

# IS TIKA TURKEY'S PLATFORM FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OR SOMETHING MORE?: EVIDENCE FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

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This paper explores the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Turkey's foreign policy by looking how it can function as a foreign policy instrument. With the example of the Western Balkans, a strategic region in the contemporary Turkish foreign policy realm, we will show that Turkey's development cooperation is more than just sharing its own experience, knowledge and comparative advantages of being a recipient, but rather a foreign policy instrument to gain influence. The manifestation of Turkey's ODA can be observed through the activities of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi Başkanlığı – TIKA), which was established in 1992 with the aim of pursuing the idea of assisting transition economies in Central Asia, Caucasus, and the Balkans. Focusing on the period when Turkey concentrated on the Western Balkans, and having in mind the perception of the latter as one of the biggest aid providers among the emerging economies, we will argue that TIKA, which has a monopoly over Turkey's ODA, is used as an important foreign policy instrument.

*Key words:* Turkey's Foreign Policy, TIKA, Western Balkans, Development Cooperation, ODA



## INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, countries have to employ different foreign policy instruments in order to be recognised as an important actor in the contemporary international reality. In order to do so, they often have to use all the possible instruments available to achieve their foreign policy goals. With several (newly) emerging actors providing official development assistance (ODA), one questions whether this is the instrument that can help countries become recognized, influential and powerful in the international community. ODA is relatively new in international relations, starting with World War II, when Turkey and Greece received aid from the United States of America, shortly followed by the Marshall plan, which was aimed at the economic recovery of Europe (Fidan and Nurdum 2008, 98; Lancaster 2009, 799). It resulted from different historical developmental imbalances, which, together with the industrial revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the abolishment of colonial systems, led to the creation of independent states that were less developed and strived to establish their position in the international community. With the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group 77, newly established independent countries demanded a new economic order in which the international community would offer them active support, not being conditioned neither on the political nor military level. Moreover, they wanted the new economic and monetary system to provide developing countries with flows of capital that would pave the way towards their development (Benko 1997; 2000; Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Order A/9556).<sup>5</sup> However, despite the overarching idea of the developing countries, not all of them

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5 Quickly after the independence of France's African colonies, France provided newly independent countries with large amounts of aid, in order to somehow help them with their economic needs and also to keep the French influence and predominance in the countries (Lancaster 2007, 28). Great Britain also wanted to maintain the influence in its former colonies using foreign aid as a tool to achieve this, whereas Japan used aid for reparation payments in Asia as well as because it needed raw materials and foreign markets for its exports (Lancaster 2007, 29).



have 'walked' at the same pace, some being (very) successful and others less so in terms of economic growth and development.

The increasing importance of developing countries that are becoming aid donors is changing the development of the international development finance and consequently also the balance of power in international relations (Kavakli 2018). Despite the fact that emerging donors have been primarily recipients of ODA, they now also provide it and the question is what the motives behind such endeavours are (Drecher et al. 2013; Walz and Ramachandran 2011). Are the donors driven by their own experience of being a recipient, wanting to share their knowledge and the comparative advantages they gained in their own developmental process, or are they driven by their own self-interests, trying to pursue foreign policy goals through the well-established instrument of ODA? With this question in mind, we will analyse one of the new emerging donors that "is at the forefront of international community these days" (Göle 2014), being on the list of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC)<sup>6</sup> as an ODA recipient, a non-DAC member providing ODA and voluntary reporting to DAC. We argue that Turkey as an emerging actor uses ODA as an instrument of foreign policy in order to achieve its foreign policy goals, which can be seen in the regional allocation of its ODA and the strategical orientation towards certain regions. The latter can be also observed in the case of the Western Balkans, as the logic of the establishment of TIKA also lies in an effort to pursue the idea of assisting transition economies in the above-mentioned region. Furthermore, the countries of the Western Balkans are understood as an important empirical reality that can be observed as the instrumentalization of a *Turkified*

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6 OECD DAC is a group of donor countries that promote the effectiveness of development aid and support sustainable development through their actions. Its mandate is to "promote development co-operation and other policies so as to contribute to sustainable development, including pro-poor economic growth, poverty reduction, improvement of living standards and developing countries, and a future in which no country will depend on aid" (OECD 2018).



Ottoman history, accompanied by a culturally and ideologically driven foreign policy. This policy is manifested in the thought that Turkey as the inheritor of a long-standing Ottoman cultural tradition should be more active in former Ottoman territories (Öztürk and Gözaydin 2018, 334–335).

