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HASAN KALYONCU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ

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HUMANITARIAN AID AS FOREIGN POLICY: THE CASE OF SYRIA, 2012-2020

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LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE
YÜKSEK LİSANS KABUL VE ONAY FORMU

Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı **Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişikliler** Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi **Saeed BAROUD** tarafından hazırlanan **"Humanitarian Aid As Foreign Policy: The Case Of Syria, 2012-2020"** başlıklı tez, **27 / 04 / 2022** tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucu **başarılı** bulunarak jürimiz tarafından **Yüksek Lisans Tezi** olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Tez Danışmanı	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Orhun Cem KARSAVURAN Hasan Kalyoncu Üniversitesi	
Jüri Başkanı	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Bilal ULUSOY Hasan Kalyoncu Üniversitesi	
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Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak sunduğum "**HUMANITARIAN AID AS FOREIGN POLICY: THE CASE OF SYRIA, 2012-2020**" başlıklı çalışmanın tarafımca, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu ve bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanmış olduğumu belirtir ve onurumla doğrularım.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of foreign aid as a soft power tool by providing an understanding of the interrelation between foreign policy and aid. The research presents the case of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis from 2012 till 2020, with a focus on five major donors to Syria: The United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Germany, and Qatar. The study is based on an extensive literature review as well as interviews with aid actors. The findings of the study unambiguously demonstrate that aid and foreign policy are intertwined since, in most cases, 'foreign aid' falls under the responsibility of foreign ministries. Besides the humanitarian imperative, the geopolitical account has significant importance in the decision-making process that cascades down from the general foreign policy agenda. In addition, the strategic interests of the donor country are contributing to the decision making. The prominent themes are national security, tackling terrorism, preventing immigration influx, and economic goals. The study also demonstrates the extent to which aid can be politicised in its extreme form by focusing on Russian vetoes in the UN Security Council and the Syrian Government's weaponisation of aid. The findings of the literature review are also crosschecked through interviews conducted with nine experts who have significant experience in humanitarian, and humanitarian-foreign policy nexus. Finally, the study provides a set of recommendations to humanitarian practitioners.

Key Words:

Foreign Policy, Foreign Aid, Humanitarian Assistance, Humanitarian Aid, Principled Aid, Syrian Crisis, Syrian Conflict

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BHA	:	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (US)
CBPF	:	Country-Based Pooled Fund
DAC	:	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DFID	:	Department for International Development (UK)
DHA	:	Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
ECHO (DG ECHO)	:	The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECW	:	Education Cannot Wait
ER	:	Early Recovery
ERC	:	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FCDO	:	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GHD	:	the Good Humanitarian Donorship
GNI	:	Gross National Income
GoS	:	Government of Syria
HCT	:	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	:	Humanitarian Response Plans
HTS	:	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IASC	:	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	:	International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
IDPs	:	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO(s)	:	International Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
ISIS	:	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LNGO(s)	:	Local Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

MSNA	:	the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
NES	:	the Northeast Syria
NGO(s)	:	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
NWS	:	The Northwest Syria
OCHA (UN OCHA)	:	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFDA	:	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USA)
OIG	:	The Office of Inspector General (US)
PiN	:	People in Need
QFFD	:	Qatar Fund For Development
SARC	:	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SCHF	:	Syria Cross-border Pooled Fund
SHF	:	Syria Humanitarian Fund
UNDRO	:	UN Disaster Relief Coordinator
UNMM	:	United Nations Monitoring Mechanism
UNSC	:	United Nations Security Council
USAID	:	United States Agency for International Development
WoS	:	Whole of Syria

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem and Problem Statement

Humanitarian aid is embedded in human nature as people respond spontaneously to offer help to the people in need. Philanthropy has evolved along with the history with the encouragement of spiritual teachings that church the good doing for others. Nevertheless, providing help, which is simply a very good thing, can be perceived by parties to the conflict as a contribution to the battle. If the conflict is triggered between community I and community II, then a volunteer who is looking after women and children of the community I will be considered as vouching for them, making the volunteering person or entity in the side of the foes. The result is that the good-doer will end up under fire. The aid providers were an obstacle, targeted, kidnapped, and even killed under such presumption. Hence the four principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence come at the top of the Fundamental Principles adopted in Vienna 1965 by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC). Those principles were designed to be the governing basis of all humanitarian action. Declaring humanitarian principles aimed to protect the "human imperative" from being engaged in combat and, as a result, being deconflicted by all parties to the conflict. Those principles must apply to the complete humanitarian aid processes, including fundraising. A humanitarian organization must be aware that funding should be provided on the basis of "human imperative". Any funds that aim to the predominance of any party to the conflict must be declined.

States, for their part, play a critical role in relief efforts. During natural disasters and times of conflict, states send humanitarian aid to foreign countries. In other circumstances, such as earthquakes, support is provided not only in terms of financial resources but also in terms of technical expertise and even sending military personnel and equipment. International aid takes several forms and can be provided bilaterally, or through United Nations agencies, since that one of the purposes of United Nations is "to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character" as indicated

in the UN Charter (the UN, 1945, p. 54). Such commitment guides the humanitarian donors to comply with the core humanitarian principles, including neutrality. In that sense, the EU has a consensus on the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles for Humanitarian Aid. The sixth principle out of the twenty-three principles dictates that allocation of humanitarian funding should be "in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments".

Under such principles, humanitarian actors argue that humanitarian aid should remain neutral and shall not serve the political interest, while foreign policy actors tend to utilize aid to achieve national interest goals. This brings us to the inherent tension between the two camps, who have a different set of mandates towards crises and conflicts of international nature. As a compromise, the notion of "principled aid" has been put forward, which aims to balance humanitarian and national interest motives. This long debate generates the research question: To what extent do donors provide aid in a "principled" manner, and how do they balance different considerations in making their funding decisions? What are the aspects of such reliance, if any? More importantly, what are the best practices by the humanitarian practitioners to ensure the moral nature of their action? In order to provide a real-life answer to the research question, the research utilized the Syrian crisis as a case study, which is examined from 2012 through 2020.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to provide an understanding of dynamics and interrelatedness between humanitarian aid and foreign policy and measures in place to ensure their co-existence with mutually acceptable boundaries. In doing so, the study starts with a brief history of aid in its various forms, such as humanitarian and development, and how these different trajectories of aid emerged and structured. Afterwards, it focuses on the notion of foreign policy and efforts to bridge the gap between the two concepts. In the following chapter, the study gives an account of the Syrian uprising from its initial phase to 2020 when the conflict was "frozen" in its existing form and investigates the funding patterns of five important donors of Syria, in conjunction with their foreign policy objectives toward the Syrian crisis, as well as discussions and rivalries at the UN level. Finally, it corroborates its literature findings with nine experts who also involves recommendations for humanitarian actors.

Apart from its contribution to the academic field, the study also aims to provide the humanitarian practitioners with an improved understanding of the funding drivers, funding mechanisms, and funding trends to the conflicts. It also shows how aid in its most basic life-

saving form can be subject to intense geopolitical competition by international actors, and a weapon for political goals by parties to the conflict. An improved understanding of these dynamics will help relevant actors in their evaluation of the advantages of institutional funding as well as the downsides that might be entangled with this funding. As a result, the local actors can get better prepared to plan their action along with the crisis in the way that is most benefitable to the served population.

1.3 Importance of the Research

The Humanitarian practitioners need to increase understanding of the funding, including funding motivation and decision process, to build strong policy-based advocacy towards more principled-aid. The relationship between humanitarian aid and foreign policy has many layers and many factors and varies from one state to another. Even within the same state, there are several dynamics in place, affecting the structures and the decision-making processes. In the light of this complexity comes the importance of the research topic on Syria.

The popular uprising sparked in 2011 has led to a complex, protracted crisis involving major global and regional powers. As a result, the Syrian crisis became the largest man-made catastrophe in the twenty-first century, where almost half of the population was displaced, over half million people lost their lives, fifteen thousand people were tortured to death while other hundred thousand remained detained (HRW, 2021, para. 9). The magnitude of human suffering called for a unique humanitarian action inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries. Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic added to the struggle of the most vulnerable population in the shadows of a shortage of international aid available.

Humanitarian aid to Syria attracted the attention of all major donors, and unfortunately, due to the prolonged nature of the crisis, the aid programs have been going on for more than ten years so far. This allows the research to show the changes occurring within this wide span of time. In the US, there has been a change in administration, for example, and the dynamics of the conflict has been very fluid itself. On the other hand, Syria is considered the most baffling geo-political case. Global and regional powers have crisscross interests in the area. Events in Iraq, Lebanon, and Libya are being balanced on Syrian accounts. That is why the crisis of Syria is multidimensional, and the decisions on humanitarian funding are cascaded from a complicated decision-making matrix. As a result, the analysis for the Syria case, being very recent and very complicated, allows an updated and comprehensive understanding of the research question.

1.4 Assumptions and Limitations of the Research

The argument is that as humanitarian actors better understand these dynamics, and how such dynamics vary according to the particular crisis and the particular government concerned, they shall have a better opportunity to engage in a more politically nuanced way with those governments. The research seeks to render such understanding derived from a theoretical review combined with the realistic observations from a spectrum of experts who have experience in working with international funding agencies in various states and witnesses structural and organisational changes about Syria and others as well.

Considering Syria for the case study brings its advantages and challenges at the same time. Firstly, the crisis is still going on with dynamic changes still happening. Being an open dossier means that many facts are still unknown and ambiguous. The geopolitical is over complicated making an attempt to plot the scene and to analyse the political motivations of different stakeholders is very debatable. The information available for review can be objective. Also, it can be based on perceptions and personal assessments.

In addition, there are technical limitations as well. While there are multiple outlets to access information related to humanitarian funding, there is limited public access to the foreign policies related to Syria. On the other hand, there is a wide discrepancy across governments in terms of publicly available information on the amount of funding or foreign policy strategies regarding Syria. It seems that unless someone has a seat on the decision-making tables, it will be challenging to assume the decision-making processes or weighing factors. Moreover, access to the people who do actually have a seat on the table is difficult. It is possible, with proper effort, to get in touch with such figures. Some officials, when correctly contacted, have participated with pleasure in the interviews. While others, due to the sensitivity of the topic, have has declined to participate or dismissed the request completely. This can be based on the concern that their answers can be misrepresented or misused.

1.5 Research Methodology

There are various types of foreign funding, such as humanitarian funding, stabilisation funding, and military support coming from different states to Syria. The research is focusing only on humanitarian funding, which is ideally needs-based funding independent from any external factors as well as it limits the study within the time frame from 2012 to 2020 to ensure the availability of the data. Moreover, the case study focuses on five of the major donors to

Syria: The United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Germany, and Qatar. This specific selection aims to present diverse approaches among donor states. For instance, the United States have it is own decision-making mechanisms that match its governance structure and its economic size. The size economics of the US, with a GDP of nearly twenty-one trillion US dollars (World Bank, 2021, p. 1), allows it to contribute generously to the humanitarian aid of the largest donors (Girling et al., 2021, p. 48). The US policies and objectives are more open to being published with details for the public. The UK, on the other hand, is unique in its foreign humanitarian aid, as it has tailored legislation to dedicate 0.7% of the national income to overseas aid (Warwick et al., 2021, p. 2). The target was even overachieved in some years. Only in 2021 and due to the economic aftermath of COVID-19, the target was reduced to 0.5% of the GNI. Germany is a leading donor with an established presence in Syria in the development sector via GIZ prior to 2011. On the other hand, the EU is an economic and political union of over twenty-five countries. The EU has a unique governance system that has its own humanitarian body, the DG-ECHO. DG-ECHO is considered unique as it pooled the contributions from member states into one fund, making the decision-making nature based on consortium decisions. Lastly, Qatar has generous overseas funding with active charity actors across the globe. Looking at the Qatari funding sheds light on the donors from beyond the western hemisphere.

The research adopts a hybrid approach combining critical analysis of the secondary data about the funding details. The results are conjugate with primary qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with the subject-matter experts.

To achieve the research objectives, the research starts with a literature review. The review aims to identify the principles of humanitarian aid within the international community framework, as stated in international charters and conventions. Then the research covers the foreign policy and humanitarian action by investigating the timeline of the development of the humanitarian principles and the adoption by the United Nations. After that, it looks into the structures of the foreign aid department, and the balance between ‘values’ and ‘interest’ at the decision making.

With the theoretical review covered, the research works on the case study of Syria. First, the context of the Syria crisis is being analysed utilising the chronological analysis methodology, highlighting the geological entanglements and the key events that influenced the humanitarian situation in Syria within the timeframe of the study. As this is done, the research moves into the case study of humanitarian funding to Syria. This selection of those five donors

is an attempt to review different donors with different characteristics. The research looks into the secondary data and analyses the funding trends and motivations in light of the chronicle order of the events with correlation to the funding amounts and priorities.

As the literature review lays down the foundations to answer the research question, comes the individual reviews to complement the findings. For that purpose, semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants such as current or former staff in the funding institutes. The interviews aim to fill the gaps in the data through a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions. The recommendations to the aid organisations are an important outcome of the interviews. The qualitative data analysis aims to find answers to the main and sub-questions of the research.

In conclusion, the research compiles the date from both, the literature review and qualitative data of the interviews, and draft a final conclusion that contains the main takeaways as well as the set of recommendations to the humanitarian community.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The study mainly looks for the relation between humanitarian funding and the political will in the foreign relations front with the particular case of the Syrian crisis, investigating the variables of the relation. The research variables are obtained from the theoretical conceptualization found in the literature review; then they were enhanced with additional aspects highlighted by the field experience of the experts. The identified variables are: The principle-nature in meeting the needs during the needs assessment, the allocation of funds, the adequate distribution of aid across geographic areas of control, and the impact of external factors is limiting such access. The role of structures and processes in establishing sound decision-making mechanisms and the impact of human factors on the system and the final outcomes. The role of the UN agencies in maintaining the neutrality of the humanitarian response and playing advocacy role with donor states.

Considering the elements aforementioned above, then looking at the research questions and problem, with the insights of the literature review, this study can validate the literature review hypothesis in the existence of influencing factors in the Syrian context and to what extent they matter. Additionally, the study explores other factors experienced in Syria but was not covered in the literature review. More importantly, the study investigates the possibility of providing a viable recommendation for humanitarian practitioners to encounter the influence

of external factors on the principled nature of their work, achieving the best outcomes for the people they are serving.

CHAPTER 2

FOREIGN POLICY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In this chapter of the study, some definitional clarity regarding the basic concepts of foreign policy and aid is provided. Afterwards, the focus turns to the interrelatedness between the two realms with a focus on the decision-making process in balancing humanitarian considerations and interests.

2.1 Introduction to Foreign Aid

Foreign aid is a blanket term that encompasses various forms of transfers from one country to another, including military aid. From the beginning of its study, scholars have emphasized the interrelatedness of aid and foreign policy. In his seminal article, Morgenthau regards foreign aid as "one of the real innovations which the modern age has introduced into the practice of foreign policy", helping accomplish ends that military force or traditional diplomacy cannot (Morgenthau, 1962, p. 302). Morgenthau then identifies different types of foreign aid such as: humanitarian aid, subsistence aid, military aid, bribery, prestige foreign aid, and foreign aid for economic development. Morgenthau's claim is that only humanitarian aid is non-political, while subsistence aid may prevent development catastrophes.

It is clear from Morgenthau's analysis that various, often contradicting practices are considered within the same category under the label of foreign aid. In fact, it can be identified that two different types of aid have dominated the field of foreign aid with very different trajectories and structures. Humanitarian aid has emerged in the 19th-century with altruistic motives, whereas development aid, or to use the more technical term Official Development Assistance (ODA), is a practice of the immediate aftermath of the post-second world era. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the evolution of these two different aid practices, before delving into the interaction of aid in general, and foreign policy.

2.2 Humanitarian Aid

The origin of humanitarianism is generally dated at the experience of Swiss businessman Henry Dunant during the Battle of Solferino in 1859. At that time, Dunant was at

the Italian village of Solferino for business purposes, and coincidentally witnessed the aftermath of an armed conflict e between Austro-Hungarian and French armies with heavy casualties on both sides, which led him to join local people to provide relief to the victims. This has been a transformative experience for him, as, after the incident, he initiated a campaign that would result in the foundation of a relief agency for the purposes of providing humanitarian assistance to victims of war, and to ensure the proper functioning of the agency in war zones, an intergovernmental treaty-making this agency neutral (Davey et al., 2013a, p. 5).

As a result of this campaign, the humanitarian system as we know it today started to be shaped with its legal and institutional foundations, including the launch of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 and enacting of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field in 1864. As conflicts became more widespread and deadly throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the Red Cross/Red Crescent started its humanitarian assistance activities to warring parties in the armed conflicts of the late nineteenth century. Also, in this period were the early examples of fundraising and disaster response in the modern sense of the word, in addition to the beginning of international cooperation in medicine and healthcare (Davey et al., 2013a, p. 6). It's also worth mentioning that the spread of humanitarianism originated in Europe was in parallel with the strengthening of European colonialism in Africa and Asia. Several core aid strategies commonly used today, such as famine relief and cash assistance, were first developed and tested in the colonies. (Bennet, 2016, p. 13).

After the First World War, the humanitarian system as we know it further developed, and following the Second World War, the establishment of the United Nations constituted the core of humanitarian action. This led to a substantial expansion in the scale and geographical breadth of the humanitarian system, which was another feature of the post-World War II period. Hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were founded during this period, with the majority of them based in the United States and Western Europe, and the focus of help changed from Europeans affected by WWII to inhabitants of the newly independent countries in the so-called Third World. (Bennet, 2016, p. 14).

Accordingly, the aid agencies faced huge challenges in the formal colonies that emerged after the withdrawal of western powers. They were expected to provide skills, materials, and funds to those countries that were required to meet the needs in those countries. Also worth noting is the cold-war rivalry between the two superpowers, which significantly impacted the working arrangements of aid agencies. Especially in the regions that were subject to intense

competition, aid was usually tried to be instrumentalized to advance policy and security goals.

With the end of the cold war, the aid system faced new challenges and tests. Initially, there was some optimism that the disappearance of superpower rivalry would lead to a more favourable environment for humanitarian action. However, it was soon seen that the new era was marked with complex emergencies, to which older systems and approaches were struggling to respond. Man-made and natural disasters intertwined as conflicts became more local and internal and within communities than across countries and borders. While geopolitical tensions reduced, they were replaced with identity-related conflicts such as ethnicity, tribe, language, and religion.

The changing environment of humanitarian action prompted radical changes in the institutional and legal framework of the humanitarian system, reflected in the relevant UN resolutions. The landmark development in this respect was the General Assembly Resolution 46/182 adopted in 1991, which took place after a comprehensive revision of previous arrangements for coordination and capacity in place, and titled the 'Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. The new system reinforced the previously titled e Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), which was later in 1998 renamed as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The abovementioned resolution also created several important new entities that are at the core of the humanitarian system: the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator; the Humanitarian Coordinator system; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC); inter-agency needs assessments; the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP); and the Financial Tracking System (FTS) (Davey et al., 2013b, p. 13). This development in coordination bodies needed to be accompanied with funding capacity to ensure the coordination is effective and goes beyond the mere reports on needs. For this purpose, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) was created in 2006 by the General Assembly. The CERF is a pooled fund, which means all states members to the UN can contribute to the fund, which is a consistency of the UN universal nature, where the donations and contribution are released based on emerging needs setting aside the individual decision of the fund's contributors. One critique to the fund is that only UN Agencies can be the receivers of these funds, even when they are sub awarding the fund to local NGOs as implementing partners (Walker & Pepper, 2007, p. 11).

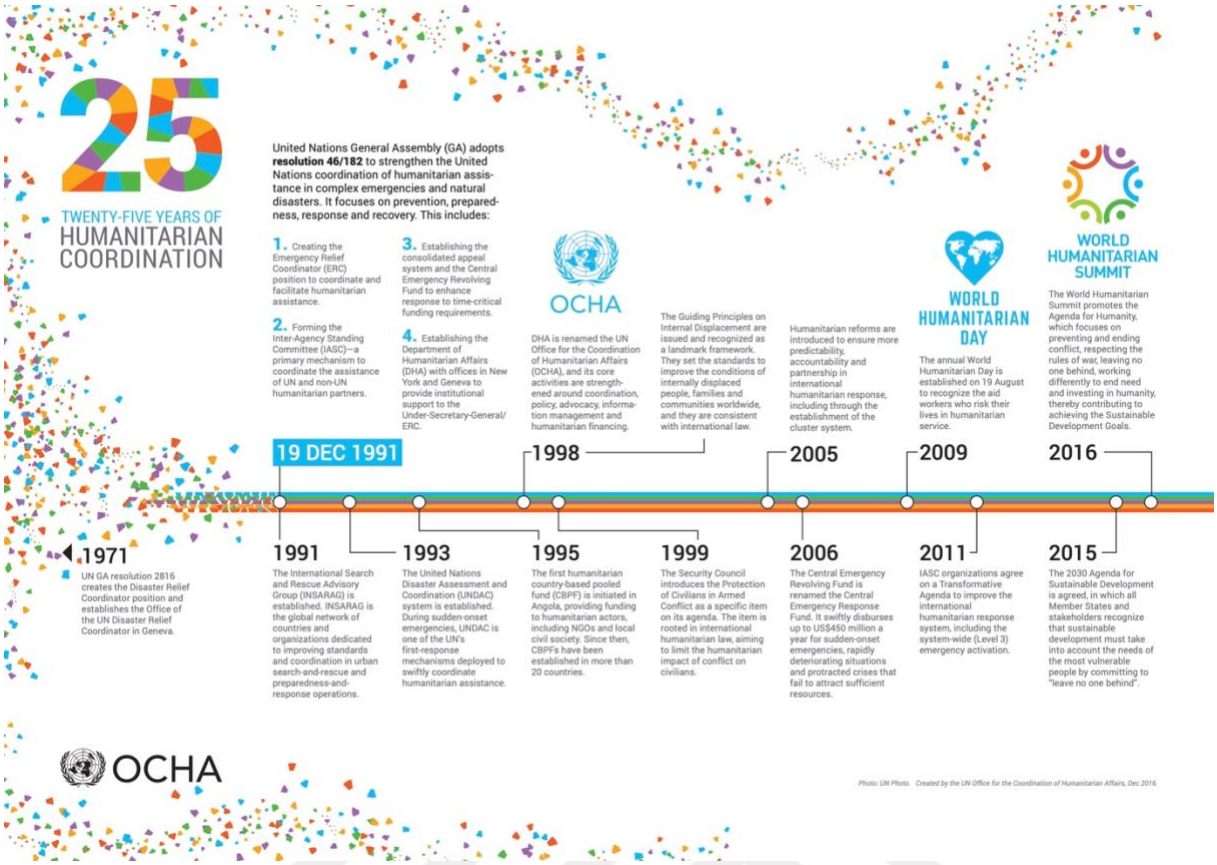

Figure 1: The evolvement of the UN humanitarian coordination.

Source: OCHA, (2016)

Together with the newly established mechanisms mentioned above, there was also a series of discussions to establish the basic principles of humanitarian action. Here, the discussions were guided by the core humanitarian principles, which were traditionally accepted as having a foundational place in the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. These principles have been adopted and embedded into the operations of UN humanitarian organizations and reflected in two General Assembly resolutions. The first three principles, 'humanity, neutrality and impartiality' were endorsed in 2004 in General Assembly resolution 1991 mentioned above. General Assembly resolution 58/114 (UNGA, 2004) included independence as the fourth key principle guiding humanitarian action. The General Assembly has constantly emphasized the cruciality of promoting and respecting these principles as central to humanitarian assistance (Bagshaw, 2012, p. 1).

Table 1: Humanitarian principles adopted by the OCHA

Source: (Bagshaw, 2012, p. 1)

Humanity	Neutrality	Impartiality	Independence
Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.	Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.	Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.	Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

These principles were not left on paper only. They have been operationalized through numerous documents and guidebooks that are highly regarded in terms of guiding humanitarian action. The first of these is the UN Code of Conduct, signed by more than 492 aid organizations, which is a reference document for humanitarian organizations by establishing common standards and adherence to the four principles. According to the code, humanitarian aid should be regarded as a right for all citizens of all countries, disregarding race, creed or nationality; in an apolitical manner and with due respect for the culture of the aid recipient and protecting their dignity. The Sphere Handbook, published in 1998, was a collective of a group of international NGOs which joined efforts with the common aim of making humanitarian aid more effective by adopting a set of "minimum standards" for international humanitarian work to be a frame of reference by NGOs, government and donor agencies (Rysaback-Smith, 2015, p. 10).

These principles and policy documents demonstrate that humanitarian action is intrinsically political, takes place in a highly politicized context, and only through these principles, it can protect itself from being controversial. The developments throughout the 1990s further reinforced this understanding. The proliferation of conflicts that are mainly characterized by being local has increased the need for humanitarian aid. During this era, the 1991 intervention in Iraq, the conflict and civil war in the former Yugoslavia; civil war and famine in Somalia; and the Rwandan genocide and Great Lakes crisis were the events that led to increased discussions and subsequent revisions on the understanding and main assumptions of humanitarian action. In that sense, the Rwandan genocide, and the way it unfolded was a critical turning point. It demonstrated that vulnerabilities often have their origins in the political sphere, as stated in the 1996 Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda, concluding "humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for political action" and calling

for increasing coherence between political and humanitarian efforts. Thus, the Rwanda experience proved that aid and political responses do not exist in separation, and there needs to be closer interaction between the two (Macrae & Leader, 2000, p. 1).

2.2.1 Recent Trends in Humanitarian Aid

The trends that emerged in the 1990s only became more dominant throughout the 2000s and 2010s. The new and emerging trends, and the contemporary challenges faced by the humanitarian system are given summarily below:

- *Changing Nature of Conflict*

As conflicts became more local and identity-based, they have also increasingly targeted civilian populations. This change also brought structural shifts in the conflict; conflicts now are longer than classical warfare, which is usually referred to as protracted crises, generally low intensified, and takes place at a low pace. Most of the aid response programs today are responding to conflicts that have ongoing proxy-wars in some form or another, which mean that the external powers have a stronger influence on the path of events than the local residents. However, there are exceptions to these trends, particularly in the middle east, horn of Africa, and Afghanistan crises. With these trends, the protection of civilians became a central concern in humanitarian action, as it has become frequently the case that o humanitarian workers and organizations find themselves amidst armed conflict, and each side regard them as having a stake in the conflict. While humanitarian organizations make every effort to claim their impartial status, impartiality may mean different things for the warring sides putting the lives of their workers in danger (Jessen-Petersen, 2011, p. 3).

- *Climate Change and Disasters*

Rapid and unplanned urbanization, especially in lowland and coastal areas, increased stress on natural resources leading to competition on resources and land, and increased the frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as floods and droughts, all bringing forward climate change as a threat multiplier that can substantially increase the damage and destruction of conflicts. Climate change may make certain disasters more frequent and severe, which may then undermine people's ability to cope and increase vulnerabilities. According to (Bennet, 2016, p. 34) "climate change may generate new threats which regions and populations have no experience of."

- *The Proliferation of Actors/Lack of Coordination*

The multiplication of actors occurs on a number of different fronts. First and foremost, there are simply too many humanitarian groups on the ground in emerging and reoccurring disasters, particularly in Africa. In a well-known example, there were more than nine hundred international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which added to the overlapping, lack of coherence, and lack of cooperation on operational and strategic objectives. To overcome these challenges, under the leadership of the United Nations emergency relief coordinator, establishment of a cluster approach to responding to situations of internal displacement, in which selected agencies are given primary responsibility for providing assistance in various sectors such as camp management, protection, shelter, water, sanitation, and food, has recently produced significant progress, resulting in a markedly better and more predictable and effective response in addressing emergency situations. (Jessen-Petersen, 2011, p. 6).

While coordination within the humanitarian ecosystem improved, persistent problems remained in place. Because funding is concentrated among a handful of major donors, the aid sector would be highly sensitive to the political interests of the nations that provide the funds. For their part, UN agencies and large international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have attracted so much funding compared to smaller international and local organizations, that there seems to be an exclusive and centralized group within the humanitarian sector constituted by its major players. On the issue of proliferation, it is also seen in the type of actors. Traditionally dominated by Western governments, the humanitarian donorship scene is now also witnessing the involvement of non-Western governments, from China to Turkey, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Brazil. On the other hand, while much advertised in the early 2010s, the so-called rise of emerging donors did not live up to its promises. Today, the main features of the humanitarian system remain in place as DAC donors are still by far the largest providers of humanitarian assistance and are expected to remain so for the foreseeable future (Willitts-King et al., 2018, p. 3).

Another witnessed trend is the increased involvement of business in humanitarian action. The deep penetration of technology even in remote societies, increased pace of urbanization, and digitalization of all aspects of life open important opportunities for business and technology to involve and transform the structure and operations of the humanitarian system.

