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ISTANBUL KULTUR UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF IHH'S HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES IN
THE SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA TO TURKIYE'S FOREIGN POLICY**

MA Thesis by

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Department: International Relations

Program: International Relations

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hazal Papuular

SEPTEMBER 2023

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ÖZET

Bu tez, uluslararası sivil toplum kuruluşlarının, bir Devletin diğer devletlerle olan dış ilişkilerinde etki yaratma konusunda önemli bir rol oynayabileceğini İHH-Türkiye örneği üzerinden iddia etmektedir. Özellikle 1990'ların sonlarında Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden sonra gelişen dinamik dünya düzeninde STK'lar büyük önem kazanmaya başladılar. Her ne kadar devletlerin askeri gücü veya çok uluslu şirketlerin ekonomik gücü gibi güçlere sahip olmasalar da STK'lar herhangi bir güç kullanımına başvurmadan dünyanın her yerindeki her topluma ulaşmalarında, benzersiz bir şekilde geliştirilmiş olduğu stratejileri ile etkilidirler. Bu özellikleri, bünyelerinde olduğu devletlerin uluslararası ilişkilerinde etki yaratmalarını sağlar. Bu tez, İHH'nın saha çalışmalarından elde edilen kaynakları kullanarak, İHH'nın sadece bir yardım kuruluşu olmadığı, zaman zaman insani yardım savunuculuğu da yaptığı ve devletin dış ilişkilerinin gelişmesinde nasıl bir etki yarattığını, böylece Türkiye'nin imaj ve yumuşak gücüne olan olumlu katkısının buluşuna yol göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, İHH, Uluslararası İlişkiler, yumuşak güç

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ABSTRACT

This thesis claims that International non-governmental organizations can play a major role in having an impact in the foreign relationship of the States concerned, by having IHH's example over the state of Turkiye. NGOs began to gain high prominence in the dynamic world order that evolved especially after the end of Cold War in the late nineties. Although they don't possess powers like military power those of the states nor economic power those of the multinational companies, NGOs are powerful and influential themselves in their nature; with their uniquely developed strategies that help them to gain access to all the places and reach all kinds of communities around the world without having to resist nor resort to the use of force. These characteristics make them have an impact over the international relationship of the states. This thesis is prepared by using the sources from the field work of IHH, by genuine examples of how it has acted not only as an aid provider but also as humanitarian advocate at times and how its actions have influenced the improvement of foreign relationship of the state of Turkiye thus paving way to the finding of their positive impact over the image and soft power of the Country.

Keywords: Non-governmental Organizations, IHH, International Relations, soft power

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ABBREVIATIONS

NGO : NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

IHH : İNSAN HAK VE HÜRRİYETLERİ VAKFI

UN : UNITED NATIONS

GDP : GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

NATO : NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

AKP : ADALET VE KALKINMA PARTİSİ (JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY)

ECHR : EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

PKK : PARTİYA KARKEREN KURDİSTAN (KURDISTAN WORKERS' PARTY)

TIKA: TÜRK İŞBİRLİĞİ VE KOORDİNASYON BAŞKANLIĞI (TURKISH COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AGENCY)

ASEAN: ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

MIKTA : MEXICO, INDONESIA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, TÜRKİYE, AUSTRALIA

ICRC : INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

UNRWA: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

UNHCR : UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

OXFAM : OXFORD COMMITTEE FOR FAMINE RELIEF

OECD : ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

MILF : MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT

TPMT : THIRD PARTY MONITORING TEAM

OIC : ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION



1: INTRODUCTION

The base for modern day Humanitarianism was introduced in the enlightenment era in the 18th century while missionary activities were carried out in colonized countries around the world. There had been a significant improvement of this practice in the war fields, to explicitly portray certain standards for humanitarian assistance in the 19th century. Humanitarianism attracted more attention with the increase of internal wars and the operational hardships faced during the early 90s, which could also be described as the post-Cold War era. This is the period where the Non-governmental Organizations began to gain prominence and become widely known, because of the humanitarian mission carried out by them in war zone areas. They entered Countries and regions even before many states did and, on some occasions, they entered places even which states could not. This way they did not just reach the people in need but also merely became their voice, the oppressed and silent individuals. After the end of Cold War, NGOs became prime forces in contributing towards the progress of Democracy and Human rights everywhere in addition to their humanitarian role. For example, the NGOs play a vital role in protecting the dignity of individuals when it's threatened by the power of the state; they fight the violations either directly or by test cases through relevant courts, they offer direct assistance to those whose rights are violated, they involve in lobbying for changes to regional, national or international laws and helping their substance developed and promoting knowledge of, and respect for, human rights among the population.¹

During the war in Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) we could witness a different paradigm of humanitarian mission. The principles of humanitarian aid serves for the protection of human rights as we all are aware. But it was violated frequently with these wars with the guise of 'Humanitarian Wars' and the humanitarian aid agencies began to receive funds from the Governments who started the wars. Another significant example where humanitarianism was put to test was during the destruction caused by Tsunami in South and Southeast Asia in 2004. It can be termed as one of the biggest and

¹ Patricia Brander et al., eds., "Human Rights Activism and the Role of NGOS," Compass manual for human rights education with young people, 2nd ed. (Hungary: Council of Europe Publishing, 2020), pp.420-425 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/human-rights-activism-and-the-role-of-ngos>

worst natural destructions of our times which claimed around 230,000 lives in total and left more than 2 million people homeless.

More than \$6.25 billion was pooled in through a central UN relief fund to assist 14 Countries that were affected starting from Indonesia to Sri Lanka who were the biggest victims.² The response for this crisis was as never seen before and we witnessed a generous gesture by the whole world, especially by the western Nations at such a dire situation.

One of the major man-made crises causing hundreds and thousands to die and millions to displace would be the post-Arab Spring period starting from 2011. Tunisia, being the cradle of the revolution has now a democratically elected Administration. Syria on the other hand though, is the worst affected by the wave disrupting even the MENA region. The crisis as a whole had not just necessitated aid from outside but also caused millions to flee the Country subsequently causing major impacts in socio demographic factors in the neighboring and western host Countries.³ In the end of 2019, the world faced a new kind of a threat; the Covid19 pandemic. The deadly virus has killed approximately 6.26 million and infected at least 521 million people around the world in two years and continues to thrive to this moment.⁴

All these disasters have intensified the need for humanitarian assistance thus making it unto utmost prominence as a separate study in the present world. With this derives new arguments leading through various aspects and branches of humanitarianism and how they are handled in different contexts around the world. We shall however try to cover and focus more on Turkiye, as the subject of this thesis addresses the political stance of the Country ultimately.

² Carla Kweifio Okai, "Where Did the Indian Ocean Tsunami Aid Money Go?", *The Guardian*. December 25th 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/dec/25/where-did-indian-ocean-tsunami-aid-money-go>.

³ Alparslan Özerdem, "İnsaniyetçilik ve Türk Dış Politikası," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*. Cilt 13, Sayı 52, 2016, pp.129-149

⁴ World Health Organization, "WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard," <https://covid19.who.int/>

Turkiye is known to be one of the biggest donor Nations with regard to its GDP ratio when compared with other nations around the world including major powers. The popularity increased in the recent past with its amount of humanitarian aid reaching to more than hundred countries under a wide range of aid categories.

It gained praise from the global community with the latest Syrian crisis, for hosting most of its refugees fleeing the war. In 2018 Turkiye became the largest donor in the world with an official aid amount of \$8,399 billion according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.⁵ And in 2019 Turkiye accounted for 26% of world humanitarian aid after consecutively spending more than any other nations in the world, according to international groups.⁶

The concept of Humanitarian diplomacy was initially brought into the context of Turkish Republic during the provision of food aid in the mid-1980s to countries in the African continent. And in the early 1990s, Turkiye played an active role in ensuring and establishing Peace in its neighboring Balkan Countries. It had undertaken the responsibility to provide humanitarian aid during the Bosnian war and contributed to the establishment of a Government in Kosovo within the framework of NATO and UN, carried out mostly with the help of Turkish Armed forces and Turkish Red Crescent. Similarly, Turkiye has also contributed to the international peace-building mission in Afghanistan after the Bonn agreement in 2002.⁷ The victory of AKP by securing majority votes in the general elections held in 2002 signaled more humanitarian ventures to come with the inception of a new era in Turkiye's international relations. Under the leadership of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Turkiye began to play the role of a trustworthy mediator and respond swiftly to humanitarian disasters around the World.

⁵ "Turkiye Remains Most Generous Donor of Humanitarian Aid," *Hurriyet Daily News*, September 30th 2019, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Turkiye-remains-most-generous-donor-of-humanitarian-aid-146994>

⁶ Gökhan Ergöçün, "Turkiye Accounts for 26% of 2019 World Humanitarian Aid," *Anadolu Agency*, Accessed August 16th 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/Turkiye-accounts-for-26-of-2019-world-humanitarian-aid/1919544#:~:text=Turkiye%20accounted%20for%20just%20under,an%20independent%20international%20development%20organization>.

⁷ Alpaslan Özerdem, "İnsaniyetçilik ve Türk Dış Politikası," pp.129-149

This was the period Turkiye was able to and had the political and economic power to negotiate independently with states like Israel and Syria, and also Hizbullah of Lebanon.⁸

Over the past decade Turkiye has risen to become an important political player and gained easy access to the respective boundaries, which can be treated as one of Turkiye's diplomatic triumphs in international politics. After years of political instability and military interventions, it was crucial for Turkiye to prove itself stable before the international community. Humanitarianism was one such tool which was embraced by the Turkish (AKP) government to prove themselves stable and strong internally.

Turkiye has emphasized Humanitarian diplomacy as one of its main elements of its foreign policy after the 2000s. It uses this tool to acquire a status along with many other players in the new multicentered world order, which occurred after the dissolution of the west, post-Cold War. Professor Meliha Benli Altunışık mentions in one of her briefs, that Turkiye which reflects AKP's worldview also possesses the responsibility of caring for nations, which were once under Ottoman reign, as a crucial part of its deep-rooted heritage.⁹ As a result, we could witness number of incidents where humanitarian assistance is being carried out today especially to those countries. It's also noteworthy that, such efforts are made not solely because of its historical responsibility. Today Humanitarianism is a 'crucial tool' mostly handled by 'huge' powers and states. Turkiye should be competent enough in handling such a tool in the concurrent world order along with rest of the big powers so that it could attain its global aspirations. This very tool can also be identified as one of the crucial soft powers of the Country, a concept of high prominence in today's international politics.

⁸ Alpaslan Özerdem, "İnsaniyetçilik ve Türk Dış Politikası," pp.129-149

⁹ Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy: The AKP Model," *Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI Brief no. 2019:08)*, January 1st 2019, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/6973-Turkiyes-humanitarian-diplomacy-the-akp-model>.

1.1 Turkish State and Soft power diplomacy

Soft power is the ability to shape the preference or perception of others. It also means to arouse interest, capture imagination and cause admiration. It is the capacity to attract and inspire.¹⁰ with reference to the 'Power' aspect, it means the ability to impose or get done a desired result by means of the attractive and appealing factors in possession regardless the need to employ the use of force.¹¹ Joseph Nye, who coined the concept puts it precisely as, the ability to get others want the outcomes that you want. 'How' can this be achieved is a question with no definite answer.

There are numerous soft power tools. Different States use different tools mostly based on what they are best equipped with or possess expertise in. However, thanks to Nye for coining the concept at such a crucial time; following the dispersion of Nations in the post-Cold War era, where all Nation States endeavored to gain prominence in a multipolar atmosphere.

One of the most popular soft power tools nowadays is the media, and more specifically the Cinema and TV Series sector. Türkiye is the second largest TV Series exporter today following the United States. The \$350 million worth of TV Series exports with over 500 million viewers around the world presently, is expected to reach upto \$500 million by 2023. Such TV series when aired abroad, not only change the perception of Turkish Culture and Social conditions in those Countries but also indirectly contribute to the progression of different sectors locally. The tourism sector is one of its major beneficiaries.

A minute example to be noted here is about the famous TV Series *Diriliş Ertuğrul* aka Turkish Game of Thrones which portrays the life and struggle of Ertuğrul Gazi before his Son Osman Gazi succeeds and enthrones to Establish the Ottoman Empire. Before the TV series was aired internationally, the little town of Söğüt in western Anatolia, which has the tomb of Ertuğrul Gazi, was rarely known and less visited even by the Turks

¹⁰ Hakan Altınay, "Türkiye's soft power: An unpolished gem or and elusive mirage?", *Insight Türkiye*, Volume 10, Issue 2. (2008)

¹¹ Aykut Soylu, Burhan Çınar, Burhan, "Gastronomi ve yumuşak güç: İstanbul Restoranlarının analizi," *Journal of Tourism Intelligence and Smartness*. Volume 4, Issue 1, 2021, p.3

themselves. However, when the Drama started to invade the houses worldwide especially that of the Muslim World, Tourists began to pour into this little suburb from all over the world so much so, Tourist Operators in Istanbul have a special package to Söğüt called the 'Ertuğrul Tomb Visit Package' for the rest. In the first 8 months of year 2018 alone, the little suburb had received more than a million Tourists locally and from abroad.¹²

Turkish Gastronomy is an important soft power tool as well. Food is not just a matter of basic need and security but also a factor of joy, an element for identity, a way of communication and most importantly an economic value.¹³ All its potentials should be utilized in order to get its utmost benefit from Gastrodiplomacy. Since 2000 Türkiye has gradually advanced and strived to make its Cuisine a global brand.¹⁴ The targets might have been achieved today as we see that Turkish Cuisine has gained high prominence especially in the west and all around the globe.

Humanitarianism is another major soft power tool Türkiye possess and has been the inspiration for this thesis. There are around 122,000 active, non-Governmental organizations in Türkiye altogether.¹⁵ Some of these NGOs are involved in humanitarian activities abroad with the help of locally collected funds, most of which are third world Countries. Such activities do not only ease the burden of relevant Governments, but also impact directly in the political relationship Türkiye has with them. Especially such aids and activities which are mostly done without any direct material or immaterial expectations are highly valued in African Countries which were previously under colonial rule and still experience the rippling effects. One of the best examples of a positive diplomatic gesture was when 51 out of 53 African Countries voted in favor of Türkiye

¹² Oktay Emlik, "Ertuğrul Gazi Türbesi'ne gelen ziyaretçi sayısı 1 milyonu aştı," *Tourism Magazine*, August 16th 2018, tourmag.com.tr/ertugrul-gazi-turbesine-gelen-ziyaretci-sayisi-1-milyonu-asti/

¹³ Fikret Söner, Alan Gülseli Aygün, "The Gastrodiplomacy model defined within the scope of International public relations: The case of Türkiye," *Research and Reviews in Social, Human and Administrative Sciences*, (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2021) pp.43-70
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352189773_THE_GASTRODIPLOMACY_MODEL_DEFINE_D_WITHIN_THE_SCOPE_OF_INTERNATIONAL_PUBLIC_RELATIONS_THE_CASE_OF_TURKEY

¹⁴ İbrahim Çekiç, Mustafa Aksoy, "Gastronominin yumuşak güç olarak kullanımı üzerine bir inceleme," Paper presented at *19. Ulusal Turizm Kongresi*, Afyonkarahisar, March 2020, p.714
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339676221_Gastronominin_yumusak_guc_olarak_kullanimi_Uzerine_Bir_Inceleme

¹⁵ T.C İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü, "Dernek Sayıları," <https://www.siviltoplum.gov.tr/dernek-sayilari>

during the votes for membership in the UN Security Council in 2010.¹⁶ This shows how much effective a soft power tool could be in determining or shaping international politics.

1.2 The reason behind the selection of IHH for the thesis

The thesis discusses about IHH, A Turkish Humanitarian Organization which has been operating in many Countries and has quite contributed in enhancing Turkiye's foreign relationship in the world arena. At the end of the thesis, we shall be able to understand how much has been achieved by this single Organization and how far it has contributed to Turkiye's Foreign policy.

Istanbul based IHH is a humanitarian organization, which has been providing humanitarian assistance around the world since 1992. Currently it has reached to at least 135 countries across five continents with a range of aid categories, done and executed spontaneously during unprecedented occurrences or under planned and scheduled basis according to shortages and needs of the respective recipient/country. The Organization has also been impacting international politics occasionally and has drawn criticisms, comments and even praises by the international communities on various occasions.

The reason why the Author has chosen IHH for the topic is, firstly because of its operation in at least 135 Countries, which is the most so far as a single non-governmental Turkish Organization having operations abroad. IHH has also obtained the Consultant status of United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Secondly its functions involve Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian Diplomacy and Human rights. Usually, NGOs specialize in a single cause and concentrate their whole focus and employ the resources in accomplishing the desired outcomes with regard to them. IHH goes a few steps ahead and almost specializes in other additional areas such as humanitarian diplomacy and humanitarian advocacy, which makes it one of the rare examples internationally and the only example in Turkiye.

The significance of the presence and activities of IHH was highlighted with an important example by Abdülkadir Özyiğit, Humanitarian Diplomacy Coordinator at IHH

¹⁶ Hüsamettin İnaç, "The Prospect for Turkish Foreign Policy in Africa under AK Party Governments," *Afro Eurasian Studies*, Volume 9, Issue 3 (Istanbul: MUSIAD, 2022) pp.148-164

during an interview with him in the head Office. “Family reunification was a concept introduced by IHH and later adopted by governments given its importance. IHH has unified children and women with their families in their countries of origin, rescuing from war-torn and disastrous regions etc. IHH reunited 2 misplaced kids with their grandparents in the Ingushetian republic of Russia. This act was later applauded by the Russian ambassador to Türkiye, appreciating IHH for such a great effort.” He also cited an example pertaining to a desperate Sri Lankan family in Syria; once the father had died, the mother and child were almost displaced amidst the ongoing war. IHH had come forward to find and relocate them back with their family in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan diplomats in Türkiye had duly expressed their appreciation for this remarkable gesture in the aftermath.¹⁷ It’s evident how such acts do not merely remain as one of the many humanitarian services but get noticed even among official-diplomatic levels. And most importantly, how could governments themselves be inspired by certain humanitarian acts of such organizations to the extent they themselves adopt them. In the case of IHH, such acts which they categorize under humanitarian diplomacy, are the ones which elevate the status and significance of the organization and differentiate from other random humanitarian organizations in the country. During an interview with Reşad Başer, the Executive Vice President of IHH and head of the Orphans Unit, he mentioned “even though IHH has been carrying out some remarkable humanitarian diplomacy efforts, they are mostly unknown or do not come to light. One main reason for this is, IHH does not advertise what it does as it carries out everything without any expectations, whereas when governments are involved in such efforts, there’s always expedience or other expectations. The next reason why the efforts of IHH are not known widely is because they’re deliberately kept discreetly due to the sensitivity of the given case. IHH needs to communicate with all the relevant parties and prolong the diplomacy between them during a specific circumstance, so that the matter is handled in a balanced manner and does not fail by any means.”¹⁸ Again we witness how much sensitively and seriously each case is handled, and how far they are prioritized instead of everything else. Hence the author finds

¹⁷ Abdülkadir Özyiğit, interview by author, IHH Head Office Istanbul, August 5th 2023.

¹⁸ Reşad Başer, interview by author, IHH Head Office Istanbul, August 5th 2023.

it quintessential to bring the exceptional efforts of an organization like IHH to light, especially to add value to the humanitarian studies in academia.

The south and southeast Asia, the regions which would be covered by the thesis has been under the IHH's concern for a long time and it has been carrying out series of humanitarian aid programmes and projects over the past decade. Through this research the Author aims to find out whether the Humanitarian activities carried out by the IHH in south and southeast Asia has been contributing to the foreign policy of Turkiye.

Additionally, the research aims to answer questions such as, 'have the humanitarian efforts been effective enough' 'are the shortages addressed appropriately in those relevant countries and eliminated duly' 'have there been any positive changes in perception and policies of the recipient country towards Turkiye' and some other relevant sub questions etc.

1.3 Literature Review

NGOs play a pivotal part today both in the social context and in political space. This is because of the scope of NGOs and their nature of inclusivity. The availability of numerous academic work under this topic with a range of disciplines reaffirms this to be true and hence occupies an important place in Academia at least as much as it is in day-to-day life. The thesis focuses on the impact of NGOs in International politics. Hence this review would analyze arguments on this subject matter.

In her work titled 'Non-Governmental Organizations and their influence on International Society' Ann Marie Clark displays an interesting approach through two cases respectively 'the international role of NGOs concerned with upholding states' obligations to protect the human rights of their citizens and the work and task of International environmental NGOs.¹⁹ Firstly, she enters the subject by claiming that both Human rights and Environment related NGOs have the ability to challenge the State sovereignty through the very characteristics like focusing on narrow issues, amount of

¹⁹Ann Marie Clarke, "Non-Governmental Organizations and their Influence on International Society," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.48, No.2 (New York: School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, 1995) pp.507-525

information, know-how and commitment etc. all which differentiate them from the State. She argues that through the appealing set of ideas and information they possess they impact States. NGOs are able to mobilize the public internationally with the principles they hold on to like human rights and environmental consciousness. This is how human and material support is amassed. Ultimately, they are able to gain leverage over States by focusing and committing to a limited set of concerns unlike the latter which naturally has to respond to a wide range of demands. Throughout her work she emphasizes that NGOs' greatest power is their focus on a specific issue and the capacity to allot human and material resources to influence the particular cause.