The first aim of this paper is to contribute to better understanding of the role of ODA in foreign policy by looking at how it can function as a foreign policy instrument. Secondly, in line with current theoretical considerations, this paper will lay ground for answering the question if Turkey perceives the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) just as a platform for development cooperation or rather as an important foreign policy instrument as well. Stemming from this, the paper also seeks to explore the logic of TIKA's presence in the Western Balkans, which is perceived as a strategic region in the contemporary Turkish political realm. Thirdly, the paper brings evidence on the extent to which the region is exposed to Turkish ODA, which will clarify whether TIKA is understood just as a platform for development cooperation or also an appropriate foreign policy instrument for achieving foreign policy goals in the Western Balkans. Finally, the paper also tackles the characteristics of ODA in today's world system and attempts to explain which factors influence the behaviour of states in the ODA distribution by looking into the theoretical contemplations of ODA as an altruistic, economic and/or foreign policy instrument.

The answers to these three research questions will be provided through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology. The basis for the research is a critical-analysis of the available primary and secondary sources that discuss the role of ODA and development cooperation among states, also in the case of Turkey. The second method employed is the method of historical-critical analysis, with which we will try to identify certain patterns in Turkey's development cooperation with other countries. It should be emphasised here that the position of Turkey in the case of ODA is twofold, in the sense that on the one hand, Turkey is an ODA recipient, but on the other hand it acts as an ODA donor. In the case study on TIKA we will use the method of in-depth case study analysis, which has four



methodological characteristics, i.e. reliability, internal validity, external validity and objectivity (Churchill 1991, 148–160). In the case study, we will present the logic of TIKA's presence in the Western Balkans, which is perceived as a strategic region in the contemporary Turkish political realm.

The article is structured as follows: after the introduction, ODA as a foreign policy instrument is defined within the theoretical framework. This is followed by the empirical part, divided into two subsections. In the first, we will outline Turkey's specific development assistance reality and the shift of position from being an aid recipient to becoming an important aid donor. The second part will discuss TIKA's compliance with Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans. In conclusion, we will provide answers on our research questions and set future paths for research on this topic.

#### DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AS A POLITICAL-ECONOMIC INSTRUMENT OR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ALTRUISM?: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to analyze the importance of Turkey's ODA and answer the research questions, it is necessary to define foreign policy. Foreign policy represents an institutionalized process of activities in official external relations, which are conducted by an independent actor in the international arena (Hill 2016; Benko 1997, 221–227). These activities are shaped by countries in order to change the behavior of other countries in the international environment and represent a key component within a process with which countries transform their goals and interests into concrete actions (Modelski 1962; Padelford and Lincoln 1976). Countries want to influence the international environment with different foreign policy actors, in accordance with their foreign policy goals and interests, which are shaped according to various (internal and external) political elements that define their position in the international community (Benko, 1997).<sup>7</sup> But

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7 For better understanding of the interconnectedness of foreign policy environments see Bojinović Fenko and Šabič (2017).



in order to fully understand and analyze the foreign policy of a country, knowledge is essential about the value system of the actors who create the foreign policy and about how they function, what the goals of the foreign policy are and what kind of means, methods and instruments are used in order to achieve foreign policy goals (Benko 1965; Dimitrijević and Stojanović 1979; Holsti 1988; Vukadinović 1989; Benko 1997; Kanjč 2006). The value system of a country is a diverse set of values (international peace and security, religion, historical ties, socio-political environment, etc.), which are also a reflection of the geopolitics, determining what kind of foreign policy goals should be pursued and with which instruments (Sjöstedt 2007; Udovič 2009).

However, achieving foreign policy goals is possible only by using appropriate strategies that depend on internal and external factors of the foreign policy environment, including socioeconomic and political relations, and material and immaterial elements that determine a country's position in the international community (Benko 1997; Bojinović Fenko 2011).<sup>8</sup> The goals are very concrete in their nature and can be short- medium- or long-term, with high or low priority. For example, economic prosperity and economic development represent a short-term high priority foreign policy goal, whereas ensuring world peace and security can be defined as a long-term goal with lower priority (Holsti 1988, 124). According to several authors (Dimitrijević and Stojanović 1979; Holsti 1988; Vukadinović 1989; Benko 1997), policy goals can be achieved with the help of different instruments that can be divided into three categories: a) military (coercive) instruments; b) political instruments and public opinion; and c) economic instruments (Benko, 1997). These activities are used to achieve foreign policy goals that are set on the basis of adopted values and strategies (Udovič 2009). However, one foreign policy instrument is not used to achieve only one set of goals, on the contrary, it can actually be used to achieve different sets of goals (e.g. political and economic goals).

