

# SOUTH–SOUTH COOPERATION AND PEACEBUILDING: TURKEY’S INVOLVEMENT IN SOMALIA

JASON STEARNS & GIZEM SUCUOGLU

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Turkey has become one of Somalia’s most important partners, providing humanitarian and development aid, military training and private investment. Its novel approach has strengthened the fledgling Somali Federal Government (SFG) at a critical moment, boosting its revenues and enhancing its capacity to maintain peace and stability. This kind of support, however, also entails risks. Over the past five years the main peacebuilding strategy of the Turkish government has been to provide financial and military support to the SFG. However, while this has empowered and stabilised the fledgling ruling coalition, it has also jeopardised the peace by favouring certain clans over others and bolstering a relatively unaccountable central government. The greatest challenges for Turkey’s involvement in Somalia will be promoting inclusivity and transparency, as well as fostering greater internal coherence and coordination among Turkey’s various aid providers.

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking to the press on 30 September 2016, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed praised Turkey’s involvement in his country: ‘I am not exaggerating if I say that the historic visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Somalia in 2011 was a turning point in the evolution of security and stability in the country.’<sup>1</sup>

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Was he right? This briefing examines the impact of Turkish cooperation, investment and aid on the Somali peace process, using it as a lens for understanding Southern providers' involvement in peacebuilding in general.

Turkey's humanitarian engagement with Somalia began during the 2011 famine in the country. It has since become one of the largest donors to Somalia, providing \$95 million in aid in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Its engagement has been multifaceted: it has built major infrastructure projects, provided humanitarian assistance, financed scholarships, offered military training, facilitated political dialogue, supported institutional capacity building, and given budgetary aid. It has done all this via a wide array of actors: government agencies, religious institutions, private businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and municipalities.

Turkey's engagement has distinguished itself from that of traditional donors. It has taken greater political and security risks by eliminating middlemen and directly delivering its aid to beneficiaries, in cooperation with national and local providers. It also has refrained from imposing political conditions and promoted knowledge and technology transfer. Its engagement with Somalia has prioritised solidarity, brotherhood and mutual benefit. While Turkey largely developed this approach on its own, these also are the key features of South–South cooperation (SSC) more broadly.<sup>3</sup>

This approach has been instrumental in alleviating suffering and contributed significantly to development. It has also been helpful in building resilience and fostering sustainable peace and development.

## **TURKEY'S APPROACH TO PEACEBUILDING**

The 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture puts forward several key tenets of peacebuilding.<sup>4</sup> First, peacebuilding is essentially a political process, and national ownership is crucial for its durability and success.<sup>5</sup> National ownership must be inclusive, encompassing the interests and needs of all sections of society, across geographical, communal and political divides. Second, political leadership and strong institutions are critical to provide strong mooring during the tumultuous transition from conflict to peace.<sup>6</sup> Finally, peacebuilding takes time: political, economic and institutional reforms to foster sustainable peace often take decades. Many of these trends also resonate in the latest discussions on SSC: people-centred inclusivity, use of country systems and resources, capacity building and policy coherence have all been identified as indicators to evaluate the quality of SSC.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, peacebuilding should be seen as a goal and a process; quick injections of financial and human resources might not stabilise a conflict-affected country. Peacebuilding can also not be undertaken by a single actor alone; its success depends on cooperation among a multitude of stakeholders with a shared vision of peace.

Approached from this perspective, the record of Turkish peacebuilding in Somalia is mixed. While Turkey has respected national ownership and used national and local providers for aid delivery, its efforts have been biased towards Somali government interests and have struggled to bridge geographical and communal divides. Moreover, while the Turkish government typically includes its Somali counterparts

in planning, joint evaluation and monitoring of projects are not the norm.<sup>8</sup>