She also states that neutrality of NGOs is another natural advantage which is a fact, but only as long as they remain so. She concludes, Environmental NGOs are less threatened and challenged when compared with human rights NGOs precisely because of their scope, hence they can influence States only on what they're concerned with. Nevertheless, her work on the whole does not discuss the gain of the State of inception through the respective NGO's activities abroad, be it human rights related or environmental. It rather confines to the general influence they can make towards States directly through their activism.²⁰

Gerald M. Steinberg touches on the soft power aspect as in related with our topic, in his Article named The Politics of NGOs, Human Rights and the Arab-Israel Conflict. He has not omitted to quote Nye's finding on NGOs indicating that they possess soft power resources, and they will never hesitate to use them whenever required. We need to understand that politics and State actions are the objects that would be 'influenced' or impacted by this. Steinberg also denotes how Europe invests in millions on soft power especially on NGOs to promote specific goals and policies. The piece of Article tries to portray an unbiased stance in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. At a point it discusses how the continuous exercise of soft power tools by the NGOs had also made major impacts in hard power dynamics of Israeli politics. He has not failed to support his

²⁰ Ibid.

argument by quoting a few concrete examples from the recent history like how the sales of weapon to the Country was hindered as a result of campaigns made against it.²¹

In the Article published by Muhittin Ataman in a Journal called Alternatives, under the subject 'The Impact of Non-State Actors on World Politics: A Challenge to Nation-States' he classifies NGOs under five different Organizational Structures namely Multinational Corporations, National Liberation Movements, Epistemic Communities, Religious and Humanitarian Organizations, Terrorist Groups and Drug Traffickers. He connotes from sound examples such as the European Court of Human rights having significant impact over the decision making of members states and how the States have turned over their sovereignty to the ECHR when it comes to the subject of Human rights. In his piece of work where he stresses more on the Human rights aspect of NGO, he points out an example of apartheid South Africa, where there were significant cases of human rights abuses for decades and how the international struggles of UN Organs succeeded to bring down most of them. Ataman shapes up his arguments by citing the theories of International Relations with respective examples and he has carefully concluded the topic delivering more power to Non state actors, that they should be taken into consideration even if it was by Superpowers like the United States so that their (NGOs) interests are maintained and guaranteed. Although the Author implies all the categories here when it comes to NGOs, we can acknowledge the same conditions for the type of organizations the Thesis discusses about.²²

Similarly, in the Masters Thesis titled 'Türkiye-Afrika ilişkilerinde sivil toplum kuruluşlarının Rölü: İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri insani yardım vakfı örneği,' Mustafa Samancı has pointed out the ways in which NGOs participate in foreign policy. First, he states that NGOs try to complement the determining process of the State's foreign policy. The reason he points out for this is because of the dissatisfaction of certain groups within the country towards the government's foreign policies and that they tend to influence the

²¹ Gerald M. Steinberg, "The Politics of NGOs, Human Rights and the Arab-Israel Conflict." *Israel Studies* 16, no. 2 (2011) pp. 24–54. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/israelstudies.16.2.24>

²² Muhittin Ataman, "The Impact of Non-State Actors on World Politics: A Challenge to Nation-States". *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 2 (2003), <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/19401#:~:text=Non%2Dstate%20actors%20play%20a,national%20and%20global%20public%20opinion.>

decision makers. Secondly, he argues that NGOs try to fill up the gaps in foreign policy related areas neglected by the government because it finds it insignificant. Hence the NGOs try to fill these openings and attract the attention of the public towards them. Samancı also states that NGOs can continuously support decision makers and after a point, this would put them in the position of advisor to those decision makers.²³ Although the thesis discusses about indirect impact and contribution of NGOs in Turkish foreign policy the most, the above methods could also be taken into consideration since the core subject is about ‘contribution to Turkish foreign policy.’

There are limited Turkish Literatures which addresses the subject directly or indirectly. One fine piece of work is Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu’s doctorate thesis titled ‘The effect of Non-Governmental Organizations on Foreign Policy: The case of the foundation of Human Rights, Freedom and Humanitarian Relief (İHH) in the specific of Humanitarian Organizations,’ a subject which goes aligned with the Author’s work. He basically analyzes the dilemma between theory and practice through his thesis with the help of various events. He speaks on the dynamic and flexible nature of the NGOs and cites them as the factors behind being able to act quicker than States, and how they can confront States and International Organizations when required. In the second part of his work, Şahinoğlu emphasizes on the capacity of these Organizations to create headline both locally and internationally, which I believe is crucial for a body which thrives as a medium between the State and public. When it comes to international dynamics, Şahinoğlu asserts that NGOs do play a proactive role but not all NGOs can do that. According to his narrative, only those which involve in advocacy have the capacity and power to influence in international relations or the foreign policies of States.²⁴

In an article published by Hakan Mehmetcik for a humanitarian NGO based project with the title ‘Humanitarian NGOs: Motivations, Challenges and Contributions to Turkish Foreign Policy,’ he examines the subject by interviewing at least 25 NGO workers and using their opinions. He starts his writing by stressing on the soft power aspect of

²³Mustafa Samancı, “Türkiye-Afrika ilişkilerinde sivil toplum kuruluşlarının Rölü: İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri insani yardım vakfı örneği,” Masters Thesis (Yalova University, 2017)

²⁴ Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, “Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)’nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği,” Doctorate diss., (Selçuk University, 2020)

foreign aid and how they have always become an important tool for the governments. In contrary to what the Author suggests in this thesis, Mehmetcik derives the motive behind the humanitarian aids carried out by NGOs in Turkiye to be ‘altruism.’ Even though he had assumed it to be religiously motivated, opinions from his interview suggested otherwise. While discussing the ‘contributing’ aspect of the NGOs in the last phase of his work, he points out that ‘all of the activities of Turkish NGOs are perceived as Turkiye’s helping hand even though they do not represent the country officially.’ He supports this argument with the aid workers’ statement about themselves wearing the badges with Turkish flag with the respective NGO’s logo, and how the recipients do not ‘thank’ the organizations but the ‘country’ while receiving the aids. This very gesture can be regarded as a sound example for the ‘contribution’ aspect of NGOs that emphasizes the concept so precisely.²⁵ This thesis has also stressed on the similar subject; how such aids are remembered and perceived as Turkish and not by the provider of them.

Overall, there are number of literatures and writings on the subject which directly or indirectly address the core topic. Most of them suggest that NGOs can certainly make an impact or influence on State policies and in international relations. A very few of them although do not accept that notion entirely but acknowledge it by categorically limiting them to a specific kind/s of organizations or by their scope of operations. Turkish literatures on this subject are very few surprisingly. Being a Nation with several Government and Non-governmental humanitarian organizations having missions inland and abroad one could simply expect to come across with a considerable number of contributions to academia. But on the contrary, there’s only a limited amount of literatures or to put it more correctly, the available few literatures are mostly monotonous and do not address the different disciplines of NGOs.

25 Hakan Mehmetcik, "Humanitarian NGOs: Motivations, Challenges and Contributions to Turkish Foreign Policy," *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 24 (2019) pp. 249-278

1.4 Methodology

The Thesis begins with an introduction of the Subject and its background with related references and examples. In the first half of the thesis, the history of Humanitarianism and how it evolved in the world and history of humanitarianism in Turkiye, and the reason behind the significance of humanitarian actions in the contemporary world and the position of Turkiye have been discussed. The latter part analyses IHH, who's the core subject of the thesis, with details of its inception, aim, progression and worldwide operation, and concludes with analytical data of the improvement of relationship between the home and host countries. Furthermore, the thesis has examined the influence IHH has exerted in those regions through its diplomacy endeavors, confirmed by relevant examples, leading to the conclusion drawn in the thesis. The research is conducted based on IHH's activities in four sample picked countries from South and Southeast Asia respectively Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand (Pattani).

Both local and foreign resources have been utilized to work out this thesis. Numerous academic materials and articles have been analyzed to comprehend and assess the contributions of NGOs and their activities over host and home Countries. Most of these materials were employed in enriching the first half of the thesis. The last parts were drafted mostly based on print materials and facts obtained from IHH directly by visiting and interviewing certain important figures within the organization. All the data gathered underwent processing to yield the ultimate outcomes of the thesis, accompanied by requisite narratives and comments throughout the document.

2.TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY & HUMANITARIANISM

2.1 A brief look of Humanitarianism in the Ottoman Era

The present-day Turkiye is not totally independent from its Ottoman past and socio-cultural heritage. In other words, having a reasonable amount of knowledge of its past- Ottoman era history would help a lot in analyzing any of its modern day social and state structural development. In this regard, humanitarianism or humanitarian diplomacy should not be read as a brand-new notion introduced into the political order of the modern Turkish State. The tradition traces back at least to the early Ottoman times and has been innate within the social custom throughout the history. One significant example is the aid extended during the great famine that hit Ireland in the 1840s. Sultan Abdul Majid, then ruler of the Ottoman state had first planned to donate an amount of £ 10,000 but later reduced to £ 2000 when the British agents in Istanbul consulate had pleaded so, since the Queen herself had donated only £2000. It is also claimed that a vessel full of food supposed to be sent to the Irish people by the Sultan was also later intervened by the Queen.²⁶ The generous gesture of Sultan had been given a huge coverage in the printed journals of both Ottoman and British Empire and was applauded highly by the subjects. Apart from humanitarianism, this act had also contributed significantly towards the diplomacy between the powers, a bond which eventually exceeded the prevailing political relationship, a bond which was crucial at such a time of crisis around.

Another notable event which took place during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid the second was the Johnstown flood disaster in USA, which was later termed as the century's disaster. The Sultan was the first to respond with food aid and an amount of 1,000\$ through Oscar Strauss, then emissary of USA to Istanbul.²⁷ History records, that this

²⁶ Semih Çelik, "Between History of Humanitarianism and Humanitarianization of History. A Discussion on Ottoman Help for the Victims of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1852." *WERKSTATTGESCHICHTE*, Issue 68 (2015), p.17

²⁷ Fatma Ürekli, *1889/1894 Afetlerinde Osmanlı-Amerikan Yardımlaşmaları* (Istanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2007) p.2

gesture of Sultan was in the memory of American people for years, so much so, they would return the favor later when the Ottoman state was once hit by an earthquake. This mutual exchange of aids comes at a time when relationship between both the States was at an adverse condition stemming from America's missionary activities, endeavors to open US Consulates in the Eastern Anatolia and problems arising from American schools in Ottoman soil etc. The reciprocal gestures helped in easing out tension between both the States and helped them bring their relationship back to normal; enabling Turkish-American relationship to continue in a friendly manner even under the most severe condition. One significant impact of these humanitarian gestures on politics was the elevation of representatives in both the States, from Consular to Embassy.²⁸ These incidents well depict how humanitarian aids have acted as strategic tools in the Ottoman period in shaping up international relationship.

2.2 Ataturk's Foreign Policy & Humanitarianism outlooks

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Modern Turkish Republic with pro-western ideologies in 1923, abolishing the centuries old Ottoman Reign along with its core principles. Imperial aspirations were given up for good and modernizing the country while embracing European values was seen imminent since the goal was to uplift Turkiye to sail along with the advancing western powers. These followed with the cost of abandoning the long kept Islamic identity of the state and cutting off all sentimental ties, most importantly with Arab Nations, that were once under the great Ottoman empire. On one hand foreign policies were redesigned according to the new aspirations in the path of integration. And on the other, Atatürk's focus solely was on Turkiye and exclusive benefit of its people. Hence, he wanted the state to rely on its own strength and decrease dependency outside on any aspect. Furthermore, he went on to introduce the notion, 'Peace at home, peace in the world' which did not only emphasize the importance he had given to the rise and revival of the new state but also defined the foreign policy he desired to adapt.

Although he did not endorse the colonial ventures of the West, he approached them based on logical grounds rather with sentimental approach. As Ömer Kürkçüoğlu points

²⁸ Ibid, 4

out in his article, Atatürk softened his attitude towards the British in parallel with the military and diplomatic success of Anatolian movement.²⁹ This can be commented as an extreme tactical move that a state leader could have resorted to, not long after coming across each other in battle. Europe was the only advanced region then, which also convinced Atatürk not to neglect them nor cultivate enmity with. On contrary to the Ottoman Empire in its late century, Atatürk did not also want to depend on one single world power. He rather wanted to maintain balance between the powers so that the Country would not fall in case a power with allegiance falls.³⁰ This shows his remarkable power of reading the incidents and taking heed from them to shape up the Country's future. Probably this very principle would have contributed in guiding Türkiye not to take part in the World War which took place a decade and a half later.

Atatürk's rejection of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkish policies are also worthy of mentioning under his foreign policy. He was against the idea of reigning over a huge territory that encompasses so many nations and communities, which he also sees as one of the main causes of the downfall of the Ottoman empire. As Kürkçüoğlu connotes Atatürk's words "...one cannot come across any success and practicability in the History of...policies of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism...Our political direction which we think is practicable is the national policy." Here he explicitly says that his ideology of a successful Nation should be built with a Nationalistic identity and not religious nor any other.³¹

However, Atatürk's Nationalism has not hindered his Internationalism (humanism). His care for the world derives based on a responsibility to the whole world community and more political. As Kürkçüoğlu describes, Atatürk deemed it his duty to be well informed about the activities and problems of other nations in all corners of the world. This was not just because an important prerequisite of international responsibility but also as a mean to pursue the best foreign policy with those respective Nations.³² Kürkçüoğlu supports this trait of Atatürk with his words to Romanian foreign minister

²⁹ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "An Analysis of Atatürk's foreign policy 1919-1938," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, (Ankara: Ankara University, 1980) p.4

³⁰ Ibid, 13

³¹ Ibid, 19

³² Ibid, 23

Antonescu during his visit to Ankara on the 17th of March 1937, “ one must think about the welfare and happiness of not only one's own nation but of all the nations of the world ...and must do one's best to serve for the happiness of the whole world ... Because, to work for the happiness of the nations of the world, is another way of trying to secure one's own comfort and happiness. Unless there is no peace, openness, and not getting on with each other among nations in the world, no nation will be in comfort, no matter how much it strives for itself. ...Even an event in the what we think the remotest part of the world can -who knows- one day reach us. That is why, we have to consider humanity a single body and each nation an organ of it. A pain on the fingertip will affect the whole organs of the body.”³³

2.3 Post World War 2 and Turkiye

This phase denotes Turkiye’s choice of side during and after the Cold War, which were the most significant happenings of late 20th century. As many States had two choices to make; either to take place with US or USSR in the bipolar system, Turkiye too had chosen to shape its foreign policy to go in harmony with western expectations. Turkiye’s utmost priority was its security given its geo-political position.³⁴

Turkiye’s membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),³⁵ application for membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1950,³⁶ and the continuous efforts to gain membership in various Organizations in the Europe well depict, how Turkiye has been enthusiastic in fitting itself in the western block. Nevertheless, instability in internal politics and economic constraints had hindered Turkiye in playing a proactive role internationally and confined its focus mostly towards the west. The struggle was to ensure its survival in the first place.³⁷

The collapse of the Soviet Union had three impacts on Turkiye. Firstly, it had removed

³³ Ibid, 23

³⁴ Gülbahar Y. Aktaş, "Turkish Foreign Policy: New concepts and reflections." Masters Thesis (Middle East Technical University, 2010) p.9

³⁵ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkiye- NATO Together for Peace and Security Since 60 Years,” www.mfa.gov.tr/Turkiye-nato-together-for-peace-and-security-since60-years.en.mfa.

³⁶ Delegation of the European Union to Turkiye, “EU and Turkiye’s History,” <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/eu-and-Turkiyes-history-711>.

³⁷ Gülbahar Y. Aktaş, "Turkish Foreign Policy: New concepts and reflections," p.58

the Russian threat and enabled Turkiye to implement a multilateral foreign policy. Turkiye lost its strategic importance in the eyes of the west. As a result, Turkiye was denied entry into the European Economic Community (now European Union) which also lead Turkiye towards further isolation. Thirdly the elimination of a powerful neighbor prompting Turkiye to establish multilateral relationship and follow various foreign policy tools with other Countries in the region who had unleashed enormous opportunities, thus boosting the geopolitical importance of Turkiye's role in the region.³⁸

Hence, it's understandable that the collapse of the Soviet Union did also present Turkiye with opportunities to expand its connectivity with other States and become more active internationally, which was also a necessity for Turkiye to be liberated from its isolation. Turkiye along with many other Nations were stepping into a multipolar international system which would command no biasedness, and relationships would be based more on cooperation and focus on the benefit of relevant States concerned. Turkiye too advanced in this new world order to secure a place for itself.

2.4 AKP's foreign Policy

With AKP coming to power in 2002, a whole new political climate began to take over Turkiye. A Government whose policies are both pro-Islamic and respecting secular values must be a totally new notion that the Turkish public would be exposed to. Internationally, an attempt to balance between the east and west, having more allies than before and having as less as much enemy nations. This modus operandi was highly influenced by Ahmet Davutoğlu's book, 'The Strategic Depth'. The book basically argues that the importance of a Nation in terms of international relations is determined by its strategic geographical location.³⁹ According to the book, Turkiye is situated in a strategically important location, along with the possession of the Straits and has high

³⁸ Sertif Demir, Ayça Eminoğlu, Arzu Y. Aslantürk "The Evolution of Turkiye's Foreign Policy toward Turkish Republics post-1990s," *Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Cilt 20, Sayı 2, (Edirne: Trakya University, 2018) p.393

³⁹ Angel Rabasa, and F. Stephen Larrabee. "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey." In *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, 1st ed., 31–50. RAND Corporation, 2008.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg726osd.10>.

chances of using its position to play an important role in international politics. Additionally, the importance of establishing bonds with the previous Ottoman controlled regions like the Middle East, Central Asia and the Balkans is highlighted through the book; suggesting that it could be a major strength in the road to become a regional power.⁴⁰ In the meantime He also stresses the importance of balancing ties with the western powers, so that its say and freedom of movement could be ensured both in the region and worldwide. These ideas had a major influence in the foreign policy of AKP and Turkiye after Davutoğlu was appointed as the chief foreign policy advisor of Erdoğan.

Today, after two decades of AKP in power, it's quite obvious that it has neither followed the footsteps of its Ottoman past nor abandoned its post Republican aspirations completely. Rather it has introduced, followed and quite succeeded in its brand-new foreign policy; a strategy which promotes Turkiye as a spokesman in the region, in fact the world. For instance, we observe how it had ventured to mediate peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in the recent times.⁴¹ A courageous act to portray while the west itself had not succeeded. This is also evident for Turkiye's non exclusiveness and unbiasedness, a role it had strived in embracing within the past couple of decades.

AKP, like the previous Governments of Turkiye, has been struggling to enter the EU block since the first day of its instating, and has been one of its prime concerns with regard to its relationship with the EU. It has also shown ardent interest in complying with the criteria that necessitates itself to get into the block one by one. One such change was to gradually reduce the military influence from the political atmosphere, thus ensuring more democracy in the country. However, the Cyprus issue has been continuously barricading Turkiye from its entrance even though it has not been one of the Copenhagen criteria. Many of the countries in the European Union have been hesitant in admitting Turkiye unless the problem is solved.⁴² USA has been Turkiye's ally for a while especially because of its membership in the NATO. However, confrontations intensified between both the countries post 1990's after the Gulf war.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p77

⁴¹Fatma Tanis, "Turkey is friendly with both Russia and Ukraine. Now it wants them to talk peace," November 16th 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/16/1136473400/turkey-russia-ukraine-peace>

⁴² Angel Rabasa, F. Stephen Larrabee, "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey."

The US's invasion of Iraq indicated a possibility of potential establishment of a Kurdish state between Turkiye, Iraq and Syria which could cause high level of threat to the Turkish State. Turkiye's endeavor to take military actions against the PKK Terrorists in its south was vetoed by the USA, eventually earning the displeasure of the Turkish public towards them.⁴³ The Armenian issue has also been under US's concerns influenced by the Armenian lobby in the USA. However, actions have not been taken productively so far in order to prevent further rupture in US Turkiye relationship.⁴⁴

Since the Cold War, both the nations have disagreed on range of issues such as, Russia's military campaign in Chechnya and the Kurdish issue in Turkiye, Russia's partnership with Armenia and Turkiye's propensity to support the territorial integrity of Georgia and resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in favor of Azerbaijan, Ankara's concerns over Russian arms export policies to Cyprus etc.⁴⁵ The relationship began to enhance after the end of Cold War and expanded to reach new milestones in AKP's period.