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8 Even though Benko (1997) claims that foreign policy goals are subordinate to the foreign policy strategy of a country, Holsti (1988) claims that foreign policy goals and strategy are equal and highly connected.



An example of such an instrument that is aimed at achieving more than one foreign policy goal is ODA<sup>9</sup>, a positive instrument of (economic) foreign policy (Benko 1997; Udovič 2009), with which countries want to achieve different political and economic goals. ODA comprises all those international flows to the aid recipient countries that meet certain criteria, such as the promotion of economic development and prosperity in the recipient countries, the source being the public sector and it being given under concession terms, meaning that the grant element is not less than 25%<sup>10</sup> (Bučar and Udovič 2007; OECD 2018). Depending on who grants it, the latter can be divided into bilateral and multilateral ODA. The former represents direct flows of ODA from a (developed) donor country to a recipient (developing) country,<sup>11</sup> whereas the latter is delivered only by an international institution,<sup>12</sup> which fully or partially carries out the development function (Mavko 2006; Bučar and Udovič 2007; Gulrajani 2016).

Since its beginnings, giving ODA has not only served the moral, altruistic and development purpose, where countries

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- 9 ODA “is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries” (OECD 2018). It is part of the broader concept of international development cooperation, which is defined as a set of different actions of providers in all areas that contribute to the elimination of poverty, the reduction of inequality and the promotion of sustainable development in partner countries, including raising public awareness, humanitarian assistance and other official and private flows (Alonso and Glennie 2015).
  - 10 ODA includes grants, soft loans and different provisions of technical assistance. “Soft loans are those where the grant element is at least 25% of the total” (OECD 2018).
  - 11 Bilateral ODA is a direct flow of resources from one country to another country and can be delivered through the public sector, non-governmental organisations or even public-private partnerships with the recipient country. The donor retains control over the funds and decides who will receive them (Mavko 2006).
  - 12 Multilateral ODA is channelled through international organisations (e.g. World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Development Programme, OECD, etc.) and is allocated based on the multilateral institution’s own decisions (Mavko 2006; Gulrajani 2016).



provide aid as a result of a moral imperative to overcome poverty, promote development, ensure humanitarian relief, and achieve better distribution of global resources, but has also been driven by the donors' pure self-interests (Lancaster 2007, 14). One such self-interest driven purpose of ODA is diplomatic : countries try to achieve international political goals by ensuring donor governments high-level access to the recipient government official, which functions as a symbolic confirmation<sup>13</sup> of successful high-level state visits (Lancaster 2007, 13). Another purpose that is not very altruistic in its core, is commercial: countries use ODA for expanding their own exports and securing access to raw materials,<sup>14</sup> or just tie their aid in order to procure goods or services from the aid donor (Lancaster 2007, 15; Clay et al. 2009).<sup>15</sup>

As a positive instrument of economic foreign policy, ODA therefore creates a favourable international economic environment for donor countries, directly contributing to the expansion of export markets, access to raw material or promotion of foreign investments (Schraeder et al. 1998; Benko 1997; Woods 2005; Lancaster 2007; Van der Veen 2011). It either is in the function of rewarding the behavior of a recipient country, or it serves as an inducement to change the behavior, thus the decisions for allocation of ODA are highly dependent on the priorities of the international community and the foreign policy goals

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13 Symbolism is one of the most important aspects of diplomacy, translating real relations into symbolic ones and vice versa (Arbeiter and Udovič, 2017).

14 Instance of this are for example Japan and several Scandinavian countries (Lancaster 2007, 14).

15 Despite the fact that tied aid is almost forbidden or should be avoided by donor countries, it exists de facto. It is used to create a favourable environment in the recipient country for the needs, priorities, interests and goals of a donor country. Tied aid represents direct conditioning of ODA in order to achieve economic and political foreign policy goals of a donor country (Lancaster 2007; Clay et al. 2009; Bučar 2011; Udovič and Bučar 2016).





of an individual donor country (Apodaca 2017).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as suggested by several authors, ODA is used to promote geostrategic interests, to achieve the donor's political, economic and security foreign policy goals, and to strengthen alliances (Maizels and Nissanske 1984; Lancaster 2007; Udovič and Bučar 2014; Udovič and Bučar 2016; Apodaca 2017). Acting as a positive economic instrument of foreign policy, ODA is allocated to those geographic areas where the donor country has developed its economic interests (Maizels and Nissanke 1984; Benko 1997; Alesina and Dollar 1998; 2000).