In the face of these new trends and challenges, several attempts were made to adopt the new environment. Below, some of the major initiatives within this framework are given.

2.2.2 Classical vs. Resilience Humanitarianism

In humanitarian action, the classical approach has long predominated, marked by characteristics such as exceptionalism, principality, and a focus on the United Nations. The notion of exceptionalism refers to the understanding that there is a clear distinction between crises and everyday life, and humanitarian assistance definitely falls under the category of crisis and exceptionalism. In classical humanitarianism, crises are the founding element, and it serves as the foundation for many characteristics of aid, such as the short-cycle financing methods and operational processes that are used. The classical method, in addition, has a singular emphasis on the value of humanitarian ideals as a way of securing safe access to those who are in need of assistance. The sole emphasis on principles also helps to solidify the image of international players as being removed from their own societies. Furthermore, from the perspective of classical humanitarianism, national authorities and other local institutions are made inconsequential. UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have a significant position in decision-making and operations. Whenever national systems are brought into the context, they are either dismissed out of hand or given the impression that they lack the necessary institutional capacity. Finally, under traditional humanitarianism, the users of charity, who are sometimes referred to as "beneficiaries," are often represented as helpless victims who have no control or agency over their situation (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 5).

As outlined in the previous section, the post-cold war environment profoundly challenged the assumptions and operational modalities of classical humanitarianism. As a response to these challenges, a new approach emerged, which may be labelled as resilience humanitarianism.

From this concept that individuals, communities, and society are capable of coping with and recovering from calamities, the resilience narrative is derived. It departs from traditional humanitarianism's interpretation of calamities and says that continuity, not disruption, maybe the result. Disaster aid spawned resilience humanitarianism, which has now spread to combat zones and refugee camps. The Syrian refugee crisis is a common illustration of this, since the vast majority of displaced individuals reside outside of camps, and the emphasis is increasingly on their ability to survive. People and communities' resilience and the necessity of local reaction mechanisms are emphasized in this approach. Progress in catastrophe preparedness and

response may be traced directly to this shift toward greater resilience. As a result, persons afflicted and the communities they live in are not seen as victims by those who practice resilience. Instead, they are seen as survivors or first responders who have taken responsibility for their own fate and can rely on themselves (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 6).

It should be noted that the classical approach to humanitarianism did not disappear completely. Rather, the two paradigms live side by side, and it is the nature of the disaster and specific context guide which one will have prominence.

2.2.3 Coherence Debate

In the face of new and emerging challenges, it has become increasingly recognized that humanitarian aid is inherently political. Against this recognition, a new debate emerged with the aim of increasing the coherence between humanitarian action and politics. The central argument of the debate was that the radical changes that occurred in the 90s and 2000s, such as the geopolitical changes, resulted in the priorities of the advanced nation, the redefinition of state sovereignty, changes in the concept of security as a wider concept which also encompasses poverty, environment, and demographics, necessitated a search for coherence between humanitarian and political actions.

One of the most persuasive reasons in favour of the coherence agenda is that although assistance might inflame tensions, it can also serve as a tool for fostering peace. Humanitarian help as a conflict management method seems to be both practical and desirable, according to this study. This approach suggests that help be delivered (or withheld) based on an assessment of its potential influence on conflict dynamics rather than on the basis of need. In order to put the concept of coherence into action, it must be combined with the humanitarian imperative. De facto political conditions have been imposed on humanitarian aid by certain donors and by some nations in the course of this process. The ethical and technological ramifications of this confluence are substantial. (Macrae & Leader, 2000, p. 4).

The use of humanitarian aid to influence the outcome of wars inevitably ran counter to the fundamental ideals of humanitarian action, which strive to offer assistance and relief only on the basis of need. Rewarding or refusing help based on political considerations or the acts of contending parties would jeopardize such ideals gravely. Additionally, the coherence agenda would result in political players abandoning distinct diplomatic and political activity, leaving humanitarianism as the dominant form of political participation in conflict-affected nations. In certain instances, humanitarian assistance workers, as well as conflict resolution and

development professionals, are required to serve as the major source of intelligence. This extension of humanitarian actors' duties has a detrimental effect on their perceived neutrality and impartiality, creates security concerns for humanitarian actors, and even results in their purposeful targeting for their operations (Curtis, 2001, p. 10).

The coherence debate took place under the assumption that the objectives of humanitarian work and conflict prevention can complement each other. Yet it neglected the fact that the underlying values of these two areas are distinctly separate. Merging the two different concepts would seriously undermine the capability of humanitarian action in reducing human suffering.

2.2.4 Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)

Another topic of intense discussions in the early 2000s was donor behaviour, which was increasingly seen as dysfunctional, irrational, and sometimes arrogant. Particularly of interest was the imbalance in the funding and attention allocated to crises, suggesting that despite the common notion that humanitarian action is impartial, neutral, and only motivated by need, some donor countries prioritize political considerations when making their funding decisions. This understanding has led to the organization of a comprehensive conference, where representatives of major donor governments would come together with humanitarian organizations and academics of the field. The aim of the conference, which was held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2003, was to promote good humanitarian donorship and foster the notion that aid is given according to need, when and where it was required, at sufficient amounts and with appropriate quality, and it should include measures to prevent and prepare for emergencies, while also assisting conflict-affected communities in rehabilitating their lives and livelihoods in post-crisis environments (Hidalgo & Lopez-Claros, 2007, p. 39).

At the Stockholm conference, a group of 17 donors endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD). The conference gave birth to the GHD principles as well as a forum and initiative which facilitates collective advancement of GHD principles and good practices, and serves as a platform for dialogue, and for advancing humanitarian policy and practice in a principled and operationally effective way. It was furthermore agreed that the GHDI would operate on the basis of rotating annual chairmanships, which is normally co-chaired by two members, and be guided by annual work plans (Jespersen et al., 2013, p. 1).

The GHD principles brought important innovations and improvements in the practice

of humanitarian action. Among these; definition of humanitarian action, its purpose and the actions it involves (Principles 1, 2, 3, and 4); issues relating to and post-crisis recovery, with the understanding that it is more cost effective to invest in disaster preparedness then responding to disasters once they unfold (Principles 1, 3, 8, and 9); improving coordination and contextual analysis when responding to humanitarian needs and proper needs assessment should be its bases (Principle 6); funding should be predictable, sufficient in volume, and with least number of strings attached to it (Principles 5, 12, and 13); greater respect for the mandates and roles of implementing agencies who are in the field and take decisions according to their field experiences (Principle 10); ensuring that there should be a balanced approach to the new and ongoing crises and one should not adversely affect the actions being taken to response to the other (Principle 11); it is the responsibility of civilian actors in taking the leadership role in humanitarian response, and any role to be played by military actors would be in line with the relevant provisions of the international humanitarian law (Principle 19); contributing to the drafting of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) which would be the primary instrument for planning and coordination in complex emergencies (Principle 14); and finally, the crucial role of learning from past experience and reflect on it in order to enhance the accountability of humanitarian actors as well as improve their performance (Principles 21, 22, and 23) (Hidalgo & Lopez-Claros, 2007). In 2018, an addition was made to the principles as the 24th principle on increasing the use of cash transfers and its benefits in efficiency and beneficiary dignity (GHD, 2018, p. 3).

The GHD initiative was clearly a response to the trends observed in the early 2000s in donor behaviour, especially increased bilateralisation of funds, and politicization of humanitarian aid. The search for a consensus about what humanitarian action is and how it should be practised, and the status of core principles in the face of new challenges led to this initiative. Currently, there are 42 members of the GHD group who contribute through this forum to the pivotal role of donors in providing effective and accountable humanitarian assistance.

The assessment of the GHD initiative after ten years of activities found that it proved to be a valuable informal platform for information sharing, dialogue, coordination, and enhancing coherence. However, a number of challenges were also identified. After initial enthusiasm, the initiative began to lose its centrality and relevance, eventually becoming a Geneva-based information exchange platform with very little attention from donor capitals and weak linkages with the field (Jespersen et al., 2013, p. 13).

2.3 Official Development Assistance (ODA)

As mentioned above, humanitarian and development aid have originated from distinctive sources and tracked very different trajectories. As opposed to the purely humanitarian roots of humanitarian action, development aid has a political origin. It emerged in the wake of the second world war as a response to the total destruction of Europe and to support its reconstruction. It is generally dated at the announcement of the Marshall Plan in 1947, followed by the Truman Doctrine of 1949. Development in this discourse was equated to economic growth as a linear process with gradual stages, which would take place by exactly following the Western historical model. After European reconstruction, the target of development aid was other underdeveloped countries of the world, particularly within the context of cold war rivalry.

Through the 1960s, development aid programs started to formulate and take shape and become more committed. In this era, UN agencies and multilateral development organizations such as World Bank and IMF also became important actors of development aid. It was also the era in which the UN adopted 0.7 per cent of gross national income as the minimum threshold for official development assistance. In the next decade, the development aid discourse shifted from economic growth to poverty, and meeting basic needs in health, education, water and sanitation. This was a manifestation of the recognition that development is not limited to economic growth, and additional interventions are needed in social infrastructure to reduce poverty.

The trend reversed in the 1980s due to the oil shock and persistent recession of the late 1970s. The development aid became conditional on implementing structural adjustment programs and free-market reforms imposed by the World Bank and IMF to receive aid. As a result of those programs, developing and least developed countries became much more indebted, and poverty rates in those countries increased significantly. However, by the end of the decade, neoliberal reforms became the dominant paradigm in the US-based development community, as formulated in the principles of the Washington Consensus.

As has been seen in the humanitarian domain, the end of the cold war also brought significant changes to the development sector. This was primarily seen in the form of the proliferation of topics covered under development. In addition to economic growth and poverty reduction of previous decades, sustainable development, environmental considerations, and gender equality increasingly became part of development discourse starting from the 1980s and

became integral to it in the 1990s. Also, assistance to former Soviet Union countries made the issue of good governance a central theme, and good governance and institutional development agenda have been an important topic across the developing world, particularly in the face of the absolute failure of structural adjustment programs. In conjunction with this, came the involvement of human rights and democracy promotion themes as development topics.

The new millennium opened with the Millennium Declaration adopted at the UN Millennium Summit, which puts together a 15-year development framework formulated as eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were a recognition of the multifacetedness of development, building on the other similar initiatives of the 1990s, such as the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). However, it was also short of encompassing the emerging trends of the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as social inclusion and participation. Yet it was definitely a success making key development issues such as ending hunger or girls' education central global policy debates.

Another key topic of the 2000s was making aid more effective, under the aid effectiveness agenda. Traditionally discussed under G-7, aid effectiveness gradually became a conversation between donor and recipient countries. The first important event in this framework was the Paris High-Level Forum and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The declaration provided principles that both donor and recipient countries are committed to adhering to, namely ownership, alignment, harmonization, results, and mutual accountability. It was the first instance that donors pledged to be held accountable for their commitments. The Paris Principles were further deepened and complemented with an action agenda in 2008 in Accra Agenda for Action. Finally, in 2011 the development community met in Busan, South Korea, within the framework of the fourth high-level forum, and adopted the Busan Declaration for Effective Development Cooperation. The declaration was an explicit manifestation of changing power dynamics within the development architecture. It stated that South-South cooperation continues to evolve, providing additional diversity of resources for development, and forms an integral part of a new and more inclusive development agenda, in which these actors participate on the basis of common goals, shared principles and differential commitments. The aid terminology also began to disappear and replaced with the term development cooperation, implying a more equal footing between donor and recipient countries (OECD, 2012).

The final important milestone to be mentioned under this subsection is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted in 2015, replacing the MDGs as the global development framework. The SDGs revealed the changing nature of development challenges

and cooperation. It provided a much broader array of goals and shaped into a more inclusive setting. Further, it adopted the leave no one behind the principle, put sustainable development at its core, prioritized quality over quantity, recognized the importance of building peace, and identified the multiplicity of financing sources beyond ODA.

While humanitarian and development actions originated from completely different settings, their trajectories have at times converged and sometimes diverged. They are both, without a doubt, political, and that is what ties them together. To put it another way: Humanitarian aid is distinct from development aid in that it focuses on immediate needs rather than long-term goals. This is because humanitarian aid is founded on the ideals of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Regardless of whether an organization is classified as humanitarian or development, beneficiaries and people who receive aid rarely make any distinctions between the numerous players and the ideas that guide them. (Lie, 2020, p. 5).

2.4 Foreign Policy and Security

After assessing the evaluation of humanitarian and development domains, it is important to also have a basic understanding of foreign policy, and how it can affect the practice of aid, especially in terms of balancing values and interests.

At the very basic, foreign policy is the conduct of a state's relations with the external world, other states, international organizations, non-state actors, and civil society. Theories of international relations provide a useful lens to make sense of foreign policy practices. The realist theory asserts that the sole purpose of states is to pursue self-interest, and it always triumphs over values. In an anarchical international system, security is central to a state's survival, and it can only survive by acting selfishly and maximizing security. The liberal tradition of international relations, on the other hand, suggests that cooperation triumphs competition among states, and it is values and ethics that inform state behaviour through rules, norms and international regimes. In the framework of the constructivist IR theory, values and interests do not exist materially in the outside world. They are socially constructed through the interactions of states and people in historical, social, and political contexts. In this understanding, beliefs, perceptions and key values of national identity change over time in a given society and therefore profoundly influence foreign policy.

In search of understanding the donor motives in providing aid, the foreign policy framework provides us with a useful basis. Interests can be security or economic related, while

values may be about the self-perception of societies or their beliefs on global issues.

Security-related motivations: Security motives can cover several issues. A growing tendency in the humanitarian domain is the securitization of humanitarian action, bringing an increasing number of issues under the security umbrella. Aid can be used to influence the foreign policy decisions of recipient countries, such as voting at the UN Security Council. Armed conflict, terrorism, and organized crime are the major threats to international security, and security-related aid would aim to reduce threats emanating from these phenomena. However, it has become the norm that issues such as migration and displacement, disasters particularly related to climate change, and state fragility are also being "securitized" and have been regarded as threats to security.

Trade / economic gains: Aid can also enhance the economic growth of the donor country through multiple channels. It can support trade relations, or through the tying of provision of goods and services to the donor country's domestic market. Additionally, aid can be designed in a way to promote trade, such as infrastructure initiatives or export credits.

Values / public perceptions: There is a strong correlation between aid spending and public support for aid. While the line of causation is not clear, it is likely that both bottom-up and top-down processes are in place. The democratic mechanisms transform public preferences on aid to policies. On the other hand, it may be the case that political elites influence public opinion through communication, outreach, and awareness-raising activities. Finally, social values play a role. For instance, in the case of Nordic countries, due to their historical trajectories, the concept of e social-democratic welfare state has a common acceptance, and its core value of universality also guide the foreign policy and foreign aid activities, which value higher volumes of foreign aid. Understanding the domestic political considerations and concepts that play a fundamental role also makes significant contributions to the understanding of the interaction between domestic and international behaviour (Zimmerman, 2007, p. 8). Values may also play a role in channelling aid for global public goods. Stemming from the notion of good international citizenship, aid towards non-proliferation, climate finance, and global public health receives more support from nations where good international citizenship is regarded highly.

It is a part of foreign policy to engage in humanitarian action, and its guiding principles may be in accord or in conflict with other core national interests. There are complex linkages between national interests and humanitarian principles, and these are highly dynamic,

depending on specific contexts. Values, too, may have their significance, interpretation, and applicability altered. Different regions and cultures use these concepts differently, as shown by the research. As global power dynamics fluctuate, so do interests. Therefore it would be more sensible to not perceive them within a single unit of analysis. (Willitts-King et al., 2018, p. 3).

2.5 Efforts on Bridging the Gap: Search for Nexus

The tensions between humanitarian and development branches of aid, as well as between aid and foreign policy, led many academics and practitioners to find common ground and bridge the gap among those three.

The idea behind the nexus approach is that t as crises become increasingly protracted and recurrent, it has increasingly been the case that humanitarian needs are overlapping and multiplying, and humanitarian circumstances are becoming more unclear. An integrated strategy would allow us to better react to people's needs in the face of this background. The term "humanitarian-development nexus" or "humanitarian-development-peace nexus" was coined to express this notion. Because emergency needs (and identities of affected communities) are typically indicators of underlying problems that reflect greater inequities and injustices, the nexus method aims to address them. The nexus provides an opportunity to address these underlying causes and realize that insufficient development policies and a lack of development investment with inclusive and tailored characteristics may lead to humanitarian crises or exacerbate them. The idea of nexus is not new. In recent decades, several attempts were made to link humanitarian and development, fields, or as referred to in the literature, silos. Examples of such efforts include "Disaster Risk Reduction" (DRR); "linking relief rehabilitation and development" (LRRD); the "resilience agenda'"; and the central place attributed to conflict sensitivity across different response types. Nexus differs from those earlier initiatives in the sense that it is not limited to programmatic or conceptual frameworks. Rather, it is a systematic response to the ever-changing architecture of the aid system, which also alters the planning and financing modalities of aid. Such changes make it all the more crucial to have an appropriate balance between the pillars of humanitarianism, development, and peace, and ways and means to integrate these elements.

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) organized in 2016 has been a milestone in recognition and emphasis of peace as the third component of nexus. Acceptance of peace as part of the nexus emanates from the understanding that humanitarian needs and sustainable development aspirations can only be fulfilled by acknowledging causes of conflict, including

its resolution and prevention, while also being aware of human-made barriers to such goals. Yet such a perspective also has certain downsides. Peace has different interpretations across different actors. Peace action may include conflict sensitivity, enhancing local capacities for peace, peacebuilding, peace processes and high-level political diplomacy; and -preserving peace through peacekeeping missions. What peace entails is also contentious, ranging from the concept of "negative peace" meaning an absence of direct violence, to “positive peace”, where initiatives aiming at a constructive resolution to the conflict are in place, where restoring positive social relations and establishing social systems are also part of peace agenda. Therefore, it is important to take note of which actor is discussing peace with what kind of definition and peace agenda in their minds.

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) emphasized the need of placing the most vulnerable people at the heart of the humanitarian and development systems. Before the peace pillar was introduced, this concept was known as the humanitarian-development nexus. A separate development-peace nexus has also been established, looking at the prospect of combining the two. Since only two sides of a triangle relationship are addressed, it would leave out the Peace-Humanitarian Nexus when calculating the nexus between humanitarian aid and development and peace. As well as not being a process with three distinct stages, the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus is nonlinear. When it comes to the nexus, it's not about changing resources, either from aid to peacebuilding or aid to development. Rather, it's all part of the same process. As a result, it's all about working together and ensuring that there are mutual benefits. During the WHS, it was also acknowledged and adopted that in order for the nexus approaches to be effectively implemented, there needs to be a "New Way of Working" (NWoW). The aim was to come up with a modality to make the nexus approach fully operational and bring together relevant actors from different disciplines such as humanitarian, development, and peace to exert efforts in a concerted and cohesive way to achieve collective outcomes (COs) in the long term while also benefiting from their individual expertise areas. Therefore, NWoW has a perspective for coordinated funding that goes beyond short-term, annual considerations and have a multi-year framework where relevant international financial institutions such as the World Bank is also involved, and pool efforts and resources towards realizing COs (OXFAM, 2019, p. 13). Some of the implementing features of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach are as follows (IASC, 2016, p. 3):

- Joint conflict/context analysis and risk assessments: In order to establish clear and shared understandings of the settings that will guide their work, actors functioning in a conflict-

affected area should perform frequent analyses of the context, risks, and drivers of conflict.

- Do no harm and conflict-sensitive programming: Humanitarian actors may avoid harming conflict dynamics through conducting a conflict analysis and using a conflict-sensitive strategy in the design and implementation of programs.
- Take short, medium and long-term perspectives: By the very nature of the nexus approach, the activities of relevant actors in the fields of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding need to adopt a long-term perspective when designing their programs
- Identify collective outcomes: Nexus is not just about integrating various activities and coordinating them in isolation. The nexus actors should design collective outcomes which will guide all activities.
- Address the drivers of the crises: At the core of the nexus approach, lies the understanding that the humanitarian needs are the results of root causes of crises and drivers of conflict, which create fragility, and needs will only be met when these core conflict elements are addressed.

2.6 Humanitarian Diplomacy

Apart from the nexus approach, another relatively new concept that brings together humanitarianism and politics is labelled under the term humanitarian diplomacy. Having appeared for the first time in the early 2000s, Humanitarian Diplomacy (HD) aims at convincing decision-makers and leaders to observe the interest of vulnerable people and with full respect for basic humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian diplomacy can be described as "a category of diplomatic engagement that seeks to advance humanitarian interests and goals". Distinct from other forms of diplomacy, humanitarian diplomacy can be seen first and foremost as humanitarian practitioner-led formation. It extends to include all stakeholders that are central to humanitarian interests, both in terms of official and non-official actors. Humanitarian diplomacy covers a broad range of activities that enable humanitarian action to take place. These include gaining the necessary support in terms of political will to engage in humanitarian issues, and the required financial, staffing, equipment, and logistical capacity to be able to deliver where humanitarian needs emerge.

"Leave no one behind" principle of the SDGs can also be understood as a part of humanitarian diplomacy, which "seeks to leverage diplomatic actors and tools" for

humanitarian purposes in a manner that is not narrowly tied to state diplomacy and its national interests. From an international perspective, upholding humanitarian principles and practices, and pushing forward for making them central to the global policymaking would be among the priorities of humanitarian diplomacy. The principle of "leave no one behind" is a manifestation of the integration of humanitarian principles at the international level and an example of how humanitarians influence the context within which they work (Turunen, 2021, p. 7).

2.7 Balancing Values and Interests: Making Aid More Principled

Decades of work on balancing various motivations behind humanitarian aid and promoting coherence across different policy goals have resulted in various frameworks, schemes and indexes. This was against the rising trends of securitization of aid as well as rendering it more self-interest oriented. One of those responses to this trend was the Principled Aid Index (PAI), developed by the UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

The main idea behind the creation of the index is that making the world a safer, more sustainable and more prosperous place would not only be beneficial for the recipient countries, but also serves the individual interests of donor countries. The natural outcome of this understanding is that a principal allocation of aid would make all states winners from both an individual and collective perspective, as the collective interests of all countries are served.

Recently, foreign aid has increasingly begun to be formulated within the context of mutual benefits or win-win formulations. Yet it is unrealistic to expect that aid would always deliver mutual benefits everywhere. Studies have unequivocally demonstrated that aid for political gains and geopolitical interests has been less effective. It is therefore important to balance interest-driven expectations with global development objectives. Where national interests align with those objectives, foreign aid's impact will be considerably higher, and all states would benefit from accruing results. Aid spending on global public goods such as international security, global public health, climate change, and migration would serve both national interests, and values and ethics.

It is also misleading to depict the idealistic and interest-driven donor motivations as mutually exclusive. In most cases, donors are seen as fitting into either category. However, the reality is more complex than this depiction as, in general, aid allocation decisions are influenced by a number of factors, and each donor country has its unique calculations in striking the right balance. What is certain is that aid is never provided for a single purpose, and it should always

be understood from the lenses of domestic and international contexts. (Gulrajani & Calleja, 2019, p. 9). The rising trends of self-interest first approach in foreign aid have the risk of undermining decades of work to make aid more effective, needs-based, and principled.

The PAI was developed with these considerations in mind, and rests on three pillars: meeting needs, supporting global cooperation, and adopting public-spiritedness. First, by making national interests also principled, aid would be destined to go to countries and regions which need it the most. Based on this premise, the relevant index indicators put more emphasis on donors, which prioritize countries with the lowest levels of development demonstrated by extreme poverty, gender inequality or elements of fragility such as the high burden of migration or prolonged conflicts.

The second premise of a principled approach would be to allocate aid with the aim of promoting cooperation at the global level and investing in global public goods and an international system that works for all. Examples of such approach would recognize that public goods such as clean air, peace and security or the eradication of communicable diseases would be beneficial for global North and South alike, as such investments would create positive externalities that benefit every nation equally and are critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Indicators for this pillar also emphasize the type of financial support that promotes multilateral cooperation and transform the structural problems in the relations between the global North and South. Channelling aid to multilateral mechanisms in an unearmarked manner would allow multilateral institutions to commit to their priorities and strengthen their neutrality while also increasing the predictability of funding which would result in better planning and operational effectiveness.

The final element of principled national interest is its public-spiritedness, characterized by its approach to maximize opportunities for long term development impact and keeping them above domestic considerations that are mainly short term in nature. Such an approach would also involve untying aid from the donor's domestic markets as well as detaching aid from its political and commercial aims. The measurement of public-spiritedness would focus on measuring the degree of politicization of aid by taking into account the extent to which it was aligned with UN voting agreements between donors and recipients, the correlation of bilateral aid flows and arms trade between donor and recipient countries, and the share of in-recipient country spending of aid, particularly as programmable country aid, and country-based pool funds which are by definition spent in the recipient country, which allows the recipient country for greater control over aid spending o that the affected populations can have increased

participation which in turn transforms the dynamics of power in donor-recipient relationships (Silcock & Gulrajani, 2020).

The country scores in the principled aid index, and the trends in the scores reveal important findings on the state of aid today. In the 2020 edition of the index, the top-scoring countries are Ireland, Norway, and Sweden. Highest spending donors such as the US, the UK and France generally perform poorly, and record a declining trend in their scores (Gulrajani & Silcock, 2020, p. 17). Yet on average, donors seem to be lagging behind as the average score is in decline. Also, there is a widening gap between northern DAC donors such as Sweden, Canada, Denmark, and Norway top the list while Greece, Slovakia, and Italy are among the worst performers. On the public-spiritedness component of the index, the decline seems to be deeper. There may be dire consequences of this downward trend, and the immediate result would be significant delays and losses in efficiency for the goals and objectives that aid intends to achieve.

2.8 How Funding is Allocated: Evaluating the Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process regarding humanitarian action in different countries can be influenced by several institutions, and they figure out this process with varying features, including how to balance ideals and interests. Yet to a large extent, this decision-making process is embedded in the wider political culture, which also reflects the level of transparency and accountability with which assistance policy is formulated and executed, as well as the extent to which it is isolated or not from core foreign policy issues. The decisions regarding funding allocations may be made in different ways. The crucial questions to be asked in this regard are; who, where and what to fund. In general, they first find an answer to this question by picking one as the priority issue, such as deciding on the target group, geography, or sector, and then the reminder is spent based on that decision.

With regard to the question of whom to fund, it is generally an issue of core or unallocated funds provided to UN agencies, Red Cross – Red Crescent organizations, or NGOs, where donors provide the recipient organizations with greater flexibility on making their own decisions on how to spend the funding on specific projects, which in turn may increase their responsiveness and effectiveness in addressing the crisis. Yet this is not the most observed case, as donors, most of the time, allocate funds by pre-selecting the region, target group, or sector to which the recipient agency should use the funding.

In terms of geographical considerations, decisions can be made based on where funding is allocated to a country or region, in which there is an ongoing or protracted crisis. However, the situation is different for rapid onset crises for which pre-planned funding decisions are impossible to make. For such cases, unallocated parts of humanitarian budgets are generally utilized. Finally, the question of what to fund generally refers to a sectoral choice, and funding is allocated to a specific humanitarian sector based on the donor's assessments and preferences. The research literature on this topic has a recent focus on making a thorough analysis to better understand how donors make decisions on what, where, or whom to fund, as well as the extent to which these funds are allocated for specific considerations, as policy documents of funding agencies provide little insight in this regard. A survey conducted by Dalrymple & Smith (2015, p. 12) with ten donor agencies have found that eight donors make their funding choices on the basis of geographical scope first, and then and then based on geography, make allocations on who to and what to fund. Four donors, on the other hand, have stated that they first decide on whom to fund, and then channel the rest of their budget in line with geographical considerations.

2.8.1 Funding Channels

Humanitarian funding may be channelled through a variety of modalities, including UN agencies, pooled funds, and international NGOs, yet it is not clear at the policy level how donors prioritize which channel to utilize when making funding decisions. According to a survey conducted in this respect (Dalrymple & Smith, 2015, p. 6) covering 30 donors, it was found that 25 donors prefer UN agencies as their priority funding channel, UNHCR being the largest recipient, with UNICEF, WFP, and UN OCHA are other significant recipients of humanitarian funding. In line with this finding, multilateral channels are the donors' preferred aid modality when it comes to humanitarian action, as 61% of all humanitarian funding is transferred through multilateral channels, the survey reveals. There are, of course, variations across countries in this respect, as some countries provide around 10% of their humanitarian funding multilaterally.