The arrival of President Putin in Ankara in the year of 2004 was an important development making him the first state leader of Russia to visit Turkiye in 32 years. With the signing of new deals, both the countries have had an advancing relationship in many areas especially politics, economy, and defense since then. Russia is one of Turkiye's biggest suppliers of natural Gas. There are also diverse investments by Russian companies in Turkiye namely in the energy, tourism, and telecommunication sectors. Turkiye also has been benefitting a lot through its suitcase trade to Russia. Even though both the countries have a strong tie in between presently, there is high potentials of confrontation since they are rivals when it comes to having an influence in central Asia and the caucuses. Apart from these, it is a matter of choice for Turkiye between the USA, Europe block on a side and Russia on the other.⁴⁶ Turkiye's relationship with middle east has been proactive since Turgut Özal's Government and intensified under AKP. The AKP

⁴³ Ibid, 83

⁴⁴ Ibid, 83

⁴⁵ Sergey Markedonov, Natalya Ulchenko, "Turkey and Russia: An Evolving Relationship," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 19, 2011.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/08/19/Turkiye-and-russia-evolving-relationship-pub-45383>

⁴⁶ Angel Rabasa, F. Stephen Larrabee, "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey," pp.85-86

government considers itself a diplomatic actor in the region who could ensure stability by negotiation and active participation in the affairs rather to be a bystander.⁴⁷

Ankara's dispatchment of 1000 troops as a part of the UN Peace keeping mission following the crisis in Lebanon in 2006 stands a good example for this. With a significant amount of Kurdish population living in Syria, Iran and Irak, Ankara finds it quintessential to be vigilant enough not to allow the formation of an independent Kurdish state in the region. Hence it has been focusing on intensifying corporation mainly between Iran and Syria since the latter phase of the first decade of this millennium.⁴⁸ The active participation in the Syrian war also depicts its concerns of stability in the region. With regard to the Palestinian issue, Ankara has been more vocal under Erdoğan's AKP than the previous regimes. Though it maintains a strong economic and military relationship with the state of Israel, it has also overtly criticized Israel's actions in the region be it against Palestine or Lebanon, accusing it of exercising 'state terrorism' and crime.⁴⁹ On the other hand, it has also established strong ties with Hamas and went on to the extent of inviting its leaders to Ankara on certain occasions.

2.5 Turkiye's Asian Policy: Asia Anew

Turkiye's connection with Asia has been comparatively passive unlike that of Europe and USA. It was in the recent couple of decades the need to reach Asia had been highly felt especially motivated by economic aspirations. Asia as a continent can be divided into sub regions such as Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Western Asia. Turkiye's connection with central Asia is traditional and historical. Among the East Asian Countries, Turkiye has a high level of dependance to China when it comes to trade. The Asia pacific region with varieties of resources to offer, has been on Ankara's list of concern for a while. Particularly it has been showing high interest in the ASEAN organization and signing up potential agreements with the bloc. As an initiative, it has also signed free trade agreements with countries like Malaysia and Singapore who are already

⁴⁷ Ibid, 86

⁴⁸ Ibid, 88

⁴⁹ Ibid, 89

in the block. Turkiye's motive to enhance relationship in the region goes beyond economic aspirations.

This topic is to be discussed in the light of Turkiye's 'Asia Anew' initiative which was unveiled by foreign minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu in August 2019.⁵⁰ The Asia Anew aims to exploit the potentials from Asian countries⁵¹ in an attempt to diversify its cooperation worldwide, an effort in contrary from its initial period of establishment almost a century back. The Republic of Turkiye was formed with western aspirations by the leadership who attributed modernization to the west. The east and even the neighboring Arab nations were the least of its concerns. However though, the West has been disappointing Turkiye frequently until the recent times. At such a juncture, Turkiye felt the need to diversify its focus and partnerships, hence it transformed its foreign policy into a multidimensional approach. This is how it crossed routes with Asia. This does not mean to cut off its ties completely with the west, but to balance between the burgeoning east and the already dominant west in terms of its foreign policy and ensure its survival in the long run. This move of Turkiye can be termed as one of the wisest it has made in its modern history; a step which helps itself to be a part of the multipolar world while ridding itself from being isolated. By doing so, Turkiye also asserts itself to be an active player in the modern world unlike as it was in the past, belonging to a particular block.

Today, Turkiye's largest trade deficit arises from the Asian region; out of 50 billion USD total trade, 40 billion USD is for imports.⁵² It has already signed in two free trade agreements (FTA) with 3 countries in the region; Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea. From 2015 to 2019, Turkiye's export to Singapore arose from \$432 million to 750 million USD and imports declined from 464 million USD to 365 million USD.⁵³ This could be majorly due to the free trade agreement. Similarly talks are in progress to sign FTAs with two more countries in the region, Indonesia and Thailand.

⁵⁰ Temmuz Yiğit Bezmez, Selma Bardakçı, "Turkey's Turn to the Asia-Pacific," *The Diplomat*, September 23rd 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/Turkeys-turn-to-the-asia-pacific/>

⁵¹ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Asia Anew Initiative," Accessed August 18th 2022. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/asia-anew-initiative.en.mfa>.

⁵² Temmuz Yiğit Bezmez, Selma Bardakçı, "Turkey's Turn to the Asia-Pacific."

⁵³ Zhengizkhan Zhanaltay, "Turkey's Asia A New initiative," *Weekly E-Bulletin*, No.293 (Turkistan: Eurasian Research Institute, Akhmat Yassawi University, 2021)

Asia Anew does not focus solely on economy but parallelly prioritizes many other areas like defense, construction, logistics, green energy, digital technologies, finance, and cultural exchanges etc.⁵⁴ In fact, the success of a diplomacy maintained with a country could majorly be determined by the areas worked up together, exceeding economic and trade ties alone. Turkiye therefore attempts its best to employ all its available resources and wealth in order to parallelly sustain relationship with the countries in Asia. Apart from its own resources such as the TIKA and Yunus Emre Institute etc. All the NGOs hailing from the country could be considered as a valuable Asset in this regard.

We can now have a brief look on how close and friendly are the countries chosen for this thesis with Turkiye. Pakistan is one of the significant countries that Turkiye shares a strong relationship with, in South Asia. The bond which had initiated during Turkiye's republic struggle (as Indian Muslims), supported materially, has developed into a special relationship by both the Nations today that also covers both political and economic interests of both sides. In 2017 both the countries celebrated the 70th year of establishment of their diplomatic relations in a grand scale. Both Nations have shown unconditional solidarity during hard times faced by either of them and portrayed a strong alliance that would go beyond diplomatic ties, a rare scenario in terms of international relations. 73 Documents and agreements were signed by both Nations in the High-level Strategic Cooperation Council held in Islamabad in 2020 and currently there are around 17 Turkish companies operating in Pakistan, Construction being the biggest category of investment.⁵⁵ A proposed Free Trade agreement is on the way and it would boost the current amount of \$900 Million to \$10 Billion by 2022 should it come into effect.⁵⁶

Although geographically way apart, yet another bond established soundly based on shared beliefs and values in South Asia is Bangladesh. Turkiye was one of the first countries to recognize its establishment in 1974, three years after its liberation from Pakistan. Embassies were opened in both the countries within the following 5-6 years of

⁵⁴ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Asia Anew Initiative," Accessed August 18th 2022. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/asia-anew-initiative.en.mfa>.

⁵⁵ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkiye-Pakistan Relations," Accessed August 23rd 2022 <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-pakistan-relations.en.mfa>

⁵⁶ Philip Kowalski, "Turkish-Pakistani Relations: A Burgeoning Alliance?" *Middle East Institute*, Accessed May 8th 2023. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkish-pakistani-relations-burgeoning-alliance>

time, paving way for fresh diplomatic relationship. However due to Turkiye's less focus on Asia, the existing cultural relationship had not been transferred into deeper commercial and political relations until 1998 where they co-founded the D8 (Developing 8). Series of commercial and political agreements were signed by both the countries only after the AKP came into power with a special focus on Asia under its foreign policy. As a result, import and export value between both the countries hiked up to 1 Billion USD by 2016.⁵⁷ While a joint protocol was signed on trade and investment in 2012, TIKA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination agency had been increasing its activities in Bangladesh focusing education, health, agriculture and in support of administrative infrastructure.⁵⁸ In terms of defense, assistance has been made by Turkiye to Bangladesh by providing light armored vehicle to Bangladesh Army in 2013 and Turkiye has been supplying one military equipment to each military unit every year according to the military corporation agreement signed by both in 2008.⁵⁹ It's also notable that the relationship between Turkiye and Bangladesh strengthened further during the Rohingya crisis when Bangladesh had lost support from its allies, China and India. Both Bangladesh and Rohingya were able to present their side of the argument to the world through Turkiye's multilateral diplomatic struggle via UN, MIKTA, G-20etc.⁶⁰

Sri Lanka and Turkiye shares relatively a long diplomatic history compared to many of the Nations in the region. Although Sri Lanka has been predominantly a Buddhist country, having Muslims as minority, Turkiye or then Ottoman Empire had established diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka (previously Ceylon) by appointing its first honorary Consul in 1864 which depicts how much significant the Island has been for the Empire since earlier times. Turkiye was one of the first countries to recognize Sri Lanka soon after its independence in 1948.

⁵⁷ Gürol Baba, "The Waves of Turkiye's Proactive Foreign Policy Hitting South-Asian Coasts: Turkiye-Bangladesh Relations," *Journal of Administrative Sciences*, (Ankara: Ankara Sosyal Bilimler University, 2017) p. 579

⁵⁸ Ibid, 580

⁵⁹ Ibid, 580

⁶⁰ Nazmul Islam, "Bangladesh: Turkiye's Key Partner in Asia Anew Initiative | Opinion," *Daily Sabah*, December 25th 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/bangladesh-Turkiyes-key-partner-in-asia-anew-initiative>

Apart from the present \$180 million trade volume with Sri Lanka, Turkiye has been aiding the island during undesirable natural and human made disasters then and there. The Turkish Government had built 450 houses in the south of Sri Lanka for those who were affected by the Tsunami disaster in 2004. A similar project of 100 houses were constructed for displaced families due to war in Northern Sri Lanka by the TIKA.⁶¹

Turkiye and Thailand both share the same characteristic of being independent during the colonial times. Turkiye's relationship with the old Siam kingdom (which is under the state of Thailand in the present day) leads back deep into history. The interaction of expanding Ottoman empire with southeast Asia happens with trade in the mid-15th century which eventually evolves into a political relationship especially with the Muslim lands in the region. During this period Siam had been exporting significant amount of goods and this was one major reason for Turkiye to establish strong ties with the Siamese kingdom.⁶² In 2018 both the countries celebrated their 60 years of diplomatic relationship. As it was in the past, both countries have been exploring opportunities to increase their relationship in all possible fields. While Turkiye has been benefitting from Thailand's export advantage, Turkiye has shared its expertise in the fields of education, tourism, and humanitarian projects etc. Since 1992, Turkiye has provided scholarships for around 400 Thai students to continue their higher education in Turkiye. In 2019, both countries signed an agreement on 'Cooperation in the field of Tourism' between KOSGEB and its Thai counterpart OSMEP. They have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between small and medium sized Enterprises.⁶³

⁶¹ Embassy of Sri Lanka Ankara "Turkiye," Accessed May 8, 2023. https://www.srilanka.org.tr/turkiye_1-1977

⁶² Ismail Hakkı Kadi, A.C.S Peacock, "*The Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Siam through the Ages*," (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2017) p.3

⁶³ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relations between Turkiye and Thailand," Accessed May 20th 2023. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-and-thailand.en.mfa>

The more the areas included into cooperation, the more the growth of relationship transpires. Despite being a majority Buddhist country, Thailand has an enormous potential to work together with Turkiye while Turkiye has vast chances of benefitting from this bond as well.



3: HUMANITARIANISM AND THE TURKISH STATE

Charity and philanthropy have existed along with humankind throughout history, be it a religious obligation or a state-imposed order. However, the modern-day charity venture originates in the year 1859, when the international committee of the red cross (ICRC) was established by Henry Dunant initially and later by the broader red cross and red crescent movement during the battle of Solferino.⁶⁴ In the twentieth century we witness the concept of international humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) occupying a broader area in the international political discourse as a result of the consequences brought up by the major and minor battles the century went through. Notably, Save the Children was created in 1919 to lay pressure over the British government to lift its blockade against Germany, and Austria-Hungary. The consequences of the second world war paved way for the creation of organizations like CARE and Oxfam. Also, Cold War conflicts in the 1970s and 80s resulted in the establishment of new generation NGOs like Action Contre la faim (Action against Hunger) in France, Merlin in the UK, and GOAL in Ireland. The biggest and major player of them all is the United Nations and its different agencies; three out of five of whom were established to deliver humanitarian assistance to the oppressed and needy people namely, UNICEF which was established in 1946 originally to help the war affected children of Europe, UNRWA in 1950 being formed originally to assist Palestinian refugees fleeing war and UNHCR in 1951 to aid refugees fleeing conflict and persecution generally.⁶⁵

In short, we can say that the modern international aid system is the result of largely western organizational and individual involvements which were primarily pooled in to

⁶⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross , “Solferino and the International Committee of the Red Cross,” January 6th 2010. <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/feature/2010/solferino-feature-240609.htm>.

⁶⁵ Jérémie Labbé, “Defining the Boundaries of the Humanitarian Enterprise,” *Rethinking Humanitarianism: Adapting to 21st Century Challenges*. International Peace Institute, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09610.6>

respond to the conflicts. Natural disaster aid in fact is relatively a new notion that came into scene within the past couple of decades which has also caused the donors and aid organizations to reevaluate and diversify their aid portfolio. The increasing number of natural disasters in the past few decades have prompted global actors to invest in precautionary actions and assistance after incidents. This situation also suggests of a future with more potential threats to inflict the global community thus causing the reevaluation of 'humanitarianism' discourse and its diversification to a much broader scope.

3.1 Humanitarianism and its scope/s

In simple terms humanitarianism could be described as all the aid efforts made to eliminate the agony or difficulty faced by any individual or community. The OECD has rather a broader definition which goes as "the assistance designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies." Further the definition lays the conditions to be considered humanitarian aid as "to be consistent with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence."⁶⁶ Out of these, impartiality and neutrality are termed as the twin principles of humanitarian action and are enshrined in the Geneva conventions of 1949 and in the additional protocols of 1977. Impartiality is defined as the provision of aid solely based on their needs regardless of nationality, race, religion, class or political opinion. While neutrality suggests, 'in order to gain the confidence of all the related subjects, not to take sides in hostilities or engage in any political, racial, religious or ideological controversy.'⁶⁷ according to Macrae and Leader, any organizations are in the verge of being politicized unless they adhere to these twin principles which eventually make their humanitarian actions to political actions.⁶⁸ Hence it becomes clear that there cannot be any material or immaterial motives like political, economic, or military motives etc. behind the aid effort carried out other than the above-mentioned conditions. This

⁶⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, DAC Statistical Reporting Directives, OECD Doc. DCD/DAC (2010)40/REV1, November 12, 2010, para. 184.
<https://www.oecd.org/dac/38429349.pdf>

⁶⁷ Alparslan Özerdem, Giovanni Rufini, "Humanitarianism and the Principles of Humanitarian Action in Post-Cold War Context." *After the Conflict*, (Coventry: I.B.Tauris, 2005) p.9

⁶⁸ Ibid, 10

ensures interests are not breached in both the sides be it by the aid provider nor the recipient.

The concept of humanitarianism has nurtured into a much broader sphere today compared to what it was in its initial days as discussed previously. It originated to attend to the needy in the war fields and the victims of war focusing solely based on the worst needy or needed in an order. It was civil wars mostly which necessitated humanitarian assistance during the 19th and 20th centuries. The scope of assistance diversified along with natural and man-made disasters from the latter part of last century. Environmental forces for example have played a central role in transforming humanitarianism causing humanitarian organizations to get away from relief activities alone and work along with the states, an action which also led to the politicization of these organizations.⁶⁹ Notions like rehabilitation, disaster management, development assistance, humanitarian advocacy etc. came into scene from this phase.

3.2 Soft power aspect of Humanitarian actions

While we focus on the relief aspect of humanitarian activities of organizations, it is notable that such efforts also do contribute to the foreign policies of the home states of the particular organizations in an indirect way. This concept in today's context is termed as 'the soft power' advantage of a Country. Such foreign aid has always been a significant soft power tool for states to have influence over other states and communities in a positive manner. Humanitarianism is not the only tool a state can possess. It can rather be a key tool to achieve soft power advantage to a greater extent.

The research materials analyzing soft power with respect to humanitarian diplomacy and vice versa are comparatively few. This is probably due to the freshness of the discourse. The necessity itself arose in the past two-three decades with the frequenting natural and man-made crisis around the world, demanding humanitarian aid, with many countries seeking to allocate a place of their own in the multipolar world order post-Cold

⁶⁹ Michael Barnett. "Humanitarianism Transformed." *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 4 (2005) pp.723–40 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3688176>.

War. Hence it would be in the author's best interest to present arguments based on real time examples.

We can discuss over Turkiye's context in relation to its refugee diplomacy. Turkiye hosts the largest Syrian refugees, with 3 million 762 thousand and 385 people registered under temporary protection so far. While 3 million 711 thousand 683 of this number live in different cities inside Turkiye, around 50,702 registered people are hosted in camps or temporary refugee centers.⁷⁰ This effort of Turkiye has earned itself a considerable amount of good impression around the world and quite increased its influence in the middle east in a positive manner.

Humanitarianism could contribute immensely to the soft power of a Country. Yet it also depends on to what extent and with what motive the particular country uses it for. Turkiye has once again proved its stance with effective health diplomacy missions carried out during Covid19, delivering health accessories and tools to many countries in need. It's notable how much praise it had received from many parts of the world for undertaking this important humanitarian task at such a dire time when the countries of the world were almost clueless against the unanticipated pandemic. Not many countries could deliver hope to the world while also struggling to care for their own people.

To emphasize the concept of Soft power is essential when we talk about international humanitarianism especially since they are transnational and involved with states. International NGOs often represent their source or home country and act as a flag bearer when they carry aid to other countries. Since such acts can contribute to the goodwill of the home country to a great extent, they can be treated as a proactive form of soft power of a nation. However, it's also notable that any misconduct of an NGO in the respective countries in its sphere, could have as much negative effects, not only potentially harming the reputation of its home country but also bring the relationship of both the countries to a hostile condition.

⁷⁰ Refugees Association, "Number of Syrians in Turkiye April 2022," April 21st 2022.
<https://multeciler.org.tr/eng/number-of-syrians-in-turkey/>

3.3 Turkiye's enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy

With a significant amount of resource potentials, a unique and rooted heritage and with its strategic geographic location, Turkiye is one of the rarest of its kind which fits into the frame of a sovereign State. From east to the west, north to the south it has been a point of attraction throughout history, so as in the present day. Especially due to its geographic importance, neither it had any chances of escaping attacks from outside nor had the option to get uninvolved in the worlds' war. Hence, it's compelled to strategize its foreign policy with powerful tools such as to engage in Global ventures and involve in humanitarian operations both to make use of fresh opportunities and protect itself from threats arising from the backdrop.⁷¹

Although Turkiye had implemented its first Aid programme in the mid-1980s according to the OECD's DAC criteria, lack of amount and variety of aid alongside with poor management had kept it away from international aid activities. Moreover, it was an aid receiving country in that period. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 90s, The Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) was founded in 1992 to coordinate and execute aid works mainly in the Central Asian Turkic countries. However, factors like volatile economic conditions, political crisis and lack of institutional structure etc. had forced the aid activities to be limited within the Turkic and Caucasian countries thus preventing it from playing a proactive international role.

Although TIKA had not been very effective until 2003, It began to play a major role in shaping Turkiye's foreign policy after being directly attached to the Prime Ministry under the AKP Government since 2002. This was the phase where a systematic and structural change in international aid policy was observed, leading to the establishment of a comprehensive corporation strategy focusing on an expansion in the range of aid activities in terms of area, depth, and strength. One of the main influencing causes was the economic and political stability in the country due to single party government unlike the previous coalition atmosphere which had been a major hindrance for developments in almost every area. A decisive and gradual process of democratization under the AKP

⁷¹ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkiye's enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy," Accessed August 20th 2022. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>.

administration had thereby led to the increase in FDI, eventually pushing it to the status of 16th largest economy in the world within a decade of time. The activities of state and non-state aid organizations also began to widespread around the world in this phase, thus making Türkiye play an active role in the global politics once again.⁷²

3.4 Humanitarianism and AKP

Humanitarian activities began to reach new heights under the AKP, unlike the previous administrations that had taken power over the course of time since the establishment of the Republic. In fact, the concept of Humanitarianism is used as one of AKP's major foreign diplomacy tools in order to engage with the countries under its scope especially the ones with which it had historical bonds in the past, extending from the Balkans to Africa, Middle East to Southeast Asia.

The AKP's model of Humanitarian Diplomacy is conceptualized with both historical and policy dimensions. The historical dimension examines and justifies Humanitarian diplomacy while the policy dimension defines its very content. The political rhetoric of humanitarian diplomacy is developed as the 'Turkish Model' by the AKP Government, and focusses more on bilateral corporation than multilateral, with exceptions. With regard to its diplomacy aspect, it goes way beyond being solely humanitarian assistance and extends to business agreements, development projects, peace building and even political relationship etc. aiming for a long-term relationship.