Nevertheless, achieving the political and economic goals and interests of a country is highly dependent on a systematic planning of the direction of ODA in accordance with the foreign policy goals and economic interests (Bučar 2011, 736). On the one hand, we can determine the intentions of a donor country and the political and diplomatic importance of the recipient country for the donor country through aid allocation. Increases or decreases in bilateral aid can show what kind of diplomatic relations the donor and recipient country have and what the political priorities of a donor country are (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Lancaster 2007). In addition, "most bilateral ODA is driven by a complex set of historical, political and sometimes commercial motivations alongside broader development and poverty considerations" and as such "represents an element of donors' foreign policy" (International Development Association 2002, 2). On the other hand, ODA is operating in accordance with the *ex-ante* principle, helping to create an environment for developing economic relations between the donor and recipient country and even helping towards the successful development of the commercial diplomacy of a donor state (Mawdsley et al. 2014; Okano-Heijmans 2008; Demena and Bergeijk 2016). It can act as an instrument that creates a better economic environment in the recipient country, easing the entrance of the enterprises

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16 For example, if the motivation for giving ODA were solely motivated by the goal of reducing poverty, European Union countries should reallocate over 70% of the aid to only the 20 poorest countries (Bigsten et al. 2011).



from the donor country in the market of the recipient country. According to Maizels and Nissanke (1984, 891), bilateral ODA is mostly focused on achieving the economic, political and security goals of a donor country. It therefore represents a foreign policy instrument that countries can use in the formulation of their foreign policy, considering that a target country receiving ODA is included in the foreign policy strategy of a donor country (Mrak et al. 2007; Udovič 2007). Hence, countries can make a deliberate choice which country to help with ODA and consequently also achieve various other goals, which are not only political, but also economic (Udovič 2009).

#### BIPOLAR PERSONALITY: TURKEY AS A RECIPIENT AND DONOR OF ODA

In the late 1940s, inspired by the foreign policy disquiets that resulted from backing the pro-Western regimes established in Europe after the Second World War, Turkey received 150 million dollars<sup>17</sup> to foster its economic development. In addition to the U.S. efforts, from the 1950s onward, Germany and Japan participated as the other two main donors that strived towards the enhancement of Turkey's economic performance (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 94).<sup>18</sup> In addition to the bilateral nature of development assistance, multilateral donors have also had a significant impact on this equation. The most notable partnership in terms of technical assistance, which was significant and present

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17 According to the U.S. State Department, Turkey was granted more than 12.5 billion dollars in economic aid as of December 2005 (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 99).

18 If the cooperation of Turkey and Japan started in 1965 with the "Acceptance of Trainees" programme, the cooperation between Turkey and Germany was launched in 1970 within the framework of German-Turkish Technical Cooperation (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 99). According to the estimates published by Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO) (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı – DPT), both countries combined provided 557 million dollars of technical assistance, which paved the way towards the successful implementation of various projects in different sectors (DPT 2000).



until 2000, was the one with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UNDP 2018). The latter brought in new ideas and strived for the promotion of the institutional capacities, providing much needed assistance for the enhancement of sustainable human development with 33.12 million dollars (BYKP 2005).

Even though Turkey is still an ODA recipient, it formally started its aid activities on 5 June 1985, when it arranged a wide-ranging aid package worth 10 million dollars to the Sahel<sup>19</sup> countries within the framework of the State Planning Organization (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı* – DPT) (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 100).<sup>20</sup> The institutionalization of Turkey’s development assistance came in 1992, when Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi Başkanlığı* – TİKA) was established in order to pursue the idea of assisting transition economies in Central Asia, Caucasus, and the Balkans (TİKA 2004). Nuri Birtek (1996, 37) argued that the first synchronized assistance dates to 1996, when Turkey contributed to the institutional capacity building in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. From 2003 onwards, TİKA<sup>21</sup> started to engage in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and in African countries, and the Turkish Statistical Institute and DPT started to track and analyze the portion of Turkey’s technical assistance to partner countries granted by TİKA (Turkstat 2018). In 2004, TİKA took over the systematic calculation of ODA, which was based on the OECD DAC Guidelines, from the Turkish Statistical Institute and started to incorporate the figures regarding the distribution of ODA in its annual reports.

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19 Those countries were Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Niger, and Chad.

20 “The history of Turkish foreign aid donations dates back to the Ottoman era. There are several historical records indicating that the Ottoman Sultans granted foreign aid to countries around the world including the ones in Europe such as Poland and Ireland” (Sen 2018, 88).

21 Carlos Lopes and Thomas Theison (2003, p. 22–28) pointed out that Turkey became the first country to give technical assistance to Eurasian countries.



