# SACRED AID:
# A HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY

## A case study of Muslim Transnational Organizations in Turkey

*"The moment we see religion through the distorting lens of 'fundamentalism', 'extremism', 'terrorism' and 'the clash of civilizations' we lose sight of the wider picture and the rich contribution that moderates in all religions make. Cultural condescension, in fact, is a very easy trap to fall into"* (Clarke and Jennings 2008).

(Cansuyu.org.tr; IHH.org.tr; Care.org.tr)

Katja Nørgaard Hansen

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Supervisor: Søren Schmidt

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

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# 1. Introduction

So-called 'faith-based' organizations (FBOs) have been neglected in academia, while religion has been referred to as a 'development taboo' (Ver Beek 2000). In recent years, this has changed, and FBOs has now become "fashionable" to talk about in development studies (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1292). However, the interest so far has primarily been towards Christian or Western-based FBOs, and thus, humanitarian action outside the Northern-dominated and institutionalized international regime is still largely neglected (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:1). This thesis aspires to help fill this gap by looking at transnational Muslim NGOs in Turkey. Although Transnational Muslim NGOs are important actors in the field of development and humanitarian aid they are still greatly understudied (Juul Petersen 2012:128). Besides, much of the literature that does exist stems from political science and terrorism studies, analyzing Muslim NGOs as front organizations for global militant networks or as supporters of national political parties and resistance groups. This research overlooks issues of organizational identity, because it rarely asks questions as to how these organizations understand themselves, their religion and the aid they provide (Juul Petersen 2012:129). Furthermore, much of the literature focuses on Western transnational Muslim NGOs. Underlying this bias, there is an understanding of Western charities as "moderate" and "progressive", whereas non-Western Muslim charities are looked at as "fundamentalist", "traditional" and sometimes even "extremist" (Juul Petersen 2014:1).

Turkey recently improved its profile as an international donor, becoming the fourth biggest contributor of humanitarian assistance in 2012 and taking on the label of 'humanitarian state'. At the same time, Turkish humanitarian NGOs also started playing a vital role in providing humanitarian aid abroad. These relatively new NGOs were established in the 1990s and 2000s mostly by the Islamic grassroots movement (Çelik and Işeri 2016:430). Two main reasons explain why the nongovernmental internationalism in contemporary Turkey is a practice predominately embarked upon by religious oriented circles. First, the religious circles existentially hold an international consciousness of the global Muslim community (the *umma*). Second, the religious-friendly Justice and Development Party (AKP) provided opportunity spaces for the non-governmental sector, by loosening the regulations for civil society organizations in Turkey (Tabak 2015:199). In line with Juul Petersen's critique above, there is an emerging academic literature on how official foreign policy-makers in Turkey rely on and work with non-state actors in foreign policy implementation. In this light, it is debated whether NGOs are truly independent from the government, or whether they serve government interests, and is in fact government organized NGOs (GONGOs) (Çelik and Işeri 2016:430). The rather limited academic literature on Turkish Muslim Transnational NGOs, often present them as being a political tool in AKPs foreign policy aspirations (see Binder and Erten 2013; Cevik 2014; Atalay 2012), or at least operating in parallel with it (see Sarkissian and Özler 2013; Çelik and Işeri 2016).

However, to gain a fuller understanding of transnational Muslim NGOs and the role they play in contemporary society, we must broaden our analysis to include questions about their motivations and visions, their underlying rationales and conceptions of aid and about the role of Islam in all this (Juul Petersen 2015:2). Thus, moving away from analyzing Turkish transnational Muslim NGOs as tools, either to improve development practices or as facilitators of governments' foreign policy aspirations, this thesis seeks to explore:

*What role does religion play in Turkish Muslim Transnational Organizations?*

Our understanding of the links between religion and humanitarianism (or development) is too incomplete and fragmented and the concepts too 'unwieldy and difficult-to-define' that an over-arching theory is possible or even desirable (Rakodi 2012:637). Thus, it does not make sense to theorize religion and humanitarianism. As Michael Barnett explains "I can no more imagine a theory of humanitarianism than I can a theory of human rights, or of war and peace, or of global capitalism" (2011:15). Caroline Rakodi suggests that frameworks which focus on religion and development (or humanitarianism) can be used instead to better understand the links between these concepts (2012:637). Thus, I use concepts and frameworks to answer my problem statement. I am especially drawing on the framework developed by Marie Juul Petersen in her dissertation about transnational Muslim NGOs in Saudi Arabia and Britain (2015). See figure 1.1 below for an overview of the methodological and the analytical framework I use to answer my problem statement.

Any analysis must be contextualized, because the understanding and practice of religion and the experience of development are both strongly influenced by the historical, political and social context in which they evolve (Rakodi 2012:648). Thus, I adopt Juul Petersen's framework of development aid and Islamic aid, to explain the contexts in which transnational Muslim NGOs operate within the different cultures of aid. Cultures of aid are defined as the larger social structures that outline the overall boundaries for what is legitimate in relation to aid provision (Juul Petersen 2015:10). Furthermore, I include another context to complement Juul Petersen's two existing ones; a national context which explains the political and socioeconomic situation in Turkey that Turkish Muslim NGOs emerged from and operate in today.