According to the former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Türkiye's Humanitarian diplomacy is based on a critical equilibrium between conscience and power. He explains this as, if a State has conscience but no power it depicts weakness, whereas if a state has power but not conscience it is tyranny. He argues that Türkiye possesses both of them and supports the argument with the presence of Türkiye in Gaza, Somalia, Myanmar etc.⁷³ President Erdoğan has repeatedly stressed on the same subject among the

⁷² Cemalettin Haşimi, "Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy and Development Cooperation," *Insight Türkiye*, 2014, Volume 16, Number 1, pp.127-145 <https://www.insightTürkiye.com/articles/Türkiyes-humanitarian-diplomacy-and-development-cooperation>

⁷³ Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy: The AKP Model," *Chr. Michelsen Institute* (CMI Brief no. 2019:08), January 1st 2019. <https://www.cmi.no/publications/6973-Türkiyes-humanitarian-diplomacy-the-akp-model>.

local and international arena and additionally has been vocal against the inaction of international community during crises in the third world countries. His tone has been especially ‘anti-western’ and more critical towards western powers, disparaging their colonial pasts and naming it the cause for the present crisis in most of the underdeveloped nations. However, the whole story has been read with a different perspective by some political specialists in the country. They argue that the domestic politics is interwoven with its foreign policy; the government uses its foreign policy to sustain support in its local politics by projecting a progressive-globalist image to gain lead over its opposition parties thus winning the hearts of its people.⁷⁴ This depicts the potential amount of audience that the AKP can attract towards its ideology of international assistance.

The people in general are abundantly generous when it comes to international aid due to three main reasons. First being Its Geographical position; Turkiye itself being afflicted with various natural destructions time to time ending up with the loss of thousands of human lives and material and immaterial ruins in the aftermath. These kinds of past experiences have taught the people to engage in solidarity regardless of the geographical location they live in. Secondly the faith-based sentiment that interconnects people with the same faith holders around the world. This long-enrooted tradition inspired by religious beliefs has sound influence in the society which motivates them towards merits. Normally funds are collected during the Friday congregation or during religious festivals and funded throughout the world for different causes. It is estimated that around 75% of funds are collected from fundraisings organized by the government apart from its budgetary allocation. Thirdly humanitarian assistance is also regarded as a heritage passed on by its Ottoman past and the public see it as a revival of its grandeur. They believe that the powerful past of the Ottoman empire could be brought back by engaging in such global activities. The AKP ensures to make what people desire to see, come true or at least reflect.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Evren Balta, “The AKP’s Foreign Policy as Populist Governance,” *MERIP*, December 15th 2018. <https://merip.org/2018/12/the-akps-foreign-policy-as-populist-governance/>

⁷⁵ Yonca Ozdemir, “AKP’s Neoliberal Populism and Contradictions of New Social Policies in Turkey.” *CONTEMPORARY POLITICS*, 2020, pp.245–267. <https://hdl.handle.net/11511/64329>.

3.5 Turkiye's position in International Humanitarianism and statistics

Turkiye was recorded as the highest Humanitarian aid provider for three consecutive years and in 2019 alone It accounted for 26% of the total humanitarian Aids around the world.⁷⁶ When compared to its GNI ratio, Turkiye's humanitarian aid expenditure amounted to be 0.84% followed by USA and Germany being 0.03% and 0.08% respectively.⁷⁷ This achievement of Turkiye is commendable considering its hostile political and economic conditions faced due to spontaneous developments that have been emanating both in the region and within itself since the beginning of the past decade. This apparently shows how much importance is given both by the country's Administration and the public towards humanitarian assistance despite the external factors. Under this topic we would briefly examine Turkiye's position in Global humanitarian engagement and analyze the facts quantitatively with statistical data obtained mainly from the Global Humanitarian assistance Report.

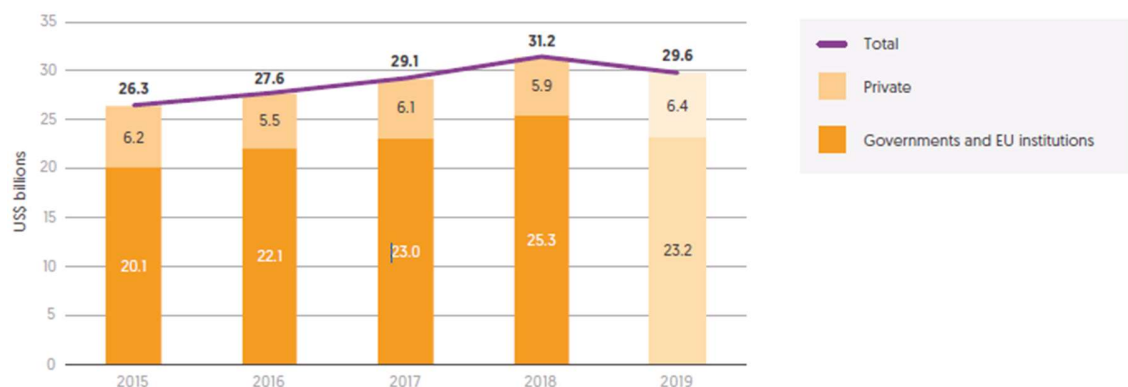


Figure 1 International humanitarian assistance, 2015–2019. “International humanitarian assistance.” *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020*, p.29

The International humanitarian aid decreased by 5% from 2018 to 2019 due to the decrease in the funds of public donors. However, the amount was still higher in 2019 with \$3.3 billion compared to 2015, contributed by the increase in funding of private sector with an amount of 8% from 2018-2019 to \$6.4 billion. Overall, from 2015 to 2019 the

⁷⁶ Gokhan Ergocun, “Turkiye Continues to Be Ranked among Top Donor Countries,” *Anadolu Agency*, Accessed May 8th 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/Turkiye-continues-to-be-ranked-among-top-donor-countries/2300237>

⁷⁷ Gokhan Ergocun, “Turkiye accounts for 26% of 2019 world humanitarian aid,” *Anadolu Agency*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/Turkiye-accounts-for-26-of-2019-world-humanitarian-aid/1919544#:~:text=Turkiye%20was%20ranked%20third%20on,3.6%20million%20as%20of%20May.>

global private sector funding to international humanitarian assistance is estimated to have grown by 3% amounting to \$192 million.⁷⁸



Figure 2 20 contributors of the largest amounts of international humanitarian assistance. “International humanitarian assistance.” *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020*, p.35

The chart above consists of the 20 biggest donors in 2019. However, this also shows that Humanitarian assistance has fallen globally for the first time in 2019, since 2012. The color of Turkiye in the chart is different because it hosts a huge number of Syrian refugees which should be analyzed differently due to its nature of assistance.

Apart from this, the three biggest contributors on this year were the US, Germany, and UK, with a combined contribution of 58% of all the international humanitarian assistance from public donors.

⁷⁸ Development Initiatives, “International humanitarian assistance,” *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020*, p.29 <https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2020/executive-summary/>

Although the general assistance would have had a negative impact globally, Turkiye's health care assistance made during the pandemic is another topic that must be highlighted. While contending its own Covid battle, Turkiye met the need of 155 out of 158 countries that requested aid in various categories ranging from Material grants, cash assistance, export permissions etc. Additionally, Turkiye also assisted international aid organizations like the OCHA, UNICEF, PAF, SICA, CARICOM, NATO, IGAD, WHO, OSCE either partially or in whole. The aid mostly contained medical equipment like the PPE (Personal protective equipment) and respiratory devices produced in Turkiye. Food aid was also given to countries which had food security threats. Another effective aid method was to provide technical education in producing PPEs in a selected list of countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Gambia, Georgia, Kingdom of Eswatini, Moldova, Mozambique, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Tajikistan etc. through the Turkish Corporation and Coordination Agency (TIKA).⁷⁹ Spontaneous aids like these at a time of crisis could elevate Turkiye's image and create the impression of a 'powerful-Strong Nation' over the aid-recipients. Having contributed vastly during one of the deadliest human crises that have occurred in 100 years, Turkiye unquestionably attained significant heights with its humanitarian-health diplomacy.

3.6 State sponsored aid Organizations of Turkiye

As a Nation which gives high priority for humanitarian aid work, the Turkish Government itself sponsors its own Organizations who carry out activities both locally and abroad. Over the past few decades, these organizations have been successful in achieving hundreds of projects that have made an impact in the relevant communities. The Author believes that, having a brief discussion on them in the thesis would contribute in enriching the topic of the research better.

⁷⁹ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Our Role and Vision During the Coronavirus Pandemic," <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/koronavirus-salginindaki-rol-ve-vizyonumuz-6-11-2020.en.mfa>

3.6.1 TİKA

Once the Soviet Union was dissolved in the early 90s, the need for development in key areas in the Turkic countries was realized. Hence the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency was found in the Turkish Republic to carry this task in those countries thus enhance dual and regional relationship. However, with the speeding up of globalization process in the post millennium era, as an important part of its foreign policy priorities, the need to reach out to every part of the developing world was considered imminent along with the burgeoning opportunities and facilities. Hence the Turkish Government was determined to play a more active role in the global arena by exporting its expertise in diverse area through the TİKA. The fields included Social, cultural, economic, and educational development activities. Today It actively executes operation in at least 150 countries over 5 continents around the world with 60 offices.⁸⁰

3.6.2 TÜRK KIZILAY

The Turkish or the Ottoman community has always interacted with wars throughout the history. The Turkish Red Crescent Association was found in the year 1868 to assist the soldiers who are wounded in the wars. The name of the organization was changed as Turkish Red Crescent Society post republic and has remained alike ever since. Though its activities were confined to a limited scope at the beginning, it has emerged as an organization whose mission is to assist socially vulnerable people both within and out of Turkiye.⁸¹

Internationally it has reached to more than 137 Countries until now and carried out disaster management operations in at least 78 Countries. The range of its international aid includes Construction of Schools, houses, community centers, places of worship and assisting in the provision of health, educational, social aids along with special assistance to agriculture an irrigation etc.⁸²

⁸⁰ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), “About Us,” Accessed May 8th 2023. http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/about_us-14650

⁸¹ European Youth Portal, European Commission, “List of Accredited Organisations,” Accessed May 8th 2023. https://youth.europa.eu/volunteering/organisations_en

⁸² Kizilay Turkiye, “What we do,” Accessed May 8th 2023, <https://www.kizilay.org.tr/what-we-do/international-services>

3.6.3 Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi

The Diyanet Vakfi is the Foundation of religious affairs directorate of the Turkish Government having its key focus on regulating and managing the Mosques and religious related matters in Turkiye. Apart from this, it has also kept its service range broad by involving itself in a series of aid activities both locally and abroad. It has been supporting Students around the World with Education and accommodation. People who are under poverty or face disasters both natural and manmade do get assisted by the Diyanet Vakfi. The Organization also embraces thousands of Orphan Children around the world. Water wells are also built by the Diyanet in areas facing shortage of water mainly in the African Continent.⁸³

⁸³ Diyanet Vakfı, “Faaliyetlerimiz,” Accessed May 8th 2023, <https://tdv.org/tr-TR/faaliyetlerimiz/>.

4: IHH AS A TRANSNATIONAL ACTOR

4.1 Post-Cold War era and Globalization

The process of the end of Cold War began with the withdrawal of Soviet Union from eastern European and certain central Asian countries, resulting in the freedom from Marxist dictatorships in some of them. This situation ultimately resulted in two major impacts in the Global political arena; one was to eliminate the already existing wars in certain third world countries due to the Cold War and reduced tensions between the east and west thus decreasing inter-state conflicts, some of which had been ignited due to the superpower ideology as an impact of the Cold War. The other side was the emergence of ethno-political conflicts, religious militancy, terrorism, North-south conflicts, and issues like severe competition over scarce resources in different parts of the world, some of which were even beyond the control of the superpowers. In a nutshell it can be said that the end of Cold War brought over both stability and instability to international politics.⁸⁴

Globalization can be simply identified as the elimination of all kinds of limits between countries all around the world. According to Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr. Globalization means the increase of globalism; a network of interdependence of countries in multicontinental level, who allow the flow and influence of capital and goods, ideas, information, people, and forces, environmentally and biologically relevant substances etc.⁸⁵

We can observe through recent History that Globalization has been in existence for a while, at least for one and half century, especially during the post-colonial era. However, the process became more effective and highlighted only after the post-Cold War period as many changes like discussed above tend to take place in international politics. Hence it would be fair enough to derive a narrative, ‘the end of Cold War expedited the

⁸⁴ Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, "The New World Order": An Outline of the Post-Cold War Era," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 7 (2008) pp.44-58

⁸⁵ Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, "Globalization: What's New? What's Not? (And So What?)." *Foreign Policy*, no. 118 (2000) pp. 104–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1149673>.

emergence of Globalization' which has almost been playing the most important role in contemporary world politics.

Although a smoother and comfortable world was highly anticipated post-Cold War, where the resources and capital could be employed to make the world a much better place, many factors did hinder the developments. One of them was the marginalization of individuals and communities because of constantly deteriorating economic conditions, eventually resulting in disparities. Such conditions have often brought about social conflicts, drug abuses, and even armed violence leading to huge changes in social and demographic structures in many parts of the world like displacement, migration, poverty etc.⁸⁶ Some of the above-mentioned incidents are also results of natural disasters. Humanitarian assistance comes to the scene at such occurrences and today's globalization has made it much more possible and convenient to mobilize funds and volunteering whenever required.

4.2 Transnationalism and the emergence of Transnational Actors

The discourse of International Relations after 1970s focused more on the relationship between State and Non-State Actors having studies like NGOs, Transnational Networks and coalitions, Foundations, Multinational Companies and Social activities etc. under deep analysis. Researchers of International Relations contributed to the expansion of work on Transnational relationships focusing on non-state actors by researching the ways of non-state actors contributing to World Politics.

Non-state actors do influence International Relations, and this is why Transnational relationships and institutions should be paid more attention according to the studies of Transnationalism.⁸⁷ Transnational Actors became active in the post-world war period along with the development of International Trade combined with technological and infrastructural progress in the world. Multinational Organizations and NGOs seized

⁸⁶ Ali Said Ali, "Globalization and the future of humanitarian action. New priorities for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement?" *International Review of the Red Cross*, 83(843), 841-846. doi:10.1017/S1560775500119340

⁸⁷ Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, "Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği," Doctorate diss., (Selçuk University, 2020)

this opportunity to expand and advocate their causes in health, human rights, global finance, and environmental issues etc. globally. Their main characteristic and source of power being ‘expertise’ Transnational Actors do not only facilitate International Organizations in policy making but also shape up public perception through various media.⁸⁸

Transnational activism refers to the activities carried out across national borders, sometimes with limitations, or completely without governmental involvement. The important factor which decides if an NGO has to go global or not is its ‘Goals’. Certain Organizations do decide from the very first whether they would act in many locations at the same time. Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth can be cited as two good examples which are established in the UK and USA and seek funds for its operation from other parts of the world.⁸⁹

4.3 International Humanitarianism

A Humanitarian act facilitates the provision of aid that would save lives, alleviate suffering, and restore dignity during the most vulnerable times. This would be done by providing material and immaterial support to the affected population by mostly skilled and professional volunteers, realized and executed as a collective response.⁹⁰

Humanitarian action is founded over the principal of ‘Humanity’ and guided by three additional principles - neutrality, impartiality and independence which are preserved in the Geneva conventions and protected under international law; namely International Human rights law and international humanitarian law.⁹¹

Humanitarianism originated in the Warfield. However, while serving the purpose per se, the scope has broadened wider to natural disasters, famines, disease outbreaks,

⁸⁸ Thomas Hale, “Transnational Actors and Transnational Governance in Global Environment Politics,” *Annual review of political science*, 2020. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-032644>

⁸⁹ Peter Willetts, “Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics,” *The Globalisation of World Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp.356-383 <https://biblioteca.cejamericas.org/bitstream/handle/2015/3651/TransnationalActors.pdf>

⁹⁰ John David Pringle, Matthew R.Hunt, “Humanitarian Action,” *Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics*, (Pittsburgh: Springer Cham, 2015) pp. 2-3 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284030877_Humanitarian_Action

⁹¹ Ibid, 4

displacements, and systematic social injustices etc. At such times, many local bodies like the Government, religious and charitable organizations, Friends, and families etc. provide help and support as far as their hands reach. Nevertheless, this assistance cannot be categorized under the humanitarian enterprise. Humanitarian aid is provided by International NGOs which are based on a particular location and has branches and operating offices around the globe which can respond to crisis immediately. United Nations organizations such as the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and private international NGOs such as CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) etc. can be stated as some of the prime examples for Humanitarian Organizations in today's context.⁹²

4.4 Establishment of IHH, Scope and causes behind the Establishment.

Globalization in the post-Cold War period had eliminated nation states from being the sole actors of politics. While the government structures expanded with different functions notwithstanding the growing pressure to meet democratic requirements, new political spaces were opened for different types of socializing, grouping activities from local to international scales along with the developing infrastructure, communication, and technology around the world.⁹³

IHH or the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedom is a Turkish based Humanitarian organization, operating mostly abroad extending to at least 135 Countries with a diversified agenda of humanitarian aid for those who are affected by natural and manmade disasters regardless of their religion, language, sect, or race. In addition, the IHH also prevents any violation against the victims and strives to restore their dignity. It prioritizes

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Islam Can, "Küreselleşme Bağlamında İslam'ın yeni sivil toplum söylemi ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı İHH," *Muhafazakar Düşünce* Yıl:8 Sayı:29-30, Temmuz-Aralık 2011, p.105
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336221883_KURESELLESME_BAGLAMINDA_ISLAM'IN_YENI_SIVIL_TOPLUM_SOYLEMI_ve_INSANI_YARDIM_VAKFI_IHH

war torn countries, regions struck by natural disasters and poverty-stricken countries and territories.

IHH was registered as a foundation in Istanbul in 1995. However, its past extends a few years back to 1992, when a few individuals had volunteered to provide humanitarian aid during the Bosnian war. It is known to be the first NGO to take aid to Bosnia during the war and to announce the plight of the victims to the world audience. It's also the first Turkish NGO to reach 120 countries in 5 continents, one of the first to enter into the Gaza strip in 2008 when the wall between Egypt and Gaza collapsed, the first Turkish organization to carry aid to Kosovo, the first ever international organization to provide aid to Chechenia, the first local organization to carry out a nationwide campaign in order to collect fund for Africa, and the first organization in the Islamic world to carry out humanitarian diplomacy efforts. Apart from the 'firsts' it has pioneered, there are also significant other operations. It had organized an international aid convoy with a huge number of participants to Gaza both via land and sea in 2009 and 2010 respectively. It has also carried out humanitarian diplomacy efforts resulting in the release of the greatest number of prisoners since the second world war, from Syrian jails in 2013. The IHH also formed an independent committee to observe the peace talks between the Philippines government and the Moro rebels in 2013. In 2016 It organized a massive convoy from Istanbul to Reyhanli, consisting of more than forty thousand people with five thousand vehicles with the motto 'Pave way to Aleppo' an effort which resulted in the evacuation of around forty-five thousand people to safer places.⁹⁴

4.5 IHH and the Turkish Government

Civil Societies in Turkiye do hail mostly from a religious background and operate with a religious motive. There are also secular groups and civil societies in Turkiye who are involved in humanitarian aid activities, but almost all of them do operate locally and not internationally. It's the majority faith-based Organizations that operate beyond borders

⁹⁴ IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, "Our History," <https://ihh.org.tr/en/tarihce>

and the main reasons are sentimental such as, historical legacy and historical responsibility etc.

Civil societies and groups existed in the late 80s and early 90s in Turkiye. However, their initiatives and activities were restricted by secular forces due to their religious identity back then. After AKP came to power, their way to engage globally was opened and in some instances, they were even encouraged by the government itself. For example, in 2007 the government provided tax exemptions for organizations such as Deniz Feneri, Kimse Yok Mu, IHH, Aziz Mahmut Hidayi Foundation and Cansuyu etc.⁹⁵

IHH being one of the biggest organizations, had benefitted immensely by such gestures of the government. Apart from this, some early examples of government itself engaging together with IHH could be stated; In 2013 TİKA, the government's civil service organization had collaborated with IHH in Niger in building a medical clinic⁹⁶ and building a school for agricultural education in Somalia.⁹⁷ Later when the first batch of the students graduated as Agricultural Engineers from this school in 2018, they were well equipped and educated to spread across different regions in Somalia and pass on the knowledge gained to the local farmers and introducing modern technology to make use of the natural resources they possess in their respective areas. While addressing the fresh graduates in his speech, The Turkish Republic's Ambassador to Mogadishu stated that 8 million hectares of agricultural land in Somalia is waiting to be used by the fresh graduates, and if optimum use could be made of these resources, Somalia could feed the east Africa all on its own.⁹⁸ We see, not just how an organization like IHH collaborated to eliminate one of the biggest, life threatening conditions of Africa but how it has indirectly contributed to the existing relationship between both the countries by doing so.