*Table 1: Official Development Assistance of Turkey from 2002 to 2017 expressed in dollars*

Year	Amount of Official Assistance in dollars
2002	85 million
2003	76 million
2004	339 million
2005	601 million
2006	712 million
2007	602 million
2008	780 million
2009	707 million
2010	976 million
2011	1273 million
2012	2533 million
2013	3308 million
2014	3591 million
2015	3919 million
2016	6487 million
2017	9084 million

*Source:* Authors' own analysis based on the annual reports of TIKA from 2005 to 2017 and OECD (2019)

However, the most important year for TIKA is 2001, when it became a part of the Government of the Republic of Turkey (Prime Ministry) in order to increase its efficiency (Lopes and Theisohn 2003, 25). Furthermore, this summarizes the second major period of changes that characterized TIKA and its activities (Ipek 2015, 179). As Parlak (2007, 74–79) argued, our focus is going to be in the so-called third period, when TIKA focused on the Western Balkans in order to help with the reconstruction after the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The third period is crucial as it also coincides with the notion that the large area stretching from the Adriatic Sea to Central Asia is expected to gain prominent geopolitical importance in the 21st century (Kabasakal 2000, 8).

Additionally, from 2013 on, Turkey is considered as one of the biggest aid providers among the emerging



economies, surpassing China for the first time (Hausmann and Lundsgaarde 2015). As a country with important cultural, economic and ethnic ties with the vast majority of the countries in the area, Turkey felt that it needed to support the transformation efforts of the Eurasian countries (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 101).

This was also argued by Öztürk and Gözaydin (2018, 339) as they showed that the new model of Turkey's engagement in the Western Balkans entailed active cooperation with religious networks, cultural platforms and state apparatuses.

Ever since then, TIKA has evolved into the main Turkish official development cooperation agency with 55 field offices, 7 of which are located in the Western Balkans.

In order to understand the role of TIKA in Turkey's Foreign Policy, we must first highlight the scope, fortitude and project implementation by TIKA.

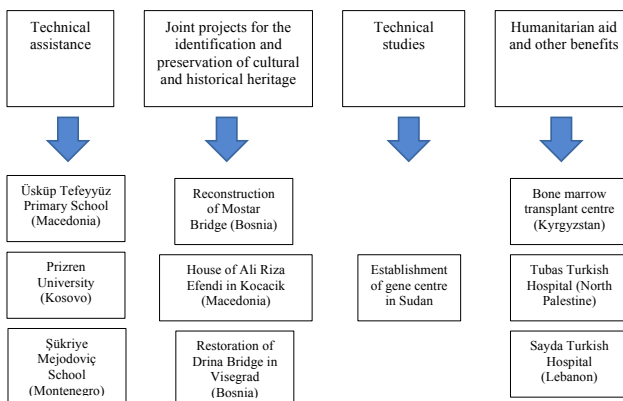
#### TIKA'S SCOPE, FORTITUDE, AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Defined with bylaw no. 4668 published on 12 May 2001 and broadened with the statutory decree no. 656 in order to increase its proficiency, the main duties of TIKA are to improve economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural, and educational support to developing countries by steering projects (Nuroglu 2013, 7). In line with this, TIKA has "the responsibility" to implement projects that will strive towards the elimination of prejudices about Turkey and strengthen inter-communal dialogue among nations (ibid.). In 2008, the Government of the Republic of Turkey added the restoration of Turkey's cultural properties abroad to the responsibilities of TIKA and underlined that TIKA should "protect the common historical, cultural, and social heritage and values" (Nuroglu 2013, 8). In general, the projects undertaken by TIKA can be reduced to four core directions: 1) technical assistance; 2) joint projects for the identification and preservation of cultural and historical heritage; 3) technical studies; 4) humanitarian aid and other benefits (TIKA, 2011).



If technical assistance focuses on training programmes, academic, scientific and cultural cooperation projects, the technical studies aim to stimulate Turkey’s potential in the regions where there is a need for specialized personnel (TIKA 2009). The latter is rarely implemented, given that from 2009 until now, there has been only one such concrete example disclosed by TIKA, and that is the establishment of the first gene centre in Sudan in 2011 (TIKA 2011, 59). On the contrary, the largest part of the projects stem from the second and fourth point, where TIKA strives for the establishment of departments where students would learn the Turkish language, for the preservation of historical (Ottoman) heritage, and for providing assistance in terms of food, medicine, clothing, and other goods (TIKA 2011, 61–64).