Apart from UN agencies, Red Cross and Red Crescent agencies are other important channels for multilateral funding. While according to the abovementioned survey, 23 out of 30 donors identified RCRC agencies as a priority channel for funding, the overall share of funding through these agencies were found to be at 12%, yet all donors reported at least some funding using this channel. Pooled funds are recognized as an innovative modality for multilateral funding. According to the abovementioned survey, 20 out of 30 donors prioritized pooled funding mechanisms, including Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) and country-based

pooled funds. 28 out of 30 donors have reported that they have made contributions to pooled funds with varying amounts.

Finally, international NGOs are another way of providing multilateral funding. To that end, 21 out of 30 donors stated INGOs as their prioritized for channelling funds. It is also noteworthy that 55% of the surveyed donors stated that their priority for funding with regard to INGOs is the member organization based in their respective donor country. National NGOs have also been prioritized as the funding channel by 28% of surveyed donors. However, overall, only 0.8% of all humanitarian donor funding was directly channelled to national NGOs.

2.8.2 Donor Decision-Making on Funding Channels

Given the variety of funding channels, then it is important to understand donor preferences in terms of how decisions are made in allocating funds across these channels. According to (Dalrymple & Smith, 2015, p. 22), by reviewing policy documents and analysing responses to the questionnaires, the donor preferences are more likely to be linked with providing funding through "established organisations and channels with a proven track record".

It may also be said that well-established organisations such as UN agencies have a certain role in fostering the international humanitarian aid structure and coordinating the international humanitarian response. Therefore, supporting these organisations, especially through core or unallocated funding schemes, would also have a positive role for the whole international community as it will boost their flexibility, more specifically in the face of rapid-onset crises which require quick, effective, and coordinated response.

Despite the much-highlighted localisation agenda, it seems that funding decisions still do not adequately prioritise funding to local or national NGOs, which would also strengthen local participation. While accountability to affected populations is among the recent emerging guiding principles of humanitarian action, this is currently being fulfilled largely through beneficiary feedback mechanisms. It is yet to be followed by a growing share of local NGOs in international humanitarian funding.

In the final analysis, funding decisions are influenced by a high number of factors, and shaped by the specific conditions of the donor country, which itself is a result of its historical, cultural, and political structures. Therefore, it is not possible to highlight or showcase an ideal funding decision-making modality, and there needs to be a detailed study of each country to better understand how humanitarian action is perceived and prioritised.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY OF FUNDING TO SYRIA 2012 – 2020

3.1 The Trajectory of the Syrian Conflict

In this section, the study aims to set the record for the trajectory of the Syrian conflict, focusing on both internal and external dynamics. The way the conflict progressed had important ramifications for the international response, both from a foreign policy and humanitarian action point of view. Therefore, to be able to better understand the interlinkages between the foreign policy and humanitarian considerations of main actors, it is important to understand the underlying factors that led to the conflict, and made it unresolved for more than a decade. To that end, a brief explanation of the historical evolution of the Syrian state and society will also be provided.

3.1.1 The Syrian Conflict: Civil Uprising Period

Starting in late 2010, the events of Arab Spring spread across the Middle East and North Africa region. Most analysts predicted that Syria would be saved from the unrest due to the firm hold of the regime across the society. In February 2011, Damascus-based traditional intellectuals tried to organize protests with little success. On March 15, a small protest could be organized in old town Damascus, while the first large gathering took place in Daraa. The Daraa protest of March 18 had little to do with the established intellectuals who have been trying to push for social change, but more with the social characteristics of the region. It started with the detention of several children who painted graffities on school walls. The security units detained and tortured the children. This caused a significant resentment in the community, which are closely tied with tribal and familial linkages. When tribal notables of Daraa met with the city's political security officials to release detained children, they were humiliated and insulted. This was the final push required for the social explosion in Daraa. Dominated by tribal leaders and clerics, large crowds took to the streets in Daraa on March 18, who were not only protesting the children being tortured or tribal leaders humiliated, but also years of poverty, lack of opportunities, and endemic corruption of the Assad regime. Another protest took place on the same day in the coastal city of Banyas.

As expected, the Syrian regime reacted with fierce violence to the protests in Daraa, firing at protestors with live bullets. The way the security forces responded to Daraa protests created resentment first among the towns in its countryside, which is linked to the urban population with tribal and familial ties, then very rapidly across Syria, reaching the most remote towns and villages. With that, Syria found itself in a revolutionary atmosphere.

As peaceful protests grew both in size and in geographical coverage, so did the regime's use of brutal force. Communities had different grievances to rise up, and therefore the protests in general were not led by a unified leadership. This helped the protestors to remain active despite fierce repression, but also hindered their organization around a unifying theme and made it susceptible to infiltration and hi-jacking. While initially, the main theme was more freedom and an end to corruption, soon after all protests had one common demand: the fall of the regime. This sparked a further violent response from the regime side, leading to massacres and mass detentions. Assad also provided some superstitious reforms, such as lifting the 40 years of emergency rule, and declaration of amnesties, which also included the release of radical fundamentalists.

Parallel to peaceful street protests, the rebellion also started to show characteristics of the armed opposition. This has started with locals and villagers defending their communities in the face of regime force violence, but then turned into attacks and ambushes to army troops. Rejecting to fight against their people, a group of officers defected from the regime army and established the Free Syrian Army (FSA). In the latter half of 2011, the conflict has increasingly been militarized. With the military activity on the opposition side, the regime's territorial control in the countryside started to fade, as the regime reoriented its focus to protect urban areas.

By 2012, Western and Gulf countries have already adopted the Assad must go policy. In March 2012, after numerous vetoes by Russia and China to condemn the Syrian regime and to open a process for a peaceful resolution of conflict, around 70 countries gathered under the Friends of Syria platform to achieve the said goal. Simultaneously, a joint UN – Arab League initiative appointed Kofi Annan as a peace envoy to sustain a ceasefire. Annan's plan to achieve a ceasefire and establish a UN ceasefire monitoring mission also failed after numerous violations of the ceasefire and the peace initiative completely failed after the Houla massacre committed by the regime forces in May 2012.

3.1.2 Escalation of the Conflict

The fighting escalated after the collapse of Annan's mediation. In the meantime, the armed opposition continued to extend its presence, and took control of several peripheral suburbs of Damascus and Aleppo. In July 2012, a rebel attack in Damascus targeting the crisis management unit of the regime killed some of its key members, indicating that the conflict has now moved to the regime's core. Around the same time, rebels began to take control of the eastern portions of Aleppo city. Amidst these developments and escalation of violence, the UN officially declared that Syria is in a state of civil war. Throughout 2012, the armed opposition made significant gains in the countryside and suburbs of major cities. Most notably, the suburbs of Damascus in eastern and western Ghouta were no longer under government control.

The military advance of the opposition left the regime with increasingly tricky options. One key challenge it faced was that the rank-and-file cadres of the army were overwhelmingly Sunni, and susceptible to defections. Therefore, it had to rely mainly on the elite special units for counterinsurgency operations. The result was twofold: one, military units withdrew from large areas in the countryside to guard urban centres. In July 2012, the regime ultimately left the many under-served areas in northern and north-eastern parts of the country. Second, to cover for the loyal man shortage, the regime recruited local civilians, mostly 'thugs' under the title of popular committees and then national defence forces, known by the opposition as the Shabiha, and began to rely upon militias from Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. Iran got involved in the conflict very early on, sending military advisors from its revolutionary guards' corpses and providing financial and material assistance, followed by the transferring tens of thousands of Shiite militias from Iran and other countries in the region with Shiite populations. Hezbollah also assisted the regime in its fight against the armed opposition. Its involvement became more pronounced during the fight over al Quasyr, a small town on the border of Lebanon, which was a strategic location for supplying arms and manpower for rebels in the fighting in Homs.

By mid-2013, the regime was controlling no more than 20% of Syrian's territory. It could stand only with the heavy involvement of Iranian and Hezbollah forces. With the escalation of the war, also arrived greater human rights violations and adopted a policy of "kneel or starve" for the whole communities and locations and enclaves that were under non-regime control. The siege warfare of the regime was characterized by cutting off food supplies, water, electricity and gas, waste services, and medical care, as well as employment and access to banks. This was accompanied by indiscriminate attacks on the area as well as attacks against any movement inward or outward. The practice of besiegement and starvation were first used

in Homs, then applied in almost all rebel-held districts of Damascus and the whole eastern Aleppo, where up to a million civilians were besieged, all services and humanitarian aid were cut, and brought under relentless bombing to forcibly evacuate civilians and ensuring that the armed groups surrender.

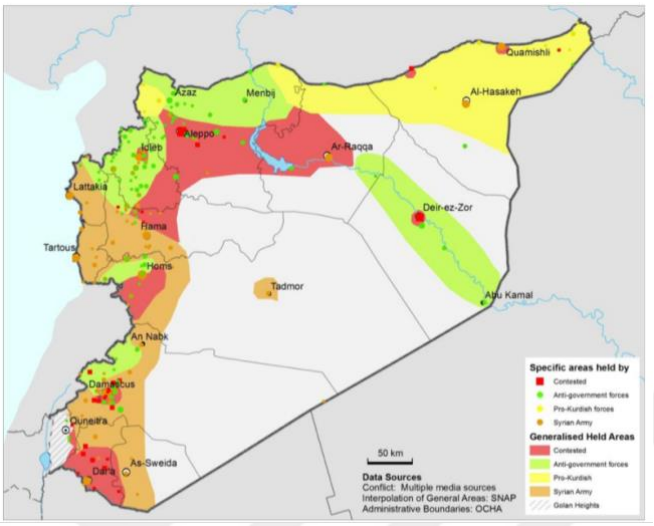

Figure 2: Government and anti-government held areas as of February 2013

Source: (ACAPS & MapAction, 2013)

The bombing intensified to the level of using chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta in August 2013. Killing up to 1400 civilians, the chemical attack was a definitive crossing of the red-line policy declared by the US for foreign intervention. Nevertheless, a US-Russia plan replaced the idea of military intervention and instead established a mechanism to destroy Syria's chemical stockpile. The Ghouta attack was an important milestone in the course of the conflict. It made it certain for the opposition that they were on their own, and that the Western powers will not militarily intervene in the conflict no matter what happens. It also signalled to the Syrian regime that it has the freedom of practically doing anything and everything to pacify the uprising, without facing any serious consequences.

The primary organization of the opposition was the Syrian National Council, which later transformed into Istanbul based National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, shortly the Coalition, or Etilaf. Despite the high international support it enjoys, the opposition could not become a significant source of influence on the evolution of the conflict, and became increasingly irrelevant as the fighting opposition had the say on the developments on the ground, and accordingly received more external funding. Apart from the Etilaf, there were other umbrella groups with more secular and left-leaning positions, yet it has not been possible to create a common platform for those different groups (Alsarraj & Hoffman, 2020, p.

9).

The Syrian civil society that emerged in the wake of the conflict also played a prominent role during its early years. The local coordination committees (LCCs) were an important network of activists that first emerged to report on protests and regime atrocities. Another function of the committees was to promote civic values and human rights. However, the devastating impact of the conflict, and the erosion of central authority required the LCCs to take on additional functions such as relief work and service delivery. In the lack of a previous civil society structure in Syria, the LCCs were also the only Syrian entities that external actors could support for humanitarian purposes.

3.1.3 Stalemate in the Conflict & Involvement of Great Powers

By mid-2014, the fight between the armed opposition and the Syrian regime had reached to a stalemate situation. The opposition, on the other hand, became more volatile and fragmented, as intra-fighting has grown. Nevertheless, the real blow to the armed opposition was the rise of the jihadi movement, culminating in the formation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Splitting from Al-Qaida, ISIS aimed to establish a caliphate in the Iraq-Syria continuum, and with its extreme violent ideology, it targeted mainly opposition factions to establish its authority in non-regime-controlled areas. Capturing the provincial capital of Raqqa from the moderate opposition, ISIS found itself a sound base and engaged in a bitter war with other armed groups for territorial control. With this development, Syria's conflict became tri-partite, all three parties fighting each other, with several regional and international actors involved.

With regard to the fight between the mainstream opposition and the Regime, Aleppo became the most important front. The fighting seemed to be locked as both sides could not make significant changes. It was the Russian involvement in September 2015 that became the game-changer not only in Aleppo front but for the whole conflict. Russia's involvement began with the transfer of large amounts of advanced weapons, including fighter jets, which would tilt the balance strongly in favour of Assad. In addition to Russian military equipment, a new wave of Shia fighters and Iranian troops backed by Tehran have entered Syria to reinforce the regime forces (Lund, 2019, p. 28). Russia launched its first wave of airstrikes in Syria in late September 2015. The stated purpose of Russian strikes was ISIS targets, but in reality, Russia targeted any group that posed a threat to Assad. The Russian-Iranian action garnered widespread condemnation, particularly for the violent measures employed, including of the brutal tactics

used. Human rights groups have repeatedly accused Russia of bombing civilian targets, including hospitals (HRW, 2016). The Russian tactics were still effective, and the regime offensives gained an advantage thanks to Iranian and Hezbollah support. Opposition forces began to lose ground and exhibited signs of strain soon after. In December 2016, the regime and its allies finally captured the rebel-held part of Aleppo, which was the defining point of the conflict, and since Aleppo was a key stronghold for the opposition, its loss would be the strongest indication of turning the tide against their favour.

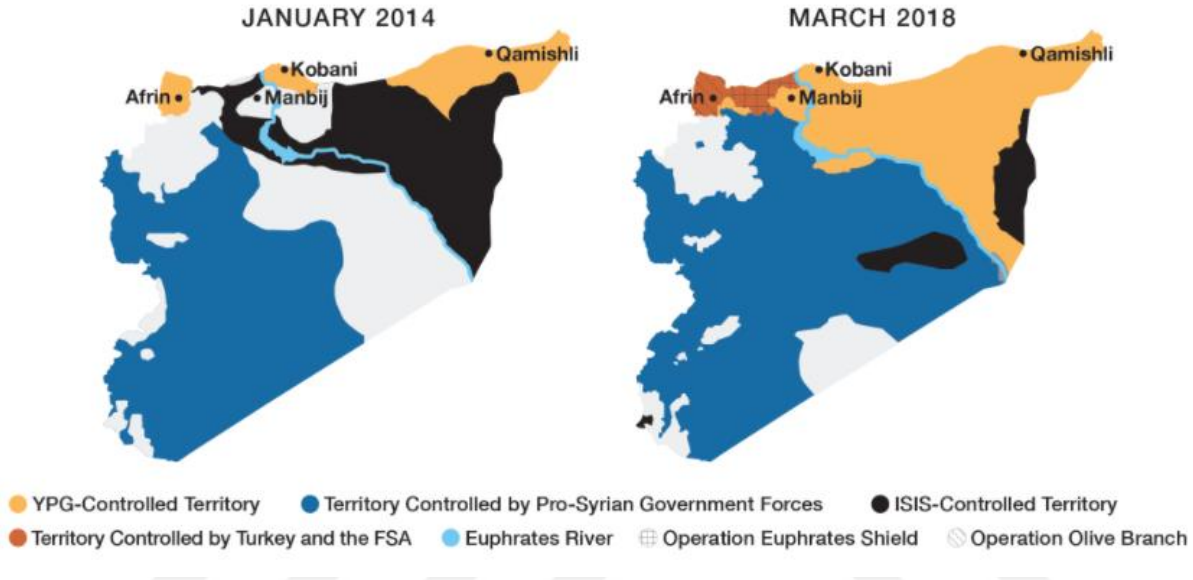

Figure 3: Territorial shifts of the Syrian conflict (2018)

Source: (Hutchins, 2018, p. 3)

On the issue of ISIS, the US and its allies continued their airstrikes while the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which was an extension of YPG, with the tribal militias of eastern Syria, provided the ground force in expelling ISIS from northern and north-eastern Syria, while the regime army, and its Russian and Iranian allies fought against ISIS in central Syria. The de-facto ISIS capital Raqqa was recaptured in 2017, and by the end of 2018, ISIS ceased to exist in Syria, with the exception of small pockets in central Syria and across the Iraqi border.

Russian involvement also brought gradual but definitive surrender of the opposition-held pockets. With relentless Russian airstrikes, and after being besieged for years, these towns were first completely destroyed; then deals were negotiated for their transfer to other rebel pockets, mainly Idlib, a pattern first observed in the besieged parts of Damascus and Aleppo and then replicated elsewhere. Civilians and fighters would typically be given a few hours or days to decide whether to stay and apply for amnesty or be bused to insurgent-held Idlib. Most inhabitants tended to stay under restored government rule, but, according to a UN investigative

panel, civilians and defeated rebels who did leave often did so because they feared reprisals or had no choice (Aron Lund, 2018, p. 21). The fractured, disorganized status of the opposition gave Assad and Russian forces the absolute upper hand, as they negotiated with each of the besieged rebel groups individually and were able to dictate the terms of agreements.

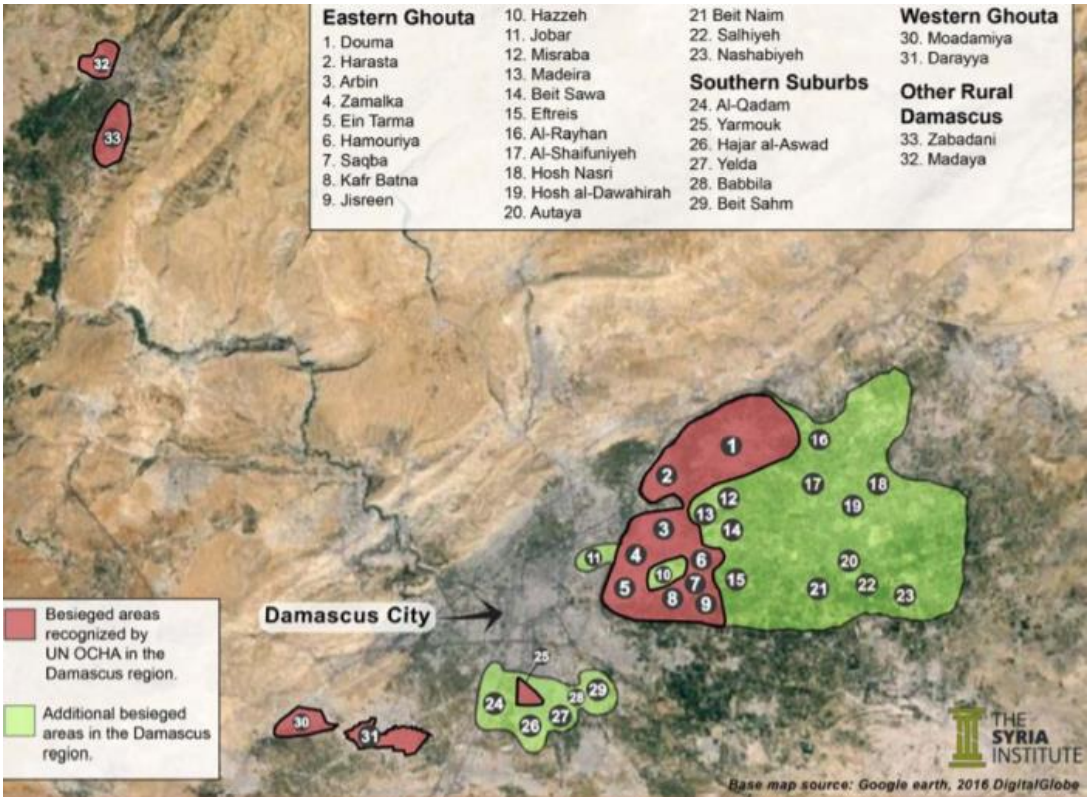

Figure 4: Besieged areas in Damascus and Rural-Damascus, 31 July 2016

Source: (TSI & PAX, 2016, p. 19)

After US and Russia, Turkey as a regional power was also involved in the conflict in August 2016, adding another dimension to an already complicated and multifaceted conflict. One of the most profound impacts of Russian involvement was Turkey's changing position in the conflict. As a strong ally of the opposition, Turkey prioritized the ousting of Assad, and provided political and material support for the forces against Assad. In the initial phase of the Russian involvement, Turkish forces shut down a Russian military aircraft, leading to bitter strife in the relations between the two countries. Turkey's security interests have changed with US – YPG alliance, as the latter was an offshoot of PKK, a terrorist organization that Turkey has been fighting since 1984. As YPG/SDF extended its territorial gains, across the Turkish border, it increasingly posed security challenges to Turkey.

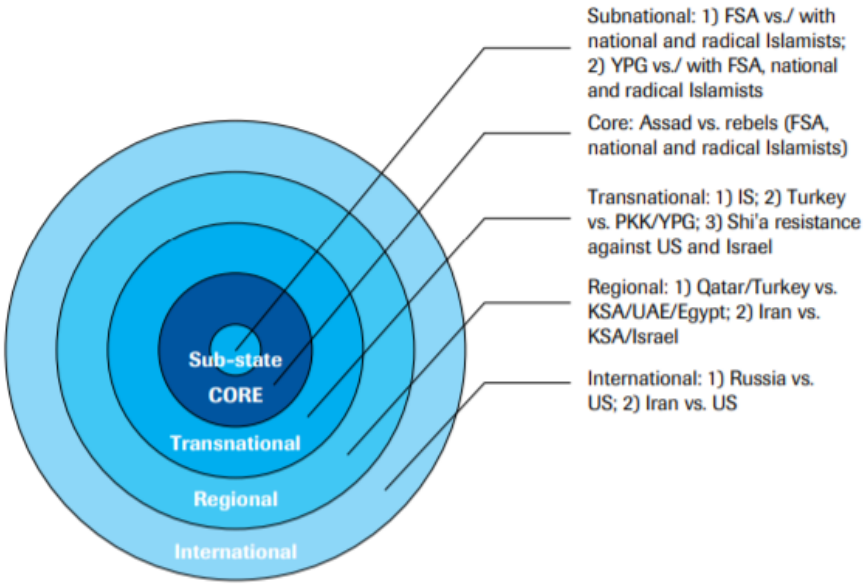

Figure 5: The Syrian conflict is a nested set of conflicts

Source: (Van Veen, Pellise, et al., 2021, p. 17)

With the thaw in Turkish – Russian relations in mid-2016, Turkey conducted an operation from September 2016 to January 2017 in cooperation with various mainstream opposition groups, resulting in ousting the of ISIS in areas adjacent to Turkish borders, namely Jarablus, Al-Bab, and Azaz. More importantly, the operation prevented the merging of two YPG cantons, as suggested by its name, the Euphrates Shield. This marked the beginning of Turkish presence in northern Syria. It also implied that Turkey's policy direction has shifted from regime change with cooperation with US and Western powers, to border protection with closer cooperation with Russia. The Turkish intervention also led to a unified command of mainstream opposition forces under the name Syrian National Army, which would be trained and supported by the Turkish army. As such, Turkey's influence on both political and armed wings of the mainstream opposition became much stronger.

The Russian involvement and Russia-Turkey cooperation that emerged in late 2016 was also reflected in the changing nature of resolution mechanisms to the conflict. Since the beginning, discussions on diplomatic solutions were mainly based on the UN Security Council. However, Russia, sometimes joined by China, has been a staunch supporter of the Assad regime and blocked any resolution that would bring meaningful change on the ground. Between 2012 and 2020, Russia vetoed ten draft resolutions alone, while Russia and China together vetoed six more resolutions that received the majority of security council member countries (SNHR, 2020, p. 2). Under the auspices of the UN, several ceasefire attempts were made but to no avail. On the other hand, UN-led international conferences were another platform to provide a resolution

to the conflict. The first attempt in this regard was the first Geneva Conference, where permanent members of the UN Security Council and UN special envoy for Syria Annan issued a communique, whereby they agreed on the need for a transitionary government fully representing the Syrian society. Afterwards, a second Geneva conference was to be organized with much wider participation. While the Geneva II conference could have been gathered in January 2014, it dissolved with no achievement due to disagreements and conflicts both between supporters of the Syrian regime and the opposition, and also among the supporters of the opposition. Another initiative was gathered in Vienna in October 2015 under the brand of International Syria Support Group, adopting a resolution calling for a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned transition process. This agreement became the foundation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015), which called for a political transition to end the conflict, establishing credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance, drafting a new constitution, and for free and fair elections, pursuant to the new constitution (UNSC, 2015). It was a rare instance of agreement within the security council on a common framework for the resolution of the conflict.

Following rounds of Geneva talks also did not produce any tangible result, due to disagreements between main backers of warring sides, within the opposition itself and detachment between the political and armed wings of the opposition, disagreements on who would represent the opposition and a common definition on terrorist organizations, and most importantly, the Syrian regime and its allies' utter disregard for agreed ceasefires and other mechanisms, as they continued attacks and bombings regularly.

Given the deadlock, in the Geneva process, a parallel track was opened by Turkey and Russia, later joined by Iran, named after the Kazakh capital Astana, where the meetings are held. Astana was not meant to replace the Geneva process but rather aimed to overcome the impasse in talks. After successive rounds in 2017, an agreement was reached in May 2017. The Astana talks focused on establishing "deconflicting zones" on the active conflict pockets, namely Idlib, eastern Ghouta, northern Homs, and southern regions, with three central goals: ending the hostilities between the regime and the rebels in the de-escalation zones, providing humanitarian aid to the civilian population, which had been besieged, and making progress towards a political settlement of the conflict. The agreement was initially limited to a term of six months and could be automatically extended depending on the consent of the guarantors, Russia, Turkey and Iran. Checkpoints and observation posts have been set up to ensure compliance with the agreement. The fight against the ISI, Al-Qaida and the associated terrorist group was expressly excluded from the agreement (Anadolu Agency, 2017). Despite the

agreements, the Syrian regime and Russia never stopped their attacks on the de-escalation zones. Khan Sheikhoun town of Idlib suffered from a chemical attack in April 2017, killing nearly 100 civilians. One year later, in the final days of the regime's brutal offensive in eastern Ghouta, Douma was also gassed with chlorine, killing more than 40 civilians. The Douma attack was the final step in the full regime control of the region and led to the reconciliation agreement between the opposition forces and the regime. Both chemical attacks were followed by limited airstrikes by the US, France, and the UK, but they were too small to change the course of the war. In sum, the Astana deals were created a favourable environment for Assad, since he dealt with each enclave one by one, disregarding the conditions of the deals, and without giving any concessions.

The reconciliation deals involved mass population transfers to the last opposition held area, Idlib. Having low economic and strategic importance, Idlib was allowed by the regime to become a hub for all types of rebels, and millions of internally displaced people that were transferred from towns remained under years of siege. The consequence was a highly instable region that could have spill over effects to neighbouring Turkey, which was already overburdened by 3.5 million of Syrian refugees. Therefore, maintaining the stability of Idlib and preventing regime offensive toward the region became a priority for Turkey. On the other hand, Idlib was suffering from strife between various armed factions. The key group of the region was Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, created in 2017 through a merger of al-Qaida linked Nusra Front, and numerous other armed groups. Those who did not merge were mainly expelled from the region. Having been designated as a terrorist organization by US and Turkey, and sanctioned by the UN Security Council, the organization managed to create a civilian government that administers the large sections of Idlib governorate.

Given this state of affairs, Turkey and Russia undersigned a memorandum of understanding in Sochi in September 2018 that exclusively focuses on the situation of Idlib, and established a deconfliction mechanism for it. The memorandum also allowed Turkey, Russia, and Iran to establish observation posts to monitor its implementation. The deal stipulated that Ankara would be responsible for disarming the rebels and granting free movement on the crucial highways M4 and M5. In return, Moscow and Damascus had promised not to attack the province. Eventually, both sides failed to honour these commitments.

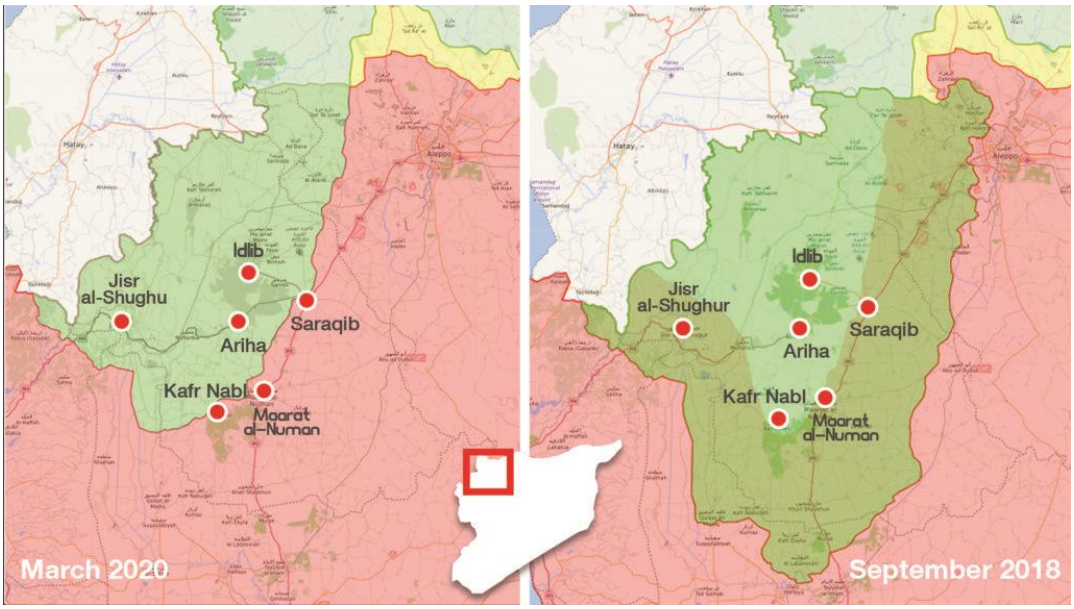

Figure 6: Territorial changes in Idleb governorate (2018-2020)

Source: (Enab Baladi, 2020)

In April 2019, the Syrian regime, backed by Russia, launched an offensive to capture the final rebel-held regions in the country's northwest. In the first part of the offensive, Hama countryside that was adjacent to Idlib governorate had fallen to regime control. The offensive intensified in the Winter of 2019-2020, leading to the death of hundreds of civilians and displacement of up to 1 million within three months (OCHA, 2020d, p. 1). The advancement of the regime forces was halted with the heavy involvement of Turkish armed forces in the fighting, as it pushed for a return to pre-offensive frontlines. However, by the time a ceasefire was reached in Moscow in March 2020 between Turkey and Russia, the Syrian regime had captured the whole northern Hama and western Aleppo countryside, in addition to key Idlib towns. The Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement froze the actual frontlines and established a secure corridor along the M-4 highway, to be jointly patrolled by Turkey and Russia.

The March 2020 Turkey-Russia ceasefire has been the longest ceasefire ever recorded in Syria since the beginning of the war. The regime and Russia almost routinely violated it with shelling and airstrikes, killing civilians, but the frontlines remained virtually intact. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and Syria's devastating economic crisis that started in 2019 and deteriorated through 2020 also contributed to the stability of the agreement

3.2 US Foreign Policy on Syrian Conflict

US foreign policy on Syria during the conflict should be first understood within the

broader US foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. Overarching US objectives in the Middle East are (Council on Foreign Relations, 2017, p. 1):

- Ensure the free flow of oil and smooth functioning of global trade (US dependency on Middle East oil reduced substantially after shale gas)
- Guarantee Israel's security
- Counter terrorism
- Prevent nuclear/WMD proliferation

For the most part, with the exception of countering terrorism, Syria did not mean much for these objectives. Therefore, traditionally, Syria has never been a priority issue for US foreign policymakers.

3.2.1 Policy under Obama

Barack Obama's presidency started under very unfavourable conditions. The financial crisis of 2008 hit the global economy so severely that the likes of which were not seen since the Great Depression, as advanced economies, including the economy of the US, were facing the risk of a complete economic meltdown. In addition to this, the image of the US was suffering a huge blow as it was stuck in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Walt, 2017, para. 19).

In such circumstances, Obama promised significant changes in US foreign policy. Under his administration, the US would initiate a process of disengagement from the Middle East issues, and steer their attention to Asia, which would be the key US priority (Quero & Dessì, 2019, p. 319). This also implies a significant change in the approach to military intervention. Obama made a distinction between a "war of choice" and a "war of necessity" and stipulated that direct military intervention should be restricted to only those cases where a direct security threat was posed to the US (Cohen et al., 2012, para. 9). The policy consequences of this approach are: the US adopted a more restrained, economic, and precise approach to using US military power; more emphasis on diplomatic engagement, with both allies and adversaries, the need to redirect US strategic resources away from the Middle East and toward the Asia-Pacific region, and finally reducing defence spending.

Under these circumstances, the administration adopted a policy of strategic retreat, gradually disengaging from the middle east and adopting the 'pivoting to Asia' approach (Quero & Dessì, 2019, p. 323).

By most accounts, the Arab Spring caught the US off guard. It is regarded as a "strategic

surprise", akin to Pearl Harbor, or the 9/11 attacks (Selim, 2013, p. 259). The US was not prepared for popular revolutionary movements in the Middle East, in countries some of which were central to US Middle East policy. As a result, the US failed to develop a cohesive and comprehensive response to the developments within the Arab Spring.

The course of events in the case of Libya requires special attention as it had profound effects on the evolution of the Syrian uprising. During the time when Gadhafi was preparing to unleash his soldiers on Benghazi, threatening to commit genocide, certain NATO countries intervened, with the support of a UN Security Council resolution. With the backing of the Arab League, NATO intervened in the Libya conflict, with UK and France in the forefront and the US "leading from behind" (Guilhem-Ducléon, 2017, p. 9).

The consequences of the Libya intervention have been significant to all major actors involved in the Syrian crisis. First and foremost, Libya proved to be a crucial experience for Russia in terms of drawing vital lessons. There have been many years of Russian obstructions and vetoes in Security Council debates on Syria, as this experience proved that UNSC partners are unreliable, and there is little reason to work in cooperation with them. Second, the precedent set by Libya had a significant impact on the way the US handled the policy issues related to Syria. Obama's stance on military action in Syria has been profoundly influenced by his failure to achieve success in Libya. In a broader sense, it led to the conclusion that a surgical and narrowly focused mission of civilian protection is almost impossible (Yacoubian, 2017, p. 9).

3.2.2 Early US Response to the Conflict (2011-2013)

It took some time for the U.S. to call for the ousting of Syria's president Bashar al-Assad once the Syrian uprising unfolded. Only in mid-May 2011, President Obama said "the Syrian people have shown their courage in demanding a transition to democracy. President Assad now has a choice: he can lead that transition, or get out of the way". Yet as the situation continued to deteriorate, on 18 August 2011, in a coordinated move with Western European countries, the U.S. Government called on President Assad to step down (Harris, 2012, p. 17).

The relations between the U.S. and Syria were in trouble for decades before the Syrian uprising emerged. Starting from 1979, successive U.S. administrations brought legislations to sanction various agencies of Syria and listed it as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. There have been additional sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime elements after the 2011 uprising's beginning and the Syrian regime's brutal response (Harris, 2012, p. 22). The sanctions included:

- Prohibition of U.S. companies dealing with the largest bank in Syria (Commercial Bank of Syria) and Syria's largest telecommunications company (Syriatel);
- Asset freezes on many individuals (including the president and others); and
- Travel bans on many of the same individuals (but not the president, giving him the option of leaving the country)

The Syrian uprising turned into horrific state-led violence, which intensified throughout 2012, prompting extensive discussions within the Obama administration on whether to arm the Syrian opposition. While the departments of state and defence, in addition to the CIA, were in favour of not limiting the assistance with non-lethal military equipment, other elements of the administration and particularly Obama himself, was highly sceptical of the effectiveness of arming the opposition. A plan on arming the Syrian opposition with advanced weaponry prepared by the departments of defence and state, known as the Petraeus-Clinton plan, was rejected by Obama in August 2012. However, at the same time, it was stated by the administration that any attempt by Syria to move or use chemical weapons would "change the calculus" regarding U.S. military intervention in Syria (Yacoubian, 2017, p. 20). The red-line policy was hoped to deter the regime from any attempt to use chemical weapons.

The Syrian regime launched a chemical attack targeting the rebel held area of eastern Ghouta on August 21, 2013, leading to a massacre with more than one thousand civilian victims. Arguably the most critical U.S. foreign policy decision on Syria, and by some accounts, of his entire presidency, has been made in the few weeks following this attack. Obama eventually decided not to attack Syria, and worked multilaterally to take the chemical weapons stock of the Syrian regime under control. This decision had far-reaching implications on the trajectory of the conflict, and represented a marked change in U.S. foreign policy in the region.

3.2.3 Assistance to Syria (2011-2013)

During the early stage of the conflict, it can be said that the U.S. assistance to Syria was under three categories:

- *International Diplomatic Support*

After calling on Assad to step down, efforts led by the U.S. to find a viable alternative to the regime gained pace. To that end, the most significant enterprise was the initiation of the "Friends of Syria" group. Formed in Tunisia in early 2012 with the participation of around 50 countries, the group held successive meetings to promote the legitimacy of the Syrian

opposition as the representative of the Syrian people, particularly the Istanbul-based Syrian National Council, and then the umbrella organization for the whole Syrian opposition, namely the National Coalition (Lund, 2017, p. 4).

Efforts strongly supported by the U.S. in this respect aimed at to establishment of a transitional governing body, supporting the Syrian opposition and further isolating the regime, ultimately ending Assad's rule, and creating a democratic post-Assad Syria with the participation of all Syrians regardless of their gender, religion, or ethnicity (U.S. Department of State, 2013, para. 7).

- *Transition Assistance to the Syrian Opposition*

During this phase, a particular emphasis of U.S. policy on Syria was assistance to the Syrian opposition in building a post-Assad Syria. Assistance was provided to local opposition structures in liberated communities to strengthen their institutional capacity to deliver essential services. Since the central government lost control over large chunks of the country, the assistance to the opposition aimed at supporting local organizations and governing bodies so that they could replace the government structures in terms of providing basic services, and other crucial government functions such as ensuring public safety, fostering the rule of law, and with a view to preventing sectarian violence and improving local stability, improving the provision of justice. The main perspective was to plan for the transition period. Therefore the assistance also included training and equipment for capacity building of activists and support linkages among them with a particular focus on empowering women leaders (U.S. Department of State, 2013, para. 14).

As a crucial component of wider U.S. attempts to promote its policy goals in Syria over the first two years of the war, civilian stabilization and local governance initiatives have played a significant role. In line with the United States' high-level policy toward Syria and the conflict's projected direction, the expectation was that the conflict was in the early stages of a long but eventually successful transition to Syria without Bashar al-Assad as its leader. This was the common future outlook shared by internationals as well as Syrian opposition members at that time. Yet, things did not turn out as planned (Brown, 2018, p. 13). During this phase, the U.S. provided $250 million in transition support to the Syrian Opposition Coalition and local opposition councils inside Syria (Sharp & Blanchard, 2013, p. 8).

There have been significant changes in the trajectory of the Syrian conflict, including from civilian uprising to full-scale proxy war, from the Assad government's resurgence to new

rounds of instability fuelled by a deep economic crisis, which also led to changes in the U.S. and its allies' approaches, policies and priorities. The greatest failure in this respect was the lack of a peace process that all parties would agree on that would lead to Assad's step down, or bring a fundamental change in Syria's political structure (Humud & Blanchard, 2020, p. 30).

3.2.4 Redefining the Policy (2014-2016)

From the outset, U.S. overall strategy has oscillated between an interventionist approach calling Assad to step down to restraint that the U.S. is not willing to take actions more than words. The ambiguity created by this ambivalent approach has further increased with the emergence of ISIS in Syria. The failure of implementing the red line policy indicated that the U.S. was not interested in military intervention in Syria. As ISIS gained territory across Iraq and Syria, the declared policy goal of post-Assad Syria has also changed.

The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the summer of 2014 has been a game-changer in the U.S. policy toward Syria, resulting in a change in focus from political transition to counterterrorism operations against the Islamic State. U.S. policy priorities, as U.S. policy itself, became increasingly divided between countering Assad or countering the Islamic State (Brown, 2018, p. 16). The rise of ISIS led to the creation of a U.S.-led coalition in Syria, whose mandate did not include targeting Syrian regime elements. With these developments, the United States had no reason to push for a regime change in Syria, as its consequences would include a greater power vacuum that could be exploited by the Islamic State. It was under these circumstances that the balance of power in the conflict completely changed when Russia officially intervened militarily to support the Assad government in September 2015, accompanied by a significant surge in the Iranian corps on the ground. The amount of Russian-Iranian support was enough to end the stalemate in the conflict. And starting in 2016, the regime forces began to take back the control of territories it had lost in the earlier stages (Lund, 2017, p. 12).

With the active involvement of Russia in the Syrian conflict, U.S. policy has increasingly become confined to defeating ISIS in the northeast of Syria. Because of the ongoing crisis in Syria, U.S. worries about terrorism and regional stability have become more pressing, and the threat posed by the Islamic State has trumped those concerning Assad's future. Policymakers in the United States and the region have debated whether Assad or the Islamic State should be the first target in Syria, and albeit remaining inconclusive, officials and observers in the United States have discussed how adopting different approaches would

produce different outcomes and their implications for Syria's stability in terms of immediate and longer-term considerations (Humud et al., 2017, p. 30).

3.2.5 Policy under Trump

The U.S. policy under Trump continuously suffered from policy drifts with no particular strategic direction. The declared policy goals in 2017 were: ensuring the country is not a base for terrorist activity against the United States, supporting its transition to a post-Assad government, diminishing Iran's influence, returning refugees and internally displaced people, and preventing Syria from again holding weapons of mass destruction (Alterman, 2018, para. 3). Yet there were no coherent strategies and sufficient resources to achieve these goals.

The U.S. responded to the regime's chemical attacks in 2017 and 2018 with limited cruise missiles strikes, but the President continued to emphasize that the U.S. would be less involved in Syria as soon as possible. Trump also ended programs for vetted Syrian rebels as well as the stabilization programs for rehabilitated areas from ISIS control. The priority was clearly stated by Trump, "As far as Syria is concerned, we have very little to do with Syria, other than killing ISIS" (Lund, 2017, p. 14).

The policy goals regarding Syria have been further clarified in 2018: the enduring defeat of the Islamic State, a political settlement to the Syria conflict pursuant to UNSCR 2254, and the withdrawal of Iranian-backed forces (Humud & Blanchard, 2020, p. 2). A particular development under Trump's presidency was the introduction of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, a comprehensive sanctions regime targeting a long list of individuals and entities supporting the Assad regime throughout the conflict as well as those who prevented its peaceful, political resolution. The Caesar Sanctions were the most comprehensive sanctions regime enacted in Syria.

On the issue of stabilization initiatives, Trump wanted to terminate U.S. aid to the Syrian opposition and pass the financing burden to other components of the anti-ISIS coalition. While the United States provided aid to particular Syrian opposition organizations from 2012 to 2018, financing for stabilization operations was concentrated in regions of north-eastern Syria freed from Islamic State rule under Trump. The United States has significantly altered its humanitarian and foreign aid initiatives in northern Syria during Trump's presidency. As it became the administration's priority to stabilize IS-held territories formerly in eastern and north-eastern Syria, certain projects with different objectives were revised or terminated from 2018 onwards. Stabilization programming for areas of northeast Syria liberated from I.S.

control has comprised four primary lines of effort: (1) demining, (2) promotion of local governance and civil society, (3) rehabilitation of basic infrastructure, and (4) promotion of economic growth and development (Humud & Blanchard, 2020, p. 40).

3.2.6 Assessment of US Humanitarian Assistance to Syria

The US prides itself on being the largest donor to the Syria crisis. Indeed, the country has delivered more than 13 billion USD in humanitarian and stabilization assistance to the people of Syria. 6 billion USD of this amount was delivered through USAID. As of 2021, USAID humanitarian assistance reaches more than 4.5 billion across all of Syria's 14 governorates, in addition to Syrians' 1.1 million refugees in neighbouring countries every month (USAID, 2021).

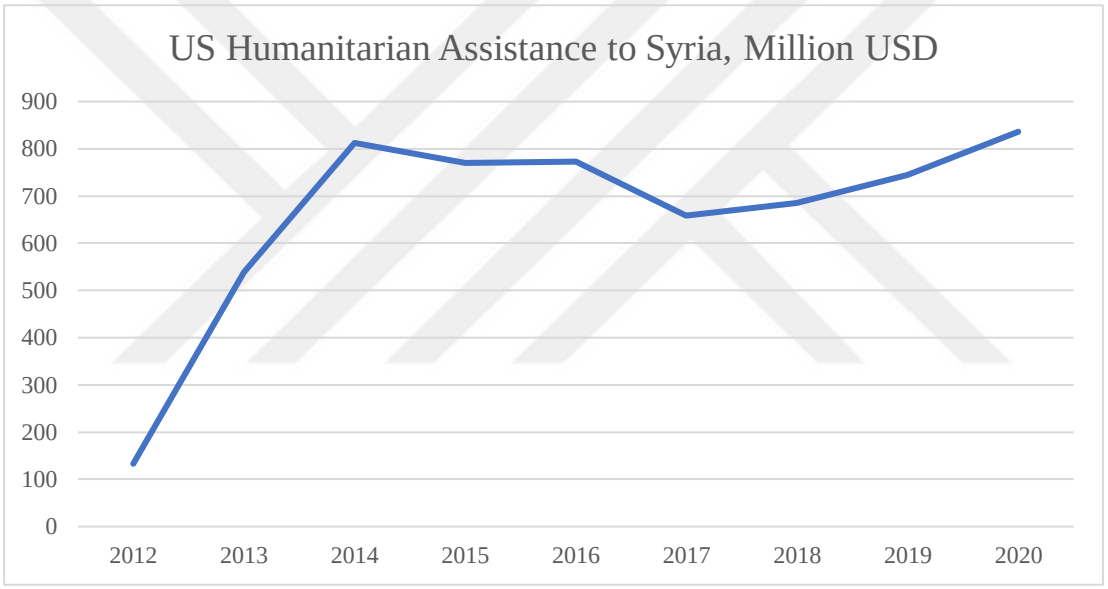

Figure 7: US humanitarian assistance to Syria (2012-2020)

The data retrieved from UNOCHA's financial tracking service shows the trends in US humanitarian assistance to Syria throughout the conflict. The annual allocation to Syria presents a strong correlation with the trajectory of the conflict. The modest amount provided in 2012 skyrocketed from 2013 onwards as the conflict intensified and led to significant destruction and displacement. There has also been a marked decrease after 2016, as the fighting in several regions ceased, either because the government took control of these regions or because of the reconciliation agreements enacted in these areas. The amount of assistance started to increase once again in 2019, and more significantly in 2020, as new rounds of regime advances created further destruction and displacement, especially in and around Idlib Governorate. It should also be noted that Syria descended into a severe economic crisis in 2019 which intensified

throughout 2020, as a result of which millions of Syrians have further become dependent on aid.

Compared to other donors, the US is the leading provider of assistance to the people of Syria. The table below shows the breakdown of total assistance to Syria by donor country:

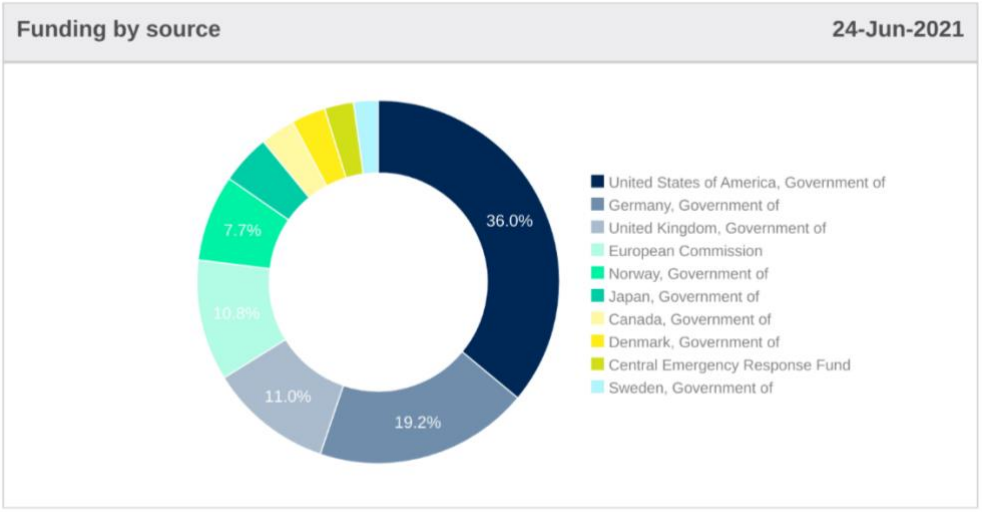

Figure 8: Funding by source for Syria in 2020 (UNOCHA)

While sector specific figures are not available, the following figure shows a general distribution of assistance programs across Syria's governorates.

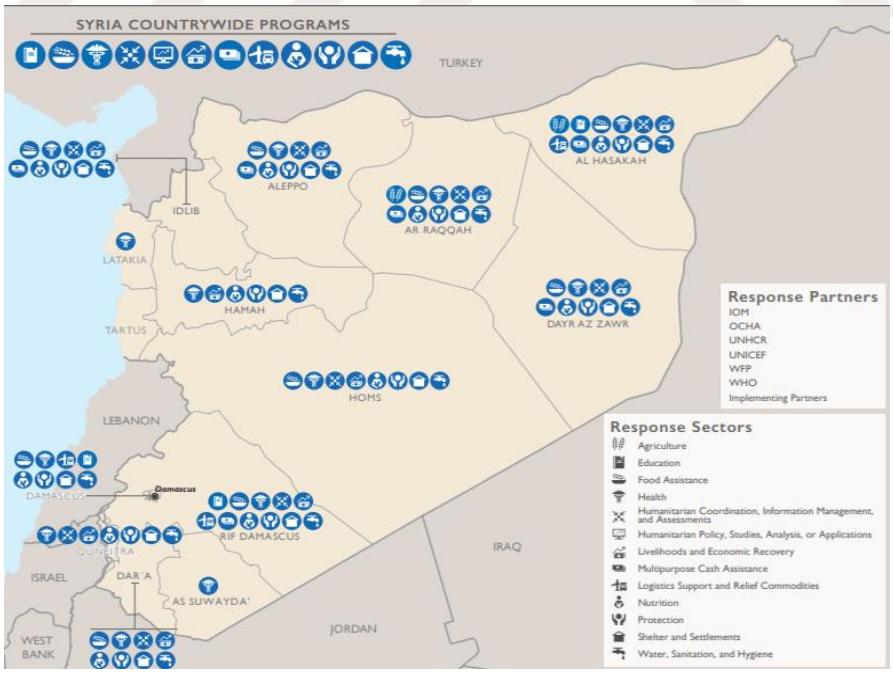

Figure 9: USAID Syria programs by sector as of 2021 (USAID, 2021)

It can be seen from the figure above that the US humanitarian assistance is dispersed across Syria, and is being provided in almost all sectors.

3.3 EU Policy on the Syrian Conflict

3.3.1 Before the Conflict

Before the uprising, the EU perceived Syria from its external neighbourhood policy framework. The policy and relations with Syria were guided by a certain country strategy, which aimed to support a series of reforms in various areas, starting from economic and socials reform, which would set the ground for political and administrative reforms, where good governance would be promoted, human rights would be protected, and separation between legislative, executive, and judiciary powers would be realized (Kizilkan, 2019, p. 2).

With committed to bilateral cooperation with Syria between 1995 and 2016, the EU was Syria's main donor and development partner, with projects worth 286.5 million Euros. In addition to these figures, the European Investment Bank (EIB) provided nearly 1 billion Euros for the period of 2000-2007. Within the scope of the EU-Syria relations, the human rights situation in Syria could find a little place for itself (Turkmani & Haid, 2016, p. 6).

3.3.2 EU Response to the Uprising

In a similar move to the US policy, the first EU reaction to the uprising in Syria came in May 2011 by taking specific actions against the Syrian regime came in May 2011. Among these steps were terminating the bilateral cooperation programs, freezing the draft Association Agreement, suspending the EU's regional programs and technical assistance, and imposing sanctions which gradually expanded over time.

A marked change in tone came in August 2011 when the EU called on Assad to immediately resign, in a coordinated move with the US, UK, Germany, and France. Between 2011 and 2013 EU continued to express its support for the Syrian opposition under the Syrian Coalition, as well as for the civil society, and local civilian bodies throughout Syria.

EU adopted a new strategy for Syria in June 2013 with the following main elements ; supporting political settlement through the 'Geneva II' process, ensuring that people living in all conflict areas could have access to humanitarian assistance in all conflict-affected areas, increasing financial assistance to affected populations and host communities huge displacement of the Syrian population, dealing with European citizens who are engaged with one of warring sides in Syria, and prepare for the reconstruction and rehabilitation work after the end of the conflict. As the Geneva II peace process collapsed in early 2014, the process towards political

resolution came to a halt, and with the re-intensification, EU assistance prioritized humanitarian work, in addition to the support to the opposition, funding civil society, and increasing the coverage of the sanctions regime (Turkmani & Haid, 2016, p. 11).

3.3.3 Counterterrorism and Refugees Take Precedence

Similar to what we have seen in the case of the US, the EU's approach to the Syrian crisis changed significantly with the advent of the Islamic State in 2014, where security considerations of the member states trumped aspirations for the removal of the Assad regime and Syria's democratic transition. This shift has also been reflected in the EU's discourse regarding the crisis. Concepts such as democratic transition, peaceful demonstrations, and regime change gave their places to "combating with IS", "fighting ISIS", "security of European citizens", "refugee/migration crisis", and "security threat" (Kizilkan, 2019, p. 6).

The rise of ISIS had important ramifications for the EU's policy on Syria. Most notably, the strong stance against Assad was revised around late 2014. There was no change in the EU's stance on Bashar al-future, Assad's, but there was a more flexible attitude to when he should be removed from power. European governments were also concerned about whether Assad's successor would be less preferred, particularly in the context of their efforts to combat ISIS and other 'jihadist' organizations in the region. Some Europeans agreed with Assad's rhetoric, which said that the regime is battling all 'jihadist' terror groups not just to maintain Syria intact and secular but also to safeguard Europe. With a change in European public opinion towards the right, stressing themes such as terrorism, terror, refugees, and a retreat from human rights and democracy, pressure on Assad has been less effective. (Yırcalı, 2017, p. 14).

3.3.4 EU Strategy for Syria (2017)

EU's strategy on Syria adopted in April 2017 emphasizes the following points as pillars of its policy toward Syria (Council of the European Union, 2020):

- Bring the war to an end by launching a political transition process that is authentic in nature
- Support the transition in Syria in an inclusive and meaningful way
- Meet humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians, thereby saving lives
- Enhance democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech
- Demand accountability for war crimes
- Foster the Syrian society's and population's resilience

Starting from 2017, a key contribution of the EU was the organizing of the annual Brussels conference to maintain a pipeline of humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid to both the region and Syria. One important outcome of the Brussels conferences was the prevention of the disbursement of any reconstruction funding until a formal political transition was initiated. In particular, the Brussels conferences have sought to limit the potential of "donor weariness" with respect to Syria. This is an area where they have achieved success by providing Syrian civil society with a prominent role at the Brussels talks. Another considerable contribution from the EU was also made to the otherwise stuttering United Nations peace process, which helped to keep the political opposition functional as well as enhance its organizational and intellectual skills and capabilities (Van Veen, Di Pietrantonio Pellise, et al., 2021, p. 27).

3.3.5 Assessment of EU Policy on Syria

The European Union's responses to the Syrian issue during the Syrian conflict failed to provide the desired results in terms of ending the conflict or successfully dealing with the consequences of the Syrian conflict. Only at the member-state level did the EU play a significant role in the efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria, with the US-led anti-ISIS coalition taking the lead. The EU's limited autonomy in manoeuvring between Russia and the US was a result of its modest diplomatic and military participation in Syria. This limitation was further exacerbated by the EU's internal and external relations institutions and legislative frameworks. Overreliance on soft power tools has not worked in Syria's proxy war, where actual political factors, such as state survival, power struggle, security and regional balance of power, take precedence over any other considerations. According to other parties, the EU's efficacy in Syria was hampered by its lack of hard power capabilities, which complement the EU's soft power (Kizilkan, 2019, p. 10).

However, the EU as a whole did a good job of mobilizing financial resources to help lessen the conflict's humanitarian impact as much as possible. As a result, it was able to rapidly expand humanitarian assistance activities in nations where such skills and knowledge were lacking or insufficient. It has also helped to strengthen a more self-reliant and capable Syrian civil society by selecting such organizations as implementers of EU-funded initiatives both inside and outside Syria, while engaging with them in discussions about the political transition in Syrian to make such discussions as inclusive as possible (Van Veen, Di Pietrantonio Pellise, et al., 2021, p. 32).

Going forward, there might be two potential roles to be played by the EU in the future. When it comes to this process, the EU's most prominent role may be to ensure that a political solution to the conflict has international/Western legitimacy. This will allow the EU to play a more dominant political role after the settlement of the conflict and have a greater impact on the Syrian players as a result of its soft power position. Secondly, in terms of rebuilding post-war Syria, planning, financing and implementation of the reconstruction projects would be other key contributions of the EU (Yırcalı, 2017, p. 15).

3.3.6 EU's Humanitarian Assistance for the Syria Crisis

EU has a complex web of assistance schemes, mechanisms and facilities to address the Syria crisis and to assist Syrians both inside Syria and in the countries in the region. Admittedly, EU assistance to Syria is not allocated through a multi-year planning, the EU continues to provide direct assistance to the Syrian population, both within Syria and in neighbouring countries impacted by the conflict, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey, through annual Special Measures, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis, and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, among other initiatives.

Having mobilized a total of €24.9 billion in humanitarian, stabilization, and resilience assistance for those affected by the conflict inside Syria and throughout Syria's neighbouring countries since 2011, the European Union (EU) and its member states have provided the greatest share of the international response to the Syrian conflict.

For the period 2014-2020, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) was one of the most important EU finance tools for addressing the medium- to long-term needs of the conflict-affected population in the European Union (EU). Efforts to strengthen the resilience of the Syrian people and pave the road for transition and post-conflict rehabilitation are the goals of EU assistance in the country. Education, livelihoods, civil society capacity development, health, accountability, and transitional justice are just a few of the areas in which assistance is offered to the poor. Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011, the European Union has raised €349.4 million for use within the country.

Launched in 2015, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis has channelled a large percentage of non-humanitarian aid to Syria's neighbours and refugees from Syria (EUTF Syria). Its overall budget of €2.3 billion is a swift and comprehensive EU response to the crisis, helping nearly 7 million people, mainly in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. (European Commission, 2021c, para. 8).

Apart from the Trust Fund, a dedicated instrument of the EU for refugees in Turkey is its Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT). Launched in 2016, through the Facility, the EU provided €6 billion to Turkey for those affected by the conflict. Refugees, particularly those living outside of camps and in vulnerable situations, are the primary beneficiaries of this aid, which also supports the local community by ensuring that refugees have access to high-quality health care and educational opportunities, in addition to a variety of other local services. (European Commission, 2021b).

Over the course of the conflict, the EU has dedicated €1.8 billion to assistance inside Syria, both humanitarian (71%) and non-humanitarian (29%). This aid was delivered in both; regime controlled and non-regime-controlled areas of Syria (European Commission, 2021a). Humanitarian assistance was provided for: Emergency health services; Food aid and support to livelihoods, including multipurpose cash assistance; Protection programs, including child protection and prevention of gender-based violence; Access to safe drinking water and sanitation services; Education in emergencies; and Humanitarian demining and risk awareness projects.

The EU claims to be the largest donor to Syrian civil society and creates perspectives for Syrians through the following initiatives: Promoting access to justice; Empowering Syrians to protect their civic space; Promoting dialogue as well as social and community cohesion; Supporting Syrian youth and women through better livelihoods; Funding agriculture and food security; Providing non-formal education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training programs; Delivering health care and psycho-social support, and countering sexual and gender-based violence (European Commission, 2021a, para. 17).

The following table shows the EU Institutions' Assistance for Syria Crisis, where the EU Institutions are EU supranational bodies such as the parliament, council, commission, and other relevant bodies.

Table 2: EU institutions' assistance for Syria crisis

Source: OECD International Development Statistics

Year	***2012***	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***	***2016***	***2017***	***2018***	***2019***
Spending (Million USD)	*23.34*	*181.99*	*171.17*	*222.32*	*325.68*	*354.22*	*569.81*	*443.07*

3.4 Germany Foreign Policy on Syrian Conflict

3.4.1 German Approach to the Syria Crisis

Germany's approach to the Syrian conflict has followed a very similar trajectory to that of the EU. After the uprising began in 2011, Germany, France, and the UK adopted a similar approach toward Libya by condemning the use of violence against civilians. Regarding the Syrian crisis, German foreign policy and public opinion were in consensus with its traditional course of action, which stipulates avoiding military confrontation in the face of crises. Instead, it makes use of multilateral organizations by exerting political and economic pressure. As a result, multilateral mechanisms provided by the EU have become the main tools through which Germany's implementation of foreign policy on Syria, which also functioned as a strong EU support for the US policy, including the exercise of a sanctions regime with elements such as arms embargo, the oil embargo, travel restrictions and asset freezes of regime-linked individuals. (Maier & Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2016, p. 10).

The EU's difficulty to come up with a coherent policy for Syria posed particular challenges for the Union. The split was notably apparent in the issue of arming the opposition forces as French and British policymakers were in favour of this policy and suggested the lifting of an EU arms embargo that prohibits arms delivery to all warring parties, while Germany was wary of such actions on the basis that they could result in the further destabilization of the region. German approach was also backed by its public opinion, where public polls found that the absolute majority of the population was against arms delivery. The lack of coherence between Germany and other major EU countries also emerged in the wake of the Syrian regime's chemical attack in August 2013, which targeted civilians. While UK and France have immediately supported the US position to conduct military strikes against Syrian regime targets, the German attitude was more ambiguous, which supported a UN-authorized military operation but was not supportive of the German involvement in it (Maier & Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2016, p. 14).

Germany's Syria policy also demonstrated a high degree of sensitivity to the emergence of the ISIS threat, which resulted in shifts in the political discussions and media discourse on Syria. The shift has become a sharp turn after the ISIS attacks in Paris in late 2015. The attack proved, in the eyes of policymakers, that the ISIS threat is real and present, and warrants an appropriate response at every level. On the other hand, putting forward an EU level solidarity was necessary with France. These factors led Germany to depart from its traditional policy of

rejecting military options and a strict commitment to multilateralism, and join the anti-ISIS coalition voluntarily. The German involvement in anti-ISIS strikes was still not combative, however, and involved such roles as contributing reconnaissance jets that can deliver detailed images of events on the ground, in-flight refuelling, aerial surveillance, exchange of position information with other international actors within the anti-ISIS Coalition, in addition to military training programs (Maier & Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2016, p. 26).

One of the key turning points in Germany's Syria policy was its decision to accept more than 1 million refugees. In 2015, the refugee crisis was at its highest point, with more than one million Syrians who crossed into Europe through various routes, mainly using Turkey-Balkans direction. While the response of the majority of European countries was to adopt a much stricter border control policy, German policy opted for a different path by opening its borders and welcoming Syrian refugees, which in turn increased the refugee flows towards this country. Germany not only accepted asylum applications of refugees that passed through other EU counties, but it also increased its offerings in resettlement, relocation, and humanitarian admission files. All these policies and practices made Germany a safe haven for Syrian refugees, eventually leading to more than 1 million Syrians seeking refuge in this country (Ayoub, 2019, p. 14).

It should be noted that the open-doors policy of the Merkel Government was not without objections and actually sparked a fierce debate and opposition to this policy both from the public opinion and political spectrum, including Merkel's own constituency. Nevertheless, the Merkel administration managed to handle the opposition and gradually increased support for this policy. On the other hand, this has started as a very controversial policy (Akın, 2017, p. 83).

In sum, the increased instability in the EU's immediate external borders posed security challenges directly and indirectly for Germany, such as refugees, illegal immigrants, and terrorism, which led to reconsideration in German foreign policymakers in terms of their level of engagement with the Middle East and made it a more significant region from a foreign and security policy point of view. While Germany provided support for military operations against ISIS in Syria and Iraq as a result of this realignment, it did not change the core principles of German policy, which posits Germany r as a neutral mediator in the process of developing political solutions and facilitating communication between actors engaged in conflict.

3.4.2 German Humanitarian Assistance for the Syria Crisis

In terms of Germany's assistance framework, there are several bodies involved in the process. Whereas humanitarian aid is under the mandate of Germany's Federal Foreign Office; medium -to long term development aid is administered by the BMZ. There is also a strong coordination mechanism to ensure that humanitarian relief and development activities are mutually reinforcing. BMZ played an important role in Germany's response to the Syrian crisis through its three-pillared approach, which focuses on education for children, vocational training for young people, and jobs for adults (BMZ, 2018, para. 4). The holistic framework of the BMZ ensured that assistance was not only provided for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, but also supported their host communities, who have borne the real burden of the refugee influx. The overall aim of this approach was to help the whole region and promote social cohesion between the Syrian refugees and host community members.

In terms of quantity, the overall amount of assistance for the Syrian crisis provided by the German government stood at 5.4 billion Euros, a figure that makes Germany one of the most generous bilateral donors among advanced economies. BMZ directly spent 3.28 billion Euros of this total amount, indicating its central place in assistance to the Syrian crisis (BMZ, 2018, para. 5).

With regard to the humanitarian side of the assistance, German humanitarian aid in Syria and its neighbouring countries in 2020 was amounted to 672 million euros more than half of which was allocated to activities inside Syria. The total humanitarian assistance provided by Germany since the start of the war exceeds 10 billion euros, which was spent through various channels including the United Nations, Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as a number of other humanitarian organizations. The goal is to provide individuals with better access to food, healthcare, sanitation, shelter, and protection, with a particular focus on gender-based violence. Germany adheres to humanitarian principles and standards of neutrality, and accordingly provides aid in all fourteen Syrian governorates, regardless of their control status. In terms of stabilization assistance, it is again the Federal Foreign Offices that are taking the lead, and a total of 250 million euros have been made available to help the political process, stabilize the regions in north-east Syria that were previously under the control of the Islamic State, and strengthen civil society stakeholders and organizations in those areas. (Federal Foreign Office, 2021, para. 7).

Table 3: German official development assistance for Syria (million USD)

Source: (OECD International Development Statistics Dataset)

Year	***2012***	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***	***2016***	***2017***	***2018***	***2019***
Assistance Amount	*106.76*	*311.9*	*276.5*	*277.1*	*824.18*	*879.79*	*768.77*	*765.12*

The above table shows the annual amount of assistance from Germany to the Syrian people. As these are official development assistance figures, they may not include other forms of assistance made by Germany that are not qualified as ODA.

The figures demonstrate a marked increase in Germany's amount of aid after 2016. This was also in line with Germany's greater involvement in the Syrian crisis following 2015, in which the country received more than 1 million Syrian refugees, and also reacted to the Paris attacks perpetrated by ISIS. This is yet another example of how aid goes in parallel with foreign policy developments and engagements.

3.5 The UK Foreign Policy on Syrian Conflict

3.5.1 The Overarching UK Foreign Policy in Syria

For the UK, the main goals to be achieved in terms of its Syria policy are defeating ISI and ending the conflict through a political settlement which would also address the suffering of the Syrian population, as well as support stability in Syria and in the wider region. The UK pursues a Syria policy based on the understanding that Syria needs a transition from the Assad era, to a new government with inclusive and non-sectarian characteristics, where Syrians themselves can determine their future. Another important focus of the UK policy is that there needs to be an accountability mechanism for the crimes committed by the regime forces, which included bombardment of civilian infrastructure and siege policies imposed on urban areas during the war.

As with other case studies, the fight against ISIS constitutes a crucial component of the UK's Syria policy. As a member of the anti-ISIS Coalition, UK's contributions can be listed as follows:

- Supporting local forces through the provision of essential military elements
- Denying ISIS to access any type of financing and funding
- Stronger border controls with the aim of preventing foreign fighters from joining ISIS

and other similar organizations

- Contributing to the stabilization of regions that were previously under ISIS control
- Countering the narrative of ISIS and undermining its ability to increase its supporters

In addition to defeating the ISIS campaign, stabilization is another area where the UK makes significant contributions, is stabilization, where main actions include mine action services, supporting community reconciliation projects, and extending support to efforts led by the UN with a view to restarting delivery of core public services in education, health, and infrastructure (GOV.UK, 2021, para. 3).

The UK's refugee admission was much more limited compared to Germany and other major European countries. In the first years of the conflict, the preferred policy was to assist adequately neighbouring countries hosting refugees rather than admitting them for resettlement in the UK. Yet this policy has changed and extended as the scale of the refugee crises grew in 2014-15, resulting in the resettlement of up to 20.000 Syrians over a multi-year program. While initially, the resettled were put under humanitarian protection status, they were later granted a full refugee status to be able to fully access rights and services (McGuinness, 2017, p. 17).

3.5.2 UK Humanitarian Assistance for Syria Crisis

The UK is among the key donors that provide substantial aid for the Syrian crisis. UK aid is provided to both Syrians inside Syria, and to Syrian refugees and host communities affected by the crisis in the neighbouring countries.

The main aims of UK aid in Syria aims can be listed as: With a focus on areas with access issues, address the most vulnerable people's needs and accordingly ease the suffering of these people,; enhance capacity at individual as well as community levels so as to empower them to develop coping mechanisms in the short term while future capacity is also built which ultimately leads to prevention of additional decline in social and economic field; and strive for making the international response more effective in general. . The overall spending of the UK for the crisis between the period of February 2012 and December 2020 exceeds £3.5 billion involving both direct implementation and through partnering with around 30 organizations including UN agencies, Red Cross Red Crescent agencies, and international NGOs by executing programs to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable Syrians in Syria, and in refugee hosting countries in the region, including support for these countries as well (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021).

In the following chart, the regional breakdown of the UK's aid can be seen:

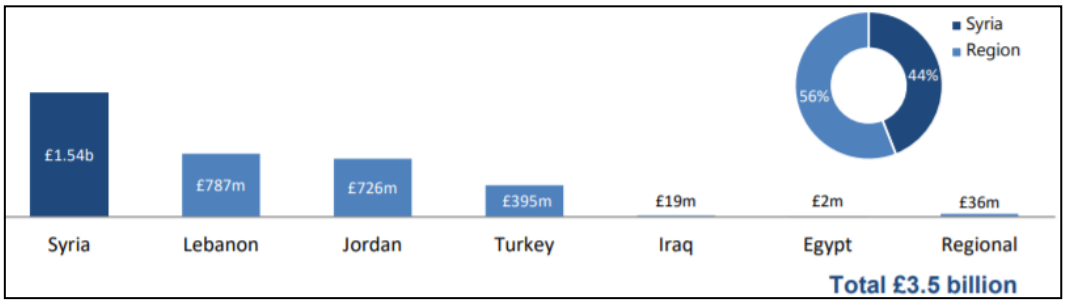

Figure 10: Recipients of UK aid for Syrian crisis by region

Source: (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021).

The assistance provided by the UK has the following results: hygiene and sanitation activities reached 3.6 million people (3.4 million in Syria), drinking water was provided to 5.1 million people (4.7 million in Syria), mental health support was extended to 480,000 people (218,000 in Syria) sexual and gender-based violence services have reached to 120,000 peoples (23,000 in Syria) nutrition interventions have benefited children under five or women who are pregnant r lactating with reaching to a total of 350,000 people (350,000 in Syria) livelihoods and agricultural support programs benefitting 470,000 people (470,000 in Syria) access to formal primary and secondary education by supporting 1.2 million children (680,000 in Syria) and finally in terms of non-formal primary or secondary education, a total of 220,000 children were supported (179,000 in Syria) (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021).

With regard to the annual allocation of aid for Syrians, the following table demonstrates the changes in the amount of funding provided by the UK between 2012-2019:

Table 4: Annual amount of UK assistance for the Syria crisis (Million USD)

Source: OECD International Development Statistics Dataset

Year	***2012***	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***	***2016***	***2017***	***2018***	***2019***
Amount of Assistance	*62.67*	*216.93*	*213.42*	*391.32*	*474.76*	*404.11*	*307.91*	*284.51*

Apart from humanitarian assistance, the UK is also providing non-humanitarian assistance for Syrians. With a view to preparations for a post-Assad Syria, establishing the ground for a political solution, and protecting the civilians from the aggressions of the regime, the UK coordinates with and supports the work of actors from a wide spectrum, including the opposition's political umbrella organization Syrian National Coalition, as well NGOs, civil society organizations, human rights activists, and journalists. Since 2012, the UK has provided support for various initiatives in this respect, such as the support for the Syrian opposition with

more than £67 million with an additional £3 million for the programs aiming to eliminate the regime's chemical weapons stockpile, and around £29 million for general programs which designed to mitigate the impact of the conflict in the region. Other features of the UK assistance were working at the local level to reduce tensions and enhance community engagement by supporting civil society groups, moderate actors, and local councils. It was within this context that the support was extended to informal peace political dialogue initiatives known as the Track II processes through peacebuilding activities involving different segments of the Syrian society with various ethnic and religious backgrounds with peacebuilding programs including trainings in citizenship, peace education and community dialogue with the aim of reducing intercommunal tensions.

Support for transitional justice was another feature of the UK's support for the Syrian people. Projects in this field included the provision of training and necessary tools for human rights activists, which would allow them to collect evidence for human rights abuses and promote accountability. Key stakeholders in this respect were civil society organizations, local councils, and media institutions.

Finally, because governmental services were halted in areas controlled by the opposition and it was local councils that were responsible for service delivery, the UK aid extended support to local councils, and other political bodies of the opposition, including the Syrian Interim Government (SiG) to enable them to meet needs by improving and sustaining the delivery of basic services. At the community level, this translates into assistance for increasing agricultural production as well as services in education, health and infrastructure (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2015, para. 12).

3.6 Qatar Foreign Policy on Syrian Conflict

3.6.1 Qatar's Position on the Syrian Crisis

Qatar has recently emerged as an important player both in regional and global affairs. The rich natural resources it possesses and its strategic location between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two regional rivals, allow Qatar to influence events in the region despite its smaller geographical size and population. One of Qatar's significant roles in recent years is to mediate between conflicting sides while also extending support in general to the demands of popular movements of the Arab Spring since the beginning. Qatar provided diplomatic and financial aid to these popular movements allowing it to increase its regional influence. This pattern

followed by Qatar was also quite visible in its policy regarding the Syrian uprising, as it supported the opposition from the first day, and remained one of its strongest backers. Qatar was the first country that closed its Damascus embassy, and played a pioneering role in the suspension of Syria's membership in the Arab League. With the hope for a smooth transition to a post-Assad Syria, Qatar provided considerable political and financial support for the Syrian opposition.

Despite the recent trends of normalizing ties with the Assad regime in the region, including among several Gulf countries, Qatar remained staunchly opposing to such initiatives leaving the issue of legitimizing the current form of the Syrian regime out of the question. However, there have been some recalibrations in Qatar's policy towards the Syrian crisis, especially after the 2017 diplomatic crisis when several Arab and Gulf countries cut relations with Qatar. As a result, Qatar's main policy goal has been reformulated as regime reform in Syria, rather than an overall regime change (Görgülü, 2018, p. 14).

A recent initiative involved and led by Qatar is a "trilateral consultation process" whereby Qatar, Turkey, and Russia converged for the first time to resolve Syria's decade-old conflict through a political solution. Within this context, in which Doha and Moscow seek some common ground despite having fundamentally different positions on Assad's regime, there is a possibility of more flexibility in Qatar's position (Cafiero & Langlois, 2021, para. 14).

3.6.2 Qatari Humanitarian Assistance for the Syria Crisis

Unlike Western donors, for which data regarding their humanitarian assistance is ample and detailed, there are scarce data sources to provide information on Qatar's spending on humanitarian assistance for the Syrian crisis. According to OECD DAC, Qatar's development co-operation has risen from USD 543 million in 2012 to USD 1.3 billion in 2013, for which the latest data is available. The top recipients of aid from Qatar were Syria, Morocco, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Egypt and Yemen in 2013 as it supported such sectors as humanitarian aid, poverty alleviation, construction, and multi-sectoral and budget support (OECD DAC, 2021).

Many donor countries also report their spending on the Syria crisis through UNOCHA's financial tracking service database. The information regarding Qatar on this system is also very limited, demonstrating a few million dollars annually, much smaller than their actual spending. Therefore, this section will focus more on Qatar's humanitarian policies and rely on secondary data in terms of aid amounts.

Qatari aid in Syria has had an impact on both financial and political levels. In the last two editions of the Brussels Conference for Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, Qatar pledged to provide $100 million annually to help alleviate humanitarian concerns. Since 2011, Qatar's humanitarian aid to the Syrian crisis has exceeded $2 billion. This is the estimated total of government aid, donations through civil society organizations, humanitarian and charitable societies, in addition to Qatari donor institutions (Abdallah, 2021, para. 4). Qatar offered USD $10 billion in aid to be spent over a period of a decade at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, and committed another $500 million to different United Nations (UN) initiatives during the 2018 Doha Forum. Following the Gulf crisis in 2017, Qatari assistance organizations have grown even more cautious. It may be argued that the 2017 Gulf Crisis was a huge hiccup for Qatar's humanitarian sector, which was one of the largest in the Gulf in terms of the number and diversity of actors. While the drastic reduction in the diversity of humanitarian actors was one result of the 2017 crisis, the other was a shift in the channelling of aid in favour of multilateral organizations (43.53% of funds were disbursed through multi-laterals in 2017). More intense cooperation with multilateral organizations can be interpreted as a strategy that aims for greater legitimacy through such cooperation efforts and Qatar's commitment to multilateralism. It was also observed that there has been a significant drop in Qatar's unidentified funding, which dropped from the levels of 40% to less than 2% in 2017, and can be interpreted as Qatar's increased focus on transparency and accountability.

Qatar's humanitarian and development assistance is being provided through mainly two implementing agencies, namely Qatar Charity and the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS). In fragile situations, QRCS employs expert mediation to facilitate the execution of initiatives that provide essential services, with the ultimate goal of contributing to resilience, stability, and wellbeing. Having established itself as a reliable third-party mediator, Qatar developed sophisticated engagements in peace and conflict problems while cementing its position as a major global actor in conflict-affected areas. Building on the premise of humanitarian imperative, Qatar's latest mediation efforts have centred on exchanging prisoners and releasing hostages (Barakat, 2019, p. 5).

3.7 Cross-Border Aid: between Humanitarian Imperative and Great Power Rivalry

Despite that the research focuses on humanitarian funding, during the interviews conducted, it was evident that other factors that contribute to humanitarian action do not involve the donors or civil society actors in the international arena. The special case presented in this

context is the case of “Cross Border aid” to Syria. There have been tense debates at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This chapter presents the evolution of the UNSC resolution on Cross Border aid with a focus on the political dispute between the permanent members of the security council, known as the P5, and other members of the council.

3.7.1 Overview of UN Humanitarian Response System

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the UN-led humanitarian architecture has exerted significant efforts and allocated plenty of resources in its response. In this section, after a description of the main features of the UN humanitarian response to Syria, the politics behind it will be discussed.

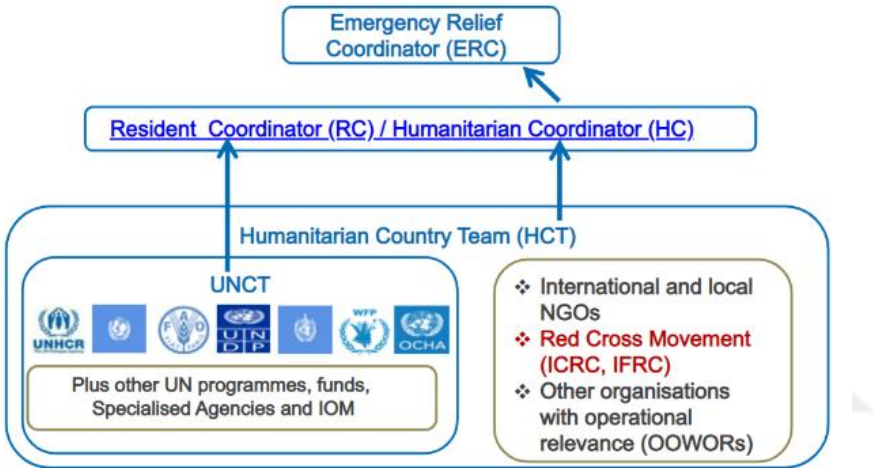

Figure 11: Coordination structure in a national disaster in peaceful times.

Source: (OCHA - UN CMCoord, 2017, p. 28)

The UN humanitarian response mechanisms were created in the 1990s to address the changing humanitarian context. The highest UN position to deal with humanitarian crises is the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who directly reports to UN Secretary General. The coordinator is also the chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the highest-level humanitarian coordination platform of the UN System. The ERC and IASC are supported by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to undertake their leadership and coordination responsibilities.

ERC is responsible for overseeing and coordinating all emergencies requiring international humanitarian assistance. Once a crisis unfolds, ERC may appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) who will be responsible for leading and coordinating the response on the ground. The Humanitarian Coordinator role may also be assumed by the Resident Coordinator (RC), who is the leading actor of the UN System in a country during non-emergency times. To

that end, the HC communicates and coordinates with a wide array of actors, from UN agencies to local and international NGOs to government authorities. In undertaking his/her tasks, the HC at the country level has a team which is called the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) as an in-country decision-making platform with the task of guiding and policymaking for issues related to the humanitarian response in that country. HCTs, mimicking the global coordinating body of IASC, involve UN agencies, international humanitarian organizations, and national NGOs.

3.7.2 The UN Response in Syria

With regard to the crisis in Syria, initially, it was regarded by the UN community as a principally human rights issue that is expected to end rather quickly. This perception was naturally shaped by the events of Arab Spring elsewhere in the region. That is why, in the first months of the uprising, the humanitarian response was rather limited. As the uprising was faced with a rapid increase in the violence and intensity of clashes throughout 2012, the need to scale up the humanitarian response increased as well. However, the specific characters of the conflict and the context within which it occurred made scaling up a particularly difficult task. Indiscriminate bombing of residential areas, targeting of civilian infrastructure, notably bakeries and health facilities, use of siege as collective punishment of entire cities, denying access to food and medicine were some of the war tactics used by the Syrian government which led to a humanitarian catastrophe in large parts of the country. The Syrian regime also consistently attempted to disrupt and limit UN humanitarian operations and divert them to areas under its control. Further, the regime was not willing to admit that it had lost control in portions of its territory while it also wanted to have complete control over the flow of aid, and insisted on a greater role for Syrian entities such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) in the delivery of aid (Sida et al., 2016, p. 11). Such actions of the regime created huge challenges for UN operations.

From the beginning, the Syrian crisis was also a regional one. As early as April 2011, a group of Syrians took refuge in southern Turkey, followed by similar movements toward Jordan and Lebanon. By April 2013, the number of refugees in neighbouring countries reached one million (Sida et al., 2016, p. 8). Because of this massive spill-over effect, there was a need for a regional approach to the crisis. A crucial step in this regard was the creation of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator position in 2012 based in Damascus. However, due to restrictions of the regime, the RHC could not have a regional approach and undertook his work mainly limited to Syria.

Given these limitations and slowness in scaling up efforts, the IASC declared Syria as a level-3 (L3) emergency, in a bid to increase the pace of humanitarian response.[1] Syria was the first case in which the L3 response was activated. The activation of L3 brought some improvement in the quality of response; the funding from Central Emergency Response Fund increased, the RHC was relocated to Amman, making it the regional hub, and HC positions were launched in Damascus, Beirut, and Amman. Despite these improvements, humanitarian access continued to be a major problem. Aid from regime-held to opposition-held areas, dubbed as crossline aid, did not work due to the regime's blockings as well as the deep mistrust between the two sides. Providing aid from neighbouring countries to opposition-held areas was another possibility.

In fact, Syrian NGOs based in Turkey have been providing aid across the border since 2012. Some large international NGOs also started their cross-border humanitarian operations in 2013. To ensure coordination among Syrian actors; the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) was established in Turkey. On the other hand, the INGOs formed an alliance called the "NGO Forum" (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021).

While the OCHA and the UN System in general also increased in presence in Turkey, the Syrian regime remained hostile to the idea of cross-border aid, and continued to regard it as a violation of its sovereignty. Therefore, while OCHA has made a presence in Turkey by mid-2013, due to the lack of a clear mandate, and fears that the Damascus regime would end cooperation with the UN Agencies if they involve in cross-border aid activities, Syrian and International NGOs took the lead to provide and coordinate aid while OCHA was mainly side-lined. Another reason for the poor communication between the two different entities was the Syrian NGO's lack of trust in Damascus-based UN agencies, and their silence about the regime's continuous atrocities.

3.7.3 Cross-Border Operations

In 2013-2014, significant efforts were exerted to provide a legal basis and mandate for a cross-border aid mechanism to enhance humanitarian access. The efforts were especially

[1] The Declaration of an IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Response, referred to as 'Level 3' or simply 'L3' Response, "activates a system-wide mobilization of capacity (leadership, staffing and funding) to enable accelerated and scaled-up delivery of assistance and protection to people in need" (IASC, 2015).

focused on the Syrian regime's obstruction of aid and related access issues. To that end, the first step taken by the UN Security Council was the adoption of Resolution 2139 in February 2014 which demanded that "all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need through the most direct routes" (UNSC, 2014).

