Examining Foreign Development Assistance in Africa through Emerging Power Dynamics: A Focus on Turkey’s Engagement in the Horn of Africa

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ABSTRACT

In the last two and a half decades of the 21st century, a modern-day “scramble” for Africa, led by traditional Western powers, has taken shape. This coincides with Africa's expanding external relations, notably with non-traditional powers like Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). The emerging powers share an objective of advancing their interests in Africa, particularly through exploiting its strategic resources. Turkey has also joined this narrative, yet existing scholarly literature focuses disproportionately on the BRICS, sidelining other players like Turkey. This article addresses this gap by comprehensively investigating Turkey’s distinctive role and its ramifications in Africa. It specifically probes Turkey’s contributions to development in the Horn of Africa, encompassing diverse forms of aid and investments. Turkey strategically wields soft power tools, including humanitarian aid, loans, grants, and technical expertise, to bolster its political and economic sway, thus fostering trade and investment prospects across the Horn of Africa. This engagement has been warmly received, particularly in nations like Somalia and Ethiopia, which have long sought constructive developmental partnerships. This development assistance, however needs to be taken with caution and accompanied by a clear strategy on the mode of response by the Horn of Africa countries in regards to self-guarding themselves from being sucked into a deeper dependence relationship where power is heavily weighted in favor of global powers. This necessitates a clear roadmap to prevent unwarranted dependency on external forces and to preserve a balanced power dynamic. In essence, this study underscores the importance of equitable engagement for sustainable growth and self-determination in the continent.

Keywords: Development assistance, emerging powers, Horn of Africa, Turkey.

1. Introduction

The significance of emerging powers plays a pivotal role in the current landscape of international relations. An emerging power, or a rising power, refers to a country that has achieved notable influence in the global arena. These nations have experienced considerable economic and technological advancement and aim to secure a more dominant position either regionally or globally (Center for Chinese Studies, 2013). The end of the Cold War heralded an era of transition from a bipolar system to a multipolar world, with a diverse distribution and exercise of power (Tank, 2012). The post-Cold War era has seen the growing influence of newly emerging countries, especially those from the non-western regions of the world. The debates about the growing importance of the non-western region have been largely based on the role these emerging powers play in the global economy and international politics.
Scholarly and policy discussions have focused on five emerging powers—notably Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). These countries have become more influential as the traditional Western powers deal with the dilution of their influence in the international system. The BRICS have become far more influential not only within their regions but also globally. Although academic literature has focused on the BRICS, other rising powers have emerged. These include what are known as ‘second tier’ or ‘middle level’ rising powers such as Turkey, Indonesia, and Mexico (Hurrell, 2018). These rising powers have been able to seek a greater voice in global engagement by building political, social, and economic links.

In the last few decades, Turkey has risen to become an influential actor not only in Europe and the Middle East but in other regions of the world (World Bank, 2021). According to 2021 data from the World Bank, Turkey is the 19th largest economy in the world and is seen as a newly emerging global power (Gürzel, 2014). Since the 2008 global financial crisis, Turkey has shown better economic performance than some of the other emerging powers (Tepeciklioğlu & Tepeciklioğlu, 2021). Debates on Turkey’s prominence have emerged as the country shows greater interest in engaging the global community, particularly in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

Turkey’s role as an emerging global power has risen since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power through the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Its recent foreign policy engagements in its region and beyond have put it at the forefront of global politics (Gürzel, 2014). Turkey projects itself as a major link between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Beyond the region, Turkey has continued to actively engage foreign nations in a bid to grow its global influence. As a rising power, Turkey is keen on the use of soft power as a means of achieving recognition (Tank, 2012). Soft power tactics like the utilization of its historical links, culture, religion, and humanitarian support have enabled it to have a greater position in world politics (Gürzel, 2014).