Coordination and cooperation with other donors is another weak point in Turkish policy. In the past decade Turkey has become increasingly wedded to a bilateral approach in its peacebuilding and development efforts – \$3.5 billion out of \$3.6 billion in foreign aid was provided bilaterally in 2014.<sup>9</sup> The construction of an expensive Turkish embassy and the Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency office in Mogadishu, the recent opening of a general consulate in Hargeisa, and the launch of Turkish Airlines flights to Somalia give the impression that Turkey is in Somalia to stay. However, the current internal political and economic turmoil and security risks in Turkey and regional developments tied to Syria might lead to a diversion of resources and attention away from Somalia. This has already happened in Afghanistan. The country hosted Turkey's largest development programme to date in 2010, but Turkey's new interest in Somalia and the urgent situation in Syria have seen its assistance to Afghanistan drop from \$130.89 million in 2011 to \$65.2 million in 2014.<sup>10</sup>

### THE ELUSIVE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN SOMALIA

A complex array of factors is to blame for the persistence of conflict in Somalia. These include the weakness of state institutions, the persistence of competing and deeply entrenched clan loyalties, and regional interference.<sup>11</sup> A political settlement has been elusive because peace deals have been exclusionary and do not reflect the Somali political culture, and because the war economy has been profitable for some of the belligerents.

In August 2012 the current SFG was established under a new provisional constitution, the product of a long transitional and consultative process. In September 2013 commitments were made to 'Vision 2016'. This entailed three main undertakings: a review of the 2012 constitution; the creation of a decentralised, federal system; and the holding of elections. Progress has been incremental and mixed on these three benchmarks. The constitutional review has stalled owing to the amount of time and energy the creation of federal member states has taken and to a lack of willingness to enact relevant legislation to move the process forward, as a result of competing interests among elites. Progress has been made in creating a new, decentralised state architecture, but concerns persist that the new system will foment clan divisions and fragmentation,<sup>12</sup> factors that are already driving the current conflict. Lastly, the elections scheduled for October 2016 have not yet been held, and the promise of 'one person, one vote' has been temporarily abandoned, owing largely to the state of insecurity in the country. Instead, a mixed system has been set up that includes 14 025 delegates divided into 51 electoral colleges, who elect 275 MPs, who take their seats alongside 135 clan elders. Together, these reforms will culminate in universal elections in 2020 and are supposed to move the country beyond the clan-based 4.5 formula.<sup>13</sup>

### TURKEY'S IMPACT

In general Turkish aid has been focused on strengthening the capacity of the SFG through revenue generation and support to the security services, as well as on promoting economic growth through the private sector.

## Revenue generation

Two key interventions by the Turkish government – at the Mogadishu airport and seaport – have dramatically increased the SFG’s ability to raise revenues.

The rehabilitation of Aden Abdulle International Airport was one of the first and more prominent projects agreed upon between the two countries following the visit of then prime minister Erdoğan in August 2011. The Turkish company Favori was given the contract to rehabilitate and expand the airport, bringing it up to modern standards. In 2013 Favori was hired to manage the airport for 20 years, including baggage handling, cargo, security and fuel services. Under the terms of the deal Favori receives half of all revenues, while it provides the other half to the government.<sup>14</sup> The SFG hoped that this arrangement would increase its revenues and cut out middlemen and cartels. Initial indications appeared to validate this approach: in the first three months of operations Favori is reported to have increased revenues from the airport to the government by 50%.<sup>15</sup>

**TABLE 1** SOMALI FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE (\$ MILLIONS)

Revenue and grants	2013	2014	2015	2016*	2017*
<b>Total domestic revenue</b>	<b>69.2</b>	<b>84.3</b>	<b>114.3</b>	<b>125.2</b>	<b>148.4</b>
Tax revenue, trade	58.7	64.3	71.1	75.7	84.6
Tax revenue, other	6.3	9.6	11.2	18.1	26.2
Non-tax revenue	4.1	10.5	28.1	31.5	37.7
Grants	41.7	61	26.9	121	80.5

\* projected

Source: IMF (International Monetary Fund), ‘Somalia Country Report 16/136’, May 2016, p. 20

A similar approach was taken with the seaport. In October 2013 the SFG endorsed a contract with the Turkish firm Albayrak to rehabilitate and manage the Port of Mogadishu for a 20-year period. Under the agreement, 55% of revenue generated at the port will be earmarked for the government while the Turkish company receives 45%.

These interventions have boosted proceeds from the two ports: they now reportedly constitute nearly 80% of the Somali government’s domestic revenue.<sup>16</sup> As such, they are a powerful example of the potential of public–private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure development in Africa. These examples are particularly important to build upon given the growing need for PPPs in the face of stagnating sources of overseas development aid (ODA) from traditional donors.

Two challenges, however, arise from this kind of support. Firstly, it assumes that the SFG will be able to use these revenues to strengthen the nascent political settlement and invest in public goods. If indeed it does so, the SFG could broaden the peace process to prevent spoilers from emerging, and render it more legitimate.

However, it is far from clear whether the proceeds will not just fuel divisive patronage networks. For example, these two ports have traditionally been controlled by members of the president's Hawiye clan; focusing on these projects might favour particular political actors. This could eventually erode the fragile political settlement upon which the SFG is built.

Secondly, the close ties between some Turkish companies and their government could give the appearance of collusion or even corruption, which could undermine the legitimacy of Turkish involvement in Somalia. In December 2015 the Somali auditor general alleged that Turkish companies were avoiding their fiscal responsibilities, while some lawmakers demanded that full details of the contracting process be published.<sup>17</sup>

In general, Somali state-building remains a contested and often conflictual exercise. The state in Somalia has historically been the focus of violent contestation, as it controls government contracts and parastatals, and is the coercive instrument with which clans and coalitions have combated their rivals. As a result, some Somali actors view efforts to revive the central government as a zero-sum game that has provoked rather than mitigated conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond Mogadishu, regions may be unwilling to see those revenues redistributed to other regions, or even to cede revenues to the central government. Crucially, the government in Mogadishu has few means to make the regions share revenues. At the same time, the regions have little incentive to share revenues, as they do not perceive themselves to be in receipt of anything from the central state. For example, the 2013 Addis Ababa agreement between Jubaland and Mogadishu saw the former agree to hand over the management and revenues of the Kismayo airport and seaport, but the agreement was never implemented due to the latter's inability to enforce the deal.

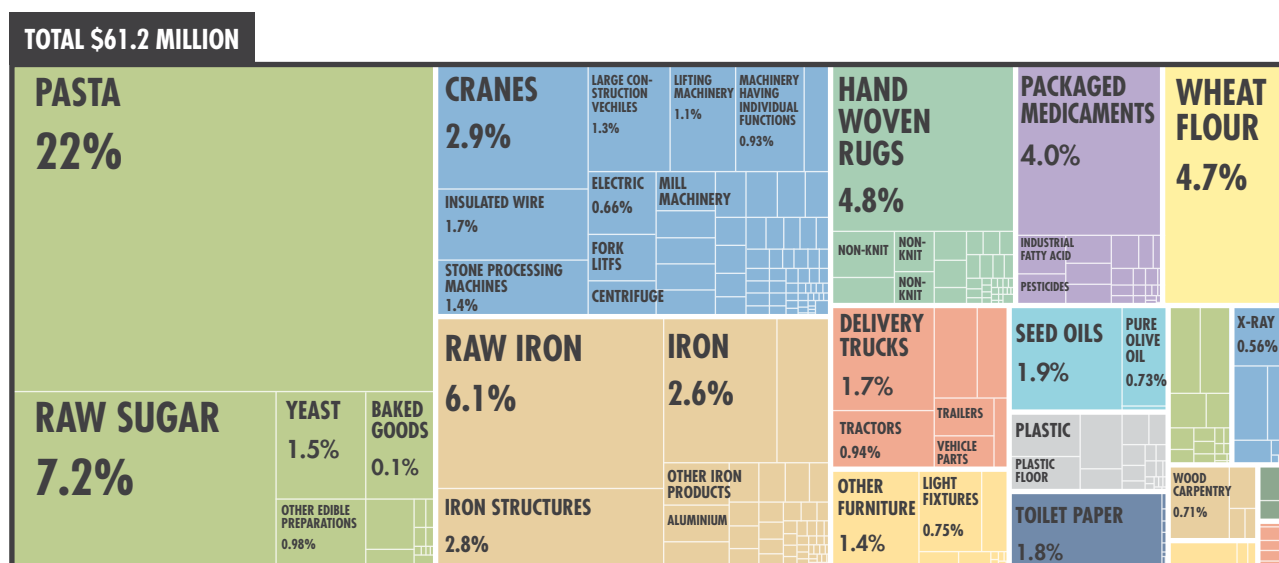
As Turkey begins to reach out beyond Mogadishu, it will be important to see what positive impact this may have on the political settlement. A recent interview with Turkish government officials suggests that Turkey's relations with Somaliland authorities and local NGOs are developing, as seen in the opening of a Turkish consulate here recently. The Turkish private sector also seems increasingly interested in expanding into Somaliland, especially into the energy sector.<sup>19</sup> It is yet to be determined to what extent these activities will offset criticisms that Turkey has been biased towards Mogadishu in its aid and mediation efforts.<sup>20</sup>