*Figure 1: The four core directions of TIKA through the prism of successfully implemented projects*



Source: Author’s own analysis based on the Annual Reports of TIKA from 2009 to 2017

Currently, TIKA coordinates its activities with the help of 55 coordination offices in more than 30 countries, but in fact, all decisions regarding the projects go through eight service units (TIKA 2011, 16): 1) Central Asia and the Caucasus; 2) the Balkans and Eastern Europe; 3) Middle East and Africa; 4) East and South Asia, Pacific and Latin America; 5) Foreign Affairs



and cooperation; 6) Legal consultancy department; 7) Strategy development; 8) Human resources and support services (ibid). The most interesting peculiarity regarding the projects, which later become funded by TIKA, is that they should serve both the interests of Turkey and the partner country, not just the latter. Furthermore, from 2011, TIKA started to function as an intermediary and arranger of projects that are supported by Turkish municipalities, which contribute to the development of the countries and “were in touch with Turkey and have important cultural and responsive ties” (Nuroglu 2013, 9). One such example is the Selçuklu Municipality from Konya that funded the renovation of Sarajevo Mevlevi house (ibid.).

Finally, the budget of TIKA is not fixed,<sup>22</sup> and varies according to the performance of the Agency in the previous year. Each year, TIKA’s budget has to be approved by the Turkish National Assembly (Nuroglu 2013, 11).

#### TIKA’S COMPLIANCE WITH TURKEY’S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

According to the fundamental policies and priorities, the implementation of projects and activities of TIKA must be in accordance with the Turkey’s foreign policy (TIKA 2017). In order to analyse the purpose (and position) of TIKA in Turkey’s foreign policy, we must first assess Turkey’s Foreign Policy Strategy (Strategy) and situate it within Turkey’s Western Balkans efforts. The identification of these efforts will be achieved with the analysis and interpretation of the above-mentioned Strategy,<sup>23</sup> which was adopted in December 2017 (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018, 2).

With the exception of the first chapter, Turkey’s Strategy systematically and precisely defines priorities both in geographical and sectoral terms. According to the structure of the Strategy, the Western Balkans region is on the 8<sup>th</sup> place, before NATO,

22 In 2015, TIKA’s budget was 62.6 million euros (TIKA 2015).

23 Turkish Foreign Policy Strategy, which is entitled Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy (Girişimci ve insani dış politika), has 204 pages and 40 chapters (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018).



the UN, OSCE, the Council of Europe, Cyprus, Greece, and the Middle East, and after the EU, Russia, and the U.S. (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018, 3–5). According to the introductory part, the (Western) Balkans region is understood through the prism of entrepreneurship, as Turkey emphasized that it is “committed to strengthening the regional cooperation and ownership” (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018, 58). Here, it should be stressed that Turkey devoted five pages to the Western Balkans, which include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the Western Balkans<sup>25</sup> as we understand them are equated with the broader context of the Balkans, which at the same time opens up space for interpretation, namely that Turkey criticizes the EU foreign policy construct of the Western Balkans. In all the countries, except in Croatia, TIKA is mentioned as an important Agency that allocates between 50–70% of its assets for the restoration of residences, bridges, wells, and mosques which are culturally and historically connected with the Ottoman Empire<sup>26</sup> (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018, 58–62). In 2014, the year for which the most recent figures are available, most of the resources were apportioned to Bosnia and Herzegovina (7.35%), followed by North Macedonia (3.46%), Kosovo (2.31%), Albania (2.03%), Montenegro (1.31%), and Serbia (1.28%). Furthermore, the Strategy highlighted that

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24 Our focus is on the countries of the Western Balkans, which include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

25 From 1998 on, the term Western Balkans is perceived as an EU Foreign Policy construct.

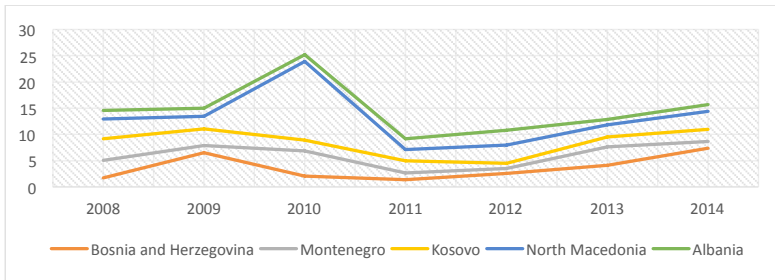
26 Here we can highlight the investments in Prezë Castle in Tirana, five mosques in Tirana, Berat, Korce and Elbasani (Albania), a museum in Tuzla, which serves to represent BiH during the Ottoman Empire, and is considered the oldest mosque in the Western Balkans, a bridge on the Drina that is now known as Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, Mahmut Aga’s mosque in North Macedonia, the construction of a house in Niš in memory of 3000 rebels who resisted the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and the Mekka-i-Mükerreme mosque in the city of Rožaje in Montenegro (TIKA 2014, 64-108; Daily Sabah 2015; Andrić 2010).