Most importantly, Turkey is keen on the use of foreign development assistance as a soft power economic tool of engagement. The term foreign development assistance in this article is a broad concept referring to capital, technology, and technical assistance from both Foreign Aid and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into a country (Easterly, 2007). Foreign aid is a political decision made by donor governments and multilateral institutions on the basis of the need for financial assistance by developing countries. On the other hand, foreign direct investment is an investment made by foreign investors on the basis of the profitability of investment in another country. The use of economic instruments by Turkey has generally proven to be an important tool in meeting its foreign policy agenda as an emerging power (Purushothaman, 2021). According to Purushothaman (2021), rising powers like Turkey use development assistance as an economic tool to ensure their position in the world as major power shifts occur. Kulaklikaya and Nurdun note that the economic gains through foreign development assistance are a crucial part of understanding Turkey’s relationship with the world, particularly with developing countries (Kulaklikaya & Nurdun, 2010).

As Turkey seeks to diversify its engagement with developing countries, the African continent has, in recent decades, stood out as an attractive space. Diplomatic, trade, cultural, and social relations have been enhanced in the last decade, while Turkish development assistance through foreign aid and foreign investment has become a key feature of their engagement. This article seeks to examine the role and impact of Turkish foreign development assistance in the Horn of Africa by identifying the areas of collaboration while assessing the motives and interests behind this engagement. The Horn of Africa region consists of seven states, which include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan (Horn of Africa Initiative, 2022). This region has attracted Turkish interest as a large share of trade and investment moves to this part of the continent. The article has relied on secondary sources of data and statistics from peer-reviewed journals, books, and reports from leading global data institutions.

2. Conceptual Underpinnings of Foreign Development Assistance and its Role in Development

In the 21st century, the global landscape is predominantly shaped by a liberal order that emphasizes the opening of markets to foreign capital, goods, and investment. As a key feature of the liberal approach to foreign development assistance, foreign aid and investment are recognized as an important source of capital and knowledge, thus supporting growth and development (Pankaj, 2005). Advocates of the approach note that development assistance plays a critical role as an economic tool to incentivize developing states to embrace economic openness and engage with foreign goods, services, and investments. Foreign development assistance can bring capital, technology, technical expertise, and access to new markets, which can contribute to job creation, infrastructure development, knowledge transfer, and economic growth (Collier, 2008; Edwards, 2014).
Liberal scholars argue that the utilization of foreign development assistance can provide financial resources for infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation programs. Foreign investment, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and services, can contribute to job creation, technology transfer, and the expansion of productive capacities (Collier, 2008; Edwards, 2014; Harris, 2007). This optimistic view of the liberal order has, however, been challenged by several scholars who note that the utilization of foreign development assistance has served the interests of economically powerful countries at the expense of the less dominant ones. Carmody (2016) notes that the 21st-century complexity of foreign development engagements in Africa resembles the 19th-century colonial scramble for Africa, where European states partitioned the continent for economic and wealth expansion. The scholar notes that there is a new scramble for Africa where geo-economic competition between various global powers has been witnessed as they seek to get access to Africa’s resources and markets (Carmody, 2016).

According to Finney (2003), foreign development assistance has become a potent foreign policy instrument for traditional powers like the US and the UK to attain their national interests. Emerging powers have largely borrowed this foreign policy tactic as they engage developing countries in a bid to expand their global influence (Finney, 2003). Countries like China and India have led the pack as they offer foreign aid through loans, grants, and technical assistance to developing countries to benefit from these markets for their businesses. Critics of the political economy view of the international liberal order note that this ideological debate has been used to justify the domination by established and rising powers over developing countries. Zubairu Wai, a scholar on the subject, notes that foreign intervention and engagement with African states have not been based on altruistic motives but are supported by power regimes seeking to legitimize their imperial motives for resource exploitation and economic dominance (Wai, 2016).

Political actors in Africa are in the 21st century actively engaged in making strategic choices on how best to leverage their position in the evolving geopolitical landscape. The reshaping of existing development assistance relationships is being considered as African states strengthen their relations with emerging powers. It is, however, important to understand what these new development assistance engagements mean for the continent and the extent to which the strengthened partnerships are benefiting the people of Africa.

3. TURKEY-AFRICA RELATIONS: A RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF HISTORIC PARTNERSHIPS

Turkey’s ties to Africa date back centuries to the Ottoman Empire, which controlled parts of Europe and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire was made up of Turkish nationalities that grew to become one of the most powerful empires in the world between the 15th and 16th centuries. The Ottoman Empire, however, came to an end in 1922 after 600 years of existence. The empire was then replaced by the Turkish Republic and various other successor states in the Middle East and South Eastern Europe (Müftüler-Baç, 2014). The Ottoman Empire in Africa was particularly present in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Through colonial conquest, the empire was able to establish trade routes before it lost its territories to European imperialists like Britain, France, and Italy in the 19th century (Stanford, 2022).

Turkey re-engaged African countries during the decolonization era in the 20th century. According to Meltem Özkan, prolific scholar on Turkey-Africa relations, this engagement was, however, not well defined in Turkey’s foreign policy. Turkey thus missed a great opportunity to develop early political, economic, and commercial relations with post-independent African states that were seeking new allies. Other than the establishment of a few diplomatic embassies in the continent, Turkey’s engagement during Africa’s post-independence period was small and lacked a strategic plan (Mehmet & Akgün, 2010).

The Turkish opening to Africa began in the late 1990s in the post-Cold War era. Its cultural, religious, and historical affinity with some African states through the Ottoman Empire placed it in an advantageous position as it reestablished relations with the continent. Its most notable engagement in Africa in the 1990s was the Africa Opening Plan, which was launched in 1998. The action plan advocated for the improvement of political, economic, and cultural relations with African countries. Turkey proposed to develop an intensification of contact with Africa, and economic measures were put in place to encourage trade, investment, and technical assistance. Cultural cooperation was also improved through the establishment of scholarships and collaborations between institutions of higher learning. The action plan served as a road map to enable Turkey to develop relations with Africa that were largely dormant for decades. Although the action plan was not fully implemented, it laid the groundwork for future engagement (Mehmet & Akgün, 2010).

Meltem Özkan (2010) notes that the initial plan to engage Africa in 1998 was largely driven by Turkey’s failure to get recognition as a member of the European Union at a 1997 EU summit. Turkey
thus sought to establish a plan on how to grow its global influence through other foreign relations. The Middle East and Africa stood out as attractive regions for investment and trade as Turkey sought to reinvent its foreign relations with the world. In the post-Cold War era, Turkey also sought to have a greater say in international affairs. Expanding and strengthening its engagement with other states separate from the European Union was a crucial part of gaining greater global leverage (Mehmet & Akgün, 2010).

In the 21st century, Africa-Turkey relations have been largely defined by the events of the 2005 Turkey-Africa Summit organized by the Erdogan regime in Turkey. Emerging powers have come to value summit diplomacy as these meetings hold symbolic importance and serve as an avenue to improve a country’s global status. These summit meetings are a reflection of geopolitical rivalry between traditional powers and new powers as states continue to ‘scramble for Africa’ (Soulé, 2021). Learning from China, India, Russia, the US, and other global actors, Turkey used the 2005 summit to develop closer ties with the continent (Müftüler-Baç, 2014). Since then, Turkey has conducted three more summits with African leaders, one in 2008 in Istanbul, one in 2014 in Malabo, and one in 2021 in Istanbul. Through these summits, elements of soft power such as development assistance, trade, investment, cultural diplomacy, and education exchanges have been integrated into the Turkey-Africa relationship. This has resulted in a more visible Turkish diplomatic presence in the continent. In 2002, Turkey had only 12 embassies. This number has increased to 43 embassies in 2021, while Africa’s diplomatic presence in Turkey has risen from 10 embassies in 2008 to 37 embassies in 2021 (Center for Applied Turkey Studies, 2022).