## 1.1 Limitations
I am biased towards Sunni Islamic organizations, not looking at minorities such as Alevi or Shia in Turkey. Organizations based on the Islamic traditions of Alevi and Shia Muslims are likely to be different in their conceptions of aid than the organizations I center my analysis around. Limitations in relation to my methodological approach will be discussed in the methodology section below.

## 1.2 Structure
The structure of the paper is such that, first, in the methodology section, I will introduce my use of the interpretivist method, and give an overview of the limitations and benefits of using case studies and qualitative

interviews in the thesis, along with an explanation for my choices. In the next section I seek to introduce and define relevant terminology and present the analytical framework I am basing my analysis on. This includes an introduction to the two aid cultures (the development aid culture and the Islamic aid cultures), and the dichotomies stemming from these two aid cultures, along with an introduction of the notion of aid as secularized or sacralized. Thereafter the Turkish socio-political context in which the Muslim NGOs emerge and operate in will be explained. The following analysis will be built around the analytical framework and concepts introduced in the previous section, exploring how the three Turkish NGOs conceptualize their aid. Finally, in the conclusion I will answer the problem statement.

Figure 1.1: Thesis overview

**The religious traditions**

Development aid culture and Islamic aid culture:

- Origins and Belief
- Religious teachings and humanitarianism

**Clarifying key concepts**

- Humanitarianism
- Religion
- Faith-based organizations
- Transnational Muslim NGOs
- Ideology

**Turkish Context**

- Turkish socio-political environment
- 'Game changers'

**Methodology**

Interpretivist approach and qualitative research methods:

- Semi-structual interviews
- Casestudies

**The analytical framework**

*Values*

- How do religious beliefs inform their view of what aid is? Is it a response to economic poverty, spiritual degeneration, inequality, physical suffering, or something else?
- What is the purpose of aid? Is it to generate income, restore justice, relieve suffering or strengthen faith?

*Rationales*

- Why do organizations engage in aid work? Is it a religious duty or a human duty?

*Strategies*

- What specific remedies, means, tactics or solutions do the organizations use to achieve their vision? What type of aid programs do they do?

*A sacralized or secularized aid?*

- Positioning the case studies in the two aid cultures.

# 2. Methodology

I use qualitative research methods in the form of case studies and qualitative interviews to answer my problem statement. Using an interpretivist method (see table 2.1) makes me able to portray the religious values and beliefs in the organizations, as well as the meaning of the symbols they use, as far as possible through the point of view of the organizations (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011:52). While I have strived not to impose my own religious and cultural assumptions in the meeting with my subjects, I realize that it is impossible to go into the encounter with a completely 'clean slate'.

Table 2.1: Interpretivism

| Assumptions | Interpretivism |
| --- | --- |
| Nature of reality | Socially constructed, multiple |
| Goal of research | Understanding, weak prediction |
| Focus of interest | What is specific, unique and deviant |

(Research Methodology)

I have worked with a mixture of the inductive and deductive approach. First, working inductively, starting the process by examining the literature written about faith-based NGOs in general, then moving towards more specific literature about Muslim NGOs, and in the end what literature I could find about Turkish Muslim NGOs. However, my qualitative interviews were broadly based on a loose analysis of the existing literature, as this provided me with substance for the interviews. Thus, after collecting my qualitative data, I moved to work by the deductive approach as I chose to base my analysis on Juul Petersen's framework, seeking to situate the Turkish Muslim NGOs place in the two aid cultures.

## 2.1 Methods

### 2.1.1 Using case studies

Case studies has had a bad reputation in social sciences. They are known to be too subjective, giving too much scope for the researcher's own interpretations and therefore compromising the validity of the study. And at the same time, not being suitable for generalizations (Flyvbjerg 2006:219). However, Flyvbjerg argues that the case-study methodology has been misunderstood and that it is in fact a "necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and that it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology" (2006:241). To prove his point, he clears up five misunderstandings about case studies. This is not the place to elaborate on all these, but I will focus on choice of case study. Flyvbjerg argues that the generalizability of the case study can be

increased by a strategic selection of cases (2006:229). I have chosen to make an information-oriented selection of cases, which purpose is to maximize the utility of the collected information. In this instance, cases are selected based on expectations about their information content (Flyvbjerg 2006:230). Besides, my cases are maximum variation cases, meant to provide information on several types of organizations (Flyvbjerg 2006:230); Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), Cansuyu Charity and Solidarity Organization (Cansuyu) and Çare Assistant and Development Association (Çare). By choosing these cases I expect to be able to retrieve adequate information to answer my problem statement, because they differ on the dimension of size, both in regards to turnover and outreach, as you can see in the table 2.2, allowing me to gain info on a small, medium and large organization.

Table 2.2: Case studies

| Organization | Turnover | Outreach (countries) |
|---|---|---|
| IHH | 32.9 (2013) | 140 |
| Cansuyu | 9.8 (2013) | 75 |
| Çare | x | 46 |

Despite Flyvbjerg's defense of the case study methodology, I have modest ambitions when it comes to the generalizability of my study. While I believe my choice of cases increases the generalizability in the study, this is not first priority, as my study is about the individual organizations and how they view themselves and religion in their work. When this is said, I still argue that any similar characteