
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER DEĞERLENDİRMELERİ

Editör: Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Murat CİNGÖZ

Uluslararası İlişkiler Değerlendirmeleri

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yaz
yayınları

2025

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"Bu kitapta yer alan bölümlerde kullanılan kaynakların, görüşlerin, bulguların, sonuçların, tablo, şekil, resim ve her türlü içeriğin sorumluluğu yazar veya yazarlarına ait olup ulusal ve uluslararası telif haklarına konu olabilecek mali ve hukuki sorumluluk da yazarlara aittir."

ÇEŞİTLİ SOSYO-EKONOMİK DEĞİŞKENLER ÜZERİNDEN BRICS'E GENEL BİR BAKIŞ

Mehmet Ercan BALTALI¹

1. GİRİŞ

BRICS, Brezilya, Rusya, Hindistan, Çin, Güney Afrika, Suudi Arabistan, Mısır, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Etiyopya, Endonezya ve İran olmak üzere on bir ülkeden oluşan bir gruptur (BRICS Brasil, 2025). BRICS, Küresel Güney ülkeleri için siyasi ve diplomatik bir koordinasyon forumu görevi görmektedir (Koç, 2025).

2023 yılında Johannesburg Deklarasyonu'nda alınan ve 2024 yılında yürürlüğe giren ikinci BRICS genişleme politikası kapsamında 2024 ve 2025 yıllarında altı yeni üye, Mısır, Etiyopya, Endonezya, İran, Suudi Arabistan ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, kabul edilmiştir (Oğuz Gök, 2024).

2023 Johannesburg Deklarasyonunda alınan BRICS ortak ülke kategorisinin oluşturulması kararı, 2024 yılında Kazan Zirvesi'nde onaylanmış ve Belarus, Bolivya, Küba, Kazakistan, Malezya, Nijerya, Tayland, Uganda ve Özbekistan'a ortak ülke statüsü verilmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2024).

Geçici BRICS Başkanı sıfatıyla Brezilya Hükümeti, Vietnam'ın gruba ortak ülke olarak resmen kabul edildiğini duyurmasıyla Vietnam, BRICS'in onuncu ortak ülkesi olmuştur (Bernardone, 2025).

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BRICS başkanlığı, kısaltmanın harflerine göre dönüşümlü olarak yürütülür. BRICS Başkanlığı'nı yürüten ülke, kısaltma düzenini takip etmekte olup, dönem her yıl 1 Ocak'ta başlayıp 31 Aralık'ta sona ermektedir. Geçici başkanlıklar, gündemin önceliklerini belirler ve grubun yıllık zirvesini düzenlerler (BRICS Brasil, 2025).

BRICS ortaklığı, siyasi ve güvenlik, ekonomik ve finansal, kültürel ve halklar arası değişim olmak üzere üç temel işbirliği alanına dayanmaktadır (Yücel, 2025).

BRICS gelişmekte olan ülkelerde altyapı ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma projelerinin finansmanını amacıyla çok taraflı Yeni Kalkınma Bankasını (YKB) oluşturmuştur (Hooijmaaijers, 2022; Kocabay, 2024).

Dünya Bankası gibi geleneksel çok taraflı finans kuruluşlarının kapsamadığı gelişmekte olan ülkelerde finansman ihtiyacı ve kalkınma amaçlı uluslararası kredi kapasitesindeki azalmadan kaynaklı sebeplerden dolayı 2014 yılında Fortaleza'da düzenlenen VI. BRICS Zirvesi sırasında, Yeni Kalkınma Bankası kurulmuştur (Latino, 2017; Morozkina, 2015).

Yeni Kalkınma Bankası'nın merkezi Şanghai'da olup, Sao Paulo ve Hindistan'ın Gujarat eyaletlerinde ofisleri bulunmaktadır. Üyelerinin maliye bakanlarından oluşan yönetim kurulu tarafından yönetilir. Yeni Kalkınma Bankası'na BRICS kurucu ülkelerinden biri dönemsel olarak başkanlık yaparken, diğer dört ülkede başkan yardımcısı olarak görev yapmaktadır (BRICS Brasil, 2025; Latino, 2017).

YKB kurucu üyelerinin (Brezilya, Rusya, Hindistan, Çin ve Güney Afrika) yanı sıra, Bangladeş, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Mısır, Uruguay ve Cezayir'in üyeliği kabul edilmiştir (New Development Bank, 2025).

BRIC kısaltması 2001 yılında Goldman Sachs yatırım bankasının bir ekonomisti Jim O'Neill Building Better Global Economic BRIC adlı çalışmasında, Brezilya, Rusya, Hindistan ve Çin'in dinamik ekonomik büyümesini ve bu ülkelerin küresel ekonomideki potansiyellerini vurgulamak için ortaya atılmıştır (Ahmed & Lamisha, 2023; O'Neill, 2001).

BRIC'in ilk toplantısı, 2006 yılında New York'taki Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu aralarında Dışişleri Bakanları düzeyinde olmuş ve ardından BM ve G20 toplantıları kapsamında diğer bakanlar düzeyinde toplantılar gerçekleşmiştir (Hooijmaaijers & Keukeleire, 2016).

BRIC ülkeleri 2008 mali krizinden sonra G20, Uluslararası Para Fonu (IMF) ve Dünya Bankası ile ortak hareket etmeye başlamış ve gelişmekte olan ülkelerin küresel ekonomideki artan göreceli ağırlığını yansıtacak şekilde uluslararası ekonomik ve finansal yönetişimin reformuna yönelik öneriler sunmuştur (Dilek vd., 2018).

Devlet Başkanları Zirvesi'nin ilk toplantısı ise 2009 yılında Rusya'nın Yekaterinburg şehrinde gerçekleşmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2009; Gouvea & Gutierrez, 2023). 2010 yılında Brezilya'nın Brasilia şehrinde düzenlenen ikinci zirvede BRIC'in ilk genişleme politikası doğrultusunda Güney Afrika üyeliğe kabul edilmiştir (Aslanyürek, 2023; BRICS Brasil, 2025; BRICS Brasil 2025, 2010).

2009'da Yekaterinburg' da ve 2010'da Brasilia'da gerçekleşen iki başarılı zirvenin ardından, 2011 yılında Çin'in Sanya şehrinde işbirliğinin genişletilmesi ve küresel yönetim reformunun teşvik edilmesi temalı üçüncü zirve düzenlenmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2011; Oliver, 2013). BRICS grubunun Güney-Güney İşbirliği'nin önemli bir parçası olarak kurulduğu vurgulanmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2011; Wang & Long, 2024).

BRICS'in dördüncü zirvesi 29 Mart 2012 tarihinde Hindistan'ın Yeni Delhi kentinde gerçekleştirildi. "BRICS İstikrar, Güvenlik ve Refah Ortaklığı" temalı zirvede gelişmekte olan ülkelere daha fazla temsil yetkisi sağlamak için uluslararası bir finansal reform çağrısını yineleni (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2012; Kirton vd., 2012). Gıda ve enerji güvenliği ile fiyatlarındaki dalgalanmalar konusunda endişeler vurgulanmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2012; Singh & Dube, 2014). Rusya'yı Dünya Ticaret Örgütü'ne katılımından dolayı tebrik edilmiştir. G20'nin rolünü vurgu yapılmış olup ekonomik açıdan, mevcut çok taraflı ve bölgesel finansal kuruluşların çalışmalarını tamamlayacak altyapı ve kalkınma projelerini finanse etmek amacıyla BRICS Yeni Kalkınma Bankası (NDB) adında bir finansal kuruluş kurulması ihtimali üzerine durulmuştur (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2012; Das, 2012; Kirton vd., 2012).

BRICS'in beşinci zirvesi, 27 Mart 2013 tarihinde Güney Afrika'nın Durban kentinde gerçekleştirildi (Anuoluwapo vd., 2018; BRICS Brasil 2025, 2013). "BRICS ve Afrika: Kalkınma, Entegrasyon ve Sanayileşme için Ortaklık" temalı zirvede, BRICS Yeni Kalkınma Bankası (YKB) ve Muhtemel Rezervler Düzenlemesinin (MRD) kurulması hakkında Yeni Delhi'de görüşülen gündemin devam etmesi damga vurmuştur (Habchi & Martinet, 2014). Afrika kıtasının kalkınmasına ve devlet şirketlerinin yanı sıra küçük ve orta ölçekli şirketlerin önemine değinilmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2013). Uluslararası Para Fonu reformunun yavaş ilerlemesinden endişe duyulduğu dile getirilmiştir. BRICS, Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu'nun Terörizmle Mücadele Küresel Stratejisi'nin uygulanmasına destek vererek, Uluslararası Terörizmle Mücadele Küresel Sözleşmesi hakkındaki müzakerelerin sonuçlandırılması gerekliliğini yinelemiştir (Bawa vd., 2014; BRICS Brasil 2025, 2013).

15 Temmuz 2014 tarihinde Brezilya'nın Fortaleza kentinde gerçekleştirilen "Kapsayıcı Büyüme: Sürdürülebilir Çözümler" temalı altıncı BRICS zirvesinde (Lesage & Zhao, 2020), Şanghay merkezli Yeni Kalkınma Bankası'nın Kurulmasına İlişkin Anlaşma ve Muhtemel Rezervler Düzenlemesinin Kurulmasına İlişkin Anlaşma imzalanmıştır (New Development Bank, 2025). Zirvede, BRICS Bankalararası İşbirliği Mekanizması kapsamında İnovasyon İşbirliği Anlaşması'nı imzalandı; Güvenlik Konseyi de dahil olmak üzere Birleşmiş Milletler 'in kapsamlı bir reforma ihtiyacı olduğunu teyit edildi ve uzayın keşfi ve kullanımının yalnızca barışçıl amaçlara hizmet etmesi gerektiğini yinелendi (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2014).

9 Temmuz 2015 tarihinde Rusya'nın Ufa kentinde gerçekleştirilen "BRICS Ortaklığı- Küresel Kalkınmanın Güçlü Bir Faktörü" temalı yedinci BRICS zirvesinde, BRICS ülkeleri arasında iş birliğini genişletmeyi amaçlayan bir BRICS Ekonomik Ortaklığı stratejisi kabul edilmiştir (Li, 2021). Uluslararası hukuku ve evrensel olarak kabul görmüş uluslararası ilişkiler normlarını ihlal eden tek taraflı askeri müdahaleler ve ekonomik yaptırımlar kınanmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2015). BRICS ülkeleri arasındaki işlemlerde ulusal para birimlerinin kullanımının genişletilmesi potansiyelinden bahsedilmiş olup BRICS ülkeleri arasında karşılıklı ticarete ulusal para birimlerinin daha geniş bir şekilde kullanılmasının uygulanabilirliği görüşülmüştür (Sakwa, 2019).

15-16 Ekim 2016 tarihlerinde Hindistan'ın Goa kentinde gerçekleştirilen "Duyarlı, Kapsayıcı ve Kolektif Çözümler İnşa Etmek" temalı BRICS'in sekizinci zirvesinde, Yeni Kalkınma Bankası'nın ve Muhtemel Rezervler Düzenlemesinin faaliyetleri doğrultusunda yenilenebilir enerji projeleri için ilk YKB kredilerinin onaylanmasını memnuniyetle karşılanmıştır (Faleiro, 2016; Rekha, 2016). Liderler, uluslararası siyasi ve ekonomik

durum, küresel yönetim, terörle mücadele, iklim değişikliği, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri, BRICS iş birliği, halklar arası ve kültürel alışveriş gibi konular hakkında görüştüler. Zirvede Goa Deklarasyonu ve Eylem Planı açıklandı ve üye devletlerin BRICS ittifakını derinleştirme taahhüdü yeniden teyit edildi (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2016). Hindistan'ın BRICS dönem başkanlığı sırasında Kurumsallaşma, entegrasyon, yenilikçilik, süreklilik ve önceki zirve kararlarının uygulanması üzerine odaklanılmıştır (Chaturvedi & Saha, 2019). Güvenlik Konseyi de dahil olmak üzere, gelişmekte olan ülkelerin katılımını destekleyen bir Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) reformunun gerekliliğinin altını çizilmiştir. Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmanın 2030 Gündemi uygulanmasına öncülük edileceği vurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca, BRICS ülkelerinin karşılaştığı zorluklar olan HIV ve tüberkülozla mücadele için önlem almanın önemini vurguladı (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2016).

4 Eylül 2017 tarihinde Çin'in Xiamen kentinde gerçekleştirilen "BRICS: Daha Parlak Bir Gelecek İçin Daha Güçlü Ortaklık" temalı BRICS'in dokuzuncu Zirvesinde BRICS Ekonomik Ortaklık Stratejisi'nin uygulanması yoluyla üyeleri arasındaki iş birliği girişimlerinin başarısını vurgu yapılmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2017).

25-27 Temmuz 2018 tarihleri arasında Güney Afrika'nın Johannesburg kentinde gerçekleştirilen "Afrika'da BRICS: 4. Sanayi Devrimi'nde Kapsayıcı Büyüme ve Paylaşılan Refah için İş Birliği" temalı BRICS'in onuncu zirvesinde çok taraflılık ve küresel yönetim reformu, özellikle de Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi ile ilgili konular ele alınmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2018). Toplantıda, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve kadın hakları, genç nüfusun gelişimi, istihdam ve işin geleceği, kentleşme ve göç konuları da görüşülmüştür (İstikbal vd., 2019).

14 Kasım 2019 tarihinde Brezilya'nın Brasilia kentinde gerçekleştirilen "BRICS: Yenilikçi Bir Gelecek İçin Ekonomik Büyüme" temalı on birinci BRICS zirvesinde, küresel yönetim reformuna yönelik geleneksel çağrı ve grup ülkeleri arasında ticaret ve yatırımın güçlendirilmesi gerekliliği vurgulanmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2019). Zirvede, Birleşmiş Milletler, Dünya Ticaret Örgütü (DTÖ) ve IMF gibi çok taraflı kurumların daha kapsayıcı, demokratik ve temsili hale getirilmesi için güçlendirilmesi ve reform yapılmasının aciliyetinden bahsedilmiştir (Linderoth, 2024). Üye devletlerin Paris Anlaşması ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmanın 2030 Gündemi uygulanmasına olan bağlılıkları vurgulanmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2019).

On ikinci BRICS Zirvesi 17 Kasım 2020 tarihinde Rusya'nın Saint Petersburg kentinde çevrimiçi olarak, "Küresel İstikrar, Paylaşılan Güvenlik ve Yenilikçi Büyüme için BRICS Ortaklığı" temasıyla gerçekleştirildi (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2020). Zirvede Toplantıda, kapsayıcı bir ekonomik toparlanma, halk sağlığı alanında iş birliği ve aşı geliştirme konularına odaklanılarak COVID-19 pandemisinin zorlukları ele alınmış olup Koronavirüs pandemisiyle mücadele için yaygın aşılama ihtiyacı kabul edilmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2020).

9 Eylül 2021 tarihinde Hindistan başkanlığında çevrimiçi olarak gerçekleştirilen "BRICS: Süreklilik, Konsolidasyon ve Uzlaşma için BRICS İçi İş Birliği" temalı On Üçüncü BRICS Zirvesinde, BRICS Uzaktan Algılama Uydu Takımıyıldızı İşbirliği Anlaşması, BRICS Gümrük Konularında Karşılıklı İdari Yardım Anlaşması, Terörle Mücadele Eylem Planı, 2021-2024 Tarımsal İşbirliği Eylem Planı, 2021-2024 İnovasyon Alanında İşbirliği Eylem Planı ve BRICS Yeşil Turizm İttifakı kabul edilmiştir (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2021).

23-24 Haziran 2022 tarihlerinde Çin'in başkanlığında çevrimiçi olarak gerçekleştirilen "Yüksek Kaliteli BRICS Ortaklığını Teşvik Etmek, Küresel Kalkınma İçin Yeni Bir Dönemi Başlatmak" temalı on dördüncü BRICS Zirvesinde küresel krizler karşısında gıda ve enerji güvenliğinin geliştirilmesine, üye ülkeler arasındaki farklılık ve anlaşmazlıkların diyalog ve istişare yoluyla barışçıl çözümüne vurgu yapılmıştır (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2022).

22-24 Ağustos 2023 tarihleri arasında Güney Afrika'nın Johannesburg kentinde gerçekleştirilen "BRICS ve Afrika: Karşılıklı Hızlandırılmış Büyüme, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma ve Kapsayıcı Çok Taraflılık için Ortaklık" temalı on beşinci BRICS Zirvesinde, Birleşmiş Milletler'in (BM) merkezinde olduğu kapsayıcı çok taraflılığa ve BM Şartı ilkelerini izleyerek uluslararası hukuk normlarının savunulmasına olan bağlılıklarını; Uluslararası örgütlerde ve çok taraflı forumlarda gelişmekte olan piyasaların ve ülkelerin daha fazla temsil edilmesinin gerekliliğini; Küresel yönetim reformu ve iklim güvenliği ile enerji geçişinde iş birliğinin gerekliliğini vurgulanmıştır (University of Toronto, 2023).

22-24 Ekim 2024 tarihleri arasında Rusya'nın Kazan kentinde gerçekleştirilen "Adil Küresel Kalkınma ve Güvenlik için Çok Taraflılığın Güçlendirilmesi" temalı on altıncı BRICS Zirvesinde BRICS'in beş yeni üyesiyle (Suudi Arabistan, Mısır, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Etiyopya ve İran) daha adil ve demokratik bir dünya düzenini desteklemek için çok taraflılığın güçlendirilmesini; küresel ve bölgesel istikrar ve güvenliği teşvik etmek için iş birliğinin artırılmasını; adil bir küresel kalkınma için ekonomik ve finansal iş birliğinin teşvik edilmesini; ve sosyal ve ekonomik kalkınmayı desteklemek için halk değişiminin yoğunlaştırılmasını savunulmuştur (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2024).

6-7 Temmuz 2025 tarihleri arasında Brezilya'nın Rio de Janeiro kentinde gerçekleştirilen "Daha Kapsayıcı ve Sürdürülebilir Bir Yönetim İçin Küresel Güney İşbirliğinin Güçlendirilmesi" temalı on yedinci BRICS zirvesinde 17 yıllık BRICS zirveleri minvalinde siyasi ve güvenlik, ekonomik ve finansal, kültürel ve halklar arası iş birliği olmak üzere üç temel sütun altında genişletildiği dile getirilmiştir (University of Toronto, 2025).

Bu çalışmada çeşitli sosyo-ekonomik değişkenler (Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası, Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar, Kişi Başı Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası, Toplam İşsizlik Oranı, İnsani Gelişim İndeksi, Enflasyon, Kadın İşgücü) bağlamında BRICS kurucu ülkeleri seçili Avrupa ülkeleri ve ABD ile karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmiştir.

2. ÇEŞİTLİ SOSYO-EKONOMİK DEĞİŞKENLER

Bu bölümde; Ulusal para birimi, Başkent, Yıl ortası nüfusu, Nüfus yoğunluğu ve Yüzölçümü değişkenlerinden yararlanılarak üye ülkeler hakkında bilgi verilmiş ve sonrasında GSYHİ, Kişi Başı GSYHİ, Toplam İşsizlik Oranı, İnsani Gelişim İndeksi, doğrudan yabancı yatırımlar, enflasyon ve kadınların işgücüne katılım oranı vasıtasıyla da üye ülkelere ait çeşitli sosyo-ekonomik değişkenleri değerlendirilmiştir.

Tablo 1’de. BRICS kurucu ülkelerine ait özet bilgiler sunulmuştur.

Tablo 1. BRICS Kurucu Ülkelerine Ait Özet Bilgiler

	Ulusal para birimi	Başkent	Yıl ortası nüfusu (Milyon kişi)	Nüfus yoğunluğu (Kilometrekare başına kişi)	Yüzölçümü (1.000 km ²)
Brezilya	Real-R\$	Brasilia	212,60	25,00	8.510,00
Rusya	Rouble-Rub	Moscow	146,10	8,50	17.234,00
Hindistan	Rupee-₹	New Delhi	1.404,90	427,40	3.287,00
Çin	Renminbi- RMB	Beijing	1.409,00	146,70	9.600,00
Güney Afrika	Rand-ZAR	Pretoria	63,00	51,60	1.221,00
Ortalama			647,12	131,84	7.970,40
Minimum			63,00	8,50	1.221,00
Maksimum			1.409,00	427,40	17.234,00

Kaynak: (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2025)

Tablo 1'e göre; BRICS kurucu ülkelerin ortalama yıl ortası nüfusu (milyon kişi) 647,12 iken en düşük nüfusa sahip ülke 63,00 ile Güney Afrika'nın, en yüksek nüfusa sahip ülkenin ise 1.409,00 ile Çin'in olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin ortalama Nüfus yoğunluğu (kilometrekare başına kişi) 131,84 iken en düşük nüfus yoğunluğuna sahip ülke 8,50 ile Rusya'nın, en yüksek nüfus yoğunluğuna sahip ülkenin ise 427,40 ile Hindistan'ın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin ortalama Yüzölçümü (1.000 km²) 7.970,00 iken en düşük Yüzölçümüne sahip ülke 1.221,00 ile Güney Afrika'nın, en yüksek Yüzölçümüne sahip ülkenin ise 17.234,00 ile Rusya'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

Tablo 2. Üye Ülkelere Ait Çeşitli Sosyo-Ekonomik Değişkenler

Ülkeler	GSYHİ (yıllık Büyüme %)	Kişi Başı GSYHİ (PPP-Uluslararası Dolar-1000s)	Toplam İşsizlik Oranı (Toplam İşgücü %)	İnsani Gelişim İndeksi	Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar (Net Gelen Akış, GSYHİ %)	Enflasyon (%)	Kadın İşgücü (Toplam İşgücü Oranı %)
Brezilya	2,9	20	9,2	0,786	3,9	4,6	43,3
Rusya	3,6	35,4	3,9	0,832	2,9	5,9	48,9
Hindistan	7,8	9,3	4,8	0,685	1,5	5,4	28,7
Çin	5,2	23,3	5,0	0,797	1,0	0,2	45,1
Güney Afrika	0,6	16,1	28,8	0,741	2,3	5,9	47,0
Ortalama	4,02	20,82	10,34	0,7682	2,32	4,4	42,6
Minimum	0,6	9,3	3,9	0,685	1	0,2	28,7
Maksimum	7,8	35,4	28,8	0,832	3,9	5,9	48,9

Kaynak: (BRICS Brasil 2025, 2025; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2025)

Tablo 2'ye göre; BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası (GSYHİ) (Yıllık Büyüme %) 4,02 iken en düşük GSYHİ sahip ülkenin 0,6 ile Güney Afrika'nın, en yüksek GSYHİ sahip ülkenin ise 7,8 ile Hindistan'ın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Kişi Başı Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası (PPP-Uluslararası Dolar-1000s) 20,82 iken en düşük Kişi Başı GSYHİ sahip ülkenin 9,3 ile Hindistan'ın, en yüksek Kişi Başı GSYHİ sahip ülkenin ise 35,4 ile Rusya'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Toplam İşsizlik Oranı (Toplam İşgücü %) 10,34 iken en düşük Toplam İşsizlik Oranına sahip ülkenin 3,9 ile Rusya'nın, en yüksek Toplam İşsizlik Oranına sahip ülkenin ise 28,8 ile Güney Afrika'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin İnsani Gelişim İndeksi 0,7682 iken en düşük İnsani Gelişim İndeksine sahip ülkenin 0,685 ile Hindistan'ın, en yüksek İnsani Gelişim İndeksine sahip ülkenin ise 0,832 ile Rusya'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar (Net Gelen Akış, GSYHİ %) 2,32 iken en düşük Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlara sahip ülkenin 1,0 ile Çin'in, en yüksek Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlara sahip ülkenin ise 3,9 ile Brezilya'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Enflasyon (%) 4,4 iken en düşük Enflasyona sahip ülkenin 0,2 ile Çin'in, en yüksek Enflasyona sahip ülkenin ise 5,9 ile Güney Afrika'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Kadın İşgücü (Toplam İşgücü Oranı %) 42,6 iken en düşük Kadın İşgücüne sahip ülkenin 28,7 ile Çin'in, en yüksek Kadın İşgücüne sahip ülkenin ise 48,9 ile Güney Afrika'nın olduğu görülmüştür.

3. TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin içinde en fazla nüfusa sahip olan ülkenin Çin olduğu, en yüksek nüfus yoğunluğuna sahip ülkenin Hindistan olduğu ve en yüksek Yüzölçümüne sahip ülkenin Rusya Federasyonu olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası (GSYHİ) (Yıllık Büyüme %) 4,02 iken aynı değişken Amerika Birleşik Devletleri için 1,8 İngiltere için 0,0 Fransa için 0,8 ve Almanya için 0,2 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin GSYHİ değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin ilerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025b).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Kişi Başı Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası (PPP-Uluslararası Dolar-1000s) 20,82 iken aynı değişken ABD için 85,809.9; İngiltere için 60,620.4; Fransa için 61,321.7 ve Almanya için 72,300.1 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin Kişi Başı Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük

ekonomilerinin gerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025c).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Toplam İşsizlik Oranı (Toplam İşgücü %) 10,34 iken ABD için 3,6; İngiltere için 4,0; Fransa için 7,3 ve Almanya için 3,1 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin Toplam İşsizlik Oranı değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin gerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025f).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin İnsani Gelişim İndeksi 0,7682 iken ABD için 0,938; İngiltere için 0,946; Fransa için 0,920 ve Almanya için 0,959 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin İnsani Gelişim İndeksi değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin gerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (UNDP, 2023).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar (Net Gelen Akış, GSYHİ %) 2,32 iken ABD için 1,3; İngiltere için 0,1; Fransa için 1,8 ve Almanya için 1,0 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin ilerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025a)

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Enflasyon (%) 4,4 iken ABD için 4,1; İngiltere için 6,8; Fransa için 4,9 ve Almanya için 5,9 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin Enflasyon değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin gerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025d).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerin Kadın İşgücü (Toplam İşgücü Oranı %) 42,6 iken ABD için 45,6; İngiltere için 47,5; Fransa için 48,5 ve Almanya için 46,5 olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu durumda BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin Enflasyon değişkeni açısından ABD ve Avrupa'nın büyük ekonomilerinin gerisinde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir (World Bank, 2025e).

BRICS kurucu ülkelerinin çalışma kapsamında kullanılan yedi değişkenin iki tanesinde (Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası, Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar) ABD ile seçili Avrupa ülkelerinin ilerisinde geri kalan değişkenlerde (Kişi Başı Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasılası, Toplam İşsizlik Oranı, İnsani Gelişim İndeksi, Enflasyon, Kadın İşgücü) ise gerisinde olduğu görülmektedir.

BRICS'in Gayri Safi Yurt İçi Hasıla ve Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar konusunda ileride olması ülkelerin büyüme potansiyelini ve küresel sermaye çekme kapasitelerini ortaya koymaktadır. Diğer değişkenlerde geride kalması makroekonomik büyüklükler açısından önemli bir ağırlığa sahip olmasına karşın, kalkınmanın niteliksel boyutlarında gelişmiş ülkelerle arasındaki açığın devam ettiğini göstermektedir.

BRICS ülkeleri kadınların işgücü piyasasına katılımını artıracak politikalar geliştirmesi, enflasyonun kontrol altına alınması sağlanmalı, insani gelişim ve sosyal refah göstergelerini düzeltmek için eğitim, sağlık ve istihdam alanlarında yapısal reformlara yönelmeleri önermelidir.

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IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF ALLIANCE RELATIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the position of the Resistance Axis in the alliance paradigm of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The primary purpose of this study is to reveal the true nature of Iran's Axis of Resistance policy and its importance in the alliance paradigm. The Resistance Axis, on the other hand, has a paradigm-determining position in terms of the Islamic Republic of Iran's domestic and foreign policy, alliance relations, and power struggle. In this sense, the Axis of Resistance is not an ordinary foreign policy output for the Islamic Republic of Iran but rather a determinant of the fundamental behaviour patterns of Iran. In this respect, grasping the true nature of the Axis of Resistance is a prerequisite for understanding Iran's alliance relations. Another point emphasized in the study is that the studies that deal with or touch on Iran's alliance relations ignore the real nature of the Axis of Resistance and its dominant position in Iran's domestic and foreign policy.

Thus, studies on post-revolution Iranian foreign policy and its alliance paradigm swing between pragmatism and

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idealism, or national interest and revolutionary ideology, like the clock's pendulum. When the studies on Iran's foreign policy are examined, there are four main perspectives on the analysis of Iranian foreign policy and alliance paradigm: realist, idealist, structuralist and discursive. (Garayag Zandi,2008). In this context, the studies that emphasize material elements point out that Iran behaves like a typical medium-sized state and conducts foreign policy within the traditional understanding of the security framework. This perspective entails the traditional principle of balance of power and the model of rational behaviour. Other approaches to Iranian foreign policy indicate that Iran pursues a sectarian or ideological policy. However, Iran's foreign policy and alliance paradigm are more complex than these two levels. The struggle of various factions and leaders in the Islamic Republic of Iran, political interests, and ideological perspectives are shaped by the dynamics of the current international system and internal conditions. Iran did not adopt a purely idealist or realist policy. As Ramazani states, Iranian foreign policy is neither linear nor dialectical (Al-Dosari,2015:28). It is shaped on a variable ground with different dynamics. This study uses the ontological security approach to help overcome the complicated and complex situation in Iran's foreign policy analysis. The ontological security approach is aimed to present a more flexible and inclusive approach beyond the pragmatism/idealism or rationalist/ideological opposition in Iranian foreign policy and, in this way, to present a better perspective on Iranian foreign policy and alliance relations. In this context, it was emphasized that the search for ontological security is as important to Iran as physical security and material interests and that the concept of ontological security should be considered in addition to material elements and ideological factors in the paradigm of Iranian foreign policy and the nature of alliance relations.

2. THE CONCEPT OF ALLIANCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

Morgenthau, one of the most important representatives of classical realism, pointed out that states pursued national interests defined within the framework of power and indicated that alliances between states are formed within the framework of selfish interests and behaviours of states (Morgenthau,1948:13). According to Morgenthau's approach, alliances, which are a reflection of the power struggle, are devoid of universal moral values or normative elements and are formed to preserve the physical existence of states and maximize their selfish interests. By revising classical realism and presenting a systemic model, Kenneth Waltz pointed to the phenomena of anarchy and balance of power as the main driving forces of alliances. In this sense, Waltz states that states will seek to balance their military and economic capabilities in the international system and that alliances will evolve in this context (Waltz,2015:148-152). Stephen Walt, another influential proponent of neorealism, argues that contrary to Kenneth Waltz's understanding of the balance of power, states will be oriented toward threat rather than power. Walt defines alliances as a "formal or informal arrangement of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states". He explains that the alliance behaviour of states is determined by the threat that they perceive from other states (Walt,1987:13). According to Mearsheimer, another vital proponent of the neorealist approach, alliances possess some offensive capabilities as a response to the aggressive behaviour of other states to maximize power and eliminate threats (Golmohammadi,2020:111). Neoclassical realists such as Randall Shuler, on the other hand, point out that neorealist approaches, which compare states to billiard balls and do not take internal dynamics into account, are insufficient to understand the

formation of alliances. In this manner, some neoclassical realists have introduced a new doctrine called “balance of interests” into the theoretical literature on alliances. According to the balance of interests, states try to strike a balance according to the advantages and interests of existing governments.

Generally, the notions of security and alliance are treated in realistic approaches that consider the “high politics” issues about states. Liberalism, another critical theory in international relations, argues that it is wrong to bring down security and alliance formations to power and threat. In the liberal approach, common economic interests or shared institutions are predicted to shape the foundations of alliances between states. In Democratic Peace Theory, for example, it is assumed that war is less likely to occur between states with a democratic regime. Therefore, alliances between such actors are easier to form. In the neoliberal approach, it is pointed out that interdependence or international institutional structures will be the main driving force for alliances (Yanık,2015:35-55).

In the English School, often viewed as a middle ground between liberalism and realism, the importance of anarchy is recognized, but the notion of international society is given special significance (Cingöz,2022:92-95). According to the English School, common interests and common values between states lead to the formation of an international community, and this process determines the direction of alliances (Bull,2002:13). Based upon this, the degree of common interests and common values will shape the formation of alliances between states.

On the other hand, social constructivism draws attention to the fact that the emphasis on material elements needs to be increased to explain the nature of the international system and alliances. In this regard, the social constructivist perspective argues that alliances are formed within the framework of

intellectual factors such as identity. For example, in discussing the relationship between the United States (US) and the United Kingdom and between the US and North Korea, Wendt poses the question of why the United Kingdom, which has greater military power and is closer to the US, is an ally of the US, and why North Korea, which is materially less of a threat, is a significant threat to the US. Arguing that traditional theoretical approaches fall behind in giving sufficiently explanatory and convincing answers to this question, Wendt explains that the US and the UK are allies. At the same time, North Korea is the enemy of the concept of identity, noting that identity is a crucial factor in alliance relations (Wendt,2016).

In summary, traditional approaches relate the political action of states to issues of power, interests, and security. At the same time, they address the issue of security with the dynamics of physical security and the balance of power. On the other hand, Wendt's systemic constructivist approach draws attention to the meaning and role of identities. However, in contrast to the traditional approaches, Alexander Wendt correctly grasped the importance of identity by preferring to look at events more systematically rather than examining the psychosocial facts and domestic dynamics in the background of the identity phenomenon. Moreover, along with realism and liberalism, a state-centric perspective is also prevalent in social constructionism, and non-state actors are not considered an essential component of alliances.

The mainstream approaches mentioned above are most commonly used in studies dealing with alliance relations among Middle Eastern countries, particularly Iran. However, the Middle East's political trends and power struggles are only partially consistent with the mainstream theoretical assumptions. Main approaches generally treat the nature of alliances through the struggle of states in the West, particularly competition between

great powers. In the Middle East, however, medium-sized states dominate, and non-state actors are typical. Moreover, the Middle East region shows that issues such as legitimacy, regime security, ideology, emotional motives, and facts about identity and geopolitics are interwoven. In this sense, the nature of alliance formation and security concepts in Middle Eastern countries have significance beyond what mainstream approaches draw attention to. This is because the heterogeneous structure of the Middle East, the immaturity or late maturity of nation-building processes, and the unilateral interventions of the great powers have made the region an island of constant crisis and instability. Thus, Middle Eastern states have become dependent on a Hobbesian anarchic structure in which regime security concerns, geopolitical competition, and intellectual struggle are intertwined (Golmohammadi,2020:106-115).

Moreover, the structural changes brought about by Iran as a new actor after the 1979 revolution are not easily understood through traditional approaches. Similar to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 had profound effects that went beyond the borders and material possibilities of the country and were dominated by intellectual factors. In this regard, the post-revolution Iranian leadership viewed the international system as a theatre of action and offense rather than seeing the international system only through material facts. In the words of Mesbahi, “In the post-revolution period, Iran evolved into an actor destined to ignore systemic calculations of power” (Mesbahi,2011:14). Thus, nonmaterial factors took a central position in post-revolution Iranian foreign policy and alliance relations (Akbarzadeh,2016:129). This went so far that Iran, in the post-revolution period, often engaged in behaviours that did not conform to the principle of balance of power and could even be seen as contrary to its physical security to build its revolutionary Islamic identity, maintain its legitimacy, and ensure

the security of the regime. In this sense, to understand Iranian foreign policy and alliance behaviour, domestic identity politics, regime security, legitimacy problems, and emotional relations, as well as systemic factors, must be taken into account (Firoozabadi,2011:55). The ontological security approach, on the other hand, provides a unique perspective that allows all these different dynamics to be assessed together. In this study, the ontological security approach was used to seek an answer to the question of “How does Iran’s behavior towards alliance formation shape?”.

Classical security studies in international relations have an approach that focuses on the state and emphasizes physical security. In this sense, the primary purpose of the state in foreign policy is to survive, that is, to maintain its physical security. On the other hand, the ontological security approach focuses on stability and continuity in forms of existence, unlike physical security (Kanat and Aktel,2019). Also, the ontological security approach intersects with social constructivism in one respect and offers different perspectives by completing the missing points of social constructivism (Flockhart,2016).

The concept of ontological security was coined initially by Laing, who conducted important studies on psychology. Laing argues that ontological security refers to "the absence of anxieties and dangers and, accordingly, the identity and autonomy are never threatened" (Laing,1960:39-40). Ontological insecurity refers to situations in which identity and autonomy are questioned. According to Laing, the anxiety of losing the self, that is ontological insecurity can even overcome the urge for physical security. Antony Giddens, who deems Laing's concept of ontological security remarkable, further developed this concept and applied it to sociology. Giddens expressed ontological security as "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of their

surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens,1990:92). Giddens argues that to be ontologically secure is to possess on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness, ‘answers’ to fundamental existential questions (Giddens,1990:71-80).

The concept of ontological security discussed by Giddens and Laing through the individual was transferred to the level of social groups and states by international relations representatives using similar assumptions and concepts. In this context, Jennifer Mitzen defined ontological security as "the feeling of confidence in having a stable identity". She showed in her studies that states' adherence to strict routines is closely related to the need for ontological security. (Mitzen and Larson,2017:3). Another important name, Brent Steele, defined physical security as “security as survival” and ontological security as “security as being”. Steele also reviewed the rationality of the state and the primacy of physical security, which are the assumptions of traditional theories, and showed that concern for ontological security could lead states to act irrationally (Steele, 2008).

3. THE ORIGIN OF THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE

The Axis of Resistance is the most prominent reflection of Iran's post-revolutionary Hobbesian anarchic structure. In short, the Axis of Resistance refers to a regional coalition formed by gathering governmental and non-governmental actors against the US and Israel (Cingöz, 2024). The Axis of Resistance formed under the leadership of Iran consists of actors such as Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, as well as various groups within the body of the Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq, and various Resistance Movements in Yemen, Ansarullah, Bahrain, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

In the emergence of the Axis of Resistance, the ontological meaning given to the USA and Israel has an important place. The USA, which is an expansionist, hegemonic, and arrogant power according to Iran's post-revolutionary self-narrative, opposes Iran's desire for independence and a fair role in the international community (Amanat, 2017). Israel, on the other hand, was considered by the Iranian leadership as the fifty-first state of the USA and the centre of capitalist domination in the region. Iran has attached great importance to policies such as the fight against Zionism and support for the Palestinian cause under its mission to fight against the cruel and arrogant forces in the region and their puppets (Adib-Moghaddam, 2021: 193). Iran's role in the axis of the Palestinian issue is directly related to the identity principles of the regime beyond geopolitical concerns. After the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini declared that "supporting the Palestinian people is an ideological, creed and political duty of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This principled attitude was maintained during the reign of his successor, Khamenei. For the Islamic Republic, challenging the state of Israel is the core mission of the Islamic Republic and defines its identity (Hashempour, Haghighi and Zarei, 2021: 134).

Thus, in the emergence of the Axis of Resistance and geopolitical factors, the Islamic Republic of Iran's search for ontological security played a prominent role. In this respect, the elemental plane of the Axis of Resistance under the leadership of Iran has been shaped by three main themes: its historical legacy, including traumas and socio-political developments, the principle of independence, and its concerns for domestic politics. With the Axis of Resistance, which has become an arena where routines reflecting its revolutionary Islamic identity are produced and maintained, Iran wants to challenge the American order in the region, fight Israel, support its allies, and gain influence and prestige in its competition with regional powers. In addition,

through the Axis of Resistance, the Iranian leadership provides feelings such as distinctiveness and uniqueness and an essential basis for maintaining its legitimacy (Reza ve Peyveste,2017).

Although the term “Axis of Resistance” was used for the first time in 2002 as a response to Bush's “Axis of Evil” statement, it is necessary to look for the origin of this alliance in the 1979 Revolution. While Iran's identity underwent a radical change and transformation after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a new biographical narrative was adopted, and Iran's interests and power struggle paradigm were shaped within the framework of its new narrative. The Islamic Republic embellished its new biographical narrative with elements of Resistance, such as self-sufficiency, a demand for independence, a just regional role, and respect. In this respect, Iran has brought forward the concept of strategic loneliness and the paradigm of Resistance through discourses such as not being dependent on or dependent on great power and anti-imperialism in its revolutionary narrative. In order to compensate for its strategic isolation and to emphasize its opposition to hegemony, the Islamic Republic has positioned itself as the centre of the Resistance Culture through the Shiite narratives of dispossession and Ashura culture. In this way, the Iranian leadership, which has the mission of being the core country of Islamic civilization, has portrayed Iran as a defender of Muslim nations, a supporter of the oppressed, and an anti-hegemonic actor struggling against arrogant powers. Ultimately, Iran was dragged into a revisionist foreign policy, leading to its revolutionary Islamic identity's strategic loneliness and emotional foundations (Mesbahi,2011). In this respect, it would be more accurate to see Iran's relations with the Axis of Resistance as a “sacred alliance” that serves a superior purpose of its revolutionary Islamic identity and strategic loneliness beyond a purely *raison d'État* (National Interest) relationship.

Another important reason why the Islamic Republic has maintained its Resistance Axis for decades is the emotional obligations it feels attached to. Two critical emotional dimensions came to the fore in the Axis of Resistance that emerged concerning the ontological security quest of the Islamic Republic after the revolution. The first emotional dimension of the Resistance Narrative is based on the discourse of anti-hegemony. Anger and resentment towards arrogant powers came together with a feeling of pain embedded in the common Shiite historical experience and İran history, thus creating opposition to hegemony. According to the Iranian leadership, world politics is shaped by a historical conflict between the weakened and deprived and the oppressors, who express imperialist and arrogant powers. In this historical encounter, Iran, with a normative obligation, has positioned itself as the leader of the oppressed, who oppose Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, try to correct the marginal position of the Shiites, and stand against Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, who benefit from the current order, and their ultimate supporters, the USA (Firoozabadi,2011). Another emotional dimension of revolutionary Islamic identity is empathy and solidarity with marginalized Shiites and anti-Western actors. The Iranian leadership has emphasized discourses such as independence, freedom, justice, and the search for rights through emotions such as empathy and solidarity (Gahferci and Baker,2010:81).

The Resistance Narrative, embedded in the individual and collective Iranian consciousness and consciously brought to the fore after the revolution, had significant consequences for Iran's foreign policy image. Cultures of distrust and routinized hostility relations have led to a vicious circle between the West and Iran, and the ontological and geopolitical dichotomy between the parties has deepened. Subsequently, Iran has been described by the US and Israel as a “rogue state”, destabilizing the Middle East,

supporting terrorist groups, pursuing weapons of mass destruction, and violating human rights. This reductionist approach, which portrays the Islamic Republic as uniquely bad, has eroded Iran's legitimacy in the international community and highlighted feelings of anxiety and insecurity within the Iranian leadership. In this vein, the Iranian leadership is convinced that the US and its allies do not want to accept Iran's revolutionary Islamic form of government, independence, sovereign state position, and regional role. The view adopted by the order in Iran is that the USA and the West are trying to destabilize Iran, undermine its interests, and even seek ways to overthrow the regime through policies such as the Axis of Evil and maximum pressure or soft warfare. In this respect, it is possible to frequently come across statements such as the US and the West following policies that increase the instability and conflict in the region, ignoring Iran's interests and that they cannot be trusted, in the discourses of many Iranian politicians as well as the Leader Khamenei (Güler,2021).

Iran first faced sanctions after the Embassy Raid due to the resistance paradigm. It was exposed to new sanctions due to its support for the Resistance Axis and nuclear activities. However, such pressures could not make Iran take a step back. Iran further developed its relations with the actors of the Axis of Resistance to emphasize its revolutionary Islamic identity, increase its strategic depth, and show that it does not bow to the USA. The further acceleration of globalization and modernization in the 1990s and 2000s marked a new turning point for Iran, where the debate on national identity could no longer be suppressed. After this period, Iran's existential concerns for the stability of its self-identity and systemic conditions became evident. In this respect, the Islamic Republic has increased its influence and influence in regions such as Palestine and Lebanon

by emphasizing the Resistance paradigm in the 2000s (Partovi and Branch,2018).

Another vital breaking point for Iran's resistance paradigm was the 2009 elections. With the announcement that Ahmadinejad won the 2009 elections, a significant part of the opposition did not accept the results and started to protest. In these demonstrations, some opposition went beyond cancelling the elections and targeted the regime's red lines in domestic and foreign policy. In the street demonstrations that lasted for months, criticism of the regime's and the constitution's basic principles was voiced, and the process shocked Iranian decision-makers (Bayat,2018). In other words, Iranian decision-makers and conservatives evaluated these months-long protest demonstrations as a conspiracy of foreign states as a new rebellion by the Western-backed color revolutions (Muhammedî and Mesud,2012). However, as a result, the slogans chanted in the events of 2009 and the current process have shaken the stability of the revolutionary Islamic identity of the Islamic Republic and created a gap between a vital part of the society and order. This issue, which Khamenei describes as a soft war targeting hearts and minds, has become one of Iran's main ontological security concerns. The opposition movement that emerged after the 2009 elections have been the clearest indicator that Iran's internal identity, namely its self, has changed significantly with globalization, democratization waves, and internal transformations. First, they demanded the adoption of the Iranian policy orientation, which was based on the resistance paradigm, and the revision of the Velayet-e Mutlaqe Faqih system (Herrington,2011:5-6).

After the events of 2009, the Iranian leadership associated the Narrative of Resistance with the Fitna Movement, and the place of the Resistance paradigm in domestic and foreign policy became more evident to preserve its revolutionary Islamic

identity. For example, the Quds Force became a separate autonomous unit in 2009, and Qassem Soleimani was promoted to Major General and settled in a more autonomous and powerful position. Another example in this regard is the Resistance Front, which emerged under the leadership of Ayatollah Misbah Yâzdi in Iranian domestic politics as a reaction to the 2009 events. Considering the 2009 protests as a heretical movement and emerging as a reaction to this situation, the Resistance Front advocates complete loyalty to the authority of Velayat-e Faqih and revolutionary principles. In the process, the Resistance Front has increased its influence in foreign policy and domestic politics and has become one of the most important supporters of the Resistance Axis. Another example is that the Iranian leadership declared the Resistance Economy Doctrine in 2014 and tried to adapt the resistance paradigm to the economic field. The main objectives of the Resistance Economy doctrine were to protect the principles and promises of the Revolution, to cope with international embargoes, and to compete with the global economy (Farsnews,2018).

Another breaking point that increased the visibility of the Resistance Axis in Iranian foreign policy was the Arab Spring uprisings. After the Arab Spring uprisings, sectarian polarization has increased in the region, political systems very different from what Iran expected have been established, and civil disobedience actions that have the potential to revive the Green Movement have begun to increase. Although the Iranian leadership initially welcomed these uprisings by describing them as Islamic Awakening, they started to worry after the uprisings spread to Syria. The spread of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 to Syria and the subsequent events brought a new ontological pressure process that deepened Iran's internal concerns. In this context, Iran has decided to support the Assad regime militarily and economically until the end of the crisis in Syria. Iran, which has

special relations with Syria, interpreted the uprising in Syria as an existential threat to its survival. Indeed, states focused on ontological security seeking, such as Iran, are motivated to stabilize their private relations in situations that create ontological pressure and threaten their identity. These states may act to protect their private relations even if the material and normative incentives are weak or vague, so much so that Iran has attributed meaning to the Syrian crisis far beyond geopolitical and strategic calculations. The Iranian leadership interpreted the crisis in Syria as a continuation of the 2009 events, a conspiracy designed by the West and the Zionist regime to destroy the Axis of Resistance. The supporters of Nezam considered the crisis in Syria turning into a civil war and the subsequent possibility of Assad's overthrow as an existential threat threatening the Axis of Resistance. The Iranian leadership was concerned that if the Assad administration, described as the “golden ring of the Resistance Axis,” collapsed, it would create a domino effect. Other Axis of Resistance actors in the region will also be harmed, and even confusion will arise within Iran (Elhani,2019). So much so that Hujjat al-Islam Mehdi Taeb, the head of Ammar Strategic Base, an organization established to promote “soft war tools,” stated that the strategic importance of Syria exceeds the strategic importance of the Khuzestan province (Rezaei,2019:142). Thus, despite all its military and political costs, Iran supported the Assad government beyond its traditional alliance relations. So much so that in this process, Syria ceased to be a “stepping stone” for Iran and became a virtual regional extension of Iran, called “35. the province”. During the crisis in Syria, Iran sent other actors affiliated with the Resistance Axis to the Syrian field. After Russia supported Assad, the civil war in Syria changed in favour of Assad and his allies. Meanwhile, the visibility of the Axis of Resistance peaked with the establishment of the Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq in response to the rise of Daesh.

On the other hand, the increased visibility of the Axis of Resistance, which is associated with the Shiite Crescent, has led to the riveting of an anti-Iran bloc. Having experienced regional crises in Yemen, Bahrain, and Qatar and struggling with the aftershocks of the Arab Spring uprisings, Saudi Arabia took action to lead an anti-Iran Sunni bloc (İzol and Cingöz, 2022). In this context, Saudi Arabia and some GCC countries have increased their support for anti-Iranian groups in Syria, Iraq, and other regions (Doster,2013). Despite Obama's reluctance to get too involved in the Middle East and the Nuclear Agreement signed in 2015 and entered into force in 2016, tensions in the Middle East have not subsided. In this process, despite the Nuclear Agreement climate and Rouhani's desire for normalization, Khamenei and other Iranian decision-makers avoided making concessions on the Axis of Resistance policy. The Iranian leadership stated that there is no normalization of relations with the USA to prevent an ontological disharmony and that the anti-Israel Axis of Resistance will maintain its influence. In this respect, the Revolutionary Guards continued their missile tests and had full support from the Guide. For example, when the Revolutionary Guards displayed a missile decorated with "Israel must be wiped off the map" at the parade, they complained to the Spiritual Guide Khamenei but could not find a solution (Mehrhahbergozari,2014).

By 2017-2018, Iran's influence in the Middle East expanded significantly. Assad, one of Iran's most important allies, made significant gains in Syria, and Hezbollah expanded its military inventory and influence. The Nuclear Agreement, which Khamenei described as a "heroic sacrifice", was touted as a diplomatic success on top of all these gains. However, Iran's gains in this process were nothing more than a Pyrrhic victory (Juneau,2020). The rise in Iran's policies, seen as more expansionist, is a reaction to Iran's ontological disharmony and

anxieties. Regional expansionism allows for a legitimating narrative in which regime leaders can fix their symbolic power and overcome conflicting identities, norms, and values.

On the other hand, although Iran's rivals suffered significant losses in the region, the Axis of Resistance policy brought high political and economic costs for Iran. These foreign policy behaviours of Iran have also deepened the region's ontological and geopolitical security dilemma. The fact that Iran, which already has economic problems, allocates resources to Syria, Lebanon, and other regions have also increased the state's financial burden. Moreover, the nuclear agreement remained sluggishly in force for a very short time. Moreover, Trump, who came to power in 2016, described the nuclear deal as the worst deal in history, ended it, and started implementing a policy of maximum pressure, making conditions for Iran even more difficult. Trump has forced Iran to change its Resistance-centered policies, tried to reduce its support to its local and regional allies, and tried to erode its missile program and naval power (Ottaway and Ottaway, 2019).

On the other hand, the USA and its allies have yet to successfully change Iran's behaviour despite all the pressure and containment strategies. On the contrary, the Iranian leadership responded to such policies with maximum resistance. Trump and other US politicians may have assessed from a geopolitical perspective and a cost-benefit analysis and thought the maximum pressure policy could work. Neorealist approaches predict that such systemic or structural pressures will change states' foreign policies. However, Iran emphasized the Axis of Resistance policy in this process rather than abandoning it. The Axis of Resistance policy has an ontological meaning far beyond geopolitical calculations for Iran. For the Iranian leadership, the Axis of Resistance is the red line and indispensable routine of the revolutionary Islamic identity, and there is a prevailing

understanding that it must be maintained despite all the costs. In this way, it responded to the pressures of the USA and its allies with an asymmetrical struggle and by supporting local forces (Garayag Zandi,2008).

In addition, the US and its allies' emphasis on Ironophobia and the maximum pressure policy led to the strengthening of the radical wing in Iran while weakening the position of reformers who wanted to be more integrated into the global world. The unilateral suspension of the nuclear deal by the United States in the Trump era has made the feelings of injustice and exclusion apparent again in Iran. In this sense, the discourse that the West cannot be trusted has been revived in the Iranian public and the discourses of political leaders. Moreover, the killing of Qassem Soleimani and Mahdi El Muhendis as a result of the drone attack by the USA has revived anti-US sentiment. While Kasım Süleymani became a leading mythological hero of the Axis of Resistance, the emphasis on the Narrative of the Resistance increased. The assassination of Qassem Soleimani can be seen as a new traumatic event for Iran. After the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, Iran suffered from feelings of shame and humiliation that eroded its self-esteem and created deep insecurity. The Iranian leadership brought forward a narrative in which this event was identified with the Karbala disaster (Domazeti, 2020). In this sense, while a large funeral ceremony was held for Qassem Soleimani in Iran, Soleimani's body was circulated nationwide. In addition, while the establishment drew attention to the emphasis on sacrifice through the myth of Karbala, on the other hand, it tried to alleviate the traumatic feelings of this event by highlighting the threats of revenge. These policies of Iran show that feelings such as sacrifice and revenge can be directly related to anxiety, just like shame and self-esteem (Koç,2021).

Although Iran's Axis of Resistance Policy is not coordinated with its political, normative, and economic capacity,

nezam has attributed vital importance to the Axis of Resistance to preserve its revolutionary Islamic identity and ensure the coherence of its biographical narratives. The Iranian leadership is trying to provide a stable identity. However, the ontological insecurity faced by Iran and its concerns about the existence and survival of the regime prevents flexible and rational behaviour in foreign policy. It constitutes the central pillar of adherence to rigid behaviour patterns and routines. The Islamic Republic uses its routines in foreign policy and its relations with its founding others to meet the need for ontological security and to overcome the ontological disharmony it faces. However, the difficulties experienced by Iranians in accessing resources and services, economic depressions, political problems, and democratic demands have left many of them faced with trauma, despair, uncertainty, and alienation. Moreover, the alienation policy of the establishment towards a significant part of the society brings social unrest. In this sense, the ontological incompatibility between social and state identities deepens.

4. CONCLUSION

Two fundamental alliance approaches stand out in the literature to explain Iran's Resistance Axis policy. The first approach argues that Iran pursues this policy to protect its national interests, increase its strategic depth, and operate within the regional balance of power. This perspective is based on the state acting as a rational actor and on the classical understanding of security, grounding alliances in cost-benefit analysis. However, this framework fails to comprehensively explain the economic, political, and social costs of the Resistance Axis, leading to an explanation of Iran's behaviour based solely on the balance of interests. The second approach evaluates alliances through ideology and identity, addressing the Resistance Axis within the

framework of shared sectarian affiliations or revolutionary ideological motivations. This interpretation disregards regime security, internal political dynamics, and emotional-social factors, thereby reducing the analysis to a narrow identity framework.

The ontological security approach complements the shortcomings of these two theories, offering a more holistic perspective. For Iran, the Resistance Axis is not merely a matter of balancing interests or ideological solidarity, but also an area directly related to the ontological security of the regime. The continuity of the regime's identity, the reproduction of revolutionary narratives, the preservation of routines, and the curbing of existential anxieties have been the key determinants of this policy. In this context, by maintaining the Resistance Axis, Iran aims to both secure internal legitimacy for the regime and reinforce its symbolic power internationally. However, this policy has imposed a burden that exceeds the country's economic capacity, leading to tougher sanctions, technological decline, and deepening international isolation. Nevertheless, Iran continues to pursue this alliance model, as the Resistance Axis constitutes an indispensable 'ontological alliance' for the regime's survival and identity continuity.

Consequently, the rational interest or ideological solidarity perspectives offered by classical alliance theories are not sufficient on their own to explain Iran's Resistance Axis policy. To understand Iran's foreign policy choices, it must be recognised that alliances are structures that satisfy not only strategic or identity-based needs, but also ontological security needs. In this context, the Resistance Axis should be evaluated as a guarantee of regime security and revolutionary identity beyond national interests; Iran's foreign policy should be understood as an area guided by existential concerns.

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DOĞU AKDENİZ’İN JEOPOLİTİĞİ: TÜRKİYE’NİN STRATEJİK YAKLAŞIMI

Ramazan İZOL¹

1. GİRİŞ

Doğu Akdeniz, yalnızca zengin enerji kaynaklarıyla değil, yüzyıllardır süregelen güç dengelerinin bıraktığı tarihsel mirasla da dikkat çeker. Osmanlı sonrası ortaya çıkan manda yönetimleri ve Soğuk Savaş’ın sert rekabet ortamı, bugünkü jeopolitik tabloyu şekillendiren temel etkenler arasında yer alır. Son yıllarda bölgede yaşanan enerji keşifleri, deniz yetki alanlarına dair tartışmalar ve artan göç hareketleri, burayı yeniden büyük güçlerin rekabet sahnesine taşımıştır. Özellikle Rusya–Ukrayna savaşıyla birlikte Avrupa’nın arz güvenliği kaygıları büyümüş; bu da hem tedarikçi hem de hat çeşitliliği arayışını hızlandırarak Doğu Akdeniz’in stratejik değerini daha da yukarı çekmiştir (European Council, 2024; IEA, 2023).

Enerji koridorları, ticaret yolları ve deniz geçitleri düşünüldüğünde, bölgenin küresel stratejilerin kesiştiği bir düğüm noktası hâline geldiği görülür. 2000’li yıllarda İsrail, GKRY ve Mısır açıklarında bulunan hidrokarbon rezervleri, Avrupa Birliği’nin Rus gazına olan bağımlılığını azaltmak açısından yeni bir fırsat olarak değerlendirilmiştir (Tsafos, 2020, s. 14; Tagliapietra, 2017, s. 365). Ancak bu keşiflerin bir başka sonucu da bölgesel ittifakların hızla şekillenmesi ve var olan diplomatik fay hatlarının daha görünür hâle gelmesidir (Kara & Koltuk, 2025).

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Türkiye açısından Doğu Akdeniz meselesi sadece enerjiyle sınırlı bir konu değildir. Bölge, deniz yetki alanları, caydırıcılık politikaları ve enerji diplomasisi ekseninde Ankara'nın güvenlik önceliklerini sınıadığı karmaşık bir jeopolitik sahadır. Bu yüzden Türkiye son yıllarda geliştirdiği stratejide bu üç alanı birlikte ele alma yoluna gitmiştir. Nitekim T.C. Dışışleri Bakanlığı'nın 4 Temmuz 2019 tarihli açıklamasında da “Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz'deki hak ve çıkarlarının kararlılıkla korunacağı” açıkça vurgulanır (T.C. Dışışleri Bakanlığı, 2019). Bu makale, Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz'e yönelik stratejisini söz konusu üçlü eksen üzerinden, çok boyutlu bir ulusal güvenlik perspektifiyle incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

2. TEORİLER ARASINDA: REALİZMDEN BİYOPOLİTİĞE

Doğu Akdeniz'in siyasal yapısını tek bir uluslararası ilişkiler teorisine oturtmak neredeyse imkânsızdır. Bölgenin hem tarihsel hem jeopolitik olarak karmaşık bir dokusu var; bu da farklı kuramsal yaklaşımların birlikte değerlendirilmesini zorunlu kılıyor. Realizm, bu çerçevede devletlerin güvenlik ve çıkar arayışlarını güç kapasitesi üzerinden açıklıyor. Türkiye'nin bölgede yürüttüğü askeri faaliyetler de tam olarak bu bakışla anlam kazanıyor. Sondaj gemilerinin donanma eşliğinde faaliyet göstermesi, 2020 yazında düzenlenen yoğun tatbikatlar... Bütün bunlar Ankara'nın güvenlik yaklaşımında askerî caydırıcılığın ne kadar merkezi bir yer tuttuğunu açıkça gösteriyor. Mearsheimer'ın büyük güçler arasındaki rekabetin sürekliliğine yaptığı vurgu da bu tabloyla örtüşüyor (Mearsheimer, 2018, s. 21).

Ramazan İzol da “Güvenlik Boyutuyla Doğu Akdeniz Krizi” adlı çalışmasında, Doğu Akdeniz'deki gelişmelerin

yalnızca enerji rekabetiyle sınırlı olmadığını; aynı zamanda bölgesel güvenlik doktrinlerinin sahada karşı karşıya geldiği çok boyutlu bir kriz alanı oluşturduğunu vurgular (İzol, 2022). İzol'un ifadesiyle, "Doğu Akdeniz'de yaşanan gelişmeler, Türkiye açısından deniz jeopolitiği ile ulusal güvenliğin iç içe geçtiği bir tabloyu ortaya koymaktadır." Bu durum, realizmin askeri güç merkezli açıklamalarının, Türkiye'nin stratejik yaklaşımını anlamada neden hâlâ güçlü bir analitik çerçeve sunduğunu gösterir.

Liberal kurumsalcılık ise daha farklı bir pencere açıyor. Bu yaklaşım, bölgesel istikrarın ancak işbirliği mekanizmalarıyla güçlendirilebileceğini savunuyor. Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu tam da bu açıdan önemli bir örnektir. Fakat Türkiye'nin bu yapının dışında bırakılması, forumun işlevini barışçıl bir işbirliği zemininden çok, bölgesel rekabeti kurumsallaştıran bir yapıya dönüştürmüş durumdadır. Bu da kurumların tek başına çatışmaları azaltamayacağını, dışlanmanın ters etkiler yaratabileceğini gösteriyor. Neoklasik realizm ise biraz daha katmanlı bir yaklaşım öneriyor: dış politika sadece uluslararası güç dengeleriyle değil, iç siyasi ve ekonomik faktörlerle de şekilleniyor. Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz politikasında da bu karmaşık tablo net bir şekilde görülüyor. Deniz yetki alanı siyaseti ve donanma gücü realist bir güvenlik anlayışını yansıtırken; içerideki milliyetçi dalgalar, ekonomik kırılganlıklar ve Batı ile ilişkilerdeki iniş çıkışlar Ankara'nın tutumunu zaman zaman sertlikten yumuşaklığa doğru kaydırabiliyor (Öniş & Kutlay, 2023). Kısacası, Türkiye'nin stratejisini anlamak için iç ve dış etkenleri birlikte değerlendirmek şarttır.

Biyopolitika yaklaşımı da bu denkleme ek bir boyut katıyor. İzol ve Cingöz'ün (İzol & Cingöz, 2022) Foucault ve Agamben'den hareketle geliştirdikleri analiz, devletlerin yalnızca dış tehditlere karşı değil, kendi toplumlarını da güvenlik mantığı içinde yeniden şekillendirdiklerini gösteriyor. Doğu Akdeniz

bağlamında enerji arama faaliyetleri, deniz yetki alanı politikaları veya askeri varlık sadece dış politika araçları değil; aynı zamanda devletin kendi iktidar alanını tanımlama biçimleridir. Dolayısıyla Ankara'nın stratejisi klasik realizmin sınırlarını aşır biyopolitik bir boyut da kazanıyor.

Son olarak, bölgesel güvenlik kompleksi yaklaşımı, bölgenin çok katmanlı jeopolitik doğasını kavramak açısından oldukça faydalıdır. Öztürk ve Erkan'ın (Öztürk & Erkan, 2023) Ege Denizi'ndeki mülteci krizi üzerine yaptığı çalışma, güvenlik politikalarının sadece devletlerarası düzeyde şekillenmediğini; yerel, bölgesel ve küresel dinamiklerin iç içe geçtiğini gösteriyor. Koltuk ve Sarı'nın (Koltuk & Sarı, 2023) tespitleri de bu tabloyu destekliyor. Doğu Akdeniz'de bir yandan sert güç rekabeti sürerken, diğer yandan kurumsal işbirliği arayışları ve iç politika faktörleri eşzamanlı devreye giriyor. Bu yüzden bölgeyi tek bir teorik çerçeveye açıklamaya çalışmak, hem yetersiz hem yanıltıcı olabilir. İşbirliği fırsatları kırılan, rekabet dinamikleri ise kalıcı bir karakter taşıyor.

3. LOZAN'DAN BUGÜNE SÜREGELEN ÇATIŞMA ALANI

Doğu Akdeniz'de bugün yaşanan gerilimlerin kökeni, sadece son yıllarda yapılan enerji keşiflerinde değil; yaklaşık bir yüzyıllık tarihsel mirasta aranmalıdır. Lozan Antlaşması (1923), Türkiye'nin kara sınırlarını net şekilde belirlemiş olsa da, deniz yetki alanlarını büyük ölçüde muğlak bırakmıştı. Bu belirsizlik, özellikle kıta sahanlığı ve karasuları konularında Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında yaşanan ihtilafların temelini oluşturdu (Churchill, Lowe & Sander, 2022, s. 112). Kıbrıs meselesi ise 1960'lardan itibaren bölgesel rekabetin tam ortasına yerleşti. Başlangıçta adanın statüsü üzerine şekillenen anlaşmazlık, zamanla enerji, güvenlik ve nüfuz mücadelelerinin birbirine

dolandığı karmaşık bir jeopolitik soruna dönüştü (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, s. 54). 1974'teki Türk askeri müdahalesiyle mesele, iki toplum arasındaki bir statü tartışması olmaktan çıktı; Türkiye, Yunanistan, İngiltere ve uluslararası aktörlerin dâhil olduğu çok taraflı bir güç mücadelesine evrildi. O dönemin TBMM tutanaklarında geçen “Kıbrıs, Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz'deki varlık sebebidir” ifadesi (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974), bu konunun Ankara'nın stratejik hafızasında ne kadar derin bir yer tuttuğunu gösteriyor. Bu tarihsel süreklilik, Ramazan İzol'un da belirttiği gibi, günümüzdeki Doğu Akdeniz krizinin güvenlik boyutunun temel zeminini oluşturur. İzol, bölgedeki ihtilafların yalnızca son dönemdeki enerji keşiflerinden kaynaklanmadığını; Türkiye'nin güvenlik reflekslerinin Lozan'dan günümüze uzanan jeopolitik miras tarafından şekillendirildiğini vurgulamaktadır (İzol, 2022).

2000'li yıllarda bölgedeki hidrokarbon rezervlerinin keşfi, dengeleri iyice karmaşık hale getirdi. Yunanistan, GKRY ve İsrail arasında imzalanan Münhasır Ekonomik Bölge (MEB) anlaşmaları, enerji meselesini doğrudan siyasal ve hukuki tartışmaların merkezine taşıdı. Bu düzenlemeler Türkiye'yi dışarıda bırakan bir enerji bloklaşması yarattı. Bayram (2015), GKRY'nin adanın statüsü çözülmeden tek taraflı MEB sınırlandırmaları yapmasının uluslararası hukuk açısından tartışmalı olduğuna dikkat çeker. 2019'da kurulan Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu (EMGF), bölgesel işbirliği açısından önemli bir adım gibi görünse de Türkiye'nin bu yapıdan dışlanması, forumu kısa sürede işbirliği platformundan ziyade rekabetin kurumsallaştığı bir alana dönüştürdü. Bu durum Ankara'yı farklı arayışlara itti ve aynı yıl Libya ile imzalanan deniz yetki alanı mutabakatı gündeme geldi. Mutabakat, Türkiye'ye önemli bir hukukî zemin sağladı; fakat Yunanistan ve AB tarafından hızlı bir şekilde reddedildi (Gürel, Mullen & Tzimitras, 2013). Bu da bölgedeki gerilimi bir kademe daha artırdı.

Aynı zaman diliminde, Brexit sonrası İngiltere'nin Kıbrıs'taki Egemen Üs Bölgelerinin statüsü yeniden tartışma konusu oldu. Bu üsler, ada üzerindeki güç dengeleri açısından olduğu kadar AB hukuku bakımından da yeni bir belirsizlik alanı oluşturdu (Koltuk & Sarı, 2023; Bayram, 2017). Tüm bu gelişmeler, tarihsel mirasın yeni enerji ve güvenlik gündemleriyle nasıl iç içe geçtiğini açık şekilde ortaya koyuyor. ABD ve AB politikaları da bu sürecin arka planında belirleyici bir rol oynadı. Washington, NATO üzerinden güvenlik düzeni kurmaya çalışırken; Brüksel enerji politikaları aracılığıyla bölgesel dengeyi şekillendirmeye yöneldi. Fakat bu girişimlerin çoğu Türkiye'yi dışarıda bıraktı. Dolayısıyla Ankara, bir yandan Batı kurumlarıyla uyum arayışını sürdürürken, diğer yandan bölgesel yalnızlığı aşmak için yeni ittifak yolları aramaya başladı. Kurumsal dışlanma, bir anlamda Türkiye'nin manevra alanını daralttı ama aynı zamanda diplomatik açılım arayışlarını da tetikleyen bir faktör haline geldi.