Idiosyncratic traits are a crucial part of understanding a country’s foreign policy agenda. For Turkey, the main architect of the aggressive Turkish engagement with Africa is President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He has sought to remodel Turkey as an ‘Afro-Eurasian state.’ Through President Erdogan’s leadership, Turkey’s engagement in Africa is no longer focused on economic ties but has expanded to cover political, humanitarian, and military objectives (Charlie, 2021). For example, as part of the 2005 summit, President Erdogan was able to secure a Turkish observer status in the African Union. Three years later, in 2008, the African Development Bank permitted Turkey to become the 25th non-regional member. These engagements with African regional bodies are expected to open new areas of cooperation between Turkey and African states (Mehmet & Akgün, 2010).

On the Security front, defense cooperation with Turkey has been added to the existing soft power instruments for strengthened cooperation with African countries. Turkish arms exports to African states have increased, including the sale of drones, while military training and defense diplomacy have been enhanced (Yaşar, 2022). In 2021, for example, President Erdogan visited three Gulf of Guinea countries, namely Angola, Nigeria, and Togo. Maritime security issues were top of the agenda of the visit as he sought to strengthen counter-piracy missions in the region. Turkey is targeting the transport of oil from Nigeria and Angola, and it’s in Turkey’s interest to securitize the waters in this region for ease of commerce (Karasik, 2021).

4. Turkey-Africa Trade and Investment

Since 2016, Turkey has conducted several annual Turkey-Africa economic and business forums in partnership with the African Union to regulate and develop trade relations between Turkey and the continent. Increased Turkish investment has been witnessed in construction, manufacturing, textile, and energy, amongst other sectors, in the continent. Turkish foreign direct investment into the African continent has increased from 100 million dollars in 2003 to 6.5 billion dollars in 2020 (African Business, 2021). Turkey has mainly been investing in North Africa and recently began to expand towards West Africa and the Horn of Africa (Center for Applied Turkey Studies, 2022). In 2012, a Turkish construction giant, Yapı Merkezi, signed a deal to build a 400 km railway connecting eastern, central, and northern Ethiopia to the port of Djibouti. In Tanzania, the same Turkish firm (Yapı Merkezi) signed a 1.9 billion dollar contract to construct a railway line linking Dar es Salaam to Mwanza (Tavsan, 2021). In Rwanda, a Turkish company, Hakan Mining and Electricity Generation Inc., was in 2020 completing the construction of a power plant with the capacity to serve the Southern part of the country. The monumental Kigali Convention Center and the Kigali Arena were also built by Turkish firms (Isilow, 2020). In 2022, a Turkish manufacturing conglomerate unveiled a Special Economic Zone in Kenya meant to attract manufacturers to the Naivasha investment (Wangui, 2022).

Trade, an important indicator of strengthened relations between states, has equally increased between Turkey and African states from 5.4 billion dollars in 2003 to 25.3 billion dollars in 2020. Turkey’s exports to Africa have increased from 1.3 billion dollars in 2000 to 21.21 billion dollars in 2021. Trade imports to Turkey from African states have also increased but are still relatively small compared to the rest of the world. The main products exported from Africa to Turkey include crude oil, gold, iron, and copper, while Turkey exports to African countries basic foodstuffs, auto-motives, household
apparatus, electrical appliances, clothing, and building materials (Center for Applied Turkey Studies, 2022).

Turkey’s dominant trade partners include South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia (Center for Applied Turkey Studies, 2022). According to 2020 statistical data, Egypt was the highest importer of Turkish products, with Egypt’s import volume of Turkish products reaching 4.5 billion dollars, Morocco came second with an import volume of 2.9 billion dollars, while Libya came third with 2.8 billion dollars (Tebadul, 2022). South Africa, the largest export trading partner with Turkey in 2020, exported Gold, Coal Briquettes, and cars, while Turkey’s exports to South Africa included refined petroleum, hot rolled iron, and motor vehicle parts and accessories. In 2020, the main products exported from Turkey to Nigeria included refined petroleum, Gypsum, and Iron while Nigeria exported to Turkey products such as crude petroleum, petroleum gas, oily seeds, and cocoa (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022b). Angola, another resource-rich African country in 2020, exported raw aluminum, iron, steel, timber, and crude petroleum, while Turkey exported cereal, wheat flour, and other edible milling products to Angola (Trading Economics, 2022).

An observation of Turkey’s exports from its main trading partners in the continent shows a predictable interest in Africa’s raw materials and mineral resources, such as oil, gas, gold, and timber. Due to African states’ limited industrial capacity, the products being exported are not processed, leading to a scenario where African states export raw materials only to import them back in their refined form. For example, in 2020, Nigeria exported crude petroleum to Turkey at a value of 824 million dollars, while it also imported refined petroleum products at a value of 153 million dollars from Turkey (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022a). A second observation is a trade imbalance that exists between Turkey and African countries in favor of Turkish companies. In 2021, data shows that Turkey had a comparative trade advantage over Africa as the continent’s exports to Turkey reached 8.3 billion dollars while Turkey’s exports to Africa were at 29.4 billion dollars (Tebadul, 2022). Although the export of raw materials and energy resources is not the only export focus from Africa to Turkey, it is clear that this rising power joins other global powers in the ‘Second Scramble’ for Africa’s resources.

5. Turkey and Development Assistance in the Horn of Africa

In the past decades, the Horn of Africa has shown promising economic and security development, making the region a geostrategic location for rising powers like Turkey. Through soft power approaches, Turkey has led an aggressive campaign in the region for stronger economic, political, and diplomatic ties. It is, however, important to understand why Turkey has shown a keen interest in engaging the region. There is no doubt the region is geostrategically significant to major world powers. It is adjacent to one of the most important trade arteries in the world, from the Indian Ocean to Europe through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, passing the Bab el-Mandeb strait between Djibouti and Yemen (Horn of Africa Initiative, 2022). Its proximity to the Middle East has equally motivated several foreign powers, including the US, China, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and most recently, Turkey, to establish military bases in the region (Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2019).

Turkey’s engagement with the Horn is not only based on geopolitical interests but also on domestic pressures to expand its economic outreach. Turkey’s rapid economic success under Erdogan’s AKP political party has seen it grow to become one of the fastest-rising economies in the world. This economic growth has given Turkey the confidence to pursue a more assertive foreign policy agenda that has evolved from a regional focus to a global outreach. Turkish companies today are seeking larger markets for their products and services (Van Den Berg & Jos, 2019). The Horn of Africa region is seen as an attractive space for the Turkish government and investors as they seek to penetrate regions that have previously been neglected by Western partners due to risks associated with security and underdevelopment.

More than a third of Turkey’s investment in the continent has gone to Ethiopia. As a gateway to the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia has geostrategic relevance to Turkey as the country guards some of the key shipping lanes in the world. In a single decade, Turkey’s trade with Ethiopia has risen one hundredfold from 40 million dollars in 2003 to 4 billion dollars in 2013. About 220 Turkish companies have set up shop in Ethiopia, leading to employment opportunities for the locals. Turkey has invested in manufacturing and has played a major role in contributing to infrastructure projects (Getachew, 2021). In 2014, the Ethiopian government requested Turkish government support through the Turkey Exim Bank to assist in the construction of the Awash-Woldia railway project. In the past 10 years, Turkey has put in more than $1.2 billion worth of development finance investment in Ethiopia with further support to the social sector, including education, water, and health (Ngwa, 2015).

Kenya, a key commercial and economic hub in the Horn of Africa, has strengthened its relationship with Turkey equally since the early 2000s. Turkish companies have been engaged in construction projects such as roads, housing complexes, and industrial zones. The Turkish government has also
provided financial support and technical assistance for infrastructure development in Kenya. A 2016 visit by President Erdogan to Kenya saw trade volumes between the two countries increase from $140 million in 2015 to over $235 million in 2019. Like other African countries engaging Turkey, there exists a trade imbalance between Kenya and Turkey as the major share of the trade volume is centered on Turkish exports to Kenya, including refined petroleum products, garments, technology, iron, and steel (Shihundu, 2023). Its most notable relationship in the region is with Somalia, where Turkey has contributed humanitarian aid and gone a step further to invest in the country through closer commercial and political ties. A majority of countries operating in Somalia have headquarters and offices in Nairobi, Kenya, as a result of the decades of civil strife. Turkey has, however, chosen to operate directly in Mogadishu, enabling the country to implement its foreign policy objectives in a much more direct manner than many foreign nations. This decision has elicited a positive image of Turkey by Somali citizens who have previously felt abandoned by the international community as they dealt with humanitarian emergencies and terror threats from the Al-Shabaab organization (Kaya & Warner, 2012).

Turkish engagement in Somalia intensified in response to the 2010–2012 famine in the country. Since then, the relationship between Turkey and Somalia has graduated to cover other issues beyond delivering humanitarian assistance (Van Den Berg & Jos, 2019). In 2011, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the first non-African leader to visit Mogadishu since the country’s collapse in 1991. His visit was followed by a series of bilateral agreements, including the establishment of the first major carrier, Turkish Airlines, and its commitment to having direct flights from Mogadishu. A few months before the visit, Turkey organized a meeting with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which pledged to donate 350 million dollars for humanitarian aid to Somalia. In 2012, Turkey hosted a UN conference on Somalia’s democratic transition process as a dialogue platform to facilitate discussion on the peace and security situation in the country (Kaya & Warner, 2012).

Economically, Somalia-Turkey relations have led to stronger bilateral trade and investment with Turkish companies while reviewing its development assistance efforts to cover infrastructure projects, industrialization, and security sector investment. The Mogadishu main sea and airports are managed by Turkish companies, and they contribute to 80% of the Somali government’s revenue (Orakçı, 2022). Socially, the Somali Ministry of Health and Turkish officials run the largest hospital complex in the country, Training and Research Hospital. In 2021, Turkey contributed 2.4 million dollars to Somalia’s IMF debt relief (Orakçı, 2022). Turkey’s largest overseas military base is in Somalia, and it serves its security interest in the region while assisting the Somali government in strengthening its security apparatus (Sucuoglu & Stearns, 2016). Turkish armed forces continue to offer training to the Somali national troops as the country faces security challenges from the Al-Shabaab terror organization. Somalia has also benefitted from the sale of military equipment such as drones and armored carriers from Turkey.

Although other foreign nations have engaged in development assistance with Somalia, the intentional and concerted efforts by President Erdogan’s regime show a unique approach to dealing with Somalia. According to Karen Kaya, a scholar on Turkish-Somali relations, notes that Turkey is capitalizing on the shared religious identity to promote its economic interests in Somalia (Kaya & Warner, 2012). By heavily investing in Somalia, Turkey has been able to reap the gains of an elevated international profile while also establishing itself as a leader in the Islamic world. The religious ideology of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) has also strongly influenced the focus on the Horn of Africa countries. President Erdogan’s party has sought to build Turkey’s image as a global Islamic leader interested in uplifting the status of developing states that share similar religious ideologies (Tol, 2019). On several occasions, the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has publicly critiqued the Western-centered approaches to the continent arguing that Turkey is interested in building a relationship that serves not only its interest but also that of the continent (Karasik, 2021).

6. Turkey-Horn of Africa Relations: The Second Scramble?

The influence of Turkey’s developmental aid and investment in the Horn of Africa nations demonstrates a complex interplay between political intentions, global ambitions, and shifting power dynamics. This examination delves into Turkey’s maneuvers, the reception of its development assistance by countries in the Horn of Africa, and the possible consequences for the region’s developmental path.