### Involvement of the private sector

Turkish private sector involvement in Somalia has increased dramatically. According to Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Lutfi Elvan, Turkish companies invested \$100 million in Somalia in 2015, a significant rise from the negligible level of investment in 2010.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, Turkish exports to Somalia have risen equally dramatically, from \$3.5 million in 2009 to \$72 million in 2015.<sup>22</sup> Most of these exports are foodstuffs and construction material.

**FIGURE 1** TURKISH EXPORTS TO SOMALIA IN 2014



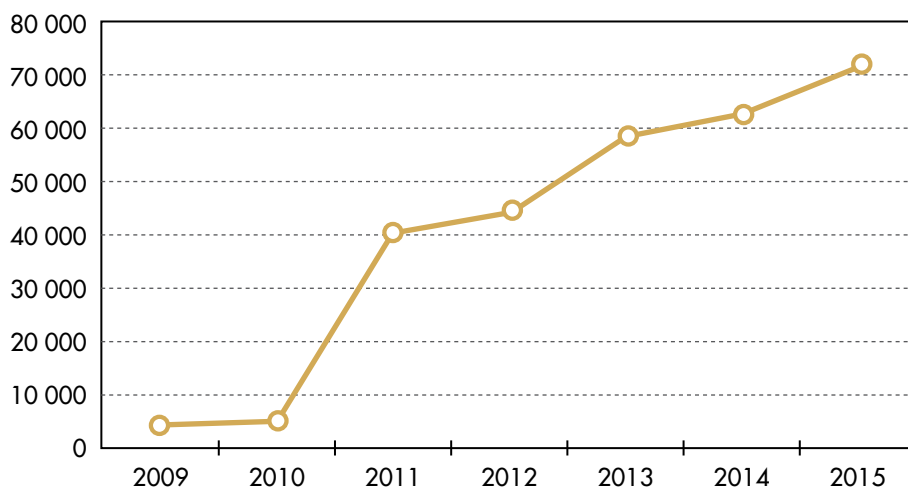
Source: Observatory for Economic Complexity, ‘What Does Turkey Export to Somalia?’, 2014, [http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/tur/som/show/2015/](http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/tur/som/show/2015/) (accessed 23 March 2017)

How has this investment affected the political settlement? The dramatic rise in foreign direct investment in general – amounting to a fourfold increase from 2012 to 2014 – has shifted the political economy of the southern part of Somalia, in particular Mogadishu. The state now occupies a larger part of the economy – the federal budget increased from \$35.1 million in 2012 to \$135.4 million in 2015 (these revenue outturns still reflect very low shares of gross domestic product [GDP]: 1.0% and 4.5% of GDP, respectively).<sup>23</sup> Arguably, this, along with a stronger security force, could lead to the marginalisation of some of the militias relying on the shadow economy. However, despite the quadrupling of the national budget in three years, state revenues are still only 2.8% of GDP, compared to 13.8% for sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>24</sup> The small tax base, poor collection capacity, absence of the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, and lack of territorial control continue to constrain the government’s domestic revenue collection, leaving the country almost completely dependent on foreign assistance and remittances.<sup>25</sup>

It is difficult to analyse these shifts without understanding the broader links between conflict and the economy in Somalia. More specifically, how and to what degree do conflict actors profit from the local economy, and how can political and economic elites be persuaded to invest in stability rather than conflict? This question pertains to both actors operating within the SFG and those backing militias competing with or opposing the government.