⁹⁵ Husrev Tabak, "Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation," *Insight Turkey*, July 1st 2015. <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/broadening-the-nongovernmental-humanitarian-mission-the-ihh-and-mediation>

⁹⁶IHH, "New eye hospital in Niger," September 12th 2014. <https://ihh.org.tr/en/haber/nijere-yeni-goz-hastanesi-2532>

⁹⁷ IHH, "Meaningful project from IHH to Africa," February 16th 2013. <https://ihh.org.tr/en/news/meaningful-project-from-ihh-for-africa-1586>

⁹⁸ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), "Somalia Agricultural School Produces its First Engineers," July 27th 2018. https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/somalia_agricultural_school_produces_its_first_engineers-46009

It's therefore well evident, the reason for such gestures and encouragement by the government to organizations like IHH is because their motives in terms of international engagement going hand in hand, perhaps rooting from the very history they share; sort of a collective responsibility towards the 'Muslim Ummah' as it was in the Ottoman empire. Precisely, the humanitarian missions through mediation and humanitarian diplomacy of IHH have been complementing Turkiye's assumed role in global politics. IHH is most likely to receive the government's support in this regard and continue to expand its global engagement even further.

4.6 Instances of interaction with international politics

IHH as a transnational Actor, engages with Governments and political bodies abroad on certain occasions. In addition to all its welfare activities, the IHH also conducts negotiations with public leaders in the respective Countries and informs them on suppressions and oppressions of the people living there and urging them to produce solutions.⁹⁹

IHH is involved in Humanitarian diplomacy activities in some contexts, especially in the war-torn places. For example, it mediates during peace talks or exchange of prisoners through diplomatic channels. It makes efforts to bring all stakeholders together and persuade them to agree over a common term, thus preventing greater disaster.¹⁰⁰

In the year 2012 two Turkish journalists, Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun were captured by the Syrian Intelligence and imprisoned for nearly two months. IHH conducted an intense humanitarian diplomacy involving Iranian, Syrian and Turkish Government and finally facilitated their release.¹⁰¹ Likewise, IHH also mediated throughout the releasing process of 2.138 Syrians, 1 Afghani, 2 Germans, 1 Kuwaiti, 2 Ukrainians, 4 Swedish and 2 Polish citizens who were all detained by the Syrian regime in Syrian

⁹⁹ IHH, "Our History," <https://ihh.org.tr/en/history>.

¹⁰⁰ Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, "Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği," Doctorate diss., (Selçuk University, 2020) p.166

¹⁰¹ IHH, "İnsani diplomasinin büyük başarısı," Accessed May 8th 2023. <https://ihh.org.tr/haber/insani-diplomasinin-buyuk-basarisi-1039>

prisons. On another occasion IHH intervened and helped the release of 2 Czech tourists who were detained in Pakistani cells. They were brought to Turkiye thereafter.¹⁰² It's noteworthy to mention here that, the IHH does not only extend hands to 'Muslims' but also any human being who are desperate and in need at any situation. This explains the broadness and non-exclusiveness of the organization when it comes to humanitarian aid and diplomacy.

4.6.1 The Mavi Marmara incident

The Attack unleashed on the 31st of May 2010 over a Turkish humanitarian flotilla by the Israeli forces on international waters not only shook the Organizer of the voyage IHH, and Turkiye but also created ripples and still brings about series of questions in the international political arena to this date as a crime committed in international boundaries. Hence, it is worth having a discussion on how it all developed and how shall and should a humanitarian organization respond at such events as it could be treated as unique in the modern humanitarian history.

On the 25th of January 2006 Hamas won the elections democratically and ascended to power with 76 seats in the Palestinian parliament. Israel and the western powers did not recognize Hamas as a political actor worthy of interlocution. On the contrary Israeli Government imposed blockade over the Gaza strip for food, medicine, fuel etc. and intensified further to keep Hamas away from the picture. On the 19th of 2008 the tension between both sides descended with a ceasefire which was later violated unilaterally by Israel on the 4th of October same year by killing 6 members of the Hamas. From the 27th of December 2008 to 18th January 2009 Israel unleashed 'Operation cast lead' and brought Gaza strip under heavy fire. While doing this, it also imposed naval blockade through the coastal line of Gaza citing 'entry of armories to Hamas' as the reason.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, "Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği," Doctorate diss., (Selçuk University, 2020) pp.166-167

¹⁰³ Ahmet Hamdi Topal, "İsrail'in Gazze Ablukası ve Mavi Marmara Saldırısı," *Public and Private International Law Bulletin*, Volume: 32, Issue: 1, p.106

On May 2010, IHH initiated a movement called the Free Gaza Movement together with 36 NGOs around the world and set off to Gaza from Istanbul with a 7-boat flotilla carrying humanitarian aid materials like food, medicine, clothes, toys, stationaries, generators etc. along with majorly Turkish and volunteers including MPs, journalists, Academics, Writers, Artists, Religious scholars, Human rights activists from around the world. On the 31st of May, the boat Mavi Marmara which carried 600 people all unarmed, and aid materials came under attack by Israeli forces in the international waters while sailing in a range of 72 miles to the closest coast and 64 miles from the blockaded area.

The attack left 9 dead and many injured. All the volunteers were arrested and escorted to Ashdod port while the aid materials were all seized by the force.¹⁰⁴ Apart from the questions arising from political sphere with regard to the violation of laws etc. this thesis is more concerned with the human rights aspect of it. There has been an explicit violation of two kinds; firstly, A boat with humanitarian aid and unarmed volunteers being attacked by armed forces. Secondly, the attack has taken place on international waters. When a boat floats on international waters, no state can intervene nor confront it except for the flag bearing state of the boat. A boat could be searched by any parties/states only with the consent of the flag bearing state. Otherwise, it is considered a severe case of violation of international law. Nevertheless, even if we consider for a case that such an attack is possible according to *lex specialis derogat legi generali*, a law which suggests more specific rules will prevail over more general rules, also considering the international humanitarian law, a disproportionate use of force still does invalidate the act of confrontation as such.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, we can come into conclusion that the attack by Israel over Mavi Marmara cannot be justified by any means. Even if the entire situation could be observed through a different angle for the sake of an argument, portraying the flotilla as a provocatory mission, the argument still commands irrelevance especially given the situation where at least citizens of 36 Countries had taken part, many of them representing NGOs incorporated under the laws of respective nations, a possible attack could never be

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 107

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 144

organized against the Israeli forces because this would definitely create international repercussions as it involves many countries.

4.6.2 The Case of Bangsamoro

One of the most critical humanitarian diplomacy phases for IHH would be the peace talks between the Philippine Government and the Bangsamoro State which was initiated in 2010. IHH was invited to monitor the talks between Philippine Government and The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as the third-party monitoring team along with four other organizations namely, Mindanao Human Rights Action Center, Asian Foundation, Peace Institute, and the EU who shall contribute to their peace and mutual understanding, eventually allowing Moro to be ruled as an autonomous region. The whole phase had been a good experience for IHH as It had been on the table directly and allowed them to observe the political dynamics and how do the related players reflect over them.¹⁰⁶

The Moros who constituted around 11% of Philippine population and with an Islamic history since the 14th century lived independently until the end of American colonial administration in 1946. The group of predominantly Muslim populated islands began to lose their freedom since the independence and went through serious oppression with the unleashing of ethnic cleansing measures carried out by the central Philippine government. By 1980, 80% of the population transformed as Christians while the remaining Muslims became the minority.¹⁰⁷ Moros established an armed resilient movement named the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1970s to defend themselves against state oppression. Nearly 120 thousand people lost their lives, and 2 million people became refugees during this period.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, “Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)’nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği,” Doctorate diss., (Selçuk University, 2020) pp.168-169

¹⁰⁷ Husrev Tabak, “Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation,” *Insight Turkey*, July 1st 2015. <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/broadening-the-nongovernmental-humanitarian-mission-the-ihh-and-mediation>

¹⁰⁸ IHH, “A Letter of thanks to Turkiye and IHH from Moro,”<https://ihh.org.tr/en/news/a-delegation-from-moro-visits-ihh>

Although the peace process between the Moro resistance group and the Philippine government had started in 1996, the agreement came into full effect in 2014 with IHH getting involved as a member of the third-party monitoring team (TPMT) and ensuring the establishment of an autonomous Bangsamoro.¹⁰⁹ IHH was nominated by the MILF as they have known IHH closely for a longer period especially through its humanitarian activities carried out since the late 90s in Moro region. This could be treated as one of the significant turning points in the history of IHH, being appointed as a mediator to ensure a ceasefire between two important political actors, who were part of one of the longest ethnic conflicts in modern times. Not only for IHH who was involving mainly in humanitarian activities and missions until then, but also Turkiye which gained goodwill as a Country which houses an NGO like IHH and extends support whenever required through its diplomatic mission. Because there are very few NGOs in the world who stretch out to different areas parallelly. IHH is such an organization with ample ground experience in all fields and has merely represented Turkiye by acting so.

4.7 Examples for IHH's contribution to Turkiye's foreign policy

The Turkish Government has been striving to create an image of itself as a peace maker and promoter of peace perhaps more intensely in the past decade. Its own war against terrorism in its borders, military assistance to countries like Libya and Azerbaijan and non-stopping humanitarian assistance etc. are used to defend its argument in this regard. At such a context, an invitation extended to an organization like IHH to mediate an important issue like that of Bangsamoro, does definitely appreciate the value of its host Country and adds more value to its global venture. As a result, the Country could also have opportunities to join various Global Organizations and going a step further, even potentially lead them.

On the other hand, such ventures could also help boost Turkiye's diplomatic relationship with other Nations and create positive perception towards Turkiye. This was

¹⁰⁹ Husrev Tabak, "Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation," p. 213 <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/broadening-the-nongovernmental-humanitarian-mission-the-ihh-and-mediation>

well noticed during the massive-repeated earthquakes that impacted 10 provinces of Turkiye on the 6th of February 2023. The following were some of the first Countries to send humanitarian aid soon after the Turkish Government declared stage 4 emergency.

- Afghanistan
- Algeria
- Austria
- China
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Germany
- Greece
- India
- Iran
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- New Zealand
- Pakistan
- Poland
- Palestine
- Qatar
- Romania
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia

- Serbia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States

While we can observe a few former beneficiaries of Turkish aid in the above list, we can also see a many western-developed Countries who have poured with aids during the disaster. We also come across States like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia who have contributed in huge amounts, both who had renewed their political relationship with Turkiye in the past few months after a long period of rift. And Nations like India, with whom Turkiye's relationship is not up to satisfactory level especially due to the pro-Pakistani policy Turkiye maintains when it comes to Kashmir. And astoundingly, the immediate arrival of Greece, a Neighbor with whom Turkiye has been having frequent disagreements on many issues concerning the region. The Proactive political and humanitarian role Turkiye has been playing since the past years seems to have paid off overwhelmingly in the global arena despite all the negative cases that take place then and there. It's noteworthy to mention that IHH's contributions to this very venture of Turkiye as a global humanitarian aid provider is vast as one of the leading international humanitarian aid providers from the country.

One of the many instances that IHH was praised for its humanitarian operations was shared by Başer during the interview with himself, citing the meeting of IHH officials with the Malaysian Foreign Minister Zambry Abdul Kadir in early 2023. While discussing the Pattani conflict in the closed meeting, Abdul Kadir asked 'We have been struggling for years as a Country to find a solution for the Pattani issue, but how did you (IHH) succeed in this?'¹¹⁰ This example alone indicates some important things regarding the

¹¹⁰ Reşad Başer, interview by author, IHH Head Office Istanbul, August 05, 2023.

subject; firstly, how powerful IHH is, as a humanitarian organization. Secondly, how it has succeeded in surpassing even the governments in this matter. Thirdly, how much this incident alone could contribute to the image of Turkiye as a Country that houses IHH.

In addition to the humanitarian aid and diplomacy operations, IHH also provides reports to official channels in its home country occasionally. They do so by obtaining authentic information from the ground through their network. At a time where ‘information’ is termed as ‘power,’ provision of these could secure the authorities from making the wrong move in the region concerned. There are many examples in Africa alone where IHH has provided ground information to the government thus facilitating and easing the foreign policy towards them.¹¹¹ During the Bosnian war, IHH has provided information upon the request of the authorities of then government and directed them accordingly. Along with these, IHH was the main actor who brought the Latin America to Turkiye’s (government’s) notice.¹¹² Therefore with these examples we can observe how an organization like IHH’s presence abroad could directly support its home country in restructuring its policies in the respective regions.

Similarly, IHH has also benefitted Authorities abroad with its reports as it has in its home country. For instance, after publishing the Hocalı Report, IHH was called and appreciated by the Azerbaijan embassy and consulate who later even sent a representative to one of IHH’s meetings regarding the subject. Likewise, Crimea and Ukraine had first congratulated IHH and later invited the organization to take part in an official meeting, for publishing a report on Crimea.¹¹³ Even though many organizations can carry out humanitarian activities internationally, not all of them are capable of involving in diplomacy efforts nor acquire the resources in drafting reports. If the IHH can prepare such in-depth reports on particular regions and countries to the extent that attracts the attention of local and foreign diplomats, it definitely stands proof for IHH’s deep knowledge and network it possesses in the ground and the expertise it has on each matters concerned, precisely portraying how powerful and influential the organization is. And the

¹¹¹Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, “Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları(STK)’nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsani Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) özelinde İnsani yardım kuruluşları örneği”. ‘Doctorate Thesis’, (Selçuk University, 2020), p.155

¹¹² Ibid,156

¹¹³ Ibid,157

presence of such an organization in a country like Turkiye, can be treated as merely a 'wealth' that helps its image elevate and thereby contribute to its foreign policy ultimately.

4.8 Can Humanitarian efforts impact political relationships negatively?

While we discuss the positive contribution humanitarian efforts can make to a Country's foreign policy, it's also essential to examine if they can have negative impacts and jeopardize the existing relationship. This question can be argued based on the above example of Mavi Marmara for a better understanding.

Turkiye and Israel are two states with traditional-strong ties in politics, trade and defense. The attack carried out on the Turkish flotilla which was organized by the IHH in 2010 had created a rupture between both the countries which took at least five years to bring them back to table. IHH's sole intention was to carry humanitarian aids to people under a blockade imposed by Israel. However, it had intimidated the Israeli military and caused them to attack, an act which cannot be justified by any means given the circumstances it was carried out. And this act of violence had resulted in Turkiye reassessing its relationship with Israel, as it considers the assault as an assault caused to itself.

We can draw a few conclusions based on this. Even though an NGO isn't bound to any State including its host country, it has huge potentials of causing damage to its Country of origin sometimes. This has equally the same impact as it could contribute to the enhancement of the relationship of the host country with others.

Although the sole intention of IHH was to deliver aid to the Gaza Strip, it had ultimately prompted tension between two Countries which were maintaining ties on different area at certain levels. This is evident that certain humanitarian actions can also cause disruption in the relationship between States, which the author identifies as 'passive impact.' Hence it could be concluded that They are mighty enough to bring about such negative results while intending to do something positive.

5. ACTIVITIES OF IHH IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON FOUR SAMPLE NATIONS

The South and Southeast Asia consists of around 33% of the total world population in its 20 countries. It is also known to be one of the densely populated regions in the world with a vibrant - multicultural, multireligious, multiethnic blend where people speak thousands of different languages. Apart from the serious level of income disparity found in many countries, the region has also been vulnerable with internal ethnic and religious conflicts, civil wars, terrorist attacks and natural disasters etc. occurring then and there, causing mass scale casualties, displacements, and damages to properties thus cripples in economy to some extent. Such catastrophes have also impacted the social structure of those population, leaving broken families, orphans, and needy people etc. Hence, it is noteworthy that the region is treated as one of the highly vulnerable regions in terms of humanitarian assistance by many different NGOs around the world.

This is also a region where Turkiye has been maintaining an active diplomatic and trade relationship. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) who's combined GDP amounts to the 7th largest economy in the world is a block where Turkiye has been actively connected with. Although politically Turkiye's ultimate goal seems to be achieving dialogue partnership with the region, trade wise it has already achieved and benefitted a lot surpassing the amount of \$8.7 billion which is quite a significant amount. Additionally, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has been very active in the region with its various projects pertaining to development assistance worthy of \$147.8 million between the period 2005-2015 alone.¹¹⁴ It is also important to mention that Turkiye has an intense cultural influence in the region especially with Countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei etc. with whom Turkiye also shares membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkiye's Relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/asean.en.mfa>

¹¹⁵ Selcuk Colakoglu, "Turkiye's engagement with Southeast Asia" *Middle East Institute*, (April 6th, 2021) <https://www.mei.edu/publications/Turkiyes-engagement-southeast-asia>

Similarly, Turkiye also has a strong relationship with the South Asian countries generally. Apart from the close economic, military and trade relationship it has with Pakistan in the region, Turkiye also has similar relationship with countries like Bangladesh on subjects like security, defense, drug trafficking etc. Notably, Bangladesh is the 4th biggest buyer of Turkish weapons.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless with India due to the Kashmiri dispute and Turkiye's Pakistan-centrism, Turkiye has not succeeded much when it comes to political and diplomatic dialogues. The Trade balance though does not indicate unhealthy figures between both the countries.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile Turkiye also has been keen in improving trade and dialogue with Countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Maldives. The visit by foreign minister of Turkiye Mevlut Çavuşoğlu to Maldives and Sri Lanka in the beginning of 2022 indicated signs of fresh bilateral relationship and cooperation potentials in the near future.¹¹⁸

The four sample countries namely Pakistan, Bangladesh (Arakan), Sri Lanka and Thailand (Pattani) for the purpose of this study were selected based on the scale of IHH's activities in them. Moreover, they do represent different societies with different social structure and culture in their respective regions. However, the countries also do share more or less the same victimhood when it comes to natural and man-made disasters thus having an impact in the respective societies in different scales eventually marginalizing certain sect/s of the society to the extent of being needy of assistance. Hence, we believe that justice has been done in the thesis in handpicking them to carry out reasonable research and analysis which would portray a clear picture of the region as desired ultimately.

¹¹⁶ Sankalp Gurjar, "Why Turkiye's growing presence in South Asia should worry India." *India Narrative* <https://www.indianarrative.com/opinion-news/why-Turkiye-s-growing-presence-in-south-asia-should-worry-india-147887.html>

¹¹⁷ Ömer Aslan, "The Evolution of Turkiye's 'South Asia Policy': Continuities and Ruptures in Outlook, Roles, Actors and Constraints." *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (April 2022) pp.122–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970221076754>.

¹¹⁸ Sankalp Gurjar, "Why Turkiye's growing presence in South Asia should worry India." *India Narrative*. <https://www.indianarrative.com/opinion-news/why-Turkiye-s-growing-presence-in-south-asia-should-worry-india-147887.html>

5.1 Pakistan

Approximately one out of three of the Pakistani population is under poverty line. The impact of poverty and illiteracy extensively affects the orphans and population in need. In addition to this, people fleeing the war in Afghanistan in hundreds and thousands do also pose a threat in terms of sharing the resources like food, accommodation etc. According to the humanitarian response plan report of 2021, nearly 11 million people including 1.4 million refugees and asylum seekers have been identified as needy of some sort of humanitarian assistance. During this period, a sum of 291 million USD has been needed to address the need of the most vulnerable out of this 11 million.¹¹⁹

IHH has been carrying out humanitarian assistance in different regions of Pakistan since 2005. Until now, a sum of \$34,750,000 has been spent on these activities and \$18,250,000 worth of projects are being carried out currently. The different range of projects carried out so far are given in the tables below. First of them is Mosques. Mosques have a very special status in a Muslim community. In addition to acting as a place of worship, often they also operate as centers which direct the community with timely instructions and announcements etc. In some places, they also act as financial hubs which receive mandatory and other charitable materials from the rich and distribute to the poor in the particular community. Mosque can also act as learning centers which provide both religious and other technical skill building knowledge and opportunities. Precisely, mosque is right in the center of every Muslim community and execute range of tasks for the spiritual and material benefit of the Community. Hence, the existence of Mosques is highly valued and respected by any Muslim community around the world. below are some of the Mosque and Madrasa (religious schools) projects done by the IHH in different regions in Pakistan so far.

¹¹⁹ Humanitarian Response, "Humanitarian Response plan Pakistan," *Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2021* Issued December 2020.
<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/pakistan/document/pakistan-humanitarian-response-plan-2021-15-apr-2021>

Table 1 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Mosque Projects in Pakistan, email, 2022

Places of Worship
Hasan Hüseyin Mosque – 2007
Hamzawala Mosque and Madrasa – 2011
Zeytinburnu Well-wishers Mosque – 2012
Bağcılar Village Mosque and School – 2012
Zeytinburnu Well-wishers Mosque – 2012
Ayhan Ceylan Mosque and Madrasa – 2013
Ayşe Gündoğan Mosque – 2015
Konya IHH Educationists Mosque – 2017

IHH's orphan activities, which have been continuing since 1992, has gained a new momentum with the implementation of the orphan sponsorship support system in 2007. With the regular donations collected in this system, which aims to protect orphans, some of the education, health, shelter, food, and clothing needs of 1662 orphan children were met. Volunteer teams that set out from Türkiye every year with the organization of IHH visit orphans all over the world, donate aid, open orphanages, supervise their work on site, make orphans happy and meet their needs. This charity mobilization, which is repeated every year, is called orphan solidarity days (YDG). Orphan solidarity days are one of the most important activities the IHH organizes for orphans throughout the year. Pakistan has one of the oldest orphanage projects of IHH in south Asia. In 2003 there were 45 orphans when they had opened their first orphanage and as for 2020, the number of orphanages increased to 10 with around 1390 orphans in them.

Table 2 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Orphanage Projects in Pakistan, email, 2022

Orphanages	
MSAL Orphanage – 2003	40 Orphans
Rara Orphanage – 2009	105 Orphans
Chakwal Orphanage – 2011	108 Orphans
Bursa Emir Sultan Orphanage – 2011	225 Orphans
Sargoda Orphanage – 2013	175 Orphans
Darul Erkam Orphanage – 2014	275 Orphans
Muzaffargarh Orphanage – 2014	100 Orphans
Gilgit Orphanage – 2015	65 Orphans
IICO Orphanage – 2020	To be opened soon
Bursa İnegöl Orphanage	Under construction

The below table shows the details of conventional schools and Madrasas (religious schools) opened by the IHH in Pakistan since 2011.

Table 3 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Schools and Madrasas in Pakistan, email, 2022

Schools
Nail Erdoğan Madrasa – 2011
Pınar College – 2011
Ghari Dopatto Schools
Nur School – 2011
Skardu School – 2011
Mehmet Akif Ersoy School - 2014
Konya Kamiltürk School – 2020 (Opening stage)
IICO Vocational Training School – 2020 (Opening stage)
IICO School – 2020 (Opening stage)

IHH focusses more on aiding the most vulnerable and needy in its project works. Almost all the schools built so far do facilitate education for orphan or poor students. Mehmet Akif Ersoy school which was opened in the town of Haripur in 2015 is one such example. Haripur, an agricultural town with a population of 8 million people has a serious problem of poverty because of the absence of industries in the area. IHH with its partner organization in Pakistan Khubaib foundation, opened the school to facilitate education for 750 orphan students. In the meantime, the biology, physics, chemistry and computer labs of the school were jointly funded by TİKA.¹²⁰ The project emanates at a time where the education becomes unaffordable to many and rarely reachable which would potentially result in a mass of uneducated society which would eventually turn as a huge social cost to the state. Projects like these could eliminate or even contribute to the revival of a society at least partially, from the brink of being exposed to the aforementioned kind of threats. On the other hand, these would also create a goodwill both in the recipient society and the government concerned towards the provider of aids, in this case IHH and its place of origin Turkiye. The below are IHH's prime health and wellness projects executed in different regions of Pakistan.

¹²⁰ IHH, "İHH Pakistan'da bir okul daha açtı," <https://ihh.org.tr/haber/ihh-pakistanda-bir-okul-daha-acti-2730>.

Table 4 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Health and Hygiene projects in Pakistan, email, 2022

Health and Hygiene
Muzaffargarh State Hospital Dialysis Unit – 2011
Nowshera State Hospital Eye Unit – 2011
Water Purification Units 10 – 2011
Water Wells 11 – 2014
IICO Water Tank – 2019
IICO Basic Health Unit – 2020 (Opening stage)

Pakistan has the 7th largest population in the world with an annual growth rate of 2.4 percent according to the census of 2017. Matching to this, the total number of housings around the country seemed to be 32.2 million, out of which 63.6% is in rural areas and 36.4% in urban areas. There is also an annual urban growth rate of 2.7% prevalent in the Country.¹²¹ IHH's Accommodation and housing projects come in response to this huge shortage which has also been a major challenge to the Government in meeting up with the needs of the rising population. Since 2005 IHH has identified critical regions and executed such projects periodically. The table below shows most of them.

Table 5 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Accomodation in Pakistan, email, 2022

Accomodation
15 Housing project in Battal Region – 2005
Bağcılar Village housing – 2011
Muzaffergarh İsmailağa Village – 200
Nowshera Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu Village – 2011
Hamzawala Mehmet Akif Yazıcıoğlu Village – 2011
Dikhana Halit Özbolat Village – 2011
Hamzawala Mavi Marmara Village – 2011
Hamzawala Osmanlı Emir Sultan Village – 2011
Hamzawala İnegöl Village - 2011
Di Khana A.S.K Village - 2011
Dadu Aliya İzzetbegoviç Village - 2011
Dadu Ankara İHH Village - 2011
Model Village for Flood Victims with 200 houses - 2017

¹²¹ Federal Government Employees Housing Authority. "Introduction," <https://www.fgeha.gov.pk/introduction/>

The aids mentioned below fall into the ‘general aids’ category executed spontaneously apart from all the project-based aids carried out in the region.

Table 6 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, General Aid in Pakistan, email, 2022

General Aid	
Mobile Clinic Project	The project, which started in July 2019 with the support of the Islamic Development Bank, is to provide free health services to the people of Pakistan in rural areas and areas with low health opportunities with 8 mobile trucks. As of 12.02.2020, the project has treated more than 76,000 patients in total
Ramadan and Fitra – Zakat Distribution project	Since 2005, the Foundation has delivered aid to 342,579 people by implementing 23 projects in this field.
Kurban and Akika Project	Since 2005, the Foundation has delivered aid to 985,702 people by implementing 43 projects in this field
Cataract Project	Since 2017, 11,000 cataract surgeries have been performed in various regions of Pakistan.

5.2 Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of world’s most densely populated Nations with a total population of 164.7 million and a density of 993 person per sq km. Its urban population is 64.81 million while the rural population is 101.81 million. Nearly 75% of its land is less than 3 meters above sea level hence it is prone to frequent floodings and cyclones.¹²² The country has also been affected by devastating floods and cyclones from time to time and left a lot of casualties and thousands of people homeless aftermath. Bangladesh has risen

¹²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bangladesh, “Country Profile,” http://bdembjp.mofa.gov.bd/public/storage/pdf/Country_Profile.pdf

to the status of lower-middle income country in 2015 from being one of the poorest nations in its birth in 1971. Its poverty level declined from 43.5% to 14.3% within the period of 1991 to 2016.¹²³ It is one of the fastest growing nations in the world today with its rising amount of production and exports. Yet compared with its population and geographical location, the country also requires aids and social support from time to time in order to meet the needs of every aspect of its societal structure. The IHH has been officially carrying out diverse aid and support activities in Bangladesh since 2005. Until now nearly 235 projects have been undertaken costing approximately €8,758,153.89. Although the activities carried out to Bangladeshi locals will be focused on this work, we shall also highlight IHH's aid activities delivered to Rohingya Muslims fleeing the military crackdown on them since 2016, because a huge number of these victims are under the shelter of Bangladesh yet deprived from effective support by Bangladeshi government because of its incapability. IHH plays an important role to fill this void and ensures their needs are met in its capacity. The table below shows the Mosques built in Bangladesh from 2011 to May of 2022.

Table 7 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Mosque Projects in Bangladesh, email, 2022

Mosque Projects
Hacı Ahmed Kınacı and Family Mosque - 2011
Sumer Mosque – 2011
Tepeaşan Mosque – 2012
Hazrat Omar Mosque – 2012
Şahin Altınok and Avni Poçins Mosque - 2012
Uhuvvet İhlas Mosque - 2014
Konya Ayder Mosque – 2014
Ayşe Hatun Mosque – 2014
Zeki-Semra Sağın Mosque - 2015
Hacı Hasibe Mosque – 2015
Ebrar Mosque- 2016
Kudüs Mosque – 2018
Raziye Hanım Mosque -2022 (Final stage)
Tavvap Mosque – 2022 (Final stage)

Out of the total population of Bangladesh 64 million are under the age of 18. Nearly half of this number grows in adverse poverty. Around 1.7 million children in Bangladesh

¹²³ World Bank. "Overview," <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview>.

engage in child labor. Every year nearly 170,000 children under the age of 5 die from malnutrition. Most children leave school by 8.¹²⁴ There is at least 4.8 million orphan kids in Bangladesh.¹²⁵ A Many orphan and careless children are often thrown to jail for petty crimes or go through many violence and abuses. There are few orphanages run by the Ministry of social welfare of the Government of Bangladesh and some run by local and foreign NGOs.¹²⁶ As a part of its monthly education, health, food, and shelter support for 121,439 orphans in 50 countries including Turkiye, IHH has also volunteered to take care a portion of Bangladesh’s orphans through the orphanages below. So far around 606 orphans have taken shelter in these orphanages while 1825 orphans are being supported additionally under the orphan support scheme in the Country.

Table 8 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Orphanages in Bangladesh, email, 2022

Babul Amman Orphanage – 2013	32 Orphans
Sultan Abdul Hamid Han Brotherhood Orphanage SULTAN – 2014	100 Orphans
Togra Orphanage – 2014	80 Orphans
Bahattin Yildiz Orphanage – 2014	32 Orphans
Muhammed Enes Orphanage – 2014	32 Orphans
Iyilikhane Orphanage – 2018	85 Orphans
Esmâ Biltâji Orphanage – 2016	32 Orphans
Inegol Orphanage – 2016	32 Orphans
Darul Iman Orphanage – 2010	35 Orphans
Daarussadat Fatih Sultan Mehmet Orphanage – 2013	50 Orphans
Atila Orhan Orphanage-2021	48 Orphans
Hazrat Hatija Orphanage -2022 (Final stage)	48 Orphans

¹²⁴ World Without Orphans, “Bangladesh Without Orphans - World Without Orphans.” https://worldwithoutorphans.org/about/regional-teams/south-asia/country/people_organization/13955.

¹²⁵ Arshad Mohamed, “Orphan Aid: Help Support an Orphanage in Bangladesh!” <https://chuffed.org/project/support-an-orphanage-in-bangladesh#:~:text=As%20many%20of%20you%20may,food%2C%20water%2C%20and%20shelter>.

¹²⁶ Distressed Children, “Orphan Support Program,” <https://distressedchildren.org/programs/orphan-support/>.

The below are some of the general-short term projects executed in Bangladesh by the IHH.

Table 9 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, General Aids in Bangladesh, email, 2022

General Aid	
Water wells	Until now almost 904 water wells have been opened in different places around the Country
Cataract operations	Around 5000 people were given hope by giving eyesight with the help and support of donors
Mandatory Eid and Akika Qurban (sacrifice)	With its 33 projects until now, 117,460 families were offered meat
Ramadan and Fitra – Zakat Distribution project	71,140 families were supported with funds from Fitra and Zakat in its 20 projects carried out so far

5.2.1 The Arakan issue, Bangladesh and IHH

Bangladesh, which is right next to Myanmar, much closer to the state of Arakan hosts the biggest number of Arakanese refugees fleeing the ethnic cleansing with an astounding amount of 900.000 and above. With an overcrowding population half of whom are illiterate, frequent natural disasters, impeding poverty etc. the Bangladeshi government already has a range of issues to tackle within its own boundaries. Caring for the fleeing refugees in hundreds and thousands would not only pose an extra burden but also cripple the newly growing economy in many ways. At this situation, the best it could do is to accommodate them within its boundaries alongside its own population and not more. Nevertheless, it has allowed NGOs around the world to freely carry their humanitarian activities in the camps allocated for the refugees. IHH is one such organization.

The Arakanese Muslims have been under persecution in different forms since a century. The problem in Arakan is considered to be one of the biggest issues in the region which erupted with the withdrawal of British from south Asia during the mid-20th century. The British had mobilized thousands of workers from neighboring countries for different

purposes during the colonial rule. Citing this as an excuse, the Myanmar government refused to grant the Arakanese citizenship, with a special citizenship law enacted in 1982. However, it is widely known that the existence of Arakanese Muslims goes back to the 12th Century, and they have been stable citizens ever since. Because of the special citizenship act, nearly 2.5 million Arakanese Muslims have become stateless, making them the biggest stateless community in the world to this date. They do not qualify for any form of official documentations and registrations either.

Since 1991 the Arakanese Muslims are being subjected to systematic violence and persecution perpetrated by both the Myanmar Government and fanatic Buddhists in the country. Since the violence unleashed by the joint state and military forces in 2012, thousands have been killed in cold blood, raped and properties torched to ground in a way not to be claimed ownership even if they return. According to the UN, more than 800 thousand Arakanese are living under inhumane conditions in 3 camps situated in Bangladesh. Nearly 70% of those who are living in those camps do not have access to clean water and frequently fall ill with contagious diseases afflicting them. They are neither able to set up a permanent life in Bangladesh nor are they able to return to their original lands as most of them are being inhabited by new owners settled in by the Myanmar Government. All these factors have made the Arakanese community much vulnerable and totally dependent on external aids.¹²⁷

The IHH has been assisting Arakanese since 1996. Within the period 2012-2021 It has met the needs of at least 5 million 500 thousand Arakanese affected by the crisis with an amount of €27.474.721,00, food security comprising the biggest portion. The categories of aids are as given below in the table. Approximately €15.272.884 was spent in the past 10 years on food. Nearly 410 thousand Arakanese are still benefiting from this aid.

¹²⁷ IHH, “Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021”, (Istanbul, December 2021)

Table 10 Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021, 2021.

Food	
Number of beneficiaries	8,704,200 People
Budget	11,010,336 €
Food Packs	554,188 Packs
Infant food distribution	5,750 Packs
Qurban Meat distribution	795,726 Packs
Iftar pack distribution	530,736 People
Cash aid	6,580 Families

Nearly 1 million Arakanese aren't able to meet their basic needs. Since 2013, around 27 projects were carried out with the amount of € 2.187.488,00 for aids apart from food.

Table 11 Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021, 2021.

Miscellaneous	
Number of beneficiaries	974,832 People
Budget	2,810,687 €
Kitchen items	20,670 Packs
Clothes	39,001 Packs
Winter Aid	102,801 Packs

One of the biggest problems developed with the Rohingya crisis is the lack of accommodation for those who migrate. With the intention to contribute to this issue, nearly 23 projects were executed in 8 years by IHH, building tents and little bamboo houses.

Table 12 Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021, 2021.

Accommodation	
Number of beneficiaries	344,364 People
Budget	8.983,174 €
Bamboo shelters	13.251 units
Tents	44,143 units
Winter Aid	102,801 Packs

One of the most affected groups in the whole crisis are the orphans who lost either one or both of their parents. So far nearly 1041 such orphans are being taken care in a stable manner each month. As much as €226.111,00 has been allocated for this.

With a risk of being confronted by Buddhist extremists in Myanmar, those who flee do equally find themselves in the verge of being afflicted with contagious diseases and in some cases, death originating from dirty water and unhygienic conditions in the places they seek temporary refuge. They are compelled to consume and use unhygienic water when they do not have access to healthy water. IHH opened 123 water wells along with the below mentioned facilities in order to eliminate this huge challenge.

Table 13 Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021, 2021.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	
Number of beneficiaries	490,188 People
Budget	1,675,179 €
Bathrooms	475 units
Toilets	746 units
Deep water wells	25 units
Water pumps	462 units
Hygiene packs	81,698 packs

Displaced Arakanese do not have access to healthcare facilities. Insufficient healthcare facilities could result in being diseased or even death. In the past 6 year period IHH has successfully carried out 11 projects where around 197,434 people were made to benefit with a budget of €1.106.990,00. In the city of Cox's Bazar, which hosts the largest number of Rohingyans, IHH serves as much as 200 people per day with its routine health scanning and other irregular diseases. Up to 109,750 people have gone through health scanning so far.

Wars and such crisis affect the education of children very badly. In the last 3 years IHH has also made efforts to facilitate stable education for nearly 1,820 children through 5 education and rehabilitation centers. Around €1.537.382,00 was spent for this purpose, and for the provision of religious education for 6 months and bursary for 20 University students in addition. The rehabilitation centers have also played a huge role in eliminating and diminishing the trauma created by the entire crisis.

In addition to all the above projects and services, IHH has also concentrated in facilitating the Arakanese refugees to continue their cultural and religious practices in a

free manner. With a budget of €94,862,00, nearly 16 places of worship and cultural centers were built so far helping around 3200 people to benefit.¹²⁸

5.3 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a little island with an area of 65,510 sq Km situated in the Indian ocean. The island has been visited by foreigners for centuries due to several reasons such as trade, religion, strategic location etc. Today it is one of the most renown tourist destinations around the world. Its 22 million population comprises Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others who have been living for centuries in harmony except for a few circumstances where there have been conflicts leading to social unrests. Sri Lanka also has one of the highest literacy rates in South Asia with a percentage of 92%.¹²⁹ The island which is a place for a rich biodiversity and number of scenic attractions and beautiful beaches gains a major proportion of income from tourism apart from other income sources like exports of Agricultural products (Tea, Rubber, Rice etc.), precious Stones, Apparels, and an enormous workforce remittance from abroad (mainly middle east).

Sri Lanka had experienced a three decade long civil war until 2009 between the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Ealam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Government. As many as 100,000 to 140,000 are speculated to be killed on both the sides including civilians, apart from millions worth of properties destroyed. The war also had contributed to mass level of internal displacement. While the 30 years old conflict had hindered the Country's progress so badly, there has also been a social cost; with the massacre of a huge youth population from the society, leaving many children in trauma and disability, losing another rich human resource who had migrated out of the country etc. International and local NGOs had been active during war times and post-war period in repairing the damages of the war, focusing on assisting the war affected children, wrecked families, mentally and physically injured people and supporting economically to hold on to life by becoming self-sufficient.

¹²⁸ IHH, "Arakan Faaliyet Raporu 2012-2021," (Istanbul, December 2021)

¹²⁹ The Global Economy, "Sri Lanka: Literacy rate," accessed March 6th, 2023.
https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sri-Lanka/Literacy_rate/

IHH's presence in Sri Lanka is relatively fresh when compared with other countries in the region. However, it has managed to execute projects worthy of mentioning under many categories, mostly among less fortunate in areas including ones which were previously identified as war torn. Projects and humanitarian assistance carried out within a span of 2010-2021 are listed below.

Table 14 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Sri Lanka, email, 2022

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 1,213 Cows were slaughtered for religious purposes and the meat distributed to almost 48,663 families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,038 Ramadan aid packages and 22,292 Iftar packs (to break the fast) were distributed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 1,747 families were financially aided on Ramadan as a part of obligatory Fitra funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 34,228 families were assisted through the emergency aid work carried out during the flood disasters in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 1,000 copies of Quran were distributed with the local language translation in the year 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2014 and 2017, 10 and 12 units of houses were built in the areas of Erukkalampiddy and Mannar respectively and handed over to 22 families who had been internally displaced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly in 2014, 2017 and 2020, 12 houses were built and handed over to orphan families who were needy and poor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 students in the region of Beruwela were sponsored for their education in technical courses designed and offered by the Tertiary and Vocational Training Commission of Sri Lanka in the year 2016.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 745 cataract surgeries were carried out so far under the cataract project initiated in 2020, and sooner to reach the target of 1,000 surgeries.

Table 15 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Sri Lanka, email, 2022

Permanent Projects
1. Construction of a school for disabled students in the town of Hemmathagama (2011)
2. Building of a Quran Learning Center in the town of Ooddamavadi (2012)
3. Building of a primary school in Trincomalee area in the name of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2013)
4. Building of Ilgın Lala Mustafa Pasha Nursery school in Puttlam area (2019)
5. Construction of ‘Abdulhamid Han the Second’ primary school in the Puttlam area (2019)
6. Construction of Ibrahim Keresteci Mosque in Kattankudy town (2012)
7. Construction of Mushfika Özer Mosque in Kattankudy town (2013)
8. Construction of Muhsine Keskin Mosque in Oddamavady town (2014)

With the above projects and activities, IHH still continues to execute operations in Sri Lanka relentlessly.

5.4 Thailand

Kingdom of Thailand or Thailand is a Country situated in the southeast Asia surrounded by countries like Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. It has a local population of around 69 million living in its 513,115 sq km land area. Although it was ruled by a monarch and never came under colonial rule, Thailand has been governed by the military for most of its years since 1947 to present day except for a few instances where there were democratic elections.¹³⁰

Thailand has a mix economy having tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and natural resources as main sectors. Its major agricultural exports are rubber, rice, vegetables, and fruits. Livestock, fresh and saltwater fishes are famous export elements too. Industrial products like agrarian, textile, electric appliances, and automobiles along

¹³⁰ BBC News, “Thailand Country Profile,” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15581957>.

with natural resources such as limestone, gypsum, glass, sand, marble, tin, and natural gas exports contribute in huge portions to the economy.

