of how the specific activities that Turkey is undertaking will interact with those dynamics and may do harm. For example, while security is undeniably important for sustainable stability and peace, a focus on security combined with a state-centric approach may, ultimately, drive some interest groups to ask, 'security for who?' If those interest groups begin to feel insecure in the face of the state, overall security may diminish. The focus on 'getting things up and running' as quickly as possible does not give Turkey and its partners the opportunity to adapt programming and approaches if it becomes clear that a project is having a negative impact on conflict. This approach to programming risks being conflict insensitive. Moreover, the fact that Turkey often is a direct party to conflict in countries that it also supports stabilisation and peacebuilding in may impair it's ability to apply conflict sensitive approaches.

These limitations can impede Turkey's various stabilisation activities from contributing to a more positive peace through the restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the population's different interest groups, and institutions and systems that are trusted to effectively manage conflict. These limitations represent a lost opportunity for peacebuilding, given the scale of Turkey's deep involvement in many crises and conflict zones.

Furthermore, stabilisation in fragile and conflict-affected countries is inevitably complex and needs many different efforts and methodologies to 'pull in the same direction' to be successful. Turkey's tendency to work outside international coordination and collaboration frameworks may diminish returns on Turkey's own investments. In addition, by eschewing coordination with other international actors, the international peacebuilding community may become more broadly unable to develop peacebuilding strategies which take into account and build on the work that Turkey
is doing.

Based on the above observations, enhanced engagement between the international peacebuilding community and Turkey to build shared understanding of how Ankara's work sits alongside the work of other actors in the stabilisation field would be highly advantageous for all sides. However, from the interviews conducted for this paper, it would appear that there are several hurdles against such an engagement. Whereas Turkey can be potentially more open to international collaboration, like in Somalia,

it would probably be less open for such a cooperation in Syria, where Turkey sees its core national interests to be at stake.

A pragmatic initial way forward, therefore, may be focusing on establishing channels of dialogue between international humanitarian, development and peacebuilding ecosystems and their Turkish interlocutors and counterparts, where possible, to build mutual understanding of each other's priorities, including engaging in coordination discussions. The purpose of this approach would be to establish a platform of basic engagement on which further actions can be built. In contexts where Turkey is an active player in post-conflict stabilisation activities and where it has a degree of foreign policy flexibility, the international peacebuilding community and the humanitarian and development sectors should:

- Engage Turkish diplomatic missions, or other Turkish state entities such as TIKA, AFAD, YTP and Maarif Vakfı as well as Turkish NGOs operating in-country, in joined-up analysis and discussion of conflict sensitivity to deepen all participants' understanding of local conflict and peace dynamics and understand how their engagement is interacting with those dynamics.
- Engage Turkish NGOs in coordination activities, demonstrating the value of sharing information, analysis and methodologies and building trust between all sides.

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