4. HARİTALARIN ÖTESİNDE: HUKUKUN SİYASALLAŞMASI

Doğu Akdeniz'de deniz yetki alanlarının nasıl paylaşılacağı, ilk bakışta teknik bir hukuk meselesi gibi görünse de, aslında bölgedeki siyasal rekabetin tam merkezinde yer alıyor. Devletler hukuku yalnızca evrensel bir normlar bütünü olarak değil, kendi stratejik pozisyonlarını meşrulaştırmanın bir aracı olarak kullanıyor. Türkiye'nin yaklaşımı bu açıdan net: Deniz yetki alanlarının “hakkaniyet” ve “orantı” ilkeleri temelinde belirlenmesi gerektiğini savunuyor. Ankara'ya göre Yunanistan'ın ada merkezli kıta sahanlığı iddiaları coğrafi gerçeklerle örtüşmüyor; tam tersine, Türkiye'nin denizlerdeki hareket alanını yapay biçimde daraltıyor. GKRY'nin tek taraflı MEB ilanları da bu tabloyu daha da karmaşık hale getiren bir

unsurdur. Üstelik adanın statüsü henüz çözülmemişken yapılan bu tür sınırlandırmalar, uluslararası hukuk açısından da tartışmalı bir durum yaratıyor (Bayram, 2015).

Kıbrıs çevresindeki özel statülü bölgeler de hukukun nasıl esnetildiğine dair çarpıcı örnekler sunuyor. Bayram (2011b), İngiltere'nin Kıbrıs'taki egemen üs bölgelerinin AB hukuku içindeki statüsünü incelediği çalışmasında, bu bölgelerin “alışılmış” hukuk normlarını zorlayan istisnai konumlarına dikkat çeker. Aslında bu örneklerin ortak noktası şu: Doğu Akdeniz’de hukuk, tarafsız bir hakemden ziyade, siyasal pozisyonların meşruiyet kazanmak için yaslandığı bir zemin haline geliyor. Uluslararası Adalet Divanı’nın önceki kararları da Türkiye’nin hakkaniyet temelli tezleriyle kısmen örtüşür niteliktedir. Divan, birçok davada ada devletlerine tam etki tanımamış; kıyı uzunluğu ve coğrafi koşulları daha belirleyici kıstaslar olarak öne çıkarmıştır (Klein, 2021, s. 87). Bu içtihatlar, katı ada merkezli sınırlandırma anlayışının yerine coğrafi koşullar ve hakkaniyet esaslı esnek yorumların da mümkün olduğunu gösteriyor.

Bu çerçevede, 2019’daki Türkiye–Libya Deniz Yetki Alanı Mutabakatı önemli bir dönüm noktasıydı. Bir yandan Türkiye’nin tezlerini somutlaştırıp sahaya taşıdı; diğer yandan hukukun ne kadar hızlı şekilde siyasileşebileceğini de açık biçimde gösterdi. AB ve Yunanistan’ın sert tepkileri, artık bu tartışmaların teknik değil doğrudan siyasi rekabet alanında yürüdüğüne bir işaretiydi (Gunawan, Sastra, Kurniasih, Prakosa & Ovitassari, 2020). TBMM Dışişleri Komisyonu’nun 2019 tarihli raporunda geçen “Doğu Akdeniz’de hukuk, bağımsız bir norm değil, çıkarların maskesidir.” ifadesi (TBMM, 2019) bu yaklaşımı çarpıcı biçimde yansıtıyor. Türkiye’nin uluslararası hukuka karşı duyduğu temkinli, hatta zaman zaman şüpheci tutum burada net şekilde ortaya çıkıyor. Bölgede hukuk, çoğu zaman sorun çözen bir mekanizma olmaktan çok, mevcut rekabeti sertleştiren bir söylem aracı haline geliyor. Bu yüzden deniz yetki alanı

tartışmaları teknik harita çizimlerinden ibaret değil; egemenlik, kimlik ve güç mücadelesi ekseninde şekilleniyor. Hatta çoğu durumda, hukuki argümanlar yeni çatışma cephelerinin oluşmasına zemin hazırlıyor.

5. REZERVLER, BORU HATLARI VE GERÇEKÇİ BEKLENTİLER

Doğu Akdeniz’in enerji jeopolitiği çoğu zaman keşfedilen rezervlerin miktarı üzerinden tartışılıyor ama bu, resmi tam olarak yansıtmıyor. Bölgenin stratejik önemini asıl belirleyen, rezervlerin büyüklüğünden çok başka faktörler: çıkarılabilirlik (rantabilite), taşıma yollarının güvenliği ve finansman koşulları. Türkiye’nin enerji politikası da büyük ölçüde bu üç eksen üzerinde şekilleniyor. Levant Havzası’nda keşfedilen rezervler elbette dikkate değer ama küresel enerji piyasasında dengeleri kökten değiştirecek düzeyde değiller (USGS, 2010; IEA, 2023). Bu nedenle bu kaynaklar, devrim yaratacak bir “oyun değiştirici” olmaktan ziyade, daha çok bölgesel pazarlık gücünü artıran jeopolitik bir koz işlevi görüyor. Türkiye açısından kritik soru, bu gazın nasıl taşınacağı ve hangi güzergâh üzerinden piyasaya sunulacağıdır.

Boru hatları bu noktada belirleyici bir rol oynuyor. EastMed hattı kağıt üzerinde iddialı görünse de, derin deniz geçişleri, yüksek maliyetler ve bölgedeki siyasi riskler nedeniyle ekonomik olarak zayıf bir projeksiyon sunuyor (Tsafos, 2020). Finansman ve güvenlik konularındaki belirsizlikler, projenin gerçekçi bir şekilde hayata geçmesini zorlaştırıyor. Mısır’daki LNG tesisleri kısa vadede bir alternatif olarak görülse de, sınırlı kapasite nedeniyle uzun vadeli bir çözüm sunmuyor. Buna karşın, TANAP ve TürkAkım hatları Türkiye’ye önemli avantajlar sağlıyor: mevcut altyapı, daha düşük maliyet ve güvenilir taşıma rotaları niteliğindedir (IEA, 2021). Türkiye’nin coğrafi konumu

bu noktada stratejik bir değer kazanıyor ve Ankara'yı potansiyel bir enerji köprüsü pozisyonuna taşıyor. Ancak bu avantajın, Türkiye'nin bölgesel yalnızlığını aşmak için ne ölçüde kullanılabileceği, esasen diplomatik manevra kabiliyetine bağlıdır.

Enerji kaynaklarının stratejik değeri, sadece rezerv miktarına bakılarak anlaşılmaz; bölgesel rekabetin yapısı da en az bunun kadar belirleyicidir. Öztürk ve Şen'in (2023) çalışması, AB–Rusya–ABD enerji ilişkilerinin çoğu zaman ekonomik rasyonaliteyle değil, kurumsallaşmış jeopolitik rekabetle şekillendiğini ortaya koyuyor. Bu tablo, Doğu Akdeniz'de de geçerlidir. Ekonomi kadar güç politikaları da dengeleri belirliyor. Türkiye için enerji, yalnızca ekonomik bir fırsat değil, aynı zamanda güvenlik stratejisinin ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Ankara'nın hedefi, Akdeniz'den çıkarılacak gazı Avrupa'ya kendi toprakları üzerinden daha güvenli ve ucuz biçimde taşıyarak bölgesel enerji denkleminin merkezinde yer almaktır.

6. DONANMANIN DİPLOMASİYE EŞLİK EDEN YÜZÜ

Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz stratejisinde askerî görünürlük sadece sahada güvenlik sağlamakla ilgili değil; aynı zamanda caydırıcılık göstergesi ve kararlılık mesajı verme aracıdır. Sondaj gemilerine savaş gemilerinin eşlik etmesi, Ankara'nın sahadaki fiilî varlığını kanıtlama ve rakip aktörlere net sinyaller gönderme isteğinin bir göstergesidir. Bu durum, realizmin güç odaklı öngörülerini sahada somut biçimde yansıtıyor (Erkeç, 2022). Ancak caydırıcılık stratejileri doğaları gereği hassas dengeler üzerine kuruludur. 2020 yazında Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında yaşanan gerginlikte donanma unsurlarının karşı karşıya gelmesi, sıcak bir krizin eşiğine geldiğini gösterdi (Zanotti, 2021; Uygun, 2021). Bu olay, caydırıcılıkla kriz tetikleme arasındaki

çizginin ne kadar ince olduğunu açık biçimde ortaya koydu. Askerî görünürlük Türkiye için bir yandan stratejik avantaj yaratırken, diğer yandan riskleri de beraberinde getiriyor.

Bu noktada NATO'nun devreye girmesi önemli bir fark yarattı. Caydırıcılığın etkinliği yalnızca askeri kapasiteye değil, karşı tarafın bu kapasiteyi nasıl algıladığına da bağlıdır. Bazen sahadaki fiilî sonuçlardan çok, güç gösterilerinin psikolojik etkisi belirleyici olabiliyor. Bu nedenle NATO gibi üçüncü tarafların arabulucu rol üstlenmesi, iletişim kanallarını açık tutması ve kriz yönetimini kurumsallaştırması stratejik istikrar açısından kritiktir. Türkiye için askerî caydırıcılık iki ucu keskin bir araçtır. Egemenlik iddialarını sahada pekiştirmeye yaradığı kadar, kontrolsüz bir tırmanma riskini de içinde barındırıyor. Asıl mesele, askeri kapasitenin büyüklüğü değil; bu kapasitenin ne kadar dengeli, ölçülü ve diplomasiyle uyumlu şekilde kullanıldığıdır (Gündoğdu, 2024).

7. İZOLASYONDAN NORMALLEŞMEYE: ANKARA'NIN DİPLOMASİSİ

Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz'de yürüttüğü diplomasi, sadece mevcut krizleri yönetmeye odaklı değil; aynı zamanda bölgesel yalnızlığı kırma ve Ankara'nın stratejik merkezî rolünü yeniden kurma çabasının da bir parçasıdır. İsrail ve Mısır'la başlatılan normalleşme girişimleri, enerji alanında yeni işbirliği fırsatları yaratıyor ve Türkiye'nin dışlanmayı aşma stratejisinde önemli bir yer tutuyor (Aras, 2022; Herzog & Tanchum, 2021). Yunanistan'la yürütülen güven artırıcı önlemler köklü sorunları çözmiyor belki ama tansiyonu düşürmeye katkı sağlıyor. Bu tür mekanizmalar, askerî caydırıcılıkla diplomatik temasın bir arada yürütülebileceğini gösteren örnekler niteliğindedir.

AB boyutu ise daha karmaşık bir tablo çiziyor. Batılı aktörler kimi zaman Türkiye'nin jeopolitik önemini kabul edip

işbirliğine yöneliyor, ama çoğu zaman Atina ve Lefkoşa'nın baskın politikalarının etkisiyle dışlayıcı bir çizgi izliyorlar. Koltuk & Kaval (2022), bu durumu “zamana yayılmış entegrasyon” modeliyle açıklıyor: Türkiye–AB ilişkileri kesintisiz bir üyelik sürecinden ziyade, parça parça ilerleyen uyum adımlarına dayanıyor. Bu yaklaşım, Doğu Akdeniz diplomasisinin de uzun soluklu, çok katmanlı ve parçalı bir süreç olduğunu ortaya koyuyor (Bayram, 2011a). AB'nin çelişkili tutumu, Ankara'nın manevra alanını daraltsa da tamamen ortadan kaldırmıyor. Göç, arama–kurtarma ya da çevre gibi teknik alanlarda geliştirilen işbirlikleri, taraflar arasında asgari bir diyalog zeminini ayakta tutuyor (Demiryol, 2022). Bu tablo, Türkiye'nin esneklik üzerine kurulu çok yönlü bir diplomasi anlayışı benimsediğini gösteriyor.

ABD ve AB'nin ikircikli yaklaşımları, Türkiye'nin diplomatik alanını aynı anda hem genişletiyor hem de sınırlandırıyor. Batı, bir yandan Ankara'nın bölgesel önemini teslim ediyor; ama diğer yandan çıkar çatışmaları nedeniyle zaman zaman dışlayıcı pozisyonlar alabiliyor. Dolayısıyla Doğu Akdeniz diplomasisi basit ikili ilişkilerle açıklanamaz; çok aktörlü, değişken ve oldukça dinamik bir denklemin içinde şekilleniyor. Türkiye açısından diplomatik başarı, bu karmaşık ortamda esnekliğini koruyabilmesine, işbirliği kanallarını doğru değerlendirmesine ve dışlanma risklerini yönetebilmesine bağlıdır. Normalleşme süreçleri, enerji diplomasisi, AB ile ilişkiler ve askerî caydırıcılık birlikte düşünüldüğünde, diplomasi Ankara'nın bölgesel stratejisinde giderek daha merkezi bir konuma oturuyor (Uçar, 2023).

8. SIFIR TOPLAMLI KISIR DÖNGÜ

Doğu Akdeniz'deki güç mücadelesi, çoğu zaman sıfır toplamı bir oyun mantığıyla ilerliyor. Bir tarafın kazancı,

diğerinin kaybı olarak algılandığında güven inşa etmek de, kalıcı işbirliği zemini oluşturmak da zorlaşıyor (Axelrod, 2006). Enerji, güvenlik ve diplomasi alanındaki gelişmeler teknik meselelerden çok stratejik üstünlük yarışının uzantısı hâline geliyor. Bu durum, rekabetin yapısal olarak yerleşmesine ve uzlaşma girişimlerinin kırılğan kalmasına yol açıyor.

Benzer dinamikler Ortadoğu'daki bölgesel hegemonya mücadelelerinde de karşımıza çıkıyor. Cingöz, Özev ve İzol (2024), Suudi Arabistan'ın İran karşıtı stratejilerinin işbirliği imkânlarını nasıl zayıflattığını gösteriyor. İzol & Cingöz (2023) ise Yemen örneğinde İran–Suudi rekabetinin bu sıfır toplamı mantığı daha da pekiştirdiğini ortaya koyuyor. Bu yapısal benzerlikler, Doğu Akdeniz'deki rekabetin Ortadoğu'daki hegemonya mücadeleleriyle paralel işlediğini gösteriyor.

Bu çerçevede üç temel senaryo öne çıkıyor. Kontrollü rekabet senaryosunda taraflar krizleri belli sınırlar içinde tutabiliyor ama güvensizlik zamanla derinleşiyor; istikrar kırılğan, rekabet süreklilik arz ediyor. İşlevsel işbirliği senaryosunda ortak çıkar alanlarından sınırlı kazanımlar elde edilebiliyor fakat Kıbrıs meselesi ve karşılıklı güvensizlik kalıcı bir engel oluşturuyor (Zartman, 2000). Teknik düzeyde bazı ilerlemeler mümkün olsa da siyasal düzeyde bunlar zayıf kalıyor. Sert ayrışma senaryosunda ise enerji projeleri ekonomik mantıktan koparak jeopolitik sembollere dönüşüyor; Türkiye'nin bölgesel izolasyon riski artıyor, sıfır toplamı mantık derinleşiyor. Öztürk & Şen (2023), hidrokarbon ticareti üzerine yaptıkları analizlerde bu tabloyu net biçimde ortaya koymaktalar. Bölge dışı aktörlerin politikaları da bu senaryoların yönünü doğrudan etkiliyor. ABD genellikle “kontrollü rekabeti” destekleyen dengeli bir tutum izlerken, AB enerji güvenliği kaygılarıyla işbirliğini öne çıkarıyor ama Kıbrıs–Yunanistan faktörü nedeniyle çoğu zaman Türkiye'yi dışlayan bir çizgide kalıyor.

Sonuç olarak, işbirliği olasılıkları kırılgan, rekabet dinamikleri ise derinlere işlemiş durumda kalmaktadır.

9. ANKARA’NIN STRATEJİK ÜÇGENİ

Tüm bu gelişmelerin ışığında Türkiye’nin Doğu Akdeniz stratejisi üç temel dayanak üzerine oturuyor: hukukî argümanlar, enerji diplomasisi ve caydırıcılık–diplomasi dengesi.

Hukukî zeminde, Türkiye deniz yetki alanlarının hakkaniyet ve orantı ilkelerine göre belirlenmesini savunuyor. Uluslararası Adalet Divanı kararları da bu yaklaşımı destekleyen örnekler sunuyor (Klein, 2011). Fakat yalnızca hukukî argümanlara yaslanmak, sahadaki jeopolitik gerçekleri gözden kaçırma riskini beraberinde getirebilir.

Enerji diplomasisi, TANAP ve TürkAkım gibi projeler sayesinde Türkiye’ye hem maliyet avantajı hem de pazarlık gücü sağlıyor (IEA, 2021). Enerji, Ankara için sadece ekonomik bir unsur değil; bölgesel rolünü güçlendiren stratejik bir kaldıraç görevi görmektedir. Ancak bu diplomasi hattını dar bir altyapı veya maliyet perspektifine sıkıştırmak stratejik esnekliği sınırlayabilir.

Caydırıcılık ve diplomasi dengesi ise en hassas alanı oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye, askerî görünürlüğü diplomasisini destekleyen bir unsur olarak kullanmakta; donanma faaliyetleriyle hem sahada hem masada pozisyonunu güçlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir (Gündoğdu, 2022). Ancak bu caydırıcılık ve diplomasi dengesi aracının yanlış yönetimi, diplomatik yalnızlığı artırabilir ya da gerilimi tırmandırabilir (Mehmetcik, 2015). Dolayısıyla, bu üç unsur arasında dikkatli bir denge kurulması şarttır.

- Hukuka fazla yaslanmak sahadaki gerçeklerle çelişebilir.

- Enerji diplomasisini dar çerçevede tutmak fırsatları kaçırabilir.
- Caydırıcılığı abartmak ise krizleri tetikleyebilir.

Ankara açısından başarı, bu üç sütunun birbirini tamamlayacak şekilde uyumlu bir stratejik mimaride buluşturulmasına bağlıdır.