TIKA managed to implement more than 400 projects in Albania and 700 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Disisleri Bakanligi 2018, 58–59). The latter is, however, hard to track as in the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a lack of systematic monitoring due to the fact that TIKA is not subjected to the Donor Coordination Forum, which was established in 2005 in the light of strengthening the effectiveness of development aid in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Vračić 2016, 13).

Figure 2: *Proportions of TIKA's investments in selected Western Balkans countries from 2008 to 2014<sup>27</sup> expressed in million dollars*



Source: Kočan (2018, 50).

The illustration above suggests that TIKA, in line with the Strategy, directs most of its assets to countries in which there is a strong Muslim community and in which Turkey believes its compatriots are living (TIKA 2014, 73–81). For that reason, the largest amount of funds were allocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania. In a certain period, TIKA devoted more funds to Montenegro, mainly due to the restoration of certain mosques (in the cities of Rozaje, Belo Polje, and Andrijevica) located in the Sandzak area, where Muslims live (ibid.). The findings presented above are in line

27 The most recent available figures regarding the allocation of TIKA assets are from 2015, when the last comprehensive Annual Report was issued. From 2015 until now, there is just one Annual Report, which was issued in 2017, but it lacks figures (TIKA 2018).

with Gangloff (2005, 34), who argued that from 2002<sup>28</sup> Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans has to be understood as a "reflection of the existence of geographical, historical, and cultural links". On this basis, authors like Demirtas (2015), Yurtnaç (2012), and Mitrović (2014) concluded that Turkey's foreign policy presence in the region was initially not based on economic resources, but rather on the idea of the existence of kin communities, which was reflected in the Strategy through the emphasis of the word "compatriots". The concept was also analysed in one of the reports issued by a think tank called Popolari (2014, 14), who underlined that the decision to advocate the concept of "kin communities" was premature, as most Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim intellectuals considered the period of the Ottoman presence as the greatest tragedy for this region. This argument built upon the fact that the inhabitants who did not practice Islam were politically and socially degraded to the extent that they were exiled and had only limited rights<sup>29</sup> (Popolari 2014, 15–16). Because of this, Turkey pushed the idea of kin communities to the background and began to emphasize peace and commitment to the Euro-Atlantic integration, which paved the way towards potential influence in the countries that couldn't to the idea of kin communities, such as Croatia and Serbia (Kirisci 2006).

However, economic interests are visible as well, considering that one of the main foreign policy goals is strengthening economic relations with the countries of the Western Balkans (Kočan 2018). According to Çakır (2014, 80), the "foreign trade volume in the Balkans region increased substantially as a result of

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28 The conceptual leader of the Turkish foreign policy transformation was Ahmet Davutoğlu, who laid the groundwork for Turkey's approach to the region in the 21st century, with the most important determinants being two, namely geography and history, as reflected in the Strategy (Kočan 2018, 48).

29 Malcom (1996, 66) emphasized that those who didn't practice Islam couldn't ride a horse, possess a weapon, wear the same clothes as those who were committed to Islam, didn't have the right to sue their pious neighbour and testify before the court.



liberalization process in line with European Union accession requirements, as well as the economic growth in Turkey.” Albania, for example, received 42.2% of all Turkish foreign direct investments in 2007 (Çakır 2014, 78),<sup>30</sup> as was the case in Bosnia and Hercegovina,<sup>31</sup> which was the biggest receiver of Turkish investments in 2010 (Çakır 2014, 80). Even though Turkey’s foreign direct investments to the Western Balkans amounted only to 3% of its whole investments in 2017, it is interesting to note that there are almost 1100 Turkish companies located in the countries of the Western Balkans (Trading Economics, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018; Gonultas 2018; Vasović 2017; Gökgöz, Dizkirici and Gezikol 2016).<sup>32</sup> This only shows that the direction of ODA is in compliance with the economic foreign policy goals, considering that the economic relationship with the countries of the Western Balkans is strengthening.

## CONCLUSION

In today’s world system, different characteristics of ODA can be identified, which are not defined only by moral imperatives and altruistic impulses, but also by concrete interests and needs of international actors. We can conclude that (bilateral or multilateral) ODA represents international flows which are allocated to aid recipient countries in order to promote economic development and prosperity in these countries. However, humanitarianism and altruism are not the only two characteristics of ODA, as countries do use it to achieve other (self-interested) goals. Its diplomatic component is also very important and (un)successful

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30 The reason for that was the partial privatization of a public telecommunications company ALBtelecom, which was taken over by a consortium of Turkish public companies (Çakır 2014, 78).