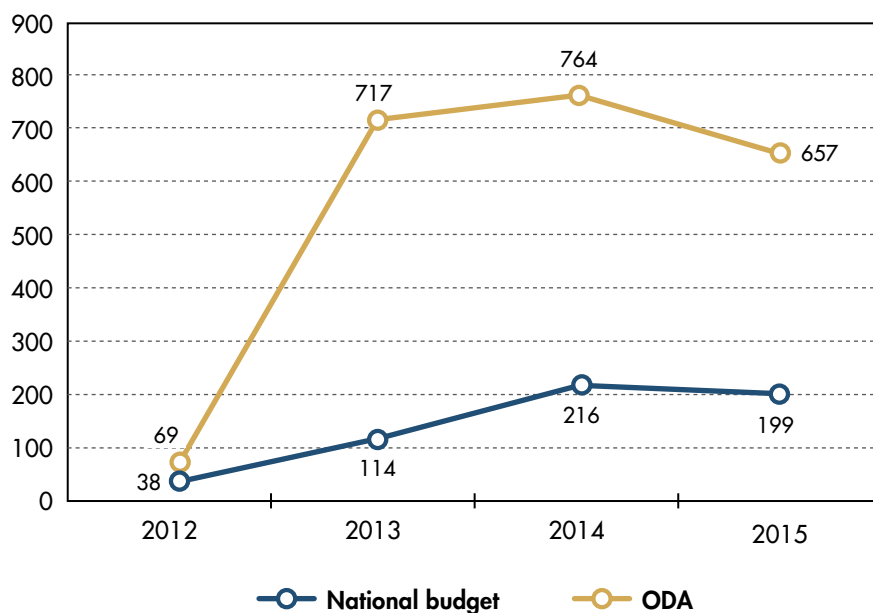
At the national level, the diversion and misappropriation of humanitarian and development aid are rife. The 2016 UN Monitoring Group report documents several criminal networks that profit from humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid is diverted in all parts of the distribution cycle, particularly when the aid is bilateral,<sup>26</sup> as in the case of Turkey.

**FIGURE 2** TURKISH EXPORTS TO SOMALIA FROM 2009–2015 (\$ THOUSAND)



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, 'Foreign trade statistics by country', 2016, [http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt\\_id=1046](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046), accessed 23 March 2017

**FIGURE 3** ODA TO SOMALIA COMPARED TO NATIONAL BUDGET, 2012–2015 (\$ MILLIONS)



Source: Compiled by C Rawhani, 2017; data drawn from Federal Republic of Somalia national budgets and OECD statistics

The opacity of contracts negotiated between private companies and the government is also of concern. Specifically, the contracts negotiated between the SFG and Turkish companies to manage the port and airport are regarded as open to exploitation by the Turkish companies.

The diversion of funds affects the conflict, as the inability of the SFG to raise enough revenue to even provide basic security has been identified as underpinning the continued instability in Somalia. The UN Secretary General's report on Somalia from September 2016 states:<sup>27</sup>

Domestic revenue collection grew by 36 per cent from 2014 to 2015, from \$84.3 million to \$114.3 million, driven mainly by trade taxes. However, this amounts to only 2.8 per cent of GDP; more than 70 per cent of domestic revenues [are] generated from international duties ... and only 32 per cent of budgeted donor funds were realized.

### Support to the security sector

The Turkish government has been actively supporting security sector reform (SSR) in Somalia since at least 2011, when it provided \$300,000 for a UN-managed SSR fund. The following year it created a \$5 million trust fund for SSR and began training Somali police and army officers in Turkey.<sup>28</sup> In 2013 Turkey gave \$1 million in support to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), shortly before a new military cooperation agreement with the Somali government was signed in 2014. The Turkish government was to open a new military camp in Mogadishu in early 2017, aiming to deploy 200 officers to train around 1 500 Somalis each year.<sup>29</sup>

The Turkish government is one of several key actors involved in the training of the Somali security forces. Since the adoption of the National Security and Stabilisation Plan in August 2012, Ethiopia, Uganda, Turkey, the EU, the US and Djibouti have all been involved in providing training. AMISOM and the UN Mission to Somalia provide much of the coordination of these efforts, and AMISOM has criticised Turkey for duplicating its efforts in military training.<sup>30</sup> The Ethiopian government also has a bilateral military treaty with the Somali government.