It is also noteworthy to mention that a developed-regional economy like the Singapore sharing a bilateral network with Thailand called the Singapore-Thailand Enhanced Economic Relationship where both government and private sectors promote closer economic cooperation between both countries.¹³¹

Muslims are the largest minority in Thailand with a population of nearly 6.3 million who mostly live in the southern part of the country where income is relatively low and crime rates are high. Muslim Thais have played important roles in politics, economy, civil society as well as in academic affairs and the private sector. They are also mostly given freedom by the rulers to practice their culture and religion in a free manner.¹³² The Thai King, as the patron of all religions has extended Royal patronage and supported Thai Muslims as done by every Thai King in their respective reigns. As the Thai government believes that cultural diversity and religious pluralism can serve as an efficient force in social development, the government refrains from any act which would potentially affect the religious, cultural, and traditional sentiments of Thai Muslims.¹³³

However, the southern part of Thailand comprising of 3 states, aka Pattani is known for its history of violence since the last century. Ethnically a Malay-majority region, Pattani has been striving for its identity as ethnically Malay and religiously Muslims, indifferent to the 'Thainess,' rejecting Thailand's policy of assimilation. From time to time, the National military has been challenged by armed insurgents perpetrating attacks in the region. In the 1960s and afterwards severe attacks were carried out by various partitioned insurgent groups in Pattani all which came under major military control in the early 90s.¹³⁴ The counterinsurgency efforts of the Thai government have

¹³¹ Eye on Asia, "Thailand - A Country Profile," <https://www.eyeonasia.gov.sg/asean-countries/know/overview-of-asean-countries/thailand-a-country-profile/>

¹³² US Department of State, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Thailand," accessed July 6th 2023. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/thailand/#:~:text=The%20constitution%20%E2%80%9Cprohibits%20discrimination%20based,Hindus%2C%20Sikhs%2C%20and%20Christians.>

¹³³ Royal Thai Embassy Riyadh, "Muslim in Thailand," [https://riyadh.thaiembassy.org/th/page/29025-muslim-in-thailand-2?menu=5d80b46615e39c0a50006465.](https://riyadh.thaiembassy.org/th/page/29025-muslim-in-thailand-2?menu=5d80b46615e39c0a50006465)

¹³⁴ Duncan McCargo, "Southern Thailand: From Conflict to Negotiations?" *Lowy Institute.*" (April 22nd 2014) [https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/southern-thailand-conflict-negotiations.](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/southern-thailand-conflict-negotiations)

always failed due to its inefficiency in addressing the root cause/s of the insurgency. After a long period of time, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) who controls the combatants on the ground was able to come to the table with the central government facilitated by Malaysia. This move of the rebels has been highly praised by the international community.¹³⁵

IHH's activities in Thailand have been mainly Pattani-centric as nearly 18% of the Muslim population has been living in this region. It has not only conducted its humanitarian activities but established dialogue with figureheads and leaders in the region. Various humanitarian aids and activities conducted by the IHH since 2007 are given below:

1. Food Security

- Food rations amounting to €961.749,90 have been distributed so far totally benefiting 200,940 people.



Figure 3 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Thailand, email, 2022

2. Social Projects

- Cash aid amounting to €50.373,45 was distributed among 4020 people in need in the region.

¹³⁵ United States Institute of Peace, "Thailand: Could One of Asia's Deadliest Conflicts Be Coming to an End?" <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/09/thailand-could-one-asias-deadliest-conflicts-be-coming-end>.



Figure 4 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Thailand, email, 2022

3. Permanent Projects

3 Mosques, 2 schools and 9 orphanages costing totally €1.570.215,75 were built like below, benefitting 2109 people. around 1100 children in the region have benefitted by the orphanages and schools built.

- Boğaziçi School (2012)
- Shifa Orphanage (2011)
- Konya IHH Orphanage (2012)
- Miyase Tanış Orphanage (2013)
- Şehit Furkan Doğan Orphanage (2014)
- Ankara Yaşar Zerdali Orphanage (2014)
- Furkan Emre Kesik Orphanage (2014)
- Istanbul Fire fighters Orphanage (2015)
- Hayri and Menekşe Neslitürk Mosque (2015)
- Konya Ayder Mosque (2015)
- Şehit İskilipli Atif Hoca Orphanage (2018)
- Kervan Mosque (2018)
- Şehit Ömer Halisdemir School (2018)

4. Orphans Project

Nearly 270 orphans are taken care of in 8 different orphanages built by IHH in 6 regions in Thailand. Apart from basic food, health and educational needs, the students are also aided with their social and cultural requirements. From time to time, projects are carried out on the enhancement and repairing of the buildings in relevant orphanages. For example, Library projects were carried out in a year and in the following year, bedroom renewal projects were carried out. IHH carries out periodic and consistent orphan aid activities in Thailand like it does in many other Countries.

- Consistent Assistance

This is the type of assistance provided financially every month supporting a huge portion of education, food, health, and accommodation for a particular orphan. The responsibility would be undertaken by any individual, group or organization in this system. Within the period of 2011-2018 around 482 orphans have benefitted with this system in Thailand.

- Periodic Assistance

Periodic aids done in a particular period like in Ramadan and Hajj occasions, during orphan caring days, educational, health, food, accommodation assistance etc. fall under this category. Orphan caring days is a special program conducted every year in order to create awareness of orphans, to introduce and carry out permanent projects for orphans and also to introduce IHH's activities on orphans to the general public etc. A series of projects related to education, health, social and cultural areas that would make a change in the lives of the orphans are carried out by IHH volunteers in many countries during February-April period.



Figure 5 IHH South Asia Desk Coordinator, Thailand, email, 2022

The figures below show the number of orphans who have benefitted from periodical assistance in Thailand until now.

- 1750 orphans have benefitted from stationary aid.
- 520 orphans have benefitted from health and hygiene related aid.
- 1813 orphans and their families have benefitted from food ration and Kurban aids.
- 2354 orphans have benefitted from clothe aids provided during orphans caring days and festival occasions.
- 1850 orphans and their families took part in various activities conducted during the orphan caring days program.
- 27 families have benefitted from development support aid.

The below are the main aims targeted by the operation of orphanages in Thailand:

- To facilitate the orphans living in best conditions
- To provide a warm environment for the orphans so that they would not feel the loss of a healthy and safe family.
- To bring the orphans to society as self-confident, educated, moral and professional individuals.
- To protect the orphans from drug and other bad habits.

6: ANALYSIS OF INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THE FOUR SAMPLE NATIONS WITH TÜRKİYE

As the final chapter of the thesis, the analysis of the relationship between the four sample Nations mentioned in the previous chapter with Türkiye shall be discussed based on economy, politics, and other relevant category if available. The base period or year would be derived from the year IHH started to carry out activities in the respective countries. This would help us find out how the relationship between the given countries and Türkiye have improved in this period and how much have IHH's humanitarian efforts contributed to this process. We shall analyze country by country in the exact order as above.

6.1 Pakistan

The relationship between Pakistan and Türkiye extends back to the latter part of the Ottoman period, and it is expressed as a 'brotherhood' given the extent of the attachment. Despite the ideological differences in politics between both countries, the ties never have been hindered by any means over the course of time.

There has been a wide range of areas such as politics, trade, defense, energy, tourism etc. that Türkiye and Pakistan have developed relationship up to this date. As countries facing same challenges with terrorism, Türkiye and Pakistan have jointly agreed to share 'expertise and intelligence' on terrorism and engage in a joint strategy reflecting a new level of political orientation and a common resolve in their fight against terror according to the agreement signed on the 20th of January 2004.¹³⁶ Türkiye has always been a supporter of the Kashmiri cause while Pakistan has stood by Türkiye in its fight against PKK, ISIS and other terrorist elements in the region. This was reiterated with the phrase "Enemies of Türkiye are enemies of Pakistan" by the new prime minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif on the 1st of June 2022, in his first visit to Ankara after assuming duties.¹³⁷ The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) which has already had six

¹³⁶ South Asia Strategic Research Center, "Pak-Turkish Relationship," p.9 <https://gasam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Pakistan-Turkiye-Report.pdf>

¹³⁷ "Türkiye, Pakistan Determined to Boost Cooperation at All Levels." *Daily Sabah*. June 2nd 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Turkiye-pakistan-determined-to-boost-cooperation-at-all-levels>.

sessions to this date is the primary platform at the leadership level which has been playing a significant role in further strengthening relationship between both the nations.¹³⁸ Important MOUs and agreements are signed and exchanged through this platform that concern both countries with top priorities.

Both Türkiye and Pakistan have been employing their best to increase the trade volume since the last two decades. Despite the close bond between the countries the trade volume has not reached significant heights so far. According to the data of 2020, the value of goods exported from Pakistan to Türkiye was \$394 million while Türkiye exported almost double the value, \$630 million.¹³⁹ Türkiye has increased its direct investment in Pakistan to \$1 billion while Pakistan has a direct investment amount of \$690 million between 2000-2020.¹⁴⁰ Pakistan aims to increase the bilateral trade to \$5 billion in the next three years.¹⁴¹ However the economic and political instability in Pakistan might hinder the above aspirations unless stability is restored. Türkiye being an industrial nation ranked 38th in economic complexity index and 29th in total exports while Pakistan ranked 93rd and 65th respectively in 2020.¹⁴² Nevertheless, when IHH first started operations officially in Pakistan in the year of 2005, the size of the trade between both countries was roughly \$503 million.¹⁴³ By the end of 2021, this amount reached more than double to \$1.13 billion.¹⁴⁴ This growth can be treated as enormous in terms of trade.

Defense is another sector in which Pakistan and Türkiye have started to intensify collaboration recently even though the platform for High-Level Military Dialogue

¹³⁸ “Türkiye, Pakistan Determined to Boost Cooperation at All Levels.” *Daily Sabah*, June 2nd 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Turkiye-pakistan-determined-to-boost-cooperation-at-all-levels>.

¹³⁹ OEC - The Observatory of Economic Complexity, “Pakistan (PAK) and Türkiye (TUR) Trade | OEC,” <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/pak/partner/tur>.

¹⁴⁰ The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB, “Trade Target with Pakistan Is \$5 Billion,” <https://www.tobb.org.tr/Sayfalar/Eng/Detay.php?rid=27628&lst=MansetListesi>

¹⁴¹ “PM Shehbaz Vows to Take Pak-Turk Bilateral Trade to \$5b in next Three Years.” *GEO News*, June 1st 2022. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/420129-pm-shehbaz-vows-to-take-pak-turk-bilateral-trade-to-5-billion-in-next-three-year>

¹⁴² OEC -The Observatory of Economic Complexity, “Pakistan (PAK) and Türkiye (TUR) Trade | OEC,” <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/pak/partner/tur>

¹⁴³ Attari, Naqibullah. “Türkiye Pakistan Dış Ticaretinin Değerlendirilmesi: 2005-2017” Masters Thesis, Istanbul Ticaret Universitesi, 2018, p.182

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Türkiye-Pakistan Economic and Trade Relations: Bilateral Economic and Commercial Relations,” https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-pakistan.en.mfa

(HLMDG) between both countries have long been established since 2003.¹⁴⁵ According to the deal signed in 2015, Turkiye had provided T-37 training aircraft to Pakistan with spare parts on gratis basis. Whereas in 2016 Turkiye signed a deal with the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAK) to purchase 52 super Mushshak Aircrafts. During 2016-2019 Turkiye remained the 3rd largest arm supplier to Pakistan, supplying around \$112 million worth of arms and Pakistan became Turkiye's 3rd largest buyer.¹⁴⁶ In 2018 a \$1.5 billion deal to purchase Turkish made ATAK helicopters was signed by Pakistan which was the largest ever defense deal between the two allies. As an attempt of good gesture, Pakistan also invited Turkish choppers on its National Day to test fly on its soil during the ceremony. Again in 2018 the Pakistan Navy signed a deal with Turkish state owned ASFAT to purchase four Ada class ships. The deal which included technological transfer defines two of the corvettes be produced in Turkiye while the other two in Pakistan.¹⁴⁷

Precisely the potentials both countries possess are being explored and developed one by one based on the traditional, long-lasting relationship both have had since the past. Both countries are prepared to help each other with mutual understanding in their respective fields of expertise. IHH, an organizational reflection of the humanitarian expertise of Turkiye, has played a significant role in contributing to the social welfare of Pakistan in its capacity. The services rendered by the organization has always been acknowledged, welcomed, and appreciated by the authorities in the region. Some of them have openly applauded such efforts and expressed hope towards the impact such activities could make over the bond between both the countries. A fine example would be during the opening ceremony of Mehmet Akif Ersoy school for orphans in the town of Haripur in 2015, where the Governor had thanked IHH for the help and emphasized in his speech that "the friendship with Turkiye would continue," and they would support with all

¹⁴⁵ Asad Ullah Khan, "The Expanding Turkiye-Pakistan Military Cooperation," *İRAM Center for Iranian Studies, Ankara* https://iramcenter.org/en/the-expanding-Turkiye-pakistan-military-cooperation/?send_cookie_permissions=OK

¹⁴⁶ Global Defense Insight, "Pakistan Turkey Strategic Alliance," August 31, 2021. <https://defensetalks.com/pakistan-turkey-strategic-alliance/>

¹⁴⁷ "Turkiye-Made Corvette Tailored for Pakistan Navy Launched in Istanbul." *Daily Sabah*, August 15th 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/Turkiye-made-corvette-tailored-for-pakistan-navy-launched-in-istanbul>.

possible means.¹⁴⁸ Similarly important figures from the administration in Pakistan have allocated time to visit IHH officials during their visit to Turkiye. Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan province Seyid Mehdi Shah who had already known IHH's commitment in Pakistan praised their efforts and stressed that such projects and aid reflect a positive picture and helped to win the hearts of Pakistani people.¹⁴⁹ Such expressions stand proof for how humanitarian services offered in other countries could have an impact in the diplomatic ties between the Nations.

Through the above examples of partnerships that do exist, we can observe that development of the level of cooperation between both countries are in different scales. Although ties have always been maintained politically, more MOUs and agreements were observant after 2002 or post AKP period. This later paved way for both countries to take stance and address even international issues pertaining to the Muslim world jointly. The strong political bonds also emanated the improvement of relationship in other sectors like trade and defense. Although trade could be commented as 'not to the potential level of expectancy,' there's still significant improvement compared to the past. More specific areas could be focused on and invested in to expand by expertise and shared know-how. Defense cooperation though, has already risen considerably high and sends out positive signals for more potential improvement in the near future. Especially Turkiye is transforming itself into almost a self-sufficient power in terms of defense reducing from 80% to 20% foreign dependance as per premier Erdoğan,¹⁵⁰ It could contribute a lot more to the Pakistani defense both in terms of field expertise and inventory. The dire need felt by both nations in combatting terrorism and other threats in the respective regions, and the skills and tools developed to counterattack them could have enabled and accelerated the process of agreements in this.

The level of diplomacy and relationship has always been disproportionate with the alteration in Party or Powers. Overall, it is evident that both countries have improved their

¹⁴⁸ IHH, "İHH Pakistan'da bir okul daha açtı." <https://ihh.org.tr/haber/ihh-pakistanda-bir-okul-daha-acti-2730>

¹⁴⁹ IHH, "Pakistani chief minister visits IHH," <https://ihh.org.tr/en/news/pakistani-chief-minister-visits-ihh-2187>.

¹⁵⁰ "Turkiye-Made Corvette Tailored for Pakistan Navy Launched in Istanbul." *Daily Sabah*, August 15th 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/Turkiye-made-corvette-tailored-for-pakistan-navy-launched-in-istanbul>.

relationship gradually. IHH's aid activities have always been praised and highly valued by the Pakistani administration and most definitely by its people. Although there wouldn't have been any deterioration in their bond in the absence of aid activities as both the countries have already got a lot more common interests to collaborate with, it's evident that IHH has contributed immensely to strengthen the existing bond between both Countries. Especially by identifying key social issues in the country like poverty, under education, and impact of natural disasters and man-made crisis etc. and venturing with its resources to aid the victims and support lives have undoubtedly assisted and contributed to the administration of Pakistan indirectly. Hence it could be concluded that IHH's humanitarian activities in Pakistan have not only helped to strengthen the brotherhood cherished by people of both the Nations but also intensified diplomatic relationship to greater extent.

6.2 Bangladesh

Even though Bangladesh and Pakistan are both from the same geographical location and share the same faith and almost the culture and customs, Bangladesh's relationship with Turkiye has not been same until the recent times. Turkiye was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh soon after its independence from Pakistan on the 22nd of February 1974. However, unlike Pakistan, the relationship has been affected by series of ups and downs ever since the establishment of the country.

One of the main reasons behind the rupture of relationship between Turkiye and Bangladesh was due to Turkiye's disapproval over Bangladeshi government's prosecution of Jamaath-e-Islami leaders for their involvement with Pakistan Army's genocide venture during the war in 1971.¹⁵¹ This reproach had offended the Bangladeshi administration and eventually contributed to the breakup between both countries. The AKP government, which is known for its Islamic identity is also an endorser of organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and organizations with similar ideologies like the Jamath-e-Islami in South Asia. Although political observers relate AKP's or the Turkish Administration's condemning of Bangladesh's government solely with its Islamic ideology, the AKP views

¹⁵¹ "Why Is Turkiye Wooing Bangladesh?" *The Financial Express*, January 6th 2021.
<https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/why-is-turkiye-woing-bangladesh/2165408/>.

the whole scenario in a much broader way. This is evident through the letter written by then President of the republic Abdullah Gül to his counterpart in Bangladesh Zillur Rahman in December 2012, urging him to pardon the war suspects of 1971, if not which would not only hinder the progress of socio-economic conditions of the Country but also be impacted with social instability.¹⁵²

Another incident contributed to the mistrust was in 2016, soon after the failed coup attempt to overthrow the Turkish government took place. The Turkish administration had requested the closure of Gülenist schools and institutions from the Bangladeshi administration and to hand over the schools to Turkish State owned Maarif Schools Administration upon which it was denied by the foreign ministry of Bangladesh citing the violation of diplomatic norms.¹⁵³

Despite the misunderstandings and resentments of the past, Turkiye, and Bangladesh both were ambitious in mending ties and improving their relationship. The disintegration began to fade away with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, Shahriar Alam declare opening a door for normalization which was subsequently given shape by the reciprocal visits of Bangladeshi President Abdul Hamid and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım in the year 2017 signaling a fresh start in between. In 2005, during IHH's first humanitarian operations in Bangladesh, the trade volume between both countries was as low as \$190 million.¹⁵⁴ However, in 2019 Dhaka had managed to become Ankara's second biggest trading partner with a trade volume of \$1 Billion after India.¹⁵⁵ The next biggest area of cooperation is in defense where Bangladesh has a high interest in purchasing Turkish made armories eventually making it the 4th largest buyer of Turkish defense products in the world. Bangladesh imported \$60 million worth of arms in the first four months of 2021 alone out of Turkiye's \$1 billion worth of total defense sales.¹⁵⁶ With

¹⁵² Selçuk Colakoğlu, "Turkiye-Bangladesh Relations: A Growing Partnership between Two Friendly Nations," *Middle East Institute*, June 25th 2019. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/Turkiye-bangladesh-relations-growing-partnership-between-two-friendly-nations>.

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ "Turkey, Bangladesh to boost bilateral ties" *Hürriyet*, April 14th 2006 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/turkey-bangladesh-to-boost-bilateral-ties-4255940>

¹⁵⁵ "Why Is Turkiye Wooing Bangladesh?" *The Financial Express*, January 6th 2021 <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/why-is-Turkiye-wooing-bangladesh/2165408/>.

¹⁵⁶ "Bangladesh, Turkiye Sign New Security and Counterterrorism Deal," *The Diplomat*, January 11th 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/bangladesh-Turkiye-sign-new-security-and-counterterrorism-deal/>.

the aim of jointly combatting terrorism Ankara and Dhaka signed in a deal which also made Turkiye get an easy penetration into Bangladesh's defense market on which the global arms industry has an eye on. Going a step further, the Turkish foreign minister expressed interest in joint production and technology transfer which would strengthen the existing bond and help Bangladeshi armed forces to become self-reliant at a point.¹⁵⁷

Although Bangladesh's economic indexes have been showing an accelerating growth since the recent past, having almost half of Turkiye's GDP at \$323 billion in 2020, it still finds itself in the 149th rank in per capita GDP with 1,962 USD per year.¹⁵⁸ The collective economic benefit is far away from aiding the individual houses. That is to say, a much larger portion of the society is still far away from reaping the collective gain of the Country. As a result, a huge portion of the public is still under poverty, 20.5% as per the data of 2019.¹⁵⁹ As a result, numerous issues like child labor, illiteracy, child marriage etc. have evolved and developed, threatening a densely populated country like Bangladesh with impending social costs.

The IHH's humanitarian activities have immensely supported portions of the Bangladeshi individuals and families. Especially activities focused on orphan children who are very vulnerable and distracted by evil forces in the society for petty gains and subjected to various types of abuses, do give hope for both the society and the orphan children themselves. With its already prevailing issues, the one that added up unexpectedly this decade was the Rohingya crisis, exerting a huge burden on the Bangladeshi administration. As Bangladesh hosted the largest number of Arakanese refugees, caring for them with its sole capacity was almost an impossible task. This is the reason it had always welcomed and allowed the international community to carry the responsibility of a portion or whole of the refugees. The services and aid rendered by IHH also have not gone unnoticed by the Bangladeshi officials. Mosud Mannan, Bangladesh's ambassador to Turkiye praised Turkiye and its Leadership during a roundtable discussion

¹⁵⁷ "Bangladesh, Turkiye Sign New Security and Counterterrorism Deal," *The Diplomat*, January 11th 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/bangladesh-turkiye-sign-new-security-and-counterterrorism-deal/>.

¹⁵⁸ OEC - The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Bangladesh (BGD) and Turkiye (TUR) Trade, OEC." <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/bgd/partner/tur>.

¹⁵⁹ Asian Development Bank, "Bangladesh: Poverty." May 11th 2022. <https://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/poverty>.

held in Ankara on September 2021, stating that ‘Turkiye has helped Bangladesh manage the situation of 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in the country.’¹⁶⁰ Although the praise was made collectively to all the state and non-state organizations of Turkiye, this certainly does address IHH’s own efforts as well, as a pioneer aid provider who has been operating in a huge and organized manner in Bangladesh since the very first moment of the crisis.