Turkey’s developmental aid and investment in the Horn of Africa reflect a strategic drive for global recognition and economic gains (Müftüler-Baş, 2014). By providing development aid and investing in the Horn region of the African continent, Turkey aims to bolster its global position and redefine its traditional approach to foreign policy. Turkey’s dispensation of development assistance serves a dual purpose, encompassing an elevation of its international reputation and a recalibration of its historical foreign policy trajectory (Ozkan, 2017). This strategic pursuit is prominently manifested in Turkey’s...
engagement with Somalia, where it aspires to wield an amplified global influence, signaling a departure from its established foreign policy stance. Turkey’s augmented involvement in Somalia, characterized by substantive developmental aid and investment, underscores a transition from a regional-focused foreign policy approach to a more globally engaged role (Kaya & Warner, 2012).

The extension of aid and investment by Turkey operates as a multifaceted diplomatic instrument, extending beyond immediate material implications. It serves to amplify Turkey’s presence on the global stage, projecting an image of benevolence and proactive involvement in addressing global challenges. This active commitment positions Turkey as a responsible and dynamic global participant, contributing to its prominence and acknowledgment in the international community (Center for Applied Turkey Studies, 2022). By cultivating lasting collaborations and establishing a substantial presence in the Horn of Africa, Turkey strengthens its geopolitical sway in a region of increasing global significance (Van Den Berg & Jos, 2019). This deepened involvement not only solidifies Turkey’s status as an influential participant in the Horn of Africa but also sets the groundwork for broader diplomatic entanglements, fostering prospects for economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and political interaction in the African continent.

Turkey’s distinct method of offering developmental aid stands in contrast to certain Western counterparts. Unlike the often stringent conditions imposed on aid from Western nations, Turkey’s assistance comes with fewer obligations regarding comprehensive political and economic reform (Miiftüler-Baç, 2014). This approach, which it shares with other emerging powers like India and China, is closely aligned with the preferences of African leaders who prioritize their ability to shape their developmental pathways. However, while this empowerment is significant, it necessitates careful consideration. The newfound independence offered by Turkey and other emerging powers calls for a non-prescriptive approach and calls for a balanced perspective. While self-determination is pivotal for the African continent, good governance and decision-making ensure that developmental choices are well-informed, sustainable, and aligned with the overarching objectives of the states in the continent.

7. Conclusion

The evolving dynamics of international development and the rise of new actors like Turkey have ushered in a promising era for developing nations, particularly those in the Horn of Africa. The diversification of donor countries represents a notable departure from the historical dominance of Western contributors, granting developing nations more autonomy and a wider array of choices to secure resources for growth. The shift towards engagement with emerging powers like Turkey underscores a broader global transformation, where foreign development assistance intersects with bilateral and multilateral partnerships, trade, and investment initiatives. African leaders are seizing this opportunity to assert influence and strive for self-reliance in shaping their economies. Turkey’s ambitious pursuit of international recognition, triggered by past challenges, has driven a dynamic diplomatic engagement with Africa, allowing it to position itself as a burgeoning global player.

By utilizing soft power tools, Turkey has not only advanced its economic interests but has also fortified its global standing. The reception of Turkey’s engagement in the Horn of Africa, especially in nations like Somalia and Ethiopia, reflects a shared enthusiasm for productive developmental collaborations. However, amidst this optimism, a cautious approach is vital to prevent potential over-reliance and uneven power dynamics. To maximize the benefits of Turkey’s involvement, the Horn of Africa nations must formulate a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy. This entails a proactive stance in safeguarding national interests and a dedication to equitable and sustainable progress through good governance. By effectively leveraging Turkey’s resources and expertise within a holistic framework, these nations can ensure that the partnership contributes to lasting socio-economic advancement, serving both present and future generations across the Horn of Africa and the broader African continent.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.
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