The logic of this kind of engagement is much the same as with budgetary support: by strengthening the fledgling federal government one can foster greater trust with the local population, and enable the security forces to clamp down on al-Shabaab and other militias. This approach, however, faces serious challenges: the SFG is not a cohesive force, and is often more focused on clan infighting and the extortion of public finances than in fighting rivals.

Given the Mogadishu-centric approach to peacebuilding and state formation, most army recruits are from the locally dominant Hawiye clan. The EU has also been accused of recruiting mainly Hawiye, thereby jeopardising the fragile political settlement undergirding the peace process. If Turkish engagement follows this recruitment model it may fall into the same trap.

Another, related risk is that a newly empowered army could incentivise the SFG to resort to coercive means to impose its wishes rather than negotiating an inclusive settlement. Despite the federalised state taking shape, the political settlement has failed to spell out the nature of power sharing between the centre and regions, and



of revenue sharing. The danger is that the regions will develop in their own way – dominated by one clan, or sub-clan, with their own security structures. This could lead to clan conflict, as with the Galkayo conflict, which pits Puntland (Darod) against Galmudug (Hawiye).<sup>31</sup> Clan conflicts could in turn become regional conflicts.

## CONCLUSION

In general, the Somali elites tend to see politics as a zero-sum game, as power and wealth are centred on the state and there can only be one set of beneficiaries. Power is seen to be held for short periods, and political actors are always looking to the next peace settlement or negotiation. A shift in Somali political culture will be necessary in order for the SFG to use new revenues to strengthen the government and invest in the public good.

Turkey's involvement in Somalia has had a large impact due to its direct financial and military support to the SFG. Its highly mediatised symbolic gestures, such as opening Turkey's largest embassy in Mogadishu and the multiple visits by Erdoğan, have also helped bolster the national government.

However, there have been significant challenges: Turkey has struggled to balance its priorities of forging strong ties with the ruling elites with its goal of supporting the population in general; to project altruism while promoting investments by private Turkish actors that are often close to the AKP; and to support the central state while trying to promote an inclusive political settlement. This balancing act will be even more difficult to achieve with the announced increase in military support to the central government.

It is too early to tell whether Turkey's involvement has furthered peacebuilding, but it is possible to highlight the risks posed by its approach. The main impact of its projects has been the strengthening of the central state apparatus through enhanced revenues and a better trained military. Absent much larger investment in forging an inclusive political settlement, the fragile balance among clans could inadvertently be eroded and the battle for state resources accentuated.

While these criticisms can also be lodged against other donors, they are particularly relevant for Turkey, given its preference for bilateralism and the lack of transparency in some aspects of its engagement. There is a pressing need for Turkey to enhance its understanding of Somali clan and political dynamics and the impact its financing is having on the political settlement and perceptions of aid. There must be an acknowledgement that Turkish aid, as any other aid, is not neutral and steps must be taken to mitigate potential bias.

These tensions are, of course, not unique to SSC. Some of the largest traditional donors have had aid policies that are closely tied to the promotion of their own national interests, even when these conflict with humanitarian imperatives. The question remains, however, whether emerging donors have additional incentives to curry favour with incumbents, either because more of these donors themselves represent governments where power is concentrated in the executive, or because the objective of these governments is to project influence through alliances with other governments and not necessarily to benefit the local population.

Nonetheless, Turkish involvement provides a useful lesson or jumping-off point for other ‘donors’ – traditional and non-traditional alike – on enhancing the capacity of the state to supply a peace dividend, thereby making peace more attractive and achievable, rather than having a heavy hand in the political process. Time and again we have observed the need in Somalia for locally owned and financed processes that lead to genuine attempts at state building, rather than short-term agreements and grabbing of as much of the pie as possible. Rarely does it seem that that lesson has been learnt. Can Turkish involvement begin to change this?

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