According to Ozair Islam-a freelance columnist, Ankara and Dhaka could give a comprehensive and strategic shape for their bilateral relationship by intensifying their cooperation in defense and security sectors.¹⁶¹ This would both serve Bangladesh’s ‘Armed forces goal 2030’ as well as help Turkiye retain the 4th largest buyer of its arms in the world. The nature of relationship is different from that of Pakistan. The relationship between Turkiye and Pakistan is denoted with a sentimental expression; brotherhood, and friendship. Bangladesh, in spite having almost the same values and culture has not been seen as such. However, the bond in between extends to the period of colonial India where many Bengalis (presently Bangladesh) had contributed to the early times of modern Turkiye by material resources.¹⁶² The current relationship could be rekindled with this historic bond and given a meaningful shape with bilateral deals that would benefit both economy. The humanitarian activities carried out by organizations like IHH could be viewed rather as a delicate bridge that connects these both, thus contribute to the development of both Countries.

¹⁶⁰ “Turkiye-Bangladesh Ties Get Stronger as Misconceptions Clarified.” *Daily Sabah*, September 28th 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Turkiye-bangladesh-ties-get-stronger-as-misconceptions-clarified>.

¹⁶¹ “Bangladesh, Turkiye Sign New Security and Counterterrorism Deal,” *The Diplomat*, January 11th 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/bangladesh-Turkiye-sign-new-security-and-counterterrorism-deal/>.

¹⁶² “Turkiye-Bangladesh Ties Get Stronger as Misconceptions Clarified.” *Daily Sabah*. September 28th 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Turkiye-bangladesh-ties-get-stronger-as-misconceptions-clarified>.

6.3 Sri Lanka

The Turkish-Sri Lankan diplomatic relationship has been in effect even before both the modern-day nations were founded. The first Ottoman diplomatic representative was appointed to British Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) in 1864. The Turkish honorary consulate was active until 1915, the year which Ottoman Empire had taken part in the World War 1. There had been no significant development in relationship in this phase. This could be due to the very small size of the Muslim population found in the island and strategically Asia has not been much of a concern, especially in the late Ottoman era. The Republic of Turkiye was one of the first states to recognize Sri Lanka after its independence from the British in 1948. After the first senior level diplomatic visit made by Sri Lankan prime minister Ranasinghe Premadasa upon an invitation by his counterpart Turgut Özal in 1986, a decision was made to open a Turkish embassy in Colombo on the following year. However, this was later canceled due to the financial shortcomings of the Turkish government.¹⁶³

Diplomatic visits were made after this period by leaders and officials of both countries but on very few occasions. However, dialogues, seminars, conferences, and trade deals etc. have been occupying the agenda in the recent past. According to the data of 2020 the size of trade between Turkiye and Sri Lanka is around \$180 million, which has not reflected the actual bond according to the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Ankara. When IHH had first initiated activities in Sri Lanka in 2011, the volume was around \$84 million.

¹⁶⁴

Sri Lanka has more competitive advantage over Turkiye in trade with \$190 million while Turkiye's exports being \$85.2 million. Tea, which is also an important cultural element of Turkiye covers most of Sri Lanka's exports with 72.3%.¹⁶⁵ Turkiye and Sri Lanka signed a 'Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement' during the visit of Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu to Sri Lanka in January 2022. Çavuşoğlu also had

¹⁶³ Asian Pacific, "Sri Lanka-Turkiye Relations." <http://www.asianpacificcenter.org/sri-lanka-Turkiye-relations.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Sri Lanka Embassy Ankara, "Sri Lanka-Turkiye Trade Relations," https://www.srilanka.org.tr/sri-lanka-Turkiye-trade-relations_2-2989.

¹⁶⁵ OEC - The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Sri Lanka (LKA) and Turkiye (TUR) Trade OEC," <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/lka/partner/tur>.

announced the areas identified to improve as health, pharmaceuticals, construction, and tourism. While he expressed interest in sharing Turkiye's experience in 'Safe tourism' with Sri Lanka, he also conveyed regarding the booming defense sector of Turkiye and how both the countries could cooperate on that.¹⁶⁶

Sri Lanka had experienced a civil war for 30 years causing deaths in thousands, and hundreds and thousands more to get displaced both internally and abroad. Many Muslims in the northern part of the country from where displacements accelerated during wartime had settled in many parts of the country, mainly in the city of Puttlam in the northwest. The IHH carries out its humanitarian activities in Sri Lanka focusing on the Muslim population in the island who account for about 1.9 million. Most of its works are carried out in regions like Puttlam where many Muslim families are living with minimal support, other parts in the east and rarely in the central hills. Many families have been supported by IHH with cash and dry rations. It has also facilitated vocational training and supplied means like boats for fisherman to support families become economically stronger. Such aids which help to get locals equipped with professional tools and instruments are of utmost importance as they help to build an economically strong society and then a Country. Additionally, these would be highly regarded by the government as they contribute to the economy. Similarly providing support for orphans also does helps to create a positive impact in the society. Many of those children would have been subject to child labor or denied education if they were not supported financially. Eventually they would have been turned burdens on the administration of the country at some point. For a country which has just got over a civil war and struggling to build itself, IHH's nature of aids are of high importance.

As a Country which had come out of a devastating war and struggling to rebuild the economy alongside enhancing the lives of its people, the aid and projects carried out by an organization like IHH is of much value. Especially those which concern the economy. While the Government focusses more on attaining its macroeconomic objectives with large scale investment promotions etc. SME's or the Small and Medium

¹⁶⁶ Gozde Bayar, "Sri Lanka 'Extremely Valuable, Important Ally' of Turkiye," *Anadolu Agency*, January 1st 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/sri-lanka-extremely-valuable-important-ally-of-turkiye/2488033>.

scale Enterprises do need encouragement given the context of Sri Lanka. Carrying out a boat gifting project to the fishermen in an island where fishing industry is of high importance, can be stated as a perfect example IHH has executed. Similarly, funds organized to support destitute families and orphans are also considered as influential activities that can support the government and ease its burden in a way.

Although the organization's activities are not directly addressed or praised by the administration of Sri Lanka in public level, it has definitely impacted in the perception of the Government prompting itself to establish and increase relationship especially in sectors like trade, defense, tourism etc. Turkiye is considered a friendly nation. Series of political and business delegations visiting both the countries, increasing Turkish investments in Sri Lanka compared to the past, academic support and exchange ventures etc. stand at all time high levels in the recent past. It is also noteworthy to mention how different humanitarian and business organizations along with the Government of Sri Lanka sent aid packages within their capacities to the victims of earthquake in Turkiye following the disaster that happened on the 6th of February 2023.¹⁶⁷ These are clear indication that shows how close the Countries have become particularly over the past decade of time.

6.4 Thailand

Turkiye and Thailand enjoy diplomatic relationship since 1958. Despite Thailand being a Buddhist majority country similar to Sri Lanka, and having a Muslim minority of approximately 10%, It has a hectic schedule in agenda with Turkiye. From trade to tourism, education to connectivity Thailand holds a better relationship with Turkiye unlike Sri Lanka.

Turkiye and Thailand have a trade volume of \$1.34 billion according to the data of 2019.¹⁶⁸ Thailand has a high-competitive advantage than Turkiye with its \$1.16 billion which is almost 3 times that of Turkiye. In the last 25 years, export of Thailand to Turkiye

¹⁶⁷ Turkish Republic Embassy in Colombo. Embassy Press Release, March 10th 2023, https://twitter.com/TR_Emb_Colombo/status/1634165874704936961 accessed June 6th 2023.

¹⁶⁸ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkiye-Thailand Economic and Trade Relations," https://www.mfa.gov.tr/Turkiye_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-thailand.en.mfa.

has risen by 11.5% while Turkish exports is only at 4.61%.¹⁶⁹ Yet the level of trade is deemed to be much below than actual potentials in comparison to both country's market size, economy, and strategic location according to the remark made by the Ambassador of Thailand to Turkiye, Phantipha Iamsudha Ekarohit prior to the Thai National Day events in December 2019. A 40% increase of Trade is projected to happen if the ongoing talk for a Free trade agreement is put to effect.¹⁷⁰ When IHH had first started operations in Thailand back in 2007, the trade volume was nearly \$1 billion.

Another main area that both countries find themselves strong is the Tourism sector. The number of Tourists traveling from Thailand to Turkiye from 2016 to 2019 rose by 12,000 to 62,000. On the vice versa it had been a 15% increase in 2019 from being 95,000 in 2016.¹⁷¹ The Turkish flag bearer, Turkish Airlines contributes immensely to the cultural and tourism relations with Thailand according to the Turkish envoy to the country Evren Dağdelen Akgün, flying three times a day, bringing tourists from all over the world.¹⁷²

In Thailand IHH mainly focusses its activities in the Pattani region, with whom Turkiye had once shared a historical bond. Pattani, a state with Malay Muslim majority has been going through series of violence, insurgencies, drug trafficking and terrorism etc. posing a huge threat to mainland Thailand. The primary demand of the insurgent groups is for an autonomous Pattani while the Thailand administration has been repeatedly refusing in responding to their claim positively. Turkiye has been assisting between the Thailand administration and the insurgent groups in Pattani within the framework of IOC which the Thailand administration is grateful for. The gratitude was expressed by the Prime minister of Thailand during her visit to Ankara in July 2013.¹⁷³ The IHH has been

¹⁶⁹ OEC The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Turkiye (TUR) and Thailand (THA) Trade OEC," <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/tur/partner/tha?redirect=true>.

¹⁷⁰ Sorvar Alam, "Thailand-Turkiye Trade Volume 'Much below the Potential.'" *Anadolu Agency*, December 5th 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/thailand-turkiye-trade-volume-much-below-the-potential-/1664135>.

¹⁷¹ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkiye-Thailand Economic and Trade Relations," https://www.mfa.gov.tr/Turkiye_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-thailand.en.mfa.

¹⁷² "Turkiye-Thailand Bilateral Trade Volume to Increase by 40%," *Daily Sabah*, August 15th 2019. <https://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2019/08/16/Turkiye-thailand-bilateral-trade-volume-to-increase-by-40>

¹⁷³ Royal Thai Embassy Ankara, "Thailand to Promote More Trade, Investment, and Connectivity with Turkiye," July 12th 2013. <https://ankara.thaiembassy.org/en/content/36852-thailand-to-promote-more-trade,-investment,-and-connectivity-with-Turkiye?page=5d7717d715e39c2f34004f22&menu=5f4b3ff023b12c768276b172>.

extending support to orphans in the region by accommodating them in orphanages and through individual family support. In a region like Pattani where there has been constant violence and supportless families with orphans, the services rendered by the IHH could be of high prominence. As it had been in other countries around, IHH is sharing a portion of government's burden by doing this.

While Thailand recognizing Turkiye's humanitarian efforts, it also highly values and acknowledges IHH's activities in the region. The Ambassador of Thailand to Turkiye, Phantipha Lamsudha Ekarohit along with her staff paid a visit to the headquarters of IHH in July 2018 in order to give a hand to Syrian refugees residing in Istanbul, as a gesture of goodwill – sharing the burden with IHH. She praised the organization for their efforts. At the end of her visit, she launched open an Art exhibition in the head office, which portrayed artwork of the orphans living in IHH's orphanages in the Pattani region.¹⁷⁴ While the IHH had carefully organized the event successfully transferring its mission and activities to the officials, it is noteworthy to know how much recognition the organization has received in a country like Thailand.

Thailand considers Turkiye to be a worthy partner in trade, diplomacy and in other common endeavors such as ensuring democracy, stance against terrorism etc. Thailand has repeatedly applauded Turkiye's efforts towards realizing the above endeavors, with all its governmental and non-governmental institutions, one of them being IHH. With its sound experience in humanitarian diplomacy of mediating the Philippine-Moro peace talks, the IHH could come up with a similar action to solve the Thailand-Pattani issue, perhaps in a different angle but assisting towards a concrete solution for a problem which has been lasting for decades. Something of this weight and prominence could have earned IHH much more recognition among the administration as well as the public, thus elevating Turkiye's goodwill once again in the global arena.

Eventually both countries have realized the need for each other to shape up their regional endeavors and interests. A high potential that could yield many benefits to both

¹⁷⁴ IHH, "Tayland Büyükelçisinden İHH'ya ziyaret," <https://ihh.org.tr/haber/tayland-buyukelcisinden-ihhya-ziyaret>.

sides lies ahead if the current relationship could be maintained at this pace respecting each other's fair interests.



CONCLUSION

Turkiye is emerging as an important power today. While it concentrates in its advancement in all aspects, it also focusses in designating a place for itself in today's multipolar atmosphere where powerful actors are marching parallelly to gain control of resources, counteracting the idea of a single hegemony. AKP's arrival to power as a single party in the early 2000s brought a glimmer of hope to the public in terms of stability. Previous coalition regimes and frequent military interventions had affected the development of the country adversely and created a sceptic and instable atmosphere for decades. With gaining significant control of the administration, one of the first priorities of AKP was to incorporate 'humanitarianism' as a crucial element in its foreign policy. By doing so, it has equally aimed to promote itself as a humane and caring government internationally and manifest its internal stability to the outer world. Ultimately these objectives gained Turkiye access to many countries in time being. Although this venture to reach and revive relationship with every part of the world was described as 'Neo-Ottomanism' by some critics,¹⁷⁵ the AKP government was actually implementing its own theory in international politics, influenced but independent from its ottoman and republican heritage.

As far as humanitarian aid is concerned, it wasn't solely the Turkish government and its institutions involved, but also the country's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With the encouragement and support of the government, these NGOs have reached many places, sometimes even before the government. On some occasions, their presence and field expertise of the ground have directed the government to make certain important decisions. Most importantly, these NGOs have succeeded in gaining the trust and goodwill in their respective grounds of operation thus to their home country. One fine example was Turkiye acquiring 51 out of 53 African Country's votes in being selected for the UN Security Council as a temporary member during 2009-2010. This shows how far NGOs have been influential, and contributive to Turkiye's foreign policy in Africa alone.

¹⁷⁵ Bellou, Olga. "Political Islam & Neo-Ottomanism in Turkey's Foreign Policy: The Case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan," *Masters Coursework*, Reading, 2017. p15

NGOs started to exert a significant impact on the global stage after the end of the cold war. Amid escalating crisis in regions like Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia etc. the NGOs did not only carry aid to the victims but also became their voice and conveyed the crisis to the whole world by becoming their representative despite the negligence of big powers and ineffectiveness of international organizations. NGOs are experts in the field they choose to act upon. At times, they precede even the governments in acquiring information because of this expertise, a factor which makes them powerful. Therefore, they become capable of directing the government/s and even influencing international politics with the very expertise they possess. IHH is such an NGO based in Turkiye and having an operational area in at least 135 countries around the world.

The motive behind this research work was to find if IHH, one of Turkiye's leading humanitarian NGOs or an important soft power tool of Turkiye as the Author identifies, has succeeded in creating a positive impact of its home country in one of its prime fields of activities, the South and Southeast Asia and contributed to the foreign policy of Turkiye ultimately. What sets apart IHH from the majority of NGOs is its distinctive area of operations, namely, Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian Diplomacy and Advocacy. Other NGOs usually do focus on a single domain. IHH though distinguishes itself by displaying a high level of sophistication across all three of its area of focus, setting it apart from a typical NGO. To illustrate, on numerous occasions, it was IHH's humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy efforts that highlighted the organization in international politics and helped it gain much attention among politicians and even governments. According to Bařer, IHH is inclined more towards diplomacy efforts, and it contains the actual weight.¹⁷⁶ IHH is an independent NGO having its own agenda, modus operandi, and work area. However, it acts as a flagbearer for the state of Turkiye when it carries its aid to the world. The recipients would always remember its name along with 'Turkiye's' or at sometimes, Turkiye alone. Although IHH does not have a separate agenda or strategy to contribute to the goodwill of Turkiye by its humanitarian actions, the name of Turkiye gets engraved in the hearts of people in the particular community and country through what IHH renders.

¹⁷⁶ Reřad Bařer, interview by author, IHH Head Office Istanbul, August 5th 2023.

The IHH has carried out many projects in South and Southeast Asia. According to the findings, the impact of these projects and aids were in different scales in different regions. In countries like Pakistan, aids rendered by IHH were more contributive to the existing relationship that's being hailed upon for decades. Especially, efforts to identify the most vulnerable areas of the society such as education, health, food etc. and carrying out activities to eradicate the shortages have been immensely welcomed by the Pakistanis in general. As it's evident through the remarks of certain politicians and authorities, praises have been made to Turkiye ultimately because of such efforts. On the other hand, relief and aid efforts carried out in Bangladesh have also impacted in the enhancement of relationship between both Countries despite occasional split-ups. An organization like IHH coming forward to undertake a portion of responsibility in caring for the Arakanese in Bangladesh has itself earned the organization and its country a goodwill. This goodwill seems to have had a major impact in the cooperation and development between both countries especially in sectors like trade and defense which has grown over the past decade. In the case of Sri Lanka, IHH's aid works are mostly concentrated on the minority Muslim community. While there's more chances of its efforts being regarded in the whole island if the aid activities are more generalized regardless of race and religion etc. the existing effort itself is considered to be crucial to a country that has recently got out of an ethnic conflict and seeking to rebuild lives and economy. The ethnographic structure of Thailand is somewhat similar to that of Sri Lanka. Yet the activities of IHH are more concentrated on the autonomous Pattani region which is acclaimed by the minority Muslim community mostly. This region has also been problematic for the government for a long time. IHH's efforts towards educational empowerment, caring for orphans and material support etc. has contributed in bringing down the extreme imbalance in the region and integrated the community with the mainland, an effort which has not gone unnoticed by the authorities and received praises for.

This thesis identifies two different approaches to arrive at its desired conclusion: quantitative and qualitative approaches. By means of quantitative method, it analyzes the area of relationship between Turkiye and the particular-sample country and weighs the volume of trade between them before IHH's mission and the situation presently. The result derived was, that there seem to be an advancement of trade volume to a level further than

where it was previously. Yet, it's not up to the expected level of advancement given the amount of humanitarian activities carried out in those countries. However, in terms of defense and certain other area, there has been a satisfactory amount of increase in deals and still has potentials to grow. For example, Bangladesh being Turkey's 4th biggest buyer of Arms is certainly a clear sign of strong relationship between both nations. Hence it could be concluded that, on a broad scale, the relationship between the respective countries and Turkiye has developed in this phase and IHH may have played a role in fostering this advancement, albeit to some extent.

The other approach is Qualitative. Initially, it's crucial to understand that not every contribution and their impacts can be quantified. Especially IHH's humanitarian diplomacy efforts which have been acknowledged and applauded on many occasions by political actors. As repeatedly emphasized in this thesis, IHH gives equal or sometimes more importance to humanitarian diplomacy endeavors within its operational domain. To intervene through Turkish, Iranian, and Syrian governments and leading to the liberation of at least 10,000 women and other prisoners from Syrian prisons at the peak of war¹⁷⁷ stands as an unparalleled achievement by the organization. Özyiğit had particularly described it as the 'biggest release' since the second world war times. Yet another noteworthy example would be the invitation for IHH to take part in the TPMT alongside EU and other regional organizations to address the decades old Moro-Philippines issue and mediate in the peace process. The presence of the organization in the team itself represents a substantial level of recognition internationally, benefiting both the organization and the country. The Turkish Government has not only acknowledged IHH's presence in the table but accords paramount importance to the whole process, so much so it considers IHH's presence as its own.¹⁷⁸ While countless examples exist, the Malaysian Prime Minister's commending of IHH for the mediation in Pattani-Thailand case certainly be noted as something remarkable. As a Turkish-based humanitarian organization, IHH has harvested enormous amount of appreciation and praise from actors around the world, which ultimately and automatically get attributed to Turkiye itself.

¹⁷⁷ Abdülkadir Özyiğit, interview by author, IHH Head Office Istanbul, August 5th 2023.

¹⁷⁸ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relationship between Türkiye and the Philippines." August 27th 2023. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-and-the-philippines_.en.mfa

To conclude the thesis has portrayed that IHH, one of Turkiye's leading and oldest NGO's humanitarian activities in south and south-east Asia has contributed to the foreign policy of Turkiye (in the region). Contribution is a broad idea which contains of factors like 'impact' and 'influence.' Through its humanitarian activities in the region, IHH has definitely been able to make an impact in the societies concerned and thereby contributed to the soft-power doctrine of Turkiye. Furthermore, through its humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy efforts, it has managed to create an even bigger influence in the region and contributed to the foreign policy of its home country immensely. The Author's use of the word 'immensely' is justified because, Turkiye's aspirations to revive relationship with Asia with its 'Asia Anew' policy and enhance cooperation with the countries in the region has never been more palpable. Especially at a time where the global power dynamics has been transforming from the west to the east, Turkiye's presence in this region is inevitable. This is why it has been aiming to achieve the status of Dialog partnership with regional organizations like ASEAN, which is the highest level of institutional partnership for countries outside the region.¹⁷⁹ Hence it's evident that whatever positive impacts an organization like IHH could make in the region through its activities would undeniably contribute to Turkiye's policies and influence in shaping its policy direction in the region concerned.

¹⁷⁹ Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye's Relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)." August 27th 2023. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/asean.en.mfa>

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