31 Turkey bought 49% of BH Airlines (Çakır 2014, 80).

32 There are around 700 companies, employing almost 10,000 people in Kosovo and 300 Turkish companies in Albania (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). In addition, Turkey has 100 companies in Macedonia, 70 in Montenegro and in Serbia (Gonultas 2018), whereas in Croatia and in Bosnia and Hercegovina, the number of Turkish companies is not higher than 60 (Gökgöz, Dizkirici and Gezikol 2016).



diplomatic relations are therefore also often realized through the allocation of ODA and a certain amount of it to a specific recipient country. In addition, countries also use ODA for improving their own economic position in the international community, using ODA as a positive instrument of economic foreign policy. It is used to create a favourable environment in the recipient countries, with the aim of further developing economic relations between the donor and recipient country. Countries often decide where to allocate their ODA based on their own foreign policy goals and national interests, taking into consideration historical, cultural, political, geographical and economic ties with the recipient country. Therefore, ODA is not used only to unconditionally help developing countries, but also to promote geostrategic interests as well as the political, economic and security goals of a donor country. With the flood of new emerging donors, the altruistic characteristic of ODA is still important, however its function as a foreign policy instrument is at its forefront, serving as a main driving force for providing ODA.

Analysing the role of ODA in Turkey's foreign policy by investigating how it can function as a foreign policy instrument in the Western Balkans provides a new set of insights about contemporary Turkey's development assistance. The analysis showed that since 2013, when Turkey became the most important aid provider among the emerging economies, most of Turkey's recipient countries were either once part of the Ottoman Empire or have important ethno-cultural connections to Turkey; even so, the Western Balkans didn't enjoy the same amount of development assistance as other regions. At any rate, most of the assets were directed to the countries of the Western Balkans in which a strong Muslim community is present, which indicates the compliance between TIKA and Turkey's foreign policy strategy. In addition, since 2004, Turkey also increased its ODA towards areas that had been historically neglected in Turkey's foreign policy, which is a result of Turkish foreign policy orientation.

Moreover, the analysis showed that 50–70% of all the development assistance allocated through TIKA were used for the restoration of residences, bridges, wells, and mosques which are culturally and historically connected with the Ottoman Empire.



This attests that Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans can be understood as a reflection of the existence of geographical, historical, and cultural links, and proves our initial argument that ODA is employed through TIKA as a foreign policy instrument. Moreover, stronger economic relations between Turkey and certain Western Balkans countries, which can be observed after 2007, can also indicate Turkey's direction of ODA towards the region. A growing interdependence between Turkey and certain Western Balkans countries is seen in the increase in trade volume, trade agreements and in the presence of Turkish companies in the region. This clearly shows how ODA can help create a better economic environment in the recipient country. When the allocation of TIKA's assets in a particular country increased, an increase in terms of Turkey's economic involvement in the selected country could also be observed.

While there is an important gap between the lack of figures since 2015 and the new reality in which Turkey exists, we can still argue that TIKA functions as an exclusive platform reserved for the countries with a clear majority of Muslims, even in the case of the Western Balkans. While there are no figures available for Croatia, Montenegro received nowhere near the same amounts as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Finally, this regional bias in Turkey's ODA distribution, which is also reflected in the distribution of TIKA's offices abroad, must always be examined according to the Prime Minister's priorities, as it seems that there are no formal aid allocation criteria. The only aid allocation criteria are the goals and interests that can be traced on the level of Turkey's foreign policy strategy and on the level of the Prime Minister's political agenda. Even though Turkey's ODA can be characterized as holistic, it also represents an integral part of the country's foreign policy, enjoying the support of the highest national leadership (Hausmann and Lundsgaarde, 2015). Consequently, this makes TIKA an important foreign policy instrument. The systematic planning of ODA allocation to the Western Balkans as a consequence of the Prime Minister's priorities, is the result of ODA being employed as a foreign policy instrument with which Turkey is trying to achieve its foreign policy goals. In that regard, TIKA represents a means



that serves several purposes. Considering that Turkey is a non-DAC member, voluntarily providing ODA, the purpose of its ODA and of TIKA's activities is even more likely to be not only altruistic in its core, but mostly focused on promoting geostrategic interests and achieving its own political, economic and other foreign policy goals. TIKA's activities are therefore driven by a very complex set of historical, political and commercial motivations which (together with considerations about development and poverty) act as a strong foreign policy tool.

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