10. SONUÇ

Doğu Akdeniz, Türkiye açısından basit bir enerji paylaşım sahası olmanın ötesinde, güvenlikten diplomasiye, bölgesel aktörlükten güç siyasetine kadar pek çok unsurun iç içe geçtiği stratejik bir alan olarak öne çıkar. Ankara bugüne dek hem hukukî argümanlara dayalı meşruiyet arayışını, hem enerji diplomasisini hem de askeri caydırıcılığı birlikte yürüten çok boyutlu bir çizgi izledi. Ancak bu stratejinin temelinde tarihsel mirastan kalan çözümsüz meseleler, AB'nin tam oturmamış bütünleşme politikaları ve İngiltere'nin bölgedeki üsleri gibi karmaşık yapısal faktörler bulunmaktadır (Bayram, 2011a, 2015, 2017). Bu da Türkiye'nin stratejik konumunu doğal olarak daha katmanlı ve zorlu bir pozisyona sokmaktadır.

Büyük güçlerin jeopolitik tercihlerinde sıkça görülen rasyonalite-güç siyaseti ikilemi, Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz yaklaşımında da kendini belli ediyor (Öztürk, 2024). Yalnızca güç kapasitesine yaslanmak bazen zorunlu bir gerçeklik olsa da, diplomatik manevra kabiliyetini geri plana atmak stratejik bir sıkışmayı tetikleyebilir. Benzer şekilde, fazla hukukî pozisyonlara bel bağlamak sahadaki fiili dengeleri görmezden gelme riskini taşır; askeri caydırıcılığı fazla öne çıkarmak diplomatik yalnızlığı artırabilir; enerji diplomasisini salt ekonomik maliyet hesabına indirgemek de yeni fırsat kapılarını kapatabilir (Umbach, 2021; Zanotti, 2021). Üstelik Ortadoğu'nun kendine özgü rekabetçi dinamikleri de bu tabloya arka plan

oluşturuyor. İzol ve Cingöz'ün (2022, 2023) çalışmalarında vurgulandığı gibi, bölgesel siyaset hem biyopolitik düzenlemelerle hem de sıfır toplamli rekabet mantığıyla şekilleniyor. Dolayısıyla Türkiye'nin Doğu Akdeniz politikası, sadece deniz yetki alanı veya enerji arayışı üzerinden değil, daha geniş bir bölgesel güç mücadelesi bağlamında okunmalıdır.

Bundan sonraki süreçte, dengeli bir stratejik çerçevenin kurulması Ankara açısından hayati önem taşımaktadır. Hukukî argümanların dikkatli kullanımı burada kilit bir nokta görünümündedir; çünkü Türkiye, deniz yetki alanı tezlerini uluslararası hukuk temelinde savunmayı sürdürürken, askeri caydırıcılığı da bu çizginin tamamlayıcı unsuru olarak görmektedir. Gerginliği tırmandıracak tek taraflı adımların önüne geçmek önem arz etmektedir (Klein, 2011). Aynı şekilde, bölgesel işbirliği mekanizmalarını güçlendirmek de gerekiyor. İsrail, Mısır ve Yunanistan gibi aktörlerle kademeli ve gerçekçi diyalog kanalları açarak, enerji diplomasisini sadece boru hatlarına değil, daha geniş bir entegrasyon zemini üzerine kurmak mümkün olabilir (Herzog & Tanchum, 2021).

Türkiye ayrıca, Doğu Akdeniz Gaz Forumu dışında kalsa bile, benzer çok taraflı platformlar geliştirip AB ile iletişim kanallarını açarak diplomatik yalnızlığını kırabilir (Demiryol, 2022). Enerji stratejisinde çeşitliliğe gidilmesi de kritik önemdedir. AB'nin yeşil dönüşüm hedefleri dikkate alınarak yenilenebilir kaynaklara daha fazla yatırım yapılması, hidrokarbon temelli dar fırsat alanlarını daha kapsamlı bir enerji güvenliği yaklaşımına entegre edebilir (Umbach, 2021). Bunlara ek olarak, kriz yönetimi ve istişare mekanizmalarının kurumsallaştırılması da NATO ve bölgesel aktörlerle yanlış hesaplama riskini azaltarak istikrara katkı sağlayacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, Doğu Akdeniz Türkiye için hem riskleri hem fırsatları içinde barındıran zor bir jeopolitik sınav alanı

niteliğindedir. Ankara'nın bundan sonraki adımları, bu sürecin ileride “tarihsel bir başarı” mı yoksa “kaçırılmış bir fırsat” mı olarak anılacağını belirleyecek. Bu nedenle dengeli, esnek ve çok katmanlı bir strateji, sadece bölgesel yalnızlığı aşmak için değil, Türkiye'nin diplomatik ağırlığını ve uluslararası meşruiyetini güçlendirmek için de anahtar bir rol oynayacaktır.

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NATION, MEMORY AND LEADERSHIP: POLITICAL FIGURES IN THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE BORCHALI TURKS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Borchali Turks have historically lived in the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia, a borderland that has consistently been contested by larger regional powers such as the Ottomans, Persians, Russians, and later the Soviet Union and independent Georgia. Their survival as a distinct Turkic Muslim community is remarkable given the pressures of assimilation, political marginalization, and displacement. This survival has not been accidental—it has been mediated through political figures and leadership structures that combined traditional authority with adaptive strategies for navigating imperial and state systems (Altstadt, 1992). Leaders not only defended the Borchali community in times of conflict but also articulated cultural, educational, and religious practices that reinforced a sense of nationhood. By exploring their lives and legacies, this study situates Borchali Turks within wider scholarly debates on the resilience of minorities in contested geopolitical spaces (Suny, 1994).

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The study of Borchali leadership also illuminates broader theoretical issues related to nationhood, memory, and leadership in minority communities. Leadership among minorities is not merely a matter of political representation in parliaments or local councils; it is often deeply intertwined with cultural authority, symbolic legitimacy, and transnational linkages. For the Borchali Turks, leadership has historically encompassed clan beys who organized local defense and mediation, religious figures who preserved cultural and spiritual traditions, nationalist intellectuals who aligned Borchali identity with pan-Turkic and Islamic discourses, and contemporary activists who advocate for rights and recognition in Georgia while forging connections with Turkey and Azerbaijan (Cornell, 2001). This layered understanding of leadership highlights how minority groups adapt their strategies to changing political contexts while maintaining continuity of identity.

Finally, this chapter aims to make a twofold contribution. First, it provides a historical narrative of Borchali political figures across different periods, from pre-modern beys and sheikhs to Soviet deputies and modern activists. Second, it offers a conceptual contribution to the study of minority politics in borderland settings by demonstrating how leadership simultaneously anchors communities in local realities and connects them to transnational solidarities. Through detailed case studies, this research shows that Borchali leaders were not passive actors responding to external pressures but active shapers of political and cultural life. Their legacies continue to inform Borchali identity today, sustaining collective memory and reinforcing the narrative of endurance in the face of marginalization (Motika, 2003).

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BORCHALI TURKS

2.1. Borderland Position

The Borchali region's geopolitical position made it subject to successive imperial struggles. Ottoman-Safavid wars in the seventeenth century destabilized the area, leading to large-scale displacements of Turkic populations and reshaping of settlement patterns (Atabaki, 2000). Later, Russian imperial expansion in the nineteenth century incorporated Borchali into the Tsarist system, introducing new forms of administration and taxation. Communities adapted through flexible leadership that combined clan and religious authority with pragmatic negotiations with imperial authorities (Sunny, 1994). In this sense, the Borchali Turks embodied the archetype of a borderland community—one that simultaneously resisted assimilation while also learning to survive within overlapping systems of power (Cornell, 2001).

2.2. Russian Imperial Expansion

The Russian conquest of the Caucasus profoundly altered Borchali society. Imperial policies privileged Christian populations, particularly Armenians and Georgians, in land distribution and administrative appointments, marginalizing Muslim elites. Despite this, Borchali Turks retained influence through informal political structures, particularly the authority of beys and tribal leaders (Altstadt, 1992). These leaders acted as intermediaries, negotiating tax burdens and resolving disputes while maintaining customary law. Russian officials often viewed them with suspicion, yet relied on their mediation to maintain order in rural communities (Swietochowski, 1985). This paradoxical role highlights how borderland leadership was both constrained by empire and indispensable for governance.

2.3. Soviet Nationality Policy

The Soviet Union introduced a new framework of ethnic categorization and control. Borchali Turks were administratively classified as “Azerbaijanis,” effectively subsuming their identity into a larger category (Cornell, 2001). This erasure of specificity was part of broader Soviet strategies of managing minority identities through categorization, education, and cultural policy. At the same time, Soviet rule opened limited opportunities for Borchali representation through deputies, party officials, and cultural leaders. Writers, poets, and educators articulated Borchali experiences within the constraints of socialist realism, ensuring that collective memory survived. Thus, while Soviet policy suppressed autonomy, it paradoxically created institutional spaces in which Borchali figures could navigate identity politics (Motika, 2003).

3. POLITICAL FIGURES IN BORCHALI HISTORY: CASE STUDIES

3.1. Clan and Religious Leaders

Case Study 1: The Beys of Shulaveri

The Shulaveri beys were among the most influential figures in the Borchali region during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, embodying the traditional leadership model of Turkic tribal elites. They acted not only as landowners but also as protectors of the community during periods of instability caused by imperial wars. Oral traditions in Borchali recall their role in organizing armed defenses against raids and in managing intercommunal relations with neighboring Georgian and Armenian populations. The beys’ authority extended into economic affairs, as they regulated access to pastures, oversaw the distribution of agricultural produce, and collected taxes on

behalf of imperial administrators (Altstadt, 1992). Their ability to mediate between Russian imperial officials and local villagers made them indispensable figures in maintaining social order.

Yet, their role went beyond mere pragmatism. The beys of Shulaveri were guardians of cultural continuity, maintaining Turkic traditions, language, and Islamic customs during an era when imperial policies increasingly favored Christian groups (Suny, 1994). They commissioned mosques, supported religious schools, and ensured that communal rituals were observed despite pressures of assimilation. In this sense, the beys served as both political and symbolic leaders: representatives of Borchali autonomy and symbols of resilience. Their memory continues to survive in local folklore and oral poetry, underscoring their importance as the first line of defense against external domination (Swietochowski, 1985).

Case Study 2: Sheikh Haji Ali Efendi (d. 1880s)

Sheikh Haji Ali Efendi was a renowned religious leader whose influence extended far beyond his immediate community. Born into a family of Islamic scholars, he rose to prominence in the nineteenth century as a respected cleric and mediator in Borchali. He was particularly known for his success in negotiating exemptions from conscription for Borchali youth during the Russian imperial period, thereby protecting the continuity of family and agricultural life (Swietochowski, 1985). His leadership exemplifies how spiritual authority could translate into political power in a minority community under foreign rule.

Haji Ali Efendi also left a lasting cultural legacy by promoting Islamic education. He established small-scale madrasas and encouraged literacy among Borchali Turks, ensuring that the Qur'an and Turkic poetry remained part of everyday life (Cornell, 2001). Oral accounts recall his ability to use sermons not only for spiritual guidance but also for subtle

resistance, reinforcing solidarity against policies that sought to weaken Muslim identity. His model of leadership—rooted in faith but exercised through political negotiation—set a precedent for later religious and cultural leaders in Borchali. Even after his death, his memory was preserved in oral narratives as a symbol of both moral integrity and political pragmatism (Altstadt, 1992).

3.2. Nationalist Leaders and the ADR Era

Case Study 3: Ali Mammadov (1875–1920)

Ali Mammadov was one of the most significant political figures produced by the Borchali Turks during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) period. A native of Borchali, he entered politics during a transformative era when Turkic elites across the Caucasus sought to articulate modern national identities. As a parliamentarian in the ADR, Mammadov actively advocated for the inclusion of Borchali within Azerbaijan's political orbit, arguing that cultural, linguistic, and religious ties necessitated strong integration (Cornell, 2001). His speeches reflected a deep conviction that Borchali Turks could not survive as an isolated minority in Georgia but needed to be anchored within the Turkic nationalist project.

Mammadov's parliamentary activities extended to broader issues, such as educational reform and land rights. He supported the establishment of Turkish-language schools in Borchali, recognizing that cultural autonomy was essential for political survival. Tragically, his political career was cut short by the Soviet invasion of Azerbaijan in 1920. He was assassinated in the chaos of the Bolshevik takeover, becoming one of the many casualties of the early Soviet repression of nationalists. Nevertheless, Mammadov's legacy remains influential: he is remembered as a courageous voice for Borchali interests and as a symbol of the region's integration into wider Turkic political currents (Altstadt, 1992). His memory endures in Borchali oral

narratives, where he is often depicted as a martyr for national identity.

Case Study 4: Hasan Hasanov (1890–1920)

Hasan Hasanov was another prominent Borchali intellectual associated with the ADR, focusing his efforts on education and cultural reform. Born into a modest family, Hasanov pursued higher education in Baku, where he came into contact with Azerbaijani intellectual movements and pan-Turkist circles. He returned to Borchali with the conviction that the community's survival required educational modernization. Hasanov championed the establishment of Turkish-language schools, arguing that without access to mother-tongue education, the Borchali Turks risked losing their cultural identity (Altstadt, 1992).

Hasanov also engaged in political activism, supporting ADR efforts to create regional councils that could safeguard minority rights. His work was cut short by the Soviet invasion, and like Ali Mammadov, he perished during the political upheaval of 1920. Hasanov's short life nevertheless left an imprint on Borchali history: he became a symbol of intellectual leadership and a reminder of the importance of education in nation-building (Cornell, 2001). Today, his name is invoked in Borchali diaspora communities as part of the pantheon of early twentieth-century leaders who sought to modernize and protect their community.

Case Study 5: Neriman Nerimanov (1870–1925)

Neriman Nerimanov occupies a unique place in Borchali political memory, even though he was not himself born in Borchali but in Tiflis (modern Tbilisi). As a physician, writer, revolutionary, and statesman, Nerimanov became one of the most influential political figures of the Caucasus, closely associated with the early Soviet administration in Azerbaijan. For Borchali

Turks, Nerimanov symbolized the potential of Turkic intellectuals to achieve positions of significant power in broader Caucasian politics (Swietochowski, 1985). His activities resonated in Borchali because he advocated cultural rights for Turkic-speaking Muslims in Georgia and opposed policies that marginalized minority communities.

During his career, Nerimanov attempted to reconcile socialism with national aspirations, a project that earned him both admiration and suspicion. As chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Azerbaijan, he supported educational and cultural projects for Turkic minorities, including those in Borchali (Cornell, 2001). His writings, particularly his novels and essays, also highlighted the plight of Muslim communities under imperial domination. Although his later years were marked by political isolation under Stalinist centralization, his legacy endured. For Borchali Turks, Nerimanov represents both the possibilities and the perils of engaging in larger state politics: he rose to prominence but ultimately fell victim to the authoritarian tendencies of the Soviet system. Today, he is remembered in Borchali oral and written traditions as an intellectual and political giant whose influence extended across the Turkic world (Altstadt, 1992).

3.3. Soviet-Era Figures

Case Study 6: Mammed Aslan (1932–2008)

Mammed Aslan, one of Borchali's most celebrated poets, became a cultural leader whose works articulated the emotional landscape of his community under Soviet rule. Born in Borchali, Aslan grew up during the Stalinist period, a time of repression and cultural homogenization. Despite these challenges, he pursued a literary career, publishing poetry that blended Soviet themes with distinctly Borchali motifs (Motika, 2003). His works often evoked the imagery of displacement, longing, and memory,

becoming a subtle form of resistance against assimilationist policies.

Aslan's poetry resonated deeply with Borchali audiences because it spoke to their lived experiences of marginalization. By embedding Borchali narratives within Azerbaijani literature, he ensured that his community's struggles were acknowledged in the broader Turkic world. He was celebrated in Baku and Tbilisi as a literary figure, yet his works always carried undertones of minority survival. Today, Aslan is remembered not merely as a poet but as a cultural leader whose pen served as a weapon in the fight for memory and identity preservation (Cornell, 2001).

Case Study 7: Suleyman Veliyev (1910–1976)

Suleyman Veliyev served as a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of Georgia, representing Borchali Turks during a period when political expression was tightly controlled. His career illustrates the contradictions of minority leadership in the Soviet Union: he was bound by party discipline but nevertheless used his position to defend minority rights. Veliyev was particularly active in promoting educational institutions, ensuring that Borchali children had access to Turkish-language instruction within the Soviet system (Suny, 1994).

Veliyev also facilitated cultural exchanges between Borchali and Azerbaijan, reinforcing ties that the Soviet state often sought to downplay. His pragmatic approach enabled him to secure modest but meaningful concessions for his community. Although he operated within the limitations of Soviet authoritarianism, his work demonstrated how even constrained political roles could be leveraged to preserve cultural identity. His legacy lives on in Borchali memory as an example of cautious but effective political leadership under authoritarian conditions (Cornell, 2001).

3.4. Contemporary Leaders

Case Study 8: Ali Babayev (b. 1955)

Ali Babayev, founder of the “Borçalı Society” in Azerbaijan, represents the transnational dimension of Borchali leadership. Born in Borchali but later active in Baku, Babayev became a prominent advocate for Borchali rights, organizing conferences, cultural events, and political lobbying campaigns (Aydınün & Harding, 2017). His activism highlights how diaspora institutions can amplify minority voices in international forums.