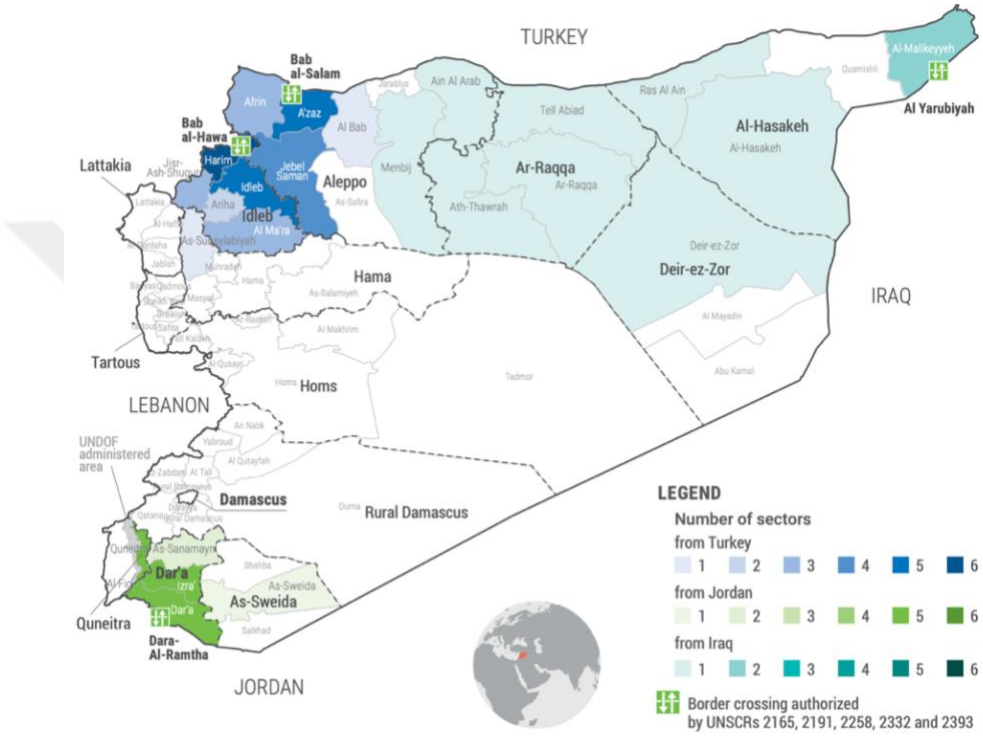

Figure 12: Authorized border crossings for humanitarian access.

Source: (OCHA, 2018)

This was the first mention of a cross-border aid mechanism in a Security Council resolution. Further to this, a much clearer mandate was provided by Resolution 2165, which was adopted in July 2014. Accordingly, it became possible for the relevant UN agencies and their operational partners to cross across lines as well as international borders of Syria, namely f Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha as officially authorized by the UN while the ones that are in use can be continued to do so, in an attempt to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all those in need, on the condition that relevant Syrian authorities be informed and with the ultimate aim of all border crossings might be used for the humanitarian operations of the UN.

The authorization of cross border aid, together with the UN Monitoring Mechanism

(UNMM), has brought tangible improvements in the UN-led humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis. First, a Deputy RHC office with adequate staffing and capacity was created in Gaziantep, to manage and coordinate the aid flows from Turkey to Syria. On the other hand, the funding mechanism has been decentralized and separate country-based pooled funds were created for Gaziantep, Damascus, and Amman.

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF)

Country-based Pooled Funds are multi-donor humanitarian financing instruments established by the ERC when a new emergency occurs or when an existing humanitarian situation deteriorates. CBPFs are rooted in the 2005 Humanitarian Reform which calls for predictable and flexible humanitarian funding to meet the needs of vulnerable communities. Contributions from donors are collected into single, unearmarked fund and allocated in response to priority humanitarian needs through joint planning and an inclusive and field-driven decision-making process. This ensures that funding is available and prioritized at the local level by those closest to people in need, empowering humanitarian leadership and fostering collaboration and collective ownership of the emergency response.

CBPFs are locally managed by OCHA under the leadership of the HC and in consultation with the humanitarian community. Advisory Boards oversee the Funds, providing advice on key decisions, and ensuring efficient and effective management.

In 2019, CBPFs allocated more than $817 million to 708 partners in 18 countries to support 1,390 critical humanitarian projects. Syria was the largest recipient with $140 million through funds in Damascus, Amman, Jordan, and Turkey cross border.

Figure 13: Explanation box on CBPF.

Source: (OCHA, 2020c)

3.7.4 Syria Cross-Border Mechanism

After the restructuring of the UN response mechanism in 2014, humanitarian aid to Syria has been provided through a whole of Syria approach. This could have been possible when, in late 2014, all three hubs (Syria, Turkey, Jordan) committed to working under a "Whole of Syria" (WoS) approach with one comprehensive framework, a common response plan, and a supporting coordination structure. With this structure, all national and international actors are brought under a common platform, and coherence is ensured for operations being carried out from different hubs. Also, as all actors would be able to have a holistic picture of the situation on the ground, this entitled the adaptation of a single humanitarian planning cycle, which

required a significant improvement in information sharing, and resulted in a reduction of overlaps. Starting from 2016, the humanitarian response to Syria was guided by the annual Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP).

Despite these improvements in response mechanisms, and a reduction in the military aspect of the Syrian crisis, humanitarian needs continued to increase. The Russian intervention in Syria has decisively changed the equation in favour of the Syrian regime. By the end of 2016, Aleppo city was again under the control of the regime with the help of Russian boots on the ground. Throughout 2017 while the international coalition swiped ISIS towards the Iraqi border, the Syrian regime, with the support from Russia and Iran, gained more land through the reconciliation agreements implemented in formerly opposition-held areas. In 2018, the rebel control in Damascus suburbs also came to an end after a brutal military campaign by the Syrian regime and its allies. In Fall 2019, the regime launched another campaign to capture the last rebel stronghold of Idlib in the northwest of the country, which reached its climax in February 2020. It only came to an end after a Turkey-Russia deal was reached in March 2020. With these developments, the military intensity of the crisis has stalled and reduced significantly. However, each territorial gain of the regime led to a new displacement wave towards the shrinking non-regime held areas. One million people were displaced in the three months of the Idlib offensive (December 2019 – February 2020). In addition to the devastating consequences of war, the implications of the economic crisis in Lebanon starting from mid-2019, and the emergence COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 onwards made the humanitarian situation even worse and increased humanitarian needs.

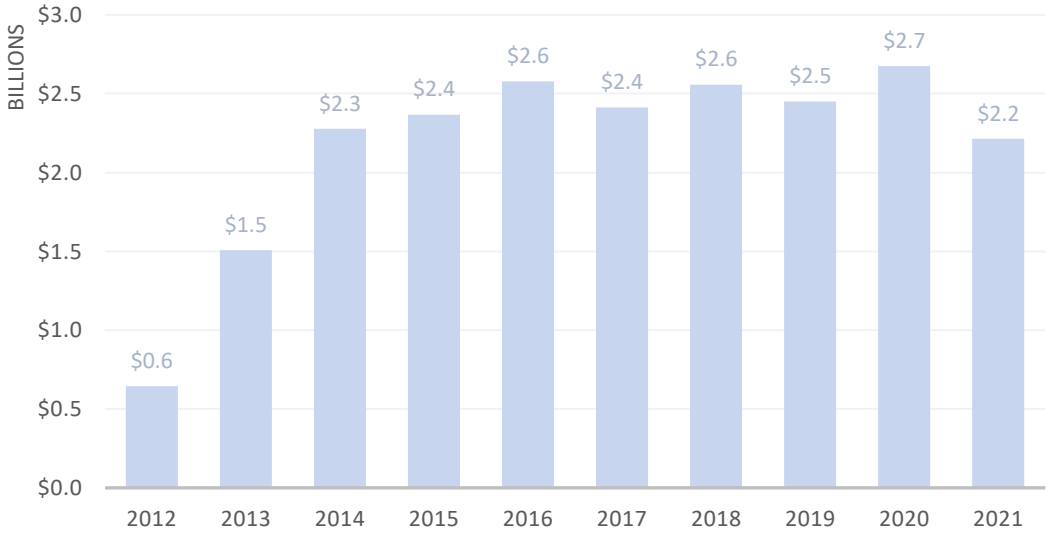

Figure 14: Trends in reported funding to Syria.

Source: (FTS, 2021)

As can be seen from the figures above, as the year 2021 ends, the reported funding to Syria is at its lowest point since 2014. On the other hand, the number of people in need reached a record level of 14 million, and because of underfunding, the share of unmet needs is also at its highest point in 2021. Despite increasing humanitarian needs, the aid mechanisms, particularly the cross-border aid modality, have been substantially politicized in recent years, and are under intense pressure from Russia and, to a lesser degree, China in UN Security Council.

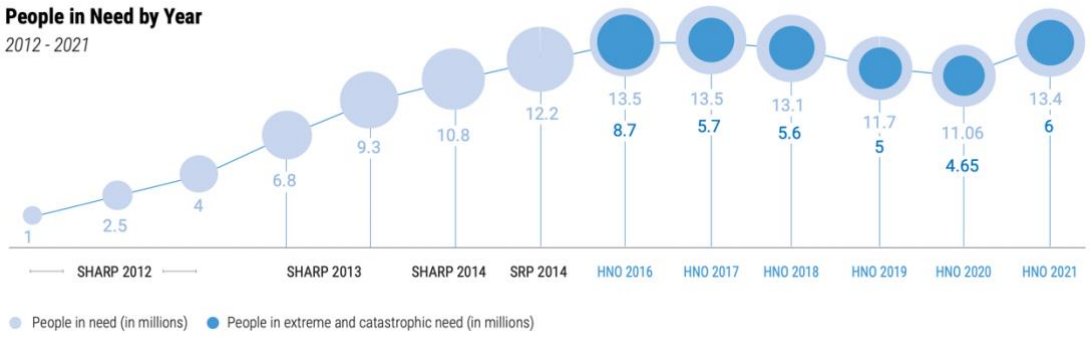

Figure 15: People in Need (PiN) by the year 2012-2021.

Source: (OCHA, 2021)

The cross-border aid mechanism from Turkey has been an important life-saving intervention for the Syrians in need, especially those in opposition-held areas in the northwest, which hosts nearly 4 million people, more than half of whom are internally displaced persons (IDPs), and more than one million living in camps or camp-like areas. While the cross-border mechanism has its own pooled-fund (SCHF), not all aid to Syria from Turkey is going through this channel. The figure below depicts the trends in the quantity of SCHF since its establishment.

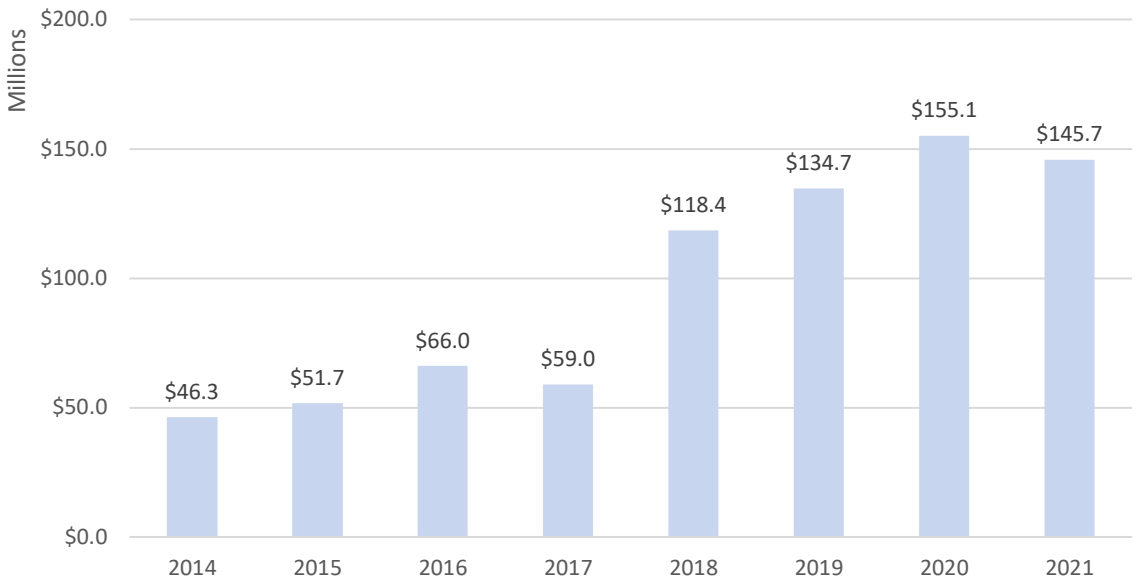

Figure 16: Contribution trends by all donors to SCHF.

Source: (UN CBPF, 2021)

The annual contributions to the fund recorded a steady increase since its establishment, despite being a relatively small share of the overall funding for Syria. Together with pooled funds in Damascus, Beirut, and Amman, the pooled fund mechanism provides close to 10% of all funding allocated to Syria through the humanitarian response plan. The Grand Bargain commitments agreed upon at World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 include the objective of 15% of HRP funding being channelled through the pooled funding mechanisms, the principle of unearmarked humanitarian funding, as well as localization of aid. In terms of localization, a growing share of the funding goes to local Syrian NGOs. In 2017, "national partners", which include NGOs, the government, and private entities, received 25.5 million USD, while in 2020, this amount recorded a 400% increase and reached 127 million USD. These figures demonstrate growing confidence in local entities from the UN agencies and international NGOs, as well as an increased capacity at the local level.

While SCHF continues to be a successful operation, not all cross-border aid is provided through this channel. UN agencies and other donors transferred a significant amount of aid through the Turkey cross-border mechanism. As a result, the cross-border mechanism increasingly became an important international issue, particularly within the framework of the UN Security Council. After the adoption of resolution 2165 in 2014, which authorized cross-border aid for six months, identical resolutions were adopted in 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), and 2332 (2016) without any problems. As explained above, 2016 was the turning point in the course of the conflict as the regime regained control of Aleppo and continued to make other

important territorial gains. This change on the battlefield was also reflected at the negotiation table. In the renewal resolutions of 2017 and 2018, Russia and China abstained from voting, signifying the changing nature of the security council consensus on the cross-border mechanism (Hall, 2021, p. 3).

However, the real test of the renewal voting came in December 2019. The voting in 2019 took place at a time when the regime army was conducting an offensive in the northwest, towards Idlib, which resulted in huge displacement across the region. The standard resolution was vetoed by Russia and the compromise UNSCR 2504 (2020) dropped the authorization of cross-border aid from Yaroubiya (northern Iraq), and Ramtha (Jordan). As such, the two crossing points from Turkey, namely Bab al-Hawa (Reyhanlı) and Bab al-Salameh (Kilis) into north-western Syria remained in place while the duration of authorization was reduced to six months, rather than the year-long authorization in the previous resolution. Therefore, another round of renewal negotiations took place in July 2020. This time around, negotiations were more intense and Russian demands were more exhaustive. In addition to reducing border crossings to one, Russia also suggested to include to support crossline operations to be carried out by Syrian regime entities, and also a critic of the sanctions regime, particularly the Caesar sanctions that were imposed by the US in 2020. In the agreed resolution UNSCR 2533 (2020), the Bab al-Hawa crossing was authorized for 12 months, and the Bab al-Salamah crossing was closed. In return, the language on crossline and sanctions were dropped. Abstaining from voting, Russia and China have claimed that cross-border aid operations constitute an unacceptable infringement on Syria's sovereignty, and it should be the case that all aid operations in Syria should be approved by the Syrian government (Hall, 2021, p. 3).

The final round of voting took place in July 2021. As the renewal voting time approached, the number of contentious issues increased. Among those, the crossline aid mechanism had a central place. The push for more crossline aid, that is, aid delivered from regime-held areas, to non-regime held areas has been a constant argument of the Syrian regime and Russia for the last few years. As explained above, since the beginning of the conflict, the regime's practices such as siege and starvation made it a highly unreliable actor in terms of aid delivery.

Among the issues of concern, safety comes first as the Syrian regime has repeatedly attacked the UN aid convoys, including the convoys that were granted permission. In a well-documented incident, on September 19, 2016, the Syrian Air Force "meticulously planned and ruthlessly carried out" an attack on a joint UN/SARC convoy, killing 18 civilians and

destroying $650,000 worth of supplies destined for opposition-held areas in Aleppo (UN IICI, 2017, p. 17). Thanks to the regime's such behaviours, those living in the opposition-held northwest fear that regime entities involved in aid delivery may endanger the lives of aid recipients, as the regime would want a list of beneficiaries, and sharing this information could allow the regime to persecute their relatives or to justify cutting off assistance. This fear is hardly unwarranted as the regime also has a history of instrumentalizing aid throughout the conflict. According to a 2021 study, there is significant regime interference in regard to the delivery of aid, including such practices as direct intervention in the aid distribution, selecting beneficiaries for various projects; picking regime loyalists for the influential positions of aid organizations which gives the regime the ability to monitor and control their operations; diverting aid to the regime's armed forces and allies in larger quantities than the aid reaches to civilians. No aid agency working in regime-controlled areas are fully immune to those practices, and in reality the regime institutions and aid organization have created a relation of symbiosis in the delivery of aid in regime areas, that is working for the benefit of both sides (SACD, 2021, para. 2). Apart from diverting aid, the regime has found other ways to abuse aid that goes through its control. A study on this issue found that the Syrian regime manipulates the international aid agencies by forcing them to use a distorted exchange rate, allowing it to divert nearly 51 cents of every international aid dollar spent in Syria in 2020. In Syrian regime-controlled areas, the official exchange rate is significantly higher than the actual market rate that exists in the black market. That distortion resulted in more than 100 million USD gain for the Syrian regime due to the conversion of US dollars at an unfavourable official exchange rate (Hall et al., 2021, para. 9).

In addition to the crossline issue, the Russian side also pushes for the inclusion of early-recovery language in the resolution. Early recovery is generally suggested by the Russian side to replicate reconstruction, while the Western donors have consistent in their position that reconstruction work in Syria is contingent upon a political solution, as outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution of 2254 (2014). However, as the Syrian regime solidified its control, some regional countries have started to change their attitudes toward the regime, and brought forward the possibility of normalization of their relations with the Assad government. Such moves also encouraged the Russian side to be more assertive in its position on early recovery. While in UN terminology early recovery activities are designed to sustainably boost local livelihoods, there are important questions to be raised over Russia's definition of early recovery, which may likely differ from that used by major donors. Another concern is, that

carrying out early recovery activities may be unfeasible for many donors, given the lack of progress toward a sustained resolution of the conflict. More importantly, the lack of progress in early recovery activities to the point that Russia would like to see may also endanger the cross-border mechanism as Moscow aims to link the two issues.

The July 2021 renewal voting approached these discussions. The course of action taken by the Syrian regime and Russia clearly shows an extreme approach to the politicization of aid. In fact, Russia's approach to the security council vote transcends its concerns for the Syrian case. Moscow uses the cross-border bargain to advance its interests vis-à-vis its domestic considerations. Additionally, Russia wants to see a faster process regarding the international re-acceptance of the Syrian regime, thereby the reconstruction of Syria could start immediately while Russia would not bear huge costs. Aid delivered through Damascus would also provide significant leverage for the Assad regime in terms of punishing adversaries and rewarding loyalists and allies through aid allocation and contracts (Hall, 2021, p. 4). After intense discussions, the Security Council adopted resolution 2585 (2021). In light of the discussions above, several new elements were included in the extension resolution. First, the resolution authorized only one crossing point (Bab al-Hawa), and only for a duration of 6 months, while the additional six months extension would be subject to the issuance of a report by the Secretary General with particular focus on transparency in operations, and progress on crossline access in meeting humanitarian needs. Second, for the first time the authorization resolution explicitly mentions early recovery activities, in addition to humanitarian activities. The resolution text also requires the Secretary General's report to include overall trends in United Nations crossline operations, and to provide in-depth information on the humanitarian assistance delivered through cross-border operations, which should involve how it is distributed, how many people received it, who were operating partners, where the aid was delivered in which type and quantity.

While the resolution is not clear whether the 6-month extension would be automatic or be subject to another voting, the Russian side signals that the extension will be subject to the content of the Secretary General's report, and thereby another voting. Given that the very limited amount of cross-lie activity with only three convoys moved from regime-held areas to non-regime held areas, suspension of the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism is a real and present danger. While there are views suggesting that from a legal point of view, security council authorization is unnecessary (Barber, 2021) or can be replicated by international NGOs, it is undoubted that without a UN mandate, the operations will be seriously hurt. As

humanitarian needs across Syria but particularly in the northwest are increasing, the cross-border lifeline can disrupt or suspended, which may result in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Syria. The politicization of aid therefore can have life-and-death consequences in Syria.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIENCE OF THE FIELD

4.1 Objective of the Interviews

The previous paragraphs attempt to draw an image of the foreign policy interaction with the humanitarian aid provided in Syria as being analysed in four states and the EU. This paragraph seeks to provide a further understanding of the relevance from practitioners' point of view. The interview questions seek to explore the hands-on experience in different contexts and management levels. The aim is to enrich the desk research and extend it beyond merely statements, structure, and figures into the personal and practical experience.

The interviews can be grouped into the following themes:

- Practical experience from the point of view of donor organisations
- Experience of the field from international actors' perspective
- Experience of the field from local actors' perspective

4.2 Interviews' Questions

The interview questions aimed to learn from real-life experience. Thus, the interviews aimed to learn from experts in different positions and fields of experience. In that sense, adequate questions were selected to match the interviewee's domain. In each interview, four to six questions were asked. Following is the complete list of all the questions.

1. In your experience, how did you see the decision-making process for humanitarian aid, with a focus on aid to Syria? On that, how the funds are distributed between geographies and sectors?

2. In the case of Syria, from your experience, what are/were the main drivers for allocating donations in value and type. What changes over the timespan of 2012-2020 you have witnessed?

3. What are the similarities and differences between the major donors in the process of allocating the funds, from your experience?

4. What are the bases of the earmarking of the humanitarian funds? What examples can you recall?

5. What is the implication you can see in the structural changes from DFID into FCDO and from OFDA into BHA?

6. How much do you see a role of personal expertise in affecting the decision making? How did you experience the relationship between the individuals and the structures they are working within?

7. What recommendations and good practices you can provide for humanitarian practitioners to improve access to and quality of humanitarian assistance, and ensure that their action is principled?

4.3 Bios of Interviewees

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it was difficult to reach out to key experts. Since all interviewed experts are still in the position, they were concerned that any of the information provided during the interview could be misinterpreted or presented in a misleading way to undermine the efforts of a specific entity. Moreover, such officials usually have a very condensed schedule. To address these legit concerns, all interviews were conducted with full confidentiality. The research adopted a full anonymisation policy. No personal information of the interviewees is shared. This includes the names, the positions, the institute they are working with, or any other indication. As well, none of the interviews was recorded by video or voice. Instead, manual minutes were noted during the interview. Taking these measures have it is own downsides entangled, as the details will be more informative if linked to a specific funding agency. But only on this basis, the participants were more comfortable in sharing their direct thoughts and observations and elaborating on their answers, including things they might not completely agree with.

Numbers were assigned to each export to be used in referencing their statement in the research. Below is the list of the interviewees with a short description of their experience related to the research topic.

Expert 1 holds a position that is in charge of humanitarian aid to Syria at a bilateral funding agency, with twenty years of experience in the humanitarian sector as he has worked with several local and international NGOs. Being a former NGO worker allowed him to bring the perspective of the field practice to the governmental bureaucracy.

Expert 2 heads an aid program to Syria at a bilateral funding agency relying on rich experience with national and international NGOs. He has extensive field experience in Syria and other contexts. He has been engaged in program development overseeing all levels of detail. He also sits on a coordination mechanism among other donors. This position allows him to gain knowledge about other funding agencies besides her own.

Expert 3 acquired his master's in international relations and affairs twenty-five years ago. Two years later, he joined a local NGO leading him to twenty-two years of experience in the humanitarian sector. He worked with local NGOs, international NGOs, the UN, and finally worked with two major donor agencies.

Expert 4 has worked with a major bilateral funding agency to Syria for two years. Before that, he has twenty-four years of experience in the humanitarian sector in senior positions within the international organisation and with the same bilateral donor agency. He has experience in different crises, including far Asia and South America.

Expert 5 leads a major NGO alliance with a focus on Syria. Before that, he has worked in different coordination positions with the UN. He has nine years of experience in donor-related positions allowed him to interact with a diversity of funding agencies.

Expert 6 has multiple senior positions within his organisation and other coordination bodies. He has focused on Syria since the start of the civic movement. In his different hats, he has been within regional bodies that included donors, the UN, and NGOs. He has more than 25 years of experience in both the humanitarian sector and the private sector as well.

Expert 7 is a Syrian expert who has worked in the development field for the past twenty-five years in different countries. He has conducted monitoring and evaluations of processes in Syria for the past ten years. His rich experience in the field and research, in humanitarian and development, allowed him to have a wide perspective on humanitarian aid.

Expert 8 has been in the humanitarian profession since 1995, with eight years of experience before that in the private sector. As a humanitarian practitioner, he has ten years with international NGOs and fifteen years in the UN, covering two major crises. He worked in different capacities, including head of NGO, operations, coordination, and advisor.

Expert 9 has been a humanitarian professional for the last 20 years. He holds a master's degree in humanitarian aid with a specialisation in geopolitics. During his rich experience, he has visited around twenty countries and worked in different emergencies. In his seven years of working in Syria, he has worked for humanitarians and development actors.

Expert 10 has a medical background that enabled him to be involved in humanitarian fieldwork as a sergeant doctor. For the past nine years, he has been leading the Syria program of an international organisation that operates in different countries. This NGO receives funding from major donors in addition to an active fundraising department.

4.4 Interviews Analysis

The transcripts were analysed after the interview was completed. The analysis was based on a comprehensive examination of the transcripts. The expert reflections are organized into thematic groupings based on the literature review findings. The experts have also discussed issues that are not included in the pre-determined categories. Those concepts were incorporated into the analysis framework. The ideas on each topic were then consolidated. In certain cases, the experts may hold similar ideas, while in others, they may hold opposing viewpoints. All ideas were consolidated to create a comprehensive overview of a topic. The results of the interviews are presented in the following paragraphs, with the structure matching the study questions.

4.5 Key Drivers of Funding to Syria

It is important to clarify that providing a breakdown of the motivations for the donation aims to have a better understanding for the sake of humanitarian action. Donor states are looking for the correct reasons for funding. They are looking for humanitarian inputs in addition to foreign policy considerations (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021). The research does not, at any point, aim to underrate the charitable motive to help the people of Syria. In addition, the research identifies the following drivers based on available information for explanation purposes without promoting, legitimising, or delegitimising any of them.

4.5.1 The Human Imperative

Several participants agreed that the Syria crisis attracted large international attention that led to maintaining a relatively high flow of funds. The level of the needs in Syria cannot be ignored. With all donations being generously allocated, till this day, millions of people are living in horrible conditions. The children and youth deprived of education and basic rights are referred to as the lost generation.

Given that the Syria crisis is getting into its eleventh year, it has become less of an

emergency. Moreover, the irritating dynamic changes in the political arena, reduced the level of compassion. The (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021) described the sequence of events in Syria as follows: the events started with a "civil movement" that was evolved into "systematic attacks and oppression by the government" that grew into "conflict" to "proxy war" then into "madness". People eventually got tired of Syria, or what is being described as donor fatigue (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021).

The amount of allocation to Syria competes with amounts needed in other crises such as Yemen and Iraq. The (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021) explains that the decision is tough. When all the departments in charge of different emergencies meet, each department needs to prove the case of the needs in the area they are working on. The humanitarian perspective is at the top, among others, such as national safety and security. It really helps to justify the case when the data speaks about themselves.

The (Expert 4, personal communication, 14 June 2021) stated that the funding decision, in his current position, is not much affected by foreign policy. He also acknowledged that since the funding agencies are under the MFA, they will be influenced in one way or another by political decisions. To simplify it even more, the aid money of donor states comes from the taxpayers of a given country. The elected politicians in office count the votes that decide their positions, considering that the process is democratic. Ideally, the humanitarian decision should be based on the urge to help. But we have never seen a prime minister or a senior official who has lost their post due to a poor humanitarian response. This makes the decision at a higher level of the hierarchy governed by other factors higher than the humanitarian principles (Expert 8, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

4.5.2 Visibility of the Needs

Almost all interviewees agree that visibility is an important factor in how much money is being allocated. When everyone is talking about the events in some country, this means it is "critical" and "visible" (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021).

Visibility seems to have two layers, according to the interviews. The first layer is the visibility of the need for immediate action. People think of the emergency when it is being shown on TV daily basis. The media mobilises the public in the funding state and pressures the politicians to create the 'political will' to spend the funding (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). In the first few years, when the crisis started, leading TVs were talking about the mass killing with barrel bombs, chemical attacks, and showing photos of mass

destruction. This was combined with the visibility of "moderate" opposition (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). The funding to Syria was flowing at that time. By that time, the visibility of Syria had decreased in the media. It also coincided with the increase of the areas under the control of Assad that have weakened the likelihood of moderate opposition to taking control of the whole of Syria, giving more chances of fragmented Syria making it close to the Gaza scenario (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). As Syria has less 'airtime', the funding also decreased (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). In 2021, Syria came casually into the headlines, which means it is not considered an emergency anymore (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021). Some consider that the situation is now 'relative stability which is not realistic or true (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

The second layer is the visibility of the response and impact of the intervention on the media. The videos of populations living in shaky tents in freezing cold can touch the heart of people more than literacy or dropping out of school, as this is hard to be captured in a photo. Similarly, commodities and distribution items that are filmed inside large trucks rushing to an area and finally being distributed to people in need with their eyes glowing with happiness, are more satisfying and rewarding to the public who have donated the money. The visibility factor, if can be named as such, makes it easier to mobilise resources towards physical necessities such as medicine, food baskets, bread, blankets, tents, winter clothing, and items as such. At the same time, the task is significantly more difficult with needs such as education, protection from gender-based violence (GBV), and case management for traumatised children. On one hand, those needs are not 'visible', as well as the impact is not instantly apparent. The outcomes of such interventions can be cultivated in a lengthy period of time (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021).

4.5.3 Geopolitics

Foreign cabinets design their policies to serve their national interests. Foreign humanitarian aid, as part of the soft power, is designed to support national interests. Especially when the state's interests are in contrast with other states' interests. For example, Italy is not considered a large donor to Syria, while it is one of the major donors in Libya and Lebanon (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021).

The political arena of Syria now has many players: the US, the EU and its member states, Russia, with the strong presence of Iran and Gulf countries, and not to mention the

outrageous number of armed groups. This complicated geopolitical situation is reflected in the money 'fuelled' to Syria (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021). Luckily, Syria is privileged that donors that are has always been at the centre of the interest of major players and had a high level of support. The geographic position is considered among the important factors. The middle east is the European borders, and that is why the EU will always be active in the middle east, and they make sure to be visible and viable in Syria (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021). Part of the funding to the moderate opposition control areas is based on the supportive political position of the opposition (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). On the contrary, what happens in Yemen, for instance, is not perceived in Europe as the same level of emergency despite the large needs (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021). While in Libya, the relief activities were utilized by some donors to improve their access and control of specific geographic territories (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021).

The Syrian regime saved no effort in politicising the relief efforts. For instance, it systematically hindered the UN's efforts to deliver aid to the population in need in the areas outside its control. At some points, the aid workers had to play the dirty game. As the regime allowed aid to Al-Tall city only in exchange for aid to be delivered to Deir ez-Zor (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

In addition to their own accounts, it seems that donors tend to follow the steps of the Americans. For example, when the US pulled out from Afghanistan, some donors pulled out soon after that. From a humanitarian lens, one can ask: what about the people in need and their level of needs? Did the suffering just end overnight? This example shows the interrelation between political decisions and humanitarian programs (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021).

4.5.4 Strategic Interest

Interviewees used strategic interests to suggest a variety of themes, including immigration, counterterrorism, and economic interest.

Aid programs can be motivated by the national security interest of the donor country. The aid which improves the quality of life of the population helps, directly or indirectly, in hampering the extremist currents. It can also be intended to reduce the influx of migration (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021). It looks like there is no formalized system to govern those factors. They are better described as 'pivots' and 'strategic shifts' on the global

level, and by the time they reflect on the funds' allocation (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021). It is also related to the objectives of the current administration. The change of the administration can change the course of action. For example, one administration can be in favour of giving money to some state because it is considered a good ally or to allow the exploitation of natural resources in that country. Once the administration is altered, the new one will focus on another state. These changes can be dramatic. Anyway, from a humanitarian perspective, given whether the government is left or right, their first priority will be to care about the people in their country. If the 'gas' does not reach each residence over the winter, it will undoubtedly impact them more than the Syrians who are dying (Expert 8, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

Migration can be dominant in European discussions, especially when migration waves increase from time to time. For that, any crisis in a neighbouring country ignites fear of the public that their countries will be invaded by migrants and foreigners looking for new life. This attracts the attention of policymaker, who starts pumping funds to reduce this influx (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021). This is relevant to Syria as it is the largest source of refugees now.

Some of the funds channelled to Syria, in humanitarian and development formats, related to the emergence and collapse of the so-called ISIS. The living conditions of the people living in areas that used to be under ISIS control need to be improved to eliminate any factors that can allow the situation to go backwards (Expert 8, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

4.5.5 Redlines

The assumption that decisions on humanitarian aid are only linked to the location and size of the needs is an oversimplification of the process. Funding institutions are accountable to their governments, parliaments, auditing entities, and public opinion. Hence comes the concept of redlines, as can be understood from the discussions during the interviews. Many concerns are related to the provision of financial assistance. The money can get into the wrong hands, delivered at the wrong timing, misspent, or delivered at the inappropriate location. Any mistake as such will place the decision maker under the heat from the home front. The rule seems to be: better safe than sorry. The active actors in Syria decide when and how such restrictions can be imposed. They may change over the course of time in responding to the dynamic changes on the ground (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

The counterterrorism regulations are the toughest (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). Red flags can be triggered due to the nature of controlling powers in certain areas. For instance, the control of HTS on Idleb raised concerns about the diversion of aid. First, funds were prohibited to actors cooperating with HTS, and then the whole area was considered a red zone (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021). Several donors had governance programs with funds channelled directly to the local directorates, such as health directorates and education directorates. With the shift in de-facto authorities, the programs were redesigned to be implemented by local NGOs (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021) (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021). The USAID and GIZ have also, reportedly, suspended the flour distribution program because of the 'toxic jihadis' as it has been said (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021). Another case is the Early Recovery (ER) funding to the areas outside government control. Given that fund managers would live to avoid any counterterrorism or sanction restrictions; they prefer to spend all the ER money in government control areas because it can easily be covered legally (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021).

Another aspect is the existence of solid control and accountability mechanisms overseeing the way money is being spent. The office of inspector general (OIG) launched a series of investigations in Syria that targeted notable INGOs on their work in Syria over allegations of misuse and poor control of funds. The result was less access to the funding by local actors as major INGOs opposed more restricted policies for funds (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021).

The fluidity of the situation in Syria has also restricted humanitarian programs in a certain geographic area. As the military operations were active in 2019, donors became reluctant to fund activities below the M4 line, on the perception that the government forces may advance to the area and all efforts will be lost.

Again, the political considerations can cause earmarking of the funds to a certain geographic area with a specific type of controlling power. One evident example is the area between Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad, also referred to as the area of spring peace. The needs in the area are clear. The area, that used to be under ISIS, suffers from a severe drought, poor health infrastructure, lack of functional schools, and food insecurity. However, majorities of donors, including the UN have not directed any funds to the area, so an INGO indicated this when being approached by local actors, that they avoid sending a wrong political message that they are legitimising the nature of controlling power on the ground. Other actors might not be

this blunt, but they may tend to delay the funds until things get cleared from the political point of view (Expert 10, personal communication, 20 November 2021). As a result, the people in need are being deprived of funding merely on political considerations.

4.6 Decision-Making Factors

The key drivers discussed in the previous paragraph set the overarching policy. These policies are being translated into place via operational tactics and a set of procedures. Following are the factors affecting the decision-making process, as being discussed with the experts.

4.6.1 Structure and Process

The interviews showed that there is a variety of structures and procedures from one state to another. In this section, the term 'person in charge' is used for several terms, including the 'minister' or the 'commissioner', to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021) explained the processes in place within their institute as follows. There are strategic planning cycles for one, three, or five years. The strategy documents cover the state's objectives, whether they are a 'peace building' or 'humanitarian assistant' for different countries. At the current time, 'humanitarian assistant' for the middle east is always there. Each region of the globe has a dedicated person in charge. This person will ask for a plan that should answer three key questions. What are the needs, how much money is needed to address the needs, and how the response will feed into the general objectives? The justification requested in the last question can be 'more security' to the homeland or 'support economic interest'. Lastly, in some emergencies, the decision matrix is completely disregarded. The decision can be purely humanitarian, and the justification can be that unless we disburse money 'people will die'.

The process in different humanitarian aid entities was described as follows. The allocation is done per country. The process starts between July and August with identifying the needs. Considerations of the needs depend on different parameters, such as what is the nature of the needs and what others are doing to address the same needs. They conduct their own needs assessment, although they look at the OCHA's assessment as well. Then, the person in charge on the top will decide eventually how much money can be allocated to Syria based on the needs and how much can be achieved. It also depends on the level of needs that they are addressing somewhere else as well like response in Africa or Asia. The decision is very difficult since there

are many factors to consider, but the factor is the needs. To operationalise the decision processes; there is a ranking system with multiple layers: the number of people in need, the number of IDPs, the number of years of displacement, the situation of the country, the HNO assessment of the OCHA, the capacity of government to react, and the quality of implementing partners on the ground (Expert 4, personal communication, 14 June 2021).

ECHO demonstrates a solid practice of data-based decision as it incorporates two objective tools in the decision making. The first is the Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA), which looks into the protracted conflicts and aftermath of natural disasters (DG ECHO, 2021). The second is their own risk assessment 'INFORM', which aims at "developing a suite of quantitative, analytical products to support decision-making on humanitarian crises and disasters" (DRMKC, 2021).

Another expert stated that: In terms of decision making, everybody thinks it is about the figures in the 'equation'. But, in reality, it is about 'making the case'. Every person in charge of a certain response plan would defend his/her case in good faith. For large cases like Yemen and Syria, the 'case-making' is important. The person should try to evaluate the need in line with the state's political position. It also depends on how much alliance this person can get. He or she needs to write emails to external affairs people or parliament members showing the case and motiving them by what other donors are also doing. If the case is not clear or missing enough evidence, the money will be taken from one response country to the other. So, the person defending one country will be against the other colleagues who are doing the same for other geographies (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021).

There are other agencies with less rigid mechanisms. The process is more informal, and there is a shorter chain of command. It depends heavily on the personal judgment of the person in charge (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021).

4.6.2 Estimation of the Needs

The needs-based approach is set to ensure the independence of the humanitarian action from political and military factors, and the influence of other states. Vulnerable people must get their human rights of accessing aid regardless of the nature of powers controlling their location. Hence comes the importance of estimating the needs.

From experience, the assessment is a super challenging task. First, it is hard to quantify human needs. In shelter needs assessment, how to assess a family living in a tent? Should they

be included in the 'people in need' or not? Another example is a population living in a camp with one water tank that is being filled on a weekly basis via water trucking. Do they have the same level of water security as people in urban areas with water flowing from their taps? These two examples can be extended to other sectors such as health, education, protection, and food. Moreover, aggregating the needs to the national level has additional challenges. There is an overlap in the number of people in need in multiple sectors. Given that in one region, there are one thousand people in need of food and one thousand people in need of health services. The total number of people in need in the area is not two thousand, because some of them have been double counted in the two sectors. Scaling this up will make it clear that on a macro level, it is almost impossible to judge that the needs in Yemen are greater than the needs in Syria and vice versa (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021).

Another challenge is that the numbers can tell different stories and can even be misleading sometimes. For example, some people say that the Syrian government controls 75% of the country, so they need 75% of the funding. But this is not accurate because the type of needs is different in each area (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). In reality, the non-state areas have poor infrastructures, few functioning hospitals, few schools, and no government spending to support the public sector (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021). So, it is not always about the numbers, but it can be about the way in which the numbers are being presented to support the case combined with a strong written argument. Moreover, when the needs are overwhelming, such as in the case of Syria, compiling the needs cannot be completely objective (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). That is why during the peak of the conflict, the bias was the worst, and the lack of solid information led to many wrong decisions that were made (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

These challenges are not new to the aid agencies. That is why major donors provide resources to the OCHA to produce and verify the assessment. The OCHA produces several key documents, including the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Unfortunately, only a few donors, such as the BHA, FCDO, and ECHO may have enough capacity and bandwidth to read these documents. Nevertheless, they have a large influence on funds allocation decisions (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

The information about the response being implemented is also as important as the needs assessment. It tells the donors where things have been improved and what areas are

underserved. This has also been challenging in Syria. The response information of UN agencies is recorded as 'Syria' without clarification on geographic distribution between GoS, NWS, and NES areas. So, despite the existence of the data, but is not telling the decision-makers about the reality of the needs, and where the next allocation is to be oriented (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021). Moreover, this information usually tells the story of how many people have been reached with services, but does not tell what is still missing. For example, it is possible to know that organisation X has provided five hundred food baskets in one area. But it is not clear how many people are still hungry, the effect of these food baskets on the 'hunger levels', or the impact of malnutrition on kids in the area (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

Circling back to the 'needs-based' approach of the principled aid, with all these factors being explained, it seems possible to present any response as 'needs-based' when the needs can be influenced according to desired interest (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

4.6.3 Individual Influence

The past two sections highlighted the importance of the structures, processes, and nature of data collection and presentation. But at the end of the day, people are doing all the jobs and delivering outputs. The interaction between the people and the systems has always attracted the attention of researchers known as the agency-structure problem (Carlsnaes, 1992). Without getting into that debate, this section only investigates the influence of individuals in the decision-making process.

Not everything is dictated in the system. Also, there are no written policies for everything, especially since emergency situations are changing rapidly, causing many gaps and grey areas. On the one hand, some people in charge challenge the system and take advantage of the existing flexibility. Those are mostly people who are touched by the size of tragedy, or have previous experience in the field, and they tend to 'walk the talk' and get into fights with their superiors to make funds available for those who are most in need. On the other hand, other staff stick to their ivory tower, talking down to the people, and believe they are doing their job by blindly following the rule, although those rules can have different interpretations. A lot of tactical decisions depend on the person's willingness to take responsibility. In addition to the personal attitude, individual influence relates to the level of technical expertise someone does or does not have, as it decides to what extent they can be objective. In the Syrian context, the

decision of engaging local actors in the leadership of the clusters came as a result of a UN official that defended the idea at the higher levels (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). Furthermore, personal preference is another form of individual influence in decision making. For example, a decision-maker is passionate about girls' education. His personal recommendation contributed to the continuation of education program funding to Syria (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021).

Nevertheless, the network seems to maintain the critical mass of influence. In that sense, replacing the agents from time to time gives life to the network. When employees work for a certain amount of time on one crisis, they become invested in it, and grow a bias towards it. For that reason, donors make sure that they perform a rotation of staff every couple of years to limit such attachments on the one hand. On the other hand, as the crisis moves from one phase into another, people with different mentalities are required for the new phase. It is hard to see people overseeing the humanitarian response are the same people designing early recovery programs (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

Given that decision-makers are aware of the fact that the quality of the person assigned to the role affects the quality of the response itself. It seems there is a link between the selection of the person and the importance of the case in national accounts. A dynamic and strong person is usually assigned to high visible crises, While, by the time, when it becomes less sensitive, a more conservative and less active staff will be selected (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021).

4.6.4 Balance Parameters

The funding decision is not black and white. It is not pure self-interest, but the self-interest also does not fade away completely. Lines are blurred between the two. The decision-maker on the spot needs to make the balance between what is actually needed and what they need to achieve on their national front. The interview questions tried to identify some of the balancing parameters adopted in real-life situations.

- *What Others are Doing*

The donors not only consider what they can do, but also what the others are already doing. There are two approaches here. One is cooperative, so donors coordinate among themselves to avoid duplicating each other. So, if one donor has a strong presence in a certain geographic area, the area will be less covered by other donors. Similarly, one donor who has a

focus on a specific sector of response, will make other donors less willing to spend funds on the same activities. In Syria, for example, Italy has more active programs in government control areas while they have much fewer activities elsewhere, knowing that it is being taken care of by other European donors (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). This role exchange is not only needed for the best use of resources, but it also allows space for negotiations among different actors. The donors funding GoS areas should have more leverage to negotiate with Damascus.

Another approach is the competitive one. Donors can compete for control of the strategic area for political influence or visibility in that exact area.

- *Level of Impact*

The humanitarian situation is getting worse, unfortunately. As many conflicts are not being resolved, the demands for aid are increasing each day. The global humanitarian overview in 2021 shows that there are 235 million people in need that require thirty-five billion dollars of assistance across the globe (OCHA, 2020e). In Syria, the continuation of military action in different parts of the country led to the increase of numbers in needs and the amount of funds requested by actors on the ground. The donor representatives only have limited financial and human resources to be able to alleviate the suffering of everyone. They need to make hard choices. It is tough to choose between funding a hospital, that literally saves people's lives, or funding a school, so the coming generations are not lost. With the same logic, would they be able to should they prioritise resilience programs, that help end the dependency on aid, over winter blankets and clothing? In the year 2020, the institute received proposals worth three hundred million dollars from implementing partners. The available resources were only a hundred and thirty million dollars which means almost sixty per cent of the projects cannot be covered. Thus, they will prioritise projects they find feasible, understandable, and well justified, with the clear impact explained. The partners should be aware that this is a competitive process, and they need to be excellent in reflecting the reality by words in the proposal document, and the excepted outcomes of the project (Expert 4, personal communication, 14 June 2021).

- *Emergencies*

Emergency or unexpected events have an impact on the funding decisions. The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic impacted the funding decisions. From one end, it caused a reduction in funding because of the shrinking in the domestic product (GDP). Also, the COVID response projects were given top priority in terms of funding (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May

2021).

In Syria, the donors responded immediately to emergencies, such as the outbreak of polio in 2013 and the massive displacement influx of IDPs in late 2018 (Expert 10, personal communication, 20 November 2021). The same concept applies in the reverse direction as well. For the donor, the aid budget is one for the whole world, so it is being done for Syria and other countries at the same time, making it affected by the crisis elsewhere. The urgent needs in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of America definitely took some from the share of Syria's response (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021).

4.6.5 The Position in the Hierarchy

In mid 2020, the new USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) was created as a result of restricting the USAID humanitarian assistance department (USAID, 2020). Almost at the same time, Boris Johnson announced the birth of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), replacing the former UK aid agency titled the Department for International Development known as (DFID) (Honeyman, 2020). During the interviews, a question was asked on the impact of the recent changes in the structures. The common answer was: it is so soon to judge. Besides the reason the changes are yet to be judged, they have coincided with economic backlash due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the government spending on foreign aid in general, as well as, the global reduction of funding to Syria as well.

4.7 The Role of the UN Aid Agencies in Syria

The UN has well established aid agencies that oversee humanitarian response globally, benefiting from its position as an international body working for world peace and prosperity. For that, the UN has played critical roles in Syria.

4.7.1 Coordination Role

Institutional humanitarian donors usually have two channels of funding. The first is via the UN agencies such as WFP, WHO, and UNICEF. The other channel is the direct bilateral funding to international NGOs in general and less likely to local organizations. Many donors were reluctant to channel their funding via the UN as the UN-led mechanism is influenced by the authorities in Damascus, which hampered down the neutrality of the operations. Instead, the donors tend to supervise their funding themselves (Expert 7, personal communication, 15

November 2021).

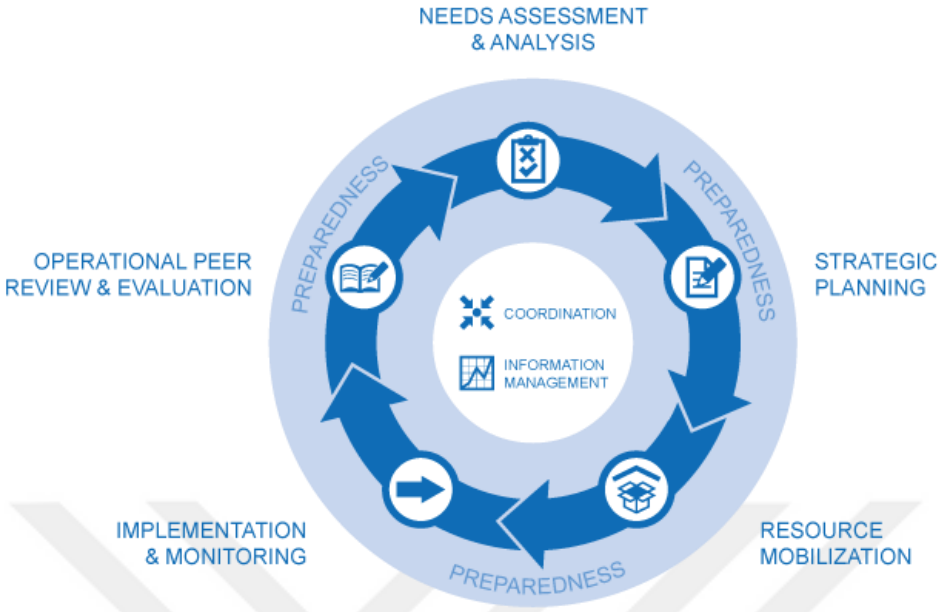

Figure 17: Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) by OCHA

The UN funding strategy follows the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) (OCHA, 2020a). The UN has a sectoral approach to the humanitarian response. The response is being organised into clusters, including shelter, non-food items (NFIs), health, protection, nutrition, education, and water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH).

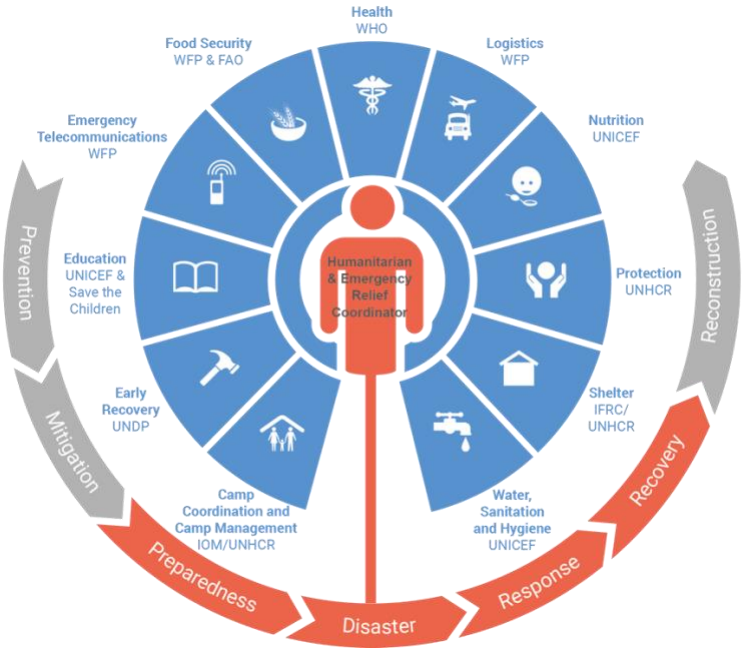

Figure 18: Cluster approach by OCHA

Source: (OCHA, 2020b)

The first step in the HPC cycle is identifying the needs by identifying the number of people in need (PiN) in the sector and the type of needs. The data is being compiled into a strategic document called the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The next step is to design the holistic response strategy and cascade it down to a sectoral response. Active humanitarian actors working in Syria design their response program and set an estimate of funds required to address the gaps indicated in the HNO. The proposals of the UN, INGOs, LNGOs, and red cross and red crescent communities are revised first and then consolidated at the national level to produce the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The HRP shows the amount of donations required to respond properly.

Given that the HRP is a national document, the UN seeks the approval of the central government in Damascus. The Assad regime frequently attempted to exploit the humanitarian funds for political purposes. For example, the regime official refused to enlist the needs in areas besieged by the Syrian Army as well as they tried to inflate the numbers of needs in their areas of control. As the UN attempted to main the neutrality of its operation, it resisted such interventions. Consequently, the government of Syria kept stalling on approval. For instance, the annual response plan for 2020 that should be issued in January was only approved in late December (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021). Such circumstances undermine the HRP's credibility on the international level. Nevertheless, major donors consider the figures in the HNO and HRP for their planning, in addition to their own primary data.

One more concern about the credibility of the HNO/HRP estimates is the nature of the process itself. It is extremely challenging to obtain accurate needs. In government control areas, the local governors push to dictate the needs based on their untransparent estimates. While in non-state areas, it seems that there is a tendency of the local actors to provide overestimated numbers. The donors, in their turn, are familiar with such practice, and counter it by requesting the digits to be reduced to a certain limit. As a result, the final published numbers are being negotiated at several levels. It is being negotiated between the UN and the donors, then with the implementing partners, and lastly with the authorities in Damascus. These multiple layers of negotiations put the final document under financial and political influences (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021). For that, the donors, who are funding the humanitarian pooled fund mechanism, challenge OCHA to see how the proposed projects are relevant to the distribution of severity scale to ensure that the assistance is reaching the area with the highest needs (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

At the end of the day, the UN is not totally free from political interests. The UN is under

the influence of the member states (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). For example, UN agencies were not able to deliver aid to the besieged areas as a result of pressure from pollical actors. Another example is the cross-line convoys coming from government control areas to NWS. The transhipment was only performed under the pressure of Russia, despite the needs in NWS are accessible from Turkey and no need for such modality. At the same time, the GoS and its allies keep obstacles to any convoys to NES where the needs are proven (Expert 10, personal communication, 20 November 2021).

4.7.2 The Unintended Consequences

Relief cannot only be sufficient to sustain any crisis to end as fast as possible, because it generates many negative side effects. The classical aid mentality assumes that it gives people something to consume but asks for nothing in return. When the people ran out of the items being distributed, the aid agencies distributed another batch. So, instead of empowering the people, the traditional relief programs remove the power from the people. Fifty per cent of the people interviewed in the MSNA2021-Syria were not happy about the aid. They stated the aid is not addressing their needs (Expert 8, personal communication, 15 November 2021).

When an emergency is a trigger in a very fragile context, it becomes the new normality and starts to feed itself and creates the environment that, in its turn, generates more damage. The ‘aid-dependency’ phenomenon is not related to the population in need only, but also extends to NGOs and the economy. In Syria, NGOs became interested in maintaining their salaries, so it is in their favour to maintain the status quo of the situation. The aid programs got stuck in a vicious circle of repeating the same thing over and over, sucking the benefices into the same circle (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021). That is why development programs must run alongside humanitarian programs to prevent exploitation of the people’s resilience. What is missing now in that equation of the Syrian response is the functioning resilience funding.

In Syria, the UN development role was almost missing due to the US-Russian discord. Efforts on tangible solutions faced a deadlock at the security council with repetitive use of Veto. The UN failed in producing any applicable political solution, neither conducted any meaningful development programs, and was left to focus on humanitarian aid alone (Expert 7, personal communication, 15 November 2021). This approach created an imbalance in the economic situation, and also, encouraged many NGOs to shift into mere contractors. As a result, the role of the UN was minimised to limited space. Instead, the international community, with UN

leadership, should prevent more deterioration of the situation in Syria, not only dump more tents and food parcels.

4.8 Areas of Improvement

One of the aims of the study is to look into areas of improvement. The following items were identified from both; the literature review and experts' interviews.

4.8.1 Pooled Funds

The pooled funds are a great tool to remove or reduce the political effect on humanitarian funding. The ECHO is a very good example of coordinated funds between different stakeholders. The political will is mellowed down as there is a complex map of states' interests, leading to the decision to be free from individual donor preference (Expert 3, personal communication, 22 May 2021). The prioritisation of aid in ECHO is being done based on two matrices assessing the situation of the crisis and the index of needs. Another example is the OCHA-led Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF). Syria has two separate pooled funds, one operating in Damascus called the Syria Humanitarian Fund (SHF), and the other is the Syria Cross-border Pooled Fund (SCHF) managed by OCHA based in Gaziantep - Turkey. The only political influence that can be practised is via the pressure on the Advisory Board, but this pressure cannot be fully biased (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021).

The positive side is less politicized because it has many stakeholders. But all decisions need to be coordinated with all different donors who can result in restrictions. The Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a global pooled fund with operations in Syria. Given its rigid roles, it was not able to cover the formal education program in Syria despite it was critically needed (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021)

4.8.2 Localization

Aid is a cycle. Nobody can maintain the span of attention of the crisis for ten years. The humanitarian practitioners get exhausted, especially when they see no solution on the horizon. Without tangible changes in the lives of people, it is hard to maintain interest. Thus, the funding gradually decreases. Therefore, donors need to invest more in localization because it is the best utilization of their money (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). The increase in the direct funding to the local actors will increase the efficiency of the donation. First, the local actors are more aware of the needs and are more suited to tailor the response

programs to suit their local community, instead of projects designed in far-away capitals. Second, direct funding to the local organization reduces the overhead costs deducted by the international NGOs (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

Another form of localization is the incorporation of local actors in the decision-making process. Looking at Syria, many essential decisions were made by excluding the Syrians (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021).

4.9 Recommendations to Humanitarian Actors

The responsibility of principled aid is not only the task of donors, but it is a mandate for the humanitarian practitioners. The analysis of the interviews resulted in a set of key recommendations to aid workers, as follows.

4.9.1 Maintaining Principled Mandate

The humanitarian organisations need to understand that donor governments are pollical institutions. The more they understand the donors' motivation, structures, and redlines, the more they can affect them in favour of people in need (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). However, the NGOs must avoid talking about any political interest of the donor. They need to be committed to the needs-based appeals. Some people may think that taking the political position of a given donor can lead to an increase in funding, but in fact, this will probably fire back and compromise their credibility. Donors are more willing to fund organisations that respect their humanitarian mandate (Expert 10, personal communication, 20 November 2021). To that end, the NGOs should never accept any funding if they feel there are strings attached. This has led some NGOs to abstain from receiving any political funding, as in the case of MSF (MSF, 2020) and Refugees International (RI, 2019).