Babayev’s leadership is characterized by a dual focus: preserving Borchali cultural traditions and integrating Borchali issues into Azerbaijani and Turkish political agendas. Under his guidance, the Borçalı Society became a hub for cultural revival, sponsoring publications, folk festivals, and educational initiatives. Babayev also campaigned for improved minority rights in Georgia, lobbying both Georgian and Azerbaijani authorities to recognize the Borchali Turks’ unique historical and cultural identity. His career demonstrates how modern Borchali leadership has transcended local politics to engage in regional and even global advocacy (Cornell, 2001).

Case Study 9: Zalimkhan Mammadli (b. 1960s)

Zalimkhan Mammadli, a cultural activist and writer, has played a central role in promoting Borchali heritage in both Georgia and Azerbaijan. Born in the late Soviet period, Mammadli came of age during the turbulent years of Georgian independence. He quickly emerged as a public intellectual, using essays, speeches, and activism to draw attention to Borchali issues. He campaigned for bilingual education in Georgia, arguing that mother-tongue instruction was essential for both integration and cultural survival (Cornell, 2001).

Mammadli's activism extends beyond education. He has been involved in efforts to document Borchali history, collect oral traditions, and publish works on Borchali culture. In doing so, he has combined the roles of historian, activist, and cultural guardian. His ability to articulate Borchali concerns in both Georgian and Azerbaijani contexts makes him a unique bridge between communities. Today, Mammadli is regarded not only as a leader but also as a chronicler of Borchali life, ensuring that his community's experiences are recorded for posterity (Aydingün & Harding, 2017).

4. NATION, MEMORY, AND LEADERSHIP

4.1. Nationhood and Identity

From the Shulaveri beys to modern activists, Borchali leaders have sustained a sense of nationhood rooted in Turkic heritage and Islamic identity. Their leadership demonstrates how small communities construct a sense of belonging in contested spaces (Halbwachs, 1992). Borchali nationhood has always been hybrid: deeply local, yet connected to broader Turkic solidarity.

4.2. Memory and Legacy

Collective memory has been central to Borchali survival. Figures like Ali Mammadov and Mammed Aslan remain alive in oral traditions, poetry, and cultural commemorations (Cornell, 2001). By preserving the memory of leaders, Borchali Turks sustain continuity across generations. These memories not only legitimize current leadership but also provide moral exemplars for future generations.

4.3. Borderland Leadership

Leadership in Borchali has always been transnational. Modern leaders frequently operate across Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, framing their activism within broader narratives of

Turkic unity (Motika, 2003). This reflects the dual nature of borderland leadership: rooted in local struggles yet oriented toward transnational solidarities.

5. CONCLUSION

The political history of the Borchali Turks is inseparable from the figures who represented them. From beys and sheikhs to ADR parliamentarians, Soviet deputies, poets, and modern activists, each leader played a role in shaping Borchali survival. Their stories demonstrate that leadership in borderland minority communities is not merely about wielding power but about sustaining identity, memory, and dignity (Altstadt, 1992; Suny, 1994).

This study contributes to minority studies and borderland history by showing how leadership adapts across shifting contexts while preserving continuity. The Borchali Turks exemplify the enduring importance of political figures in small communities navigating the pressures of empire, nationalism, and globalization. Their experiences highlight how memory and leadership intertwine to sustain nationhood in contested geopolitical landscapes.

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RETHINKING THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS IN AFRICA: CONVERGING AID MODELS OF TİKA (TURKISH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY) AND AFD (FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY)

Aymerillette ŞEN¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Global foreign aid as an organized practice began in the aftermath of World War II, notably with the Marshall Plan in 1948, through which the United States supported the reconstruction of Europe (BORDAS, 2021, s. 4-5). This marked the institutionalization of aid as both a humanitarian tool and an instrument of statecraft. As foreign aid evolved, the donor landscape has also diversified. With the emergence of actors like Türkiye, questions have arisen about whether new donors represent a paradigmatic shift or reproduce existing structures. This article investigates this question through a comparative case study of the French Development Agency (AFD) in Senegal and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) in Somalia.

The main research question is: Do the aid strategies of France and Türkiye in Africa reflect fundamentally divergent development models, or are they increasingly converging into hybrid paradigms shaped by shared geopolitical interests and soft

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power ambitions? This comparative study draws on two emblematic but contrasting cases: Senegal, a relatively stable and institutionalized Francophone state, and Somalia, a fragile, conflict – prone, non – Francophone country. Although these cases are not fully symmetrical, their contrast is analytically useful as Senegal exemplifies France’s long – standing and institutionalized aid presence, while Somalia illustrates Türkiye’s emerging, high – visibility engagement in a fragile setting. The article acknowledges that examining additional cases, such as TİKA in Sudan or AFD in Côte d’Ivoire, would enhance generalizability, and it proposes this as an avenue for future research. The study relies primarily on secondary sources, official reports, and existing empirical studies. While this limits direct field – level perspectives, it enables a critical synthesis of donor policies, recipient – state negotiations, and theoretical debates. Future research should incorporate interviews with local actors and local NGOs to capture grassroots perspectives more directly.

By applying a multi – theoretical lens: realism, constructivism, and postcolonial theory, this article explores not only donor strategies in isolation but also their intersections. Realism explains how strategic calculations underpin aid; constructivism highlights how identities and norms shape donor practices; post colonialism reveals how hierarchies and legacies of empire endure within cooperation frameworks. Together, these perspectives generate new insights into whether France and Türkiye are converging toward hybrid aid practices or reproducing old hierarchies in new forms.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: REALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Initially rooted in the post–World War II reconstruction efforts and the Cold War rivalry, foreign aid has evolved into a multi-dimensional practice shaped by geopolitics, economics, ideology, and humanitarian concern (Mahembe E., 2019, s. 4). It has also developed within three dominant theoretical perspectives in international relations: realism, constructivism, and postcolonial theory. While these theories are often applied separately, this article synthesizes them to highlight their intersections and tensions in the practices of both France and Türkiye.

Realism views the international system as anarchic, where states act primarily in pursuit of national interest, power, and survival. Even in the absence of a major global conflict, the persistence of regional and proxy wars have led to continuous “state of war” that realism associates with the international order (Mahmood, 2025, s. 33). Within this logic, foreign aid is not a humanitarian gesture but a strategic tool. For both traditional and emerging donors, aid secures alliances, counters rivals, and extends influence. France’s continued military bases in Africa and Türkiye’s security involvement in Somalia illustrate aid’s impact in power politics.

Where realism sees aid as strategy, constructivist theory focuses on the role of ideas, norms, values, and identities in shaping state behaviour. According to constructivist theory, the international system is socially constructed; states act not only based on material interests but also on perceptions of legitimacy, values, and moral obligations. From this perspective, Türkiye’s foreign aid to Africa, particularly through agencies like TİKA, can be interpreted as an extension of its self-image as a

responsible, humanitarian, and culturally connected actor. Rooted in its Ottoman legacy and Islamic cultural traditions of solidarity and assistance, Türkiye's development cooperation reflects not just geopolitical ambitions, but also a desire to uphold its identity and project norms aligned with mutual benefit and ethical responsibility. Constructivism thus provides valuable insights into how Türkiye's identity and normative commitments shape its foreign policy behaviour, offering a broader understanding of international cooperation that goes beyond material calculations (Alio, 2023, s. 45 - 58). In this view, foreign aid is a normative institution that reflects how states define themselves and how they wish to be seen.

David Lumsdaine, a leading constructivist scholar of aid, argues that humanitarian concern, religious ethics, and international solidarity are core drivers of donor behaviour, especially in democracies with active civil societies (Lumsdaine, 1993, s. 3-13). For example France has chosen to promote democratic governance and French language in Senegal. (Lambert, 2006) On its part, Türkiye, constructs its aid narrative around shared history, Islamic solidarity, and civilizational diplomacy (Özkan, Turkey's African Experience: From Venture to Normalisation, 2014, s. 219 - 224) . Both actors seek recognition as legitimate partners in Africa, but they narrate this legitimacy through different cultural repertoires.

While realism and constructivism explain the logic of state behaviour, postcolonial theory critiques the structural inequalities and discursive hierarchies that persist in development cooperation. Rooted in the legacies of empire, post colonialism interrogates how aid replicates relationships of dependency and reinforces Western hegemony under the guise of partnership. Traditional donors, especially former colonial powers like France, have been accused of maintaining neo – colonial control over African countries through language policies, cultural

institutions, and monetary systems (e.g. the CFA franc zone) (Konhert, 2022, s. 7).

Neo-colonialism, introduced by Kwame Nkrumah in the 1960s, argues that former colonial powers, like France, continue to influence their former colonies through indirect economic and political means rather than direct control. Scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Robert Young support this view, highlighting how developed countries maintain dominance over developing nations (Oppong & E., 2024, s. 20). From this perspective, France's development policy in Senegal exemplifies a postcolonial continuum. It promotes Francophonie, finances French – speaking elites, and supports institutions aligned with French norms and systems (Schraeder, Hook, & Taylor, 1998, s. 12 - 13). Renou Xavier talked about La Francophonie as a tool to promote French language and culture through training support, academic and student's exchanges. He stated also that la Francophonie was made possible due to the specific type of colonisation implemented in the French Empire which is based on the principle of assimilation and is very wide spread in Africa thus the presence of a gradual process of acculturation in Africa (Renou, 2002, s. 5 - 27) .

Postcolonial analysis also critiques how aid relations reinforce unequal power structures. Whether through tied aid, structural adjustment programs, or technical assistance missions, donors frequently position themselves as experts and saviours, while recipients are cast as passive and dependent. This narrative not only undermines sovereignty but also legitimizes external intervention under the pretext of progress (Ziai, 2016, s. 24 - 26).

On the other side, non – traditional donors like Türkiye claim to reject this model, offering aid without conditionality and respecting national sovereignty. Türkiye's development aid often incorporates an Islamic soft power dimension, notably through

building mosques, religious schools, and promoting Turkish-style religious education. In Somalia, this approach has been relatively well received, partly because it offers a cultural and religious alternative to the more rigid Wahhabi influences from the Gulf. The shared religious and cultural affinities have helped foster trust between Somali and Turkish elites. Yet postcolonial critique raises the question of whether such approaches simply repackage dominance in culturally resonant form. For instance, Türkiye does not impose its religion, however its focus on Muslim – majority countries and the construction of Turkish – Islamic cultural symbols (e.g. mosques, Ottoman heritage sites) can be seen as a symbolic projection of soft imperial influence (Van Den Berg & J., 2019, s. 9). The Camp TURKSOM can be also considered as a projection of Turkish security influence in Somalia.

Taken together, these theories reveal that aid is simultaneously strategic (realism), normative (constructivism), and hierarchical (postcolonialism). TİKA's hospital projects in Somalia can be interpreted as realist (strategic foothold in the Horn of Africa), constructivist (projection of Türkiye's humanitarian – Islamic identity) and postcolonial (potential reproduction of unequal donor – recipient relations through symbolic power). Likewise, AFD's concessional loans in Senegal serve realist interests (maintaining a sphere of influence), constructivist (promotion of French values and language), and postcolonial continuities (perpetuation of elite dependency).

In this light, no single theory adequately explains aid dynamics. Instead, their synthesis highlights how France and Türkiye employ overlapping logics, resulting in hybrid practices that blur the lines between traditional and non – traditional donors. This theoretical framing underpins the comparative case study of AFD in Senegal and TİKA in Somalia.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The field of foreign aid is increasingly complex, not only due to its multiple purposes such as poverty reduction, strategic influence, economic interest, but also because of the diversification of donors. The rise of non – traditional donors like China, Türkiye, India, Brazil, and Gulf states has challenged the normative frameworks and operational models established by Western donor countries. These emerging actors bring new priorities, modalities, and norms, contributing to what can now be described as a more competitive and pluralistic aid environment within a multipolar world order (Manurung, 2025) .

One of the most important milestones in the governance of aid was the establishment of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) under the OECD in 1961 (Bracho, R.H., W., S., & A., 2021). Official Development Assistance (ODA) is a core concept in the study and practice of foreign aid. Defined by the OECD's DAC, ODA refers to government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. (Hynes & Scott, 2013, s. 6). The DAC plays a vital role in coordinating and monitoring development aid among the world's major donors. It sets international standards for reporting and measuring aid flows and oversees peer reviews of donor performance. The DAC also developed frameworks such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2025), which emphasized ownership, alignment, harmonization, results, and mutual accountability. These principles have shaped how aid is designed, delivered, and evaluated (OECD, 2005).

The integration of ODA metrics and DAC guidance provides a valuable framework to evaluate and compare the roles of traditional donors like France and emerging actors like Türkiye in Africa.

Historically, Western donors have often used ODA as a tool to promote liberal economic and political reforms, especially in the post – Cold War era. Gilles Carbonnier has stated that aid has served as a means for donors to exert influence on recipient countries to align with their preferred models of governance and economic policy (Carbonnier, 2010, s. 137 - 142). From this perspective, aid is seen as a mechanism for fostering global cooperation in addressing shared challenges of interdependence and globalization (Lancaster, 2008, s. 4).

France is among the top DAC donors within the OECD Development Assistance Committee. (OECD, 2025). However, France's significant aid volume is not only a reflection of economic capacity or international responsibility. It is also deeply rooted with its connections with its former colonies. France's main development agency, plays a central role in this regard, channelling aid primarily to Francophone Africa. In this point, France's aid through AFD in Africa reflects realist calculations: maintaining a sphere of influence, securing access to minerals, and projecting political power through military bases and cultural ties (Glaser & S., 2014, s. 82 - 104). On the other side, many non-Western donors, including Türkiye, remain cautious or resistant toward full participation in the OECD DAC reporting processes. For these donors, engaging with the DAC offers limited strategic benefit and could entail burdensome responsibilities without commensurate returns. Non-Western donors may avoid reporting aid data to prevent their contributions from appearing marginal when compared to larger Western donors, or to protect sensitive information about their partnerships and funding mechanisms. Unlike DAC donors, non-Western providers typically refrain from attaching governance or human rights conditions to their aid, viewing such requirements as unwarranted interference in sovereign affairs. Fully integrating into the traditional aid coordination and effectiveness frameworks risks exposing these

donors to external pressure to conform to Western conditionality norms, which they fundamentally oppose (Lawson, 2013, s. 21).

As a non – DAC donor, Türkiye delivers much of its aid through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), an institution that reflects principles of South – South cooperation, cultural affinity, and mutual benefit. (TİKA n.d.) But as noted by Serdar Çam, President of the Turkish Cooperation Agency (TİKA), Turkish development assistance aims not only to deliver humanitarian support but also to enhance Türkiye’s international visibility, reflecting Ankara’s strategic interest in using aid as a tool of soft power projection and global outreach. (Hausmann , 2014, s. 9)

The growing interaction between traditional DAC donors and emerging non – DAC actors has given rise to hybrid aid models. Hybrid models in foreign aid refer to development approaches that blend characteristics of traditional North–South aid (often Western and DAC-driven) with principles of South–South Cooperation (SSC), such as solidarity, mutual benefit, cultural affinity, and non-conditionality (Chisholm & G., 2009, s. 39) . These models combine geopolitical strategy with relational diplomacy, often using a mix of aid modalities (grants, loans, technical assistance) and engaging both state and non-state actors (Mawdsley & E., 2012, s. 89). Unlike the rigid frameworks of traditional aid or the informal practices of South – South Cooperation, hybrid models are more adaptable and often reflect foreign policy integration, combining soft power, economic cooperation, and humanitarian engagement under a single framework (Mawdsley & E., 2012, s. 85 - 90).

Yet questions remain about whether such model truly redistribute power or merely adapt old practices in new forms. Despite this rich literature, important gaps persist. First, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) dimension is often overlooked,

particularly in the case of non – DAC donors. AFD is regularly peer – reviewed by the OECD, while TİKA’s limited evaluation mechanisms raise concerns about sustainability, accountability, and long term local impact. (Sucuoglu, 2016, s. 39) Weak monitoring and evaluation may shape recipient perceptions. Projects may be welcomed for their speed and visibility but criticized for limited follow – up or integration with national strategies.

Second, the agency of recipients is frequently underrepresented. While donor strategies dominate the literature, the voices of civil society, local NGOs, and communities in recipient countries are less visible. In Senegal, French aid is considered as neo – colonial. (Kilcoyne, 2021, s. 30) In Somalia, while Somali leaders have publicly welcomed Türkiye’s support, there are risks that donor – driven agendas can bypass grassroots priorities. (Achilles, 2015, s. 14) This underscores the need to move beyond elite perspectives to capture how aid is negotiated, resisted, or reinterpreted locally.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach. The selection of Senegal (AFD) and Somalia (TİKA) rests on their emblematic significance. Senegal represents a long – standing, institutionalized donor – recipient relationship within Francophone Africa, while Somalia exemplifies Türkiye’s high profile engagement in a fragile Muslim – majority state. These contexts are not fully symmetrical, but their contrast is analytically valuable. It illuminates how donors adapt strategies across stable and fragile environments. Nevertheless, the analysis recognizes the limitations of examining only two cases and proposes future research on additional sites (e.g., AFD in Côte d’Ivoire or TİKA in Sudan) to strengthen generalizability.

Data for this study were derived primarily from secondary sources, including official reports (AFD, TİKA, OECD), academic articles, policy analyses, and existing case studies. While this reliance on documentary evidence limits first – hand insights from local actors, it allow for a critical synthesis across multiple sources. The limitations of secondary reliance are explicitly acknowledged. Future research should build on this study through fieldwork, interviews with policymakers, and engagement with local communities to deepen the empirical grounding.

The comparative framework is structured around three dimensions derived from the theoretical synthesis: Realist, Constructivist, and Postcolonial logics - Aid modalities and Operational logic - sectoral and strategic focus. This design allows for both parallel comparison and cross – theoretical interpretation, moving beyond descriptive contrasts to highlight how convergence and divergence in aid practices emerge from the interplay of strategy, identity, and historical power.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: THEORY INFORMED CASE STUDY

The AFD is a state-owned industrial and commercial institution. It was created in 1941 as the “Central Fund of Free France” (“Caisse centrale de la France libre”). Its missions and organisation are set out in Articles R. 516-3 (and following) of the Monetary and Financial Code. The Agency is primarily responsible for the implementation of French cooperation and development policy, within the framework of the guidelines defined by the Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID). Its capital is 100% owned by the French State (BORDAS, 2021, s. 24). However, French aid is not monolithic: Beyond AFD, several ministries, the Ministry of

Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Treasury, and the EU all play important roles. (Cumming, 2016, s. 16) France's aid strategies thus reflect an inter – ministerial negotiation process shaped by evolving political debates about conditionality, security, and sustainable development.

Similarly, established in January 1992, through Statutory Decree No. 480 as a technical assistance agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) is a state-run development and humanitarian institution. By virtue of Law No 4668 it was tasked with the responsibility of granted by other institutions and NGOs in Türkiye (Ngwa, 2020, s. 34 - 35). Türkiye's aid landscape involves diverse actors such as Turkish Airlines, private business groups, NGOs, Religious foundations and Education foundations. These actors sometimes complement and sometimes compete with TİKA, resulting in a more fragmented aid ecosystem than official narratives suggest.

4.1. Realist, Constructivist and Postcolonial Tools

France's colonial history in Senegal provides deep institutional continuity. From the slave trade and assimilation policies of the 17th – 19th centuries to post independence ties, France has maintained strong cultural, economic, and political influence. (Oppong & E., 2024, s. 11)

The CFA franc, Francophonie, and French military presence illustrate how colonial legacies persist. (Oppong & E., 2024, s. 47). Yet, French aid is contested locally: while elites often welcome it for its stability and resources, segments of Senegalese civil society denounce it as neo – colonial and elite – serving. (Chafer, 2002, s. 189 - 196).

In contrast, Türkiye and Somalia share no colonial history. As mentioned by Abdinor Hasan Dahir, Turkey's Africa engagement policy contains elements of anti-colonial discourse.

Turkish leaders repeatedly underline that Turkey is not like the “others”, referring particularly to Europeans who have a colonial history in Africa (Dahir, 2019, s. 10). The intervention of Türkiye in Somalia has started when the president Erdoğan became the first leader to visit Mogadishu after 20 years of civil war, statelessness, terrorism, compounded by droughts and famines (Ali, 2011, s. 67).

Türkiye’s involvement in Somalia is grounded in religious, humanitarian, and geopolitical motivations. Although Türkiye does not formally cite religion as an explicit factor in its foreign policy, faith plays a subtle yet influential role in shaping Turkish-African relations. Scholars like Özkan M. and Orakçı S. have noted that while Türkiye frames its involvement primarily through humanitarian language, this religious and cultural affinity often complements its development strategy (Özkan & Orakçı, 2015, s. 141 - 164). The Turkish assistance, unlike many traditional actors, was described as unconditional, impartial and treated Somalia as an equal partner by respecting the country’s territorial integrity and accepting the Somali leaders’ input. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, former Somali President emphasized the ‘equal partnership’ in Turkish assistance to his country (Dahir, 2019, s. 10). Yet, some Somali NGOs caution that Türkiye’s aid – though respectful of sovereignty, is often centralized in Mogadishu, privileging elites and urban centers. Moreover, projects like Camp TURKSOM reveal not only solidarity but also a strategic ambition to establish geopolitical influence along Red Sea and Gulf routes. (Hagi Mohamoud, 2023, s. 92 - 95)

4.2. Aid Modalities and Operational Logic

France’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) is primarily bilateral, aligning with the priorities set by the Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and

Development (CICID). Grants constitute the majority of France's ODA, representing 77, 9 percent of total bilateral and multilateral aid in 2021 (€10, 2 billion). Bilateral grants alone increased by 14 percent between 2020 and 2021, reflecting France's commitment to prioritize grant-based aid for better targeting of the most vulnerable countries. (French Official Development 2023a)

The AFD uses all its financial instruments in Senegal. The wide range of development tools used in Senegal allows to have a very meaningful overview of the French Development Cooperation policies. Also Senegal has since 2000 consistently been part of France's top 10 ODA recipients and is figuring on the poor country priority list of France (BORDAS, 2021, s. 7-8). The 19 priority countries of French development policy received about €1 billion in French ODA in 2021: the leading recipient was Senegal (€177 million), followed by Mali (€107 million), Burkina Faso (€100 million) and Niger (€92,4 million). (French Official Development, 2023). Between 1970 and 2020, France has provided an average of \$242.755.000 to Senegal. In total Senegal received \$1.456.530.000 of aid from France. (Oppong & E., 2024, s. 32). However, a large share of this aid is loan – based rather than grants, often tied to infrastructure, water, and energy sectors (OECD, 2021). Many funds go to large – scale projects that benefit public institutions or French contractors, with limited impact on grassroots development. As noted by Dirk Konhert, French companies have often been favoured over other foreign firms, thus adding unnecessary additional costs of transactions with francophone African (Könhert, 2022, s. 11). Moreover, aid has been criticized for being used to support underperforming sectors or national prestige projects, not to catalyze transformative local change (Mestrum, 2010, s. 45 - 47).

On its part, Türkiye's TİKA delivers almost exclusively grant – based aid. (OECD, 2025). TİKA's aid to Somalia, while more symbolic and targeted, has grown significantly in impact

and visibility since 2011. Notably, ODA flows spiked in key years, reaching USD 93 million in 2011 and USD 314 million in 2015, primarily due to emergency and humanitarian operations. Although Türkiye's assistance to Africa remains modest in volume compared to larger donors, its total aid to Somalia alone has exceeded USD 1 billion since 2011, and between 2008 and 2017, Türkiye allocated approximately USD 1, 9 billion to the entire African continent (Alio, 2023, s. 53) . This is a significant figure considering Somalia's fragile context. Turkish aid in Somalia is totally delivered through grants, including humanitarian relief, infrastructure, construction (hospitals, roads), and education projects (Altunışık M. , 2020, s. 15 - 35).

Whenever Türkiye's aid may fall short in volume, it makes up for it through high visibility, cultural affinity, and tangible results on the ground. Beyond constructing Mogadishu's largest hospital and offering scholarships to Somali students, Türkiye's development cooperation is strategically reinforced through a broader public diplomacy ecosystem. This includes the widespread dissemination of Turkish television dramas, expanded Turkish Airlines routes to African capitals, relaxed visa policies, and the establishment of institutional religious ties. These state-led initiatives are complemented by private actors such as the Hizmet movement, which operates schools across the continent, and by increasing Turkish business investments, collectively amplifying Türkiye's image as a benevolent and engaged development partner. (Hausmann , 2014, s. 10)

TİKA emphasizes local ownership and flexibility, often citing its demand – driven and partnership – based approach. However, Türkiye's emphasis on bilateral visibility and preference for Muslim – majority countries shows that strategic considerations, similar to those of traditional donors also shape its aid. This strategic alignment is particularly evident in Somalia, where Türkiye's aid is praised for its speed, efficiency, and direct

delivery. Prominent Turkish companies such as Al-Bayrak (managing Mogadishu port), Favori (operating the airport), and Turkish Airlines (providing direct flights) facilitate Türkiye's development and security projects by controlling key logistical hubs. This infrastructure presence allows Turkish actors to bypass intermediaries and the notorious "briefcase businesses" in Somalia, ensuring that funds and resources reach the ground swiftly with minimal overhead.

Unlike Western donors who channel aid through multilateral frameworks like the UN, Türkiye prefers a bilateral mode, engaging directly with Somali authorities and institutions, primarily in Mogadishu. This approach not only accelerates implementation but also reduces bureaucratic delays associated with multilateralism. TİKA's operations remain under the supervision of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye and are closely coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ensuring alignment with Türkiye's broader diplomatic and strategic interests. (Van Den Berg & J., 2019, s. 8)

Türkiye channels approximately 99, 5 percent of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) through bilateral mechanisms, reflecting a deliberate preference for direct engagement over multilateral avenues. While multilateral ODA has remained relatively low—fluctuating between \$42 million and \$111 million over the past decade, it accounted for just 4,4 percent of Türkiye's total ODA as early as 2012. This sharp decline from 60 percent in 2003 to single digits underscores a strategic shift. Bilateral cooperation allows Türkiye to maximize the visibility of its aid programs, aligning with its broader public diplomacy objectives by fostering stronger state-to-state ties and enhancing its national image more effectively than through anonymous multilateral channels (Hausmann , 2014, s. 16). It engages directly with local authorities, including religious groups, traditional leaders, youth and business communities as

mentioned in “Turkey’s New Strategic Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa the Case of Somalia and Sudan” (Hagi & M., 2023, s. 73). Turkish aid’s speed and flexibility distinguish it from traditional donors, but the absence of systematic M&E raises questions about sustainability. Somali civil society organizations note that some projects, while initially impactful, lack long – term maintenance and integration with national planning. At the same time, Türkiye’s heavy reliance on bilateral channels enhances visibility but risks over – centralization around political elites.

4.3. Sectoral and Strategic Focus

France’s development cooperation in Senegal spans multiple sectors, with significant investments in infrastructure such as transport, energy, and water sanitation projects. In education, AFD supports public school modernization and teacher training, while in health, it focuses on public health systems, hospitals, and maternal care. Governance and public administration reform are key areas, particularly civil service reform and decentralization efforts. Culturally, AFD promotes the French language through the Francophonie initiative. In the economic sphere, France supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), green finance, and microcredit schemes. Security and defense cooperation remain discreet, often conducted through secret accords and peacekeeping collaborations. (AFD, tarih yok)

In contrast, Türkiye’s TİKA in Somalia emphasizes practical and high-visibility projects. Infrastructure support includes road construction, hospitals, and critical facilities like the Mogadishu airport terminal. Educational initiatives involve school construction and support for universities, particularly through scholarships for Somali students. In healthcare, TİKA has built key institutions such as the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Hospital and offers medical training. While formal governance

support is less prominent, TİKA engages in local capacity-building. Türkiye also promotes its cultural influence via the Yunus Emre Institute and supports Islamic education. Private sector engagement focuses on vocational training and market rehabilitation. In security, Türkiye plays an active role by providing military training through Camp TURKSOM and strengthening police capacity (Özkan, 2014).

Despite contrasting contexts and institutional legacies, AFD and TİKA illustrate converging patterns. They both mix aid and strategic influence: France through loans, cultural conditionality, and military presence; Türkiye through grants, religious – cultural affinity, and military training. They also both face critiques of sustainability. AFD perpetuates dependency and privileges elites whereas TİKA has a weak evaluation and elite – focused aid delivery.

They both also use aid for soft power. While France uses soft power through Francophonie and EU – aligned reforms, Türkiye uses it through Islamic solidarity, TV dramas and bilateral symbolism.

Crucially, both donors reveal the limits of neat categorizations. France is not simply a rigid, neo – colonial actor, it has engaged in reforms such as debt relief and climate initiatives. (Carroll, 2021) Türkiye is not purely a humanitarian alternative; its aid serves pragmatic and strategic ambitions. Together, they exemplify how aid today operates as a hybrid foreign policy tool, blending elements of realism, constructivism, and postcolonial continuity.

5. DISCUSSION

The comparative presence of AFD in Senegal and TİKA in Somalia provides a compelling lens through which to assess

the evolving dynamics between traditional and non-traditional donors in Africa. France exemplifies the classic Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor, operating within institutionalized, standardized processes rooted in long-standing commitments to Francophone Africa. Türkiye, by contrast, positions itself as a pragmatic, agile, and culturally resonant actor, deliberately operating outside the DAC framework while cultivating a distinct donor identity.

While Türkiye has pledged to gradually increase its Official Development Assistance (ODA)—targeting 0.33% of its Gross National Income by 2015, it deliberately avoids the constraints of DAC membership. As Hausmann (Hausmann , 2014, s. 3) notes, this dual stance allows Türkiye to engage with traditional donors while preserving autonomy from the formal obligations and conditionality associated with DAC donors.

Assessing donor preferences on the ground reveals a nuanced picture. In Somalia, Türkiye's mode, characterized by rapid deployment, grant-based funding, and cultural affinity with Muslim-majority societies, has filled critical gaps left by Western donors and garnered substantial local trust. In contrast, France's reinforced presence in Senegal has built an extensive institutional and financial footprint through AFD, but it is often critiqued for perpetuating conditionality, elite capture, and neo-colonial entanglements, leading to donor fatigue among some local constituencies.

From a sustainability perspective, OECD evaluations show that AFD's projects are well-integrated with national development strategies, leveraging concessional loans and co-financing with multilateral institutions (OECD, 2018, s. 76 - 78). TİKA, by contrast, provides 100 percent grants that are highly visible and rapidly implemented but tend to lack formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Özkan, 2014, s. 394).

This contrast positions AFD as a donor focused on scalability and long-term sectoral integration, while TİKA prioritizes immediacy, visibility, and symbolic capital.

Despite these differences, both donors reveal patterns of convergence. France increasingly complements its loan – heavy portfolio with grants, debt relief, and climate finance initiatives that resemble non – traditional priorities. Türkiye once celebrated for its grassroots visibility and unconditionality, now blends humanitarianism with strategic statecraft, most visibly through Camp TURKSOM and the integration of aid into its security and commercial interests.

This convergence raises critical normative questions. On the positive side, convergence can be read as promoting greater efficiency and comparability, aligning donor practices with international standards while allowing emerging actors to scale up their engagement. For recipient governments, convergence may facilitate coordination and predictability, particularly where donors align with national development strategies.

However, convergence also risks reproducing global hierarchies. France’s reliance on conditionality and elite – centered networks has long been criticized for sustaining dependency. Türkiye, while rhetorically rejecting conditionality, sometimes reproduces donor – recipient asymmetries in subtler – ways: privileging elites in Mogadishu, projecting cultural symbols, or leveraging aid for geopolitical influence. This suggests that hybrid models may not represent genuine innovation but rather the adaptation of old practices under new labels. Importantly, the sustainability of aid outcomes hinges not only on donor strategies but also on recipient agency. In Senegal, civil society actors have at times challenged AFD’s projects as neo – colonial or overly technocratic. In Somalia, NGOs and local leaders have welcomed Türkiye’s visibility but criticized the lack

of long – term maintenance and integration with national systems. These perspectives underscore that convergence in donor practice does not necessarily translate into convergence in recipient benefit.

Finally, neutrality requires acknowledging that both donors face trade – offs and contradictions. France combines reformist commitments (e.g. Climate finance, debt relief) with enduring postcolonial influence. Türkiye combines visible humanitarianism with growing strategic and military ambitions. Neither fully escapes the tensions of power and hierarchy inherent in aid. Rather, both illustrate how development cooperation has become a hybrid foreign policy tool, mixing elements of realism, constructivism, and postcolonial continuity.

6. CONCLUSION

The comparative presence of AFD in Senegal and TİKA in Somalia illustrates how traditional and non-traditional donors are increasingly converging in their aid practices. France embodies the institutionalized, policy-driven DAC model, with strong monitoring, concessional loans, and multilateral alignment. Türkiye offers a more flexible, grant – based, and culturally resonant approach outside the DAC framework. Yet, both donors employ aid as a strategic foreign policy tool, blending humanitarian narratives with power projection, soft diplomacy, and geopolitical interests. The convergence between AFD and TİKA has ambivalent implications. On one hand, it offers opportunities for greater coordination, predictability, and efficiency in aid delivery. Shared practices such as prioritizing visibility, strategic infrastructure, and soft power diplomacy, can facilitate complementarity between donors. On the other hand, convergence risks entrenching global asymmetries by repackaging old hierarchies in new forms. While AFD continues

to face critiques of neo – colonial conditionality, TİKA’s driven, and security – oriented projects raise concerns about sustainability and the subtle reproduction of dependency.

This analysis suggests that what is often framed as “innovation” in aid may in fact be adaptation. Hybrid models – blending South – South solidarity with strategic statecraft, do not necessarily disrupt global aid hierarchies. Instead, they reflect pragmatic adjustments to shifting geopolitical conditions. The challenge lies in distinguishing between genuine innovation and adaptive strategies that reinforce donor dominance under the rhetoric of partnership. For aid to move beyond hybridized dominance, both France and Türkiye must address their respective shortcomings. AFD could deepen reforms by reducing reliance on tied loans, engaging more directly with civil society, and diversifying beyond the Francophone sphere. Türkiye could strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, broaden participation beyond elites, and clarify the balance between humanitarian solidarity and strategic ambition. For both, prioritizing recipient agency, including local communities, NGOs, and non – elites, is essential for legitimacy and sustainability. Ultimately, foreign aid in Africa can no longer be neatly categorized as “traditional” or “alternative”. It operates within a complex, multi – layered field shaped by the interplay of strategy, identity, and history. Recognizing this complexity requires moving beyond dichotomies of altruism versus interest, or North versus South, to interrogate the hybrid practices that define today’s aid landscape. Only through such critical reflection can development cooperation evolve toward more equitable and genuinely transformative partnerships.

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