4.9.2 Advocacy and Coordination

Advocacy plays a critical role in increasing awareness about the magnitude of suffering and the urgency of taking action. Humanitarian advocacy needs to be done at different levels. There is visibility on media outlets to alert the public in donor countries to the emergency. The visibility, as discussed before, motivates the donors to increase spending on a specific response. On the other hand, the humanitarian experts need to acknowledge that not all politicians have detailed expertise in the technicalities of the situation on the ground. Therefore, they should be prepared with a clear and concise document to explain the problem and why the proposed

solutions deserve to be funded. In other words, they should be able to tell the story in a simple form (Expert 5, personal communication, 13 November 2021). Then, they need also to ensure that the outcome of the donor funding can be 'visible' to them by creating a visual documentation of the success stories resulting from the donations (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021).

Using advocacy, humanitarian actors can demand more principled funding from their donors. But to do so, the local actors need to coordinate and speak with one voice. Unfortunately, some NGOs, instead of complementing each other's efforts, compete negatively to secure more funding (Expert 1, personal communication, 17 May 2021).

The NGO in Syria has dedicated more efforts to advocacy efforts in Syria has resulted in maintaining high levels of funding. When compared to NGOs in Yemen, for example, because their advocacy efforts are less, Yemen receives less financing. The advocacy efforts must be needs-based to maintain political neutrality. Nevertheless, the NGOs can push donor states to work towards a political solution that, regardless of the type of the solution, must end the suffering and respect human rights (Expert 9, personal communication, 16 November 2021).

4.9.3 Strengthen the Internal Capacity

The donors' funding decision is not only related to the existing needs, but also to the availability of partners with enough capacity to be accountable to the funds. Therefore, the quality of the partners working in any crisis is always helpful to increase the funding being allocated to it (Expert 4, personal communication, 14 June 2021).

The operation capacity of the NGO has a huge impact on the donors' appetite to allocate funding. The donors need to be sure that funding a specific NGO is not going to lead them into a scandal that will land them in hot water with their legislatures (Expert 10, personal communication, 20 November 2021).

Aid workers should also be keen to present innovative solutions and learn from success stories in other contexts (Expert 2, personal communication, 6 April 2021). In addition to being needs-based, the NGO projects should have the best value for money because it means value for money for the taxpayers from donors' perspective as well (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The world today is overwhelmed with the size of emergencies across the globe. Protracted conflicts from Afghanistan to Yemen and from Myanmar to Sudan were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic crisis, increasing the need to unprecedented levels. The result is record levels of funding requirements for nearly all crisis regions while the overall amount of global funding is stagnating if not shrinking. The figures show that, with the current level of needs, there are not enough resources to cover the needs globally. Thus, the decision-making process becomes more and more challenging every day with fierce competition among local and international actors on gaining support for their own cases. The struggle is not only on the limited resources, but also on the methods of prioritising the spending between the humanitarian imperative and the consideration of the foreign policy of the donor state.

This study aimed to demonstrate how the Syria crisis unfolded as one of the most complex political issues in the post-World War II era, and how these complexities were reflected in addressing the humanitarian consequences of the crisis, with unprecedented levels of killing, destruction, and displacement. Although it started in 2011 with peaceful public protests inspired by the Arab spring, the events escalated rapidly due to the violent response from government forces towards the civic movement. The situation quickly erupted into street brawls, which sparked a rebellious movement across the country, and in little more than a year after the beginning of the first protests, Syria was officially recognized as a state of civil war. Because Syria has a central place in the greater middle east and north Africa region, and also because of its unique political, social, and historical characteristics, the events in Syria attracted international attention since day one. As a result, as the military conflict prolonged as opposed to other earlier Arab spring countries, major international powers engaged in military action on Syrian soil, either on the side of the regime or the opposition, supporting them with various terms and types. The fragmented situation led to the creation of several military groups and attracted more militia from aboard as well, making Syria one of the most politicised proxy wars in near history. The cost of the war was paid by millions of civilians. In addition to almost 350 thousand civilians killed during the war (OHCHR, 2021), the UN official numbers estimate that

half of the Syrian population has been forcedly displaced, with massive destruction to the infrastructure and systemic attacks on vital facilities, including hospitals and schools. The size of the catastrophe prompted many humanitarian workers and donor countries to provide aid and assistance to those in need. The amount of funding to Syria can be considered among the largest globally, in proportion to the level of needs. Nevertheless, in consideration of the political nature of the international intervention in Syria, comes the question of the principled nature of aid, and the relation between the funds provided and the foreign aid strategies.

There is wide consensus within the relevant literature that by its very nature, humanitarian aid is a political intervention, despite its purely non-political origins. The mere fact that the main types of humanitarian interventions emerged and developed in the colonies of European empires shows how quickly it has turned into a political tool. The proliferation of humanitarian action in the post-World War II period with the newly established mechanisms of the UN at its core, turned it into a complex global network with dozens of donor countries, international organizations, and hundreds of NGOs coming from all types of shapes and sizes. From this point onwards, there was constant stress and competition between the two understandings, one seeing humanitarian action purely as a form of foreign policy, and the other that wants to remain loyal to its original philosophy. Of course, in reality, no humanitarian action or policy falls completely into one of those two approaches. Rather, we are seeing a spectrum, where there are always humanitarian, and political interests co-exist, with different degrees of weight and emphasis. Recognizing this reality, scholars and practitioners of humanitarian aid have long been in search of how to make it less political and more guided by humanitarian imperative, sometimes also called more “principled”. To make this happen, there have always been new initiatives, in the form of policies, guiding principles, international conferences, indexes, and other similar efforts. The extent to which these efforts achieved success remains open to debate, as recent trends demonstrate that political considerations and self-interests of donor governments continue to be weighted more heavily than humanitarian considerations, which stipulates that humanitarian action should be based on needs alone. It will be safe to argue that the tension between these two core motivations for giving humanitarian aid will always be in place, and the search for a more principled aid will continue for the foreseeable future.

Looking at Syria's situation, the question is not whether there is a relationship between international aid and foreign policy, because the answer to this question is simply: yes, despite it is not always that obvious (Expert 6, personal communication, 14 November 2021). The

relation of international aid to foreign policy is embedded in the systems itself, being identified as 'foreign aid' and folds, in general, under the foreign ministries or equivalent bodies. For that, the study looks into the aspects of this relationship and identifies motivational factors, as well as the impact of the different structures and policies in place.

The case studies provided in the study clearly show how the trajectory of the crisis influenced the forms, amounts, and guiding policies of aid to Syria. In the first stage of the conflict, aid was in line with the expectation that the fall of the regime was inevitable, if not imminent, and it would be a good idea to invest in a political transition process and actors and institutions of a post-Assad Syria. This was translated into support for civic institutions that emerged from the conflict, such as local coordination committees, local councils, and other civil society organizations. The destructiveness of the conflict and the huge humanitarian toll it has caused gradually changed the composition of aid, and brought a response to humanitarian needs to the front, while aid towards political transition is less pronounced.

On the foreign policy considerations, the security challenges posed by ISIS for Western countries trumped all other considerations regarding the Syrian conflict, reflected in various policy and strategy documents of the case-studied donor countries.

Refugee flows were also an important element in how especially European case-studied donor countries responded to the crisis. These flows created a huge shock for several EU countries, with a mix of policies adopted from welcoming them to restricting border-crossing movements. Yet overall, the aim has been to prevent these flows, resulting in several agreements with refugee-hosting countries in the region, where financial aid was provided for refugee expenses in exchange for restricting their movements toward Europe.

Keeping in mind the changing priorities and policies summarized above, it is clear how the aid is correlated with the 'airtime' about Syria on the main media outlets. The experts confirm that the visibility of the case is a major motivation for the donors to allocate adequate funds. There are exceptions, such as the continued interest of the case due to the waves of migrations. The reaction can be positive in the form of more compassion. It also can be a negative reaction that translates into hostility against the migrants.

Geopolitical factors are also a dominant motivation for donations in Syria. Provision of aid is sometimes considered to maintain a presence in a certain area of the conflict, or to show support of the controlling powers on the ground. The political interests are not always coming from within, but also relate to what others are doing. Given that those two entities are competing

for local acceptance in one area, the two donors will race to provide services to this location, making the area overserves, and maybe leaving other areas in critical need of that aid.

Another example of the heavy influence of political calculations in approaching the Syrian crisis in general, and humanitarian aid in particular, is the case of UN mechanisms that mainly relies on voting on the UN Security Council. While from the beginning, the popular movement gained the support of western countries, Russia and China have been consistent in their support for the Syrian regime, vetoing more than a dozen of various resolutions. Yet nowhere else it has been apparent that the primacy of political interests of Russia over humanitarian considerations than the issue of cross-border mechanisms. Tying life-saving assistance to political considerations not only in favour of the regime but for Russia itself was the height of how humanitarian imperative can be subjected to self-interests, disregarding the life-and-death situation that millions live in.

In terms of UN humanitarian operations in Syria, heavy interference from the regime side on every phase of aid delivery caused significant challenges for the UN operations, and the highly politicized context of the conflict made it extremely difficult to adopt the standard crisis response mechanisms of the UN. The problems could only be alleviated after the cross-border aid delivery mechanism was established based in Turkey.

Donors are also wary of aid ending up in the wrong hands, causing political or financial troubles. On the political from, the projects implemented in an area with specific political affiliation can be perceived as a form of support to the political actor. The donor sensitivity to such problems is translated into ‘redlines’. Such redlines were criticised from a humanitarian perspective as they result in depriving the population in need of aid for reasons beyond their control.

Looking at diverse motivations does not undermine the efforts in place for respecting the human imperative in the aid institutes. One must admit that within the chaotic landscape of emergencies across the globe, the prioritisation of aid gets harder and harder. To tackle this issue and ensure objective judgments, some donor agencies have developed numerical matrices with multiple inputs such as the level of needs, type of required response, risk assessment, contributions of other donors on the field, and finally, the impact on the national interest. Despite the efforts to optimise the process, there are shortcomings to be highlighted. The needs assessment itself is an extremely challenging task. The dilemma here is how to quantify the needs. The numbers can be presented in different ways. If someone would present the number

of needs in sector a to be larger than sector b, this does not require much effort to be done.

While discussing the systems in place, it is important to check the influence of individuals within the system. In general, personality has minimal effect in well-established institutions, while it gets more important in informal funding entities. In any case, the personality cannot affect the strategic interest of the donor state, but it can affect the tactical decisions. In rare cases, these tactical pushes can lead to a strategic shift at the HQ levels. Nevertheless, practical experience tells that the selection of the person in charge is linked to the political interest in the case. The more the foreign ministry has an interest in Syria, the stronger the person they assign to the post.

It seems that there is no straightforward way of deciding rather than balancing between different factors. In addition to the items already covered above, there are weighing factors for the fine tuning of the decision. Donors consider what other donors are doing as well. They can synergise and coordinate among themselves, so their activities do not overlap on the one hand. In addition, they can take a different role to increase their negotiation positions. Or they can be looking to demote the influence of another donor, so they would increase their presence in the same sector. But again, aside from all soft power considerations, emergencies like the COVID pandemic can alter many decisions at the last minute.

Despite all humanitarian efforts, emergency programs can never put an end to a man-made crisis without a political solution. Because if it is applied for a long time without development side by side, it may create more problems than it solves. People will become more dependent on aid, as well as the local actors will slide by the time to become sort of service providers losing the agency on the response. The lack of development programs will exhaust local resources and create a ‘crisis-dependant’ economy. As so, no one will be interested in ending the crisis. The P5 rivalry in Syria left the United Nations with its hands tied. While the UN is missing the political will to end the conflict in Syria, the UN failed to implement any feasible political solution as well as lead on any development programs. Instead, the UN agencies were limited to the humanitarian programs, which, even if fully needs-based, are not addressing the actual needs in Syria due to political accounts. Syria is being left with cumulative problems such as the collapse of the health sector and a lost generation of millions of children with no education.

The humanitarian practitioners see an opportunity to increase the neutrality of humanitarian action from political interest. The pooled funds are an excellent solution, where

donors collectively donate for a specific cause. The multi-stakeholder nature of the pooled fund minimises the influence of individual entities, allowing the technical considerations to have the final say on the distribution of funds. On the same front, the localization of aid can improve the impact of the responses across the globe. Increasing direct funding to local partners will increase their capacity in implementing contextualized solutions. As well as, they need to have a seat at the decision-making table.

Humanitarian actors argue that principles must not change. In their perspective, aid agencies were established to safeguard the humanitarian imperative and to maintain its integrity. Any above-mentioned explanation seems unacceptable to them. Nevertheless, people with a long year of practice see that understanding the factors does not mean justifying them or vouching for them in any way. On the contrary, the understanding must be used to get better suited to handle these influences and build self-resilience, as much as possible. The challenge is to play the political game while maintaining independence. NGOs are well respected when they commit to their values and mandate. With that in mind, advocacy gains more interest in the humanitarian sector and is increasingly engaging in the field of advocacy to influence decision making while not compromising its principles. For example, the Syrian actors have organized a structured advocacy effort to demonstrate what they are up against as the health system in non-state areas collapses. Their campaigning led to both public awareness of the severity of the issues and attention among decision-makers in capitals, resulting in prioritization of the health response and particular exceptions to strict regulations. In short, the principles of humanitarian action will continue to guide humanitarian action. Yet there will always be interaction with the governments and their foreign policy interests, while the quest for making aid more principled will remain.

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ANNEXES

Annex I: Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

As copied from the website: www.ghdinitiative.org

In 2003 the Government of Sweden convened a meeting to discuss good humanitarian donorship, during which a set of Principles-and-Good-Practice-of-Humanitarian-Donorship was agreed. The meeting was attended by representatives from 16 donor governments as well as the European Commission, the OECD, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, and academics.

At the June 2018 High Level Meeting in New York, GHD members adopted a new, 24th principle on the use of cash transfers.

The 24 Principles and Good Practice defined by the group provide both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. These were drawn up to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action, as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organisations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, co-ordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions.

Objectives and Definition of Humanitarian Action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other

items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General Principles

1. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
2. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
3. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
4. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
5. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
6. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
7. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good Practices in Donor Financing, Management and Accountability

- **Funding**

1. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
2. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United

Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations.

3. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
4. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

- **Promoting Standards and Enhancing Implementation**

1. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
2. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
3. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
4. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
5. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
6. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

- **Learning and Accountability**

1. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient

implementation of humanitarian action.

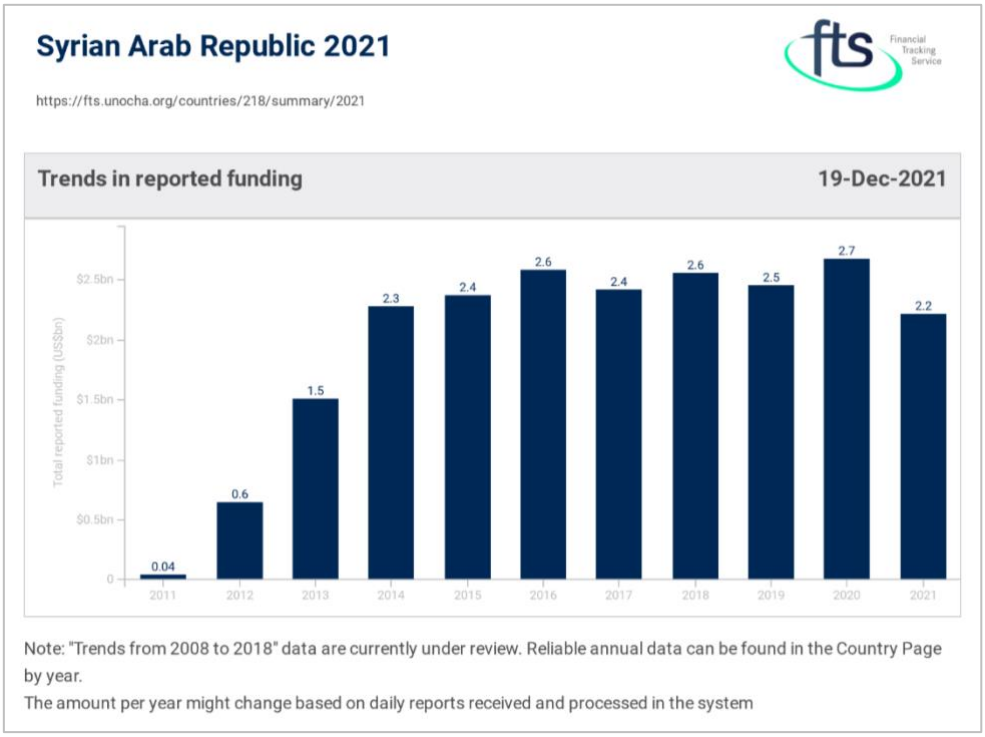
2. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
3. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.

- Modalities of Humanitarian Assistance

1. Systematically consider the use of cash transfers alongside other modalities according to context, in order to meet the humanitarian needs of people in the most effective and efficient manner.

Annexe II: FTS data on Syria

The following diagrams were obtained from fts.unocha.org



Annexe III: Country-based pooled fund data on Syria

The following diagrams were obtained from cbpf.data.unocha.org

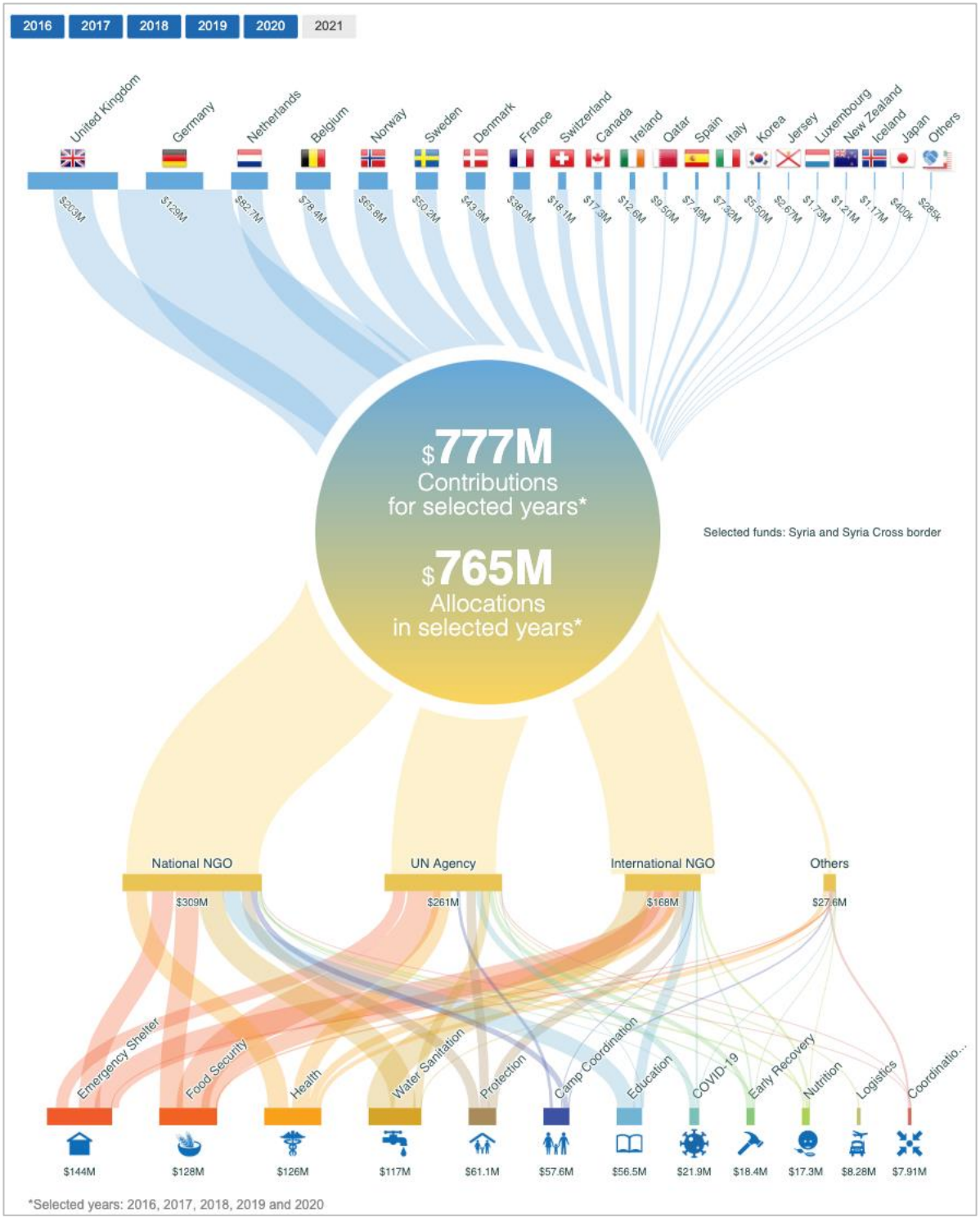


Figure 19: The pooled fund to Syria, both: Syria and cross-border operations (2016-2020)

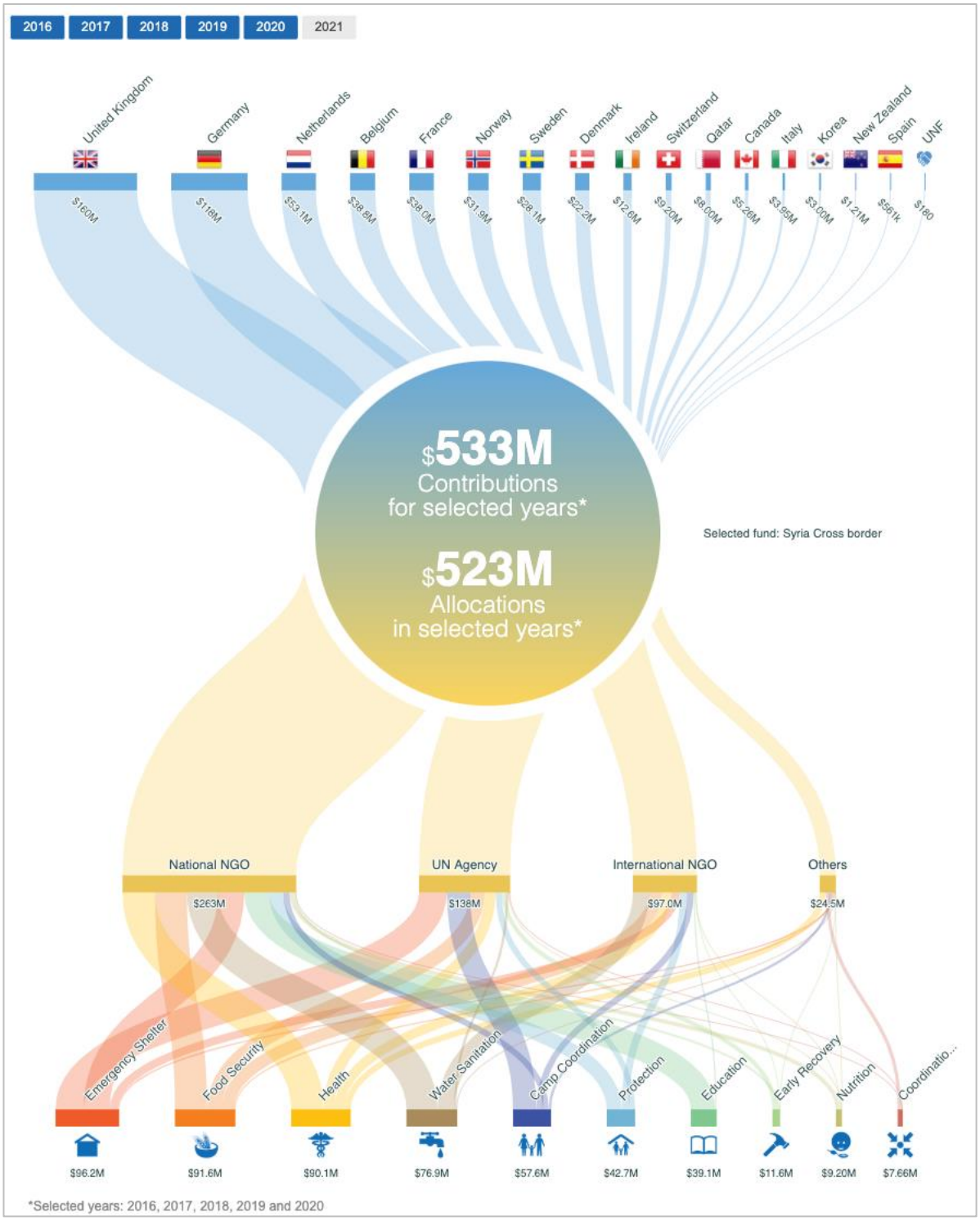


Figure 20: The pooled fund to cross-border operations only (2016-2020)

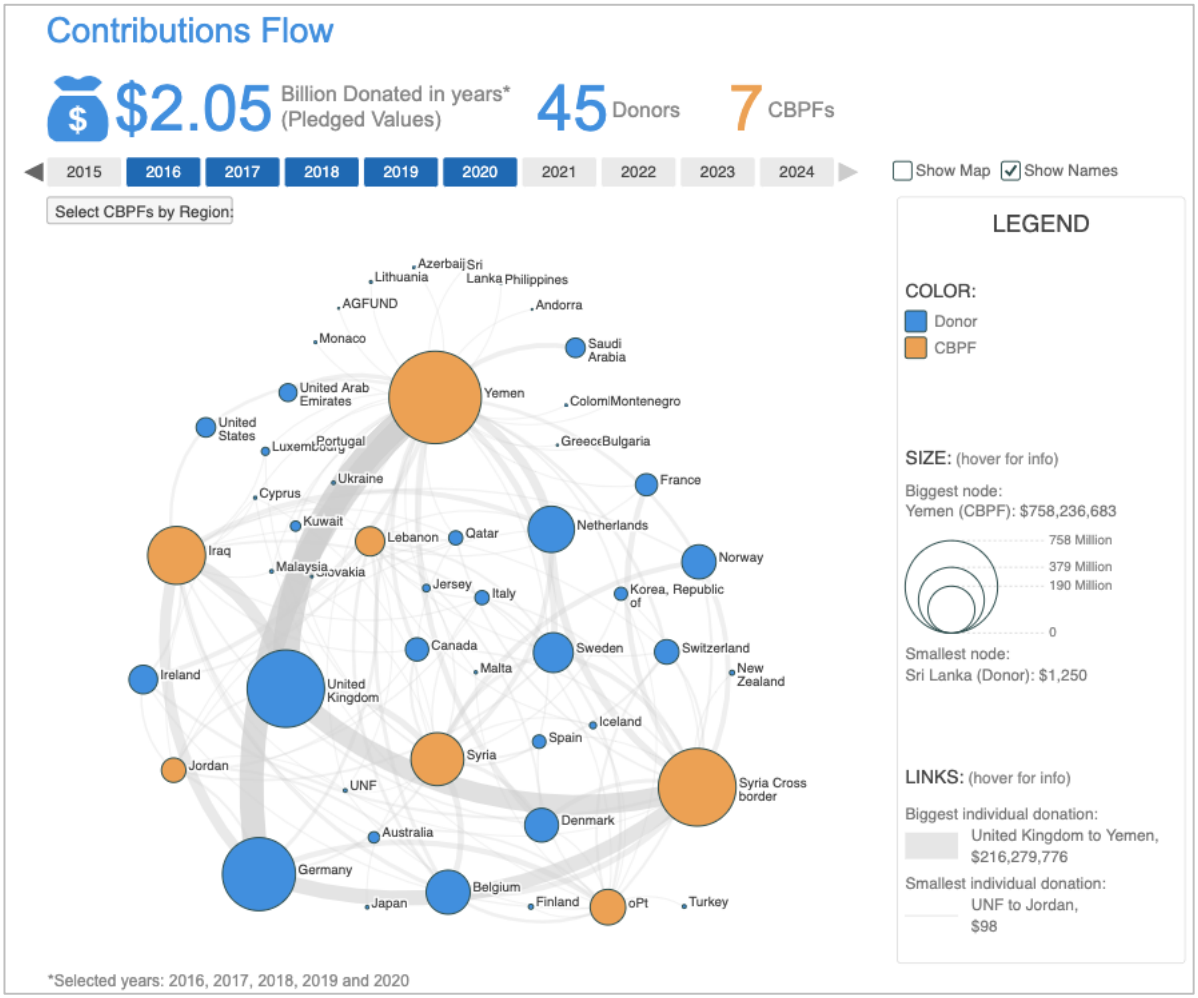


Figure 21: Contributions flow for CBPF in Middle East and North Africa (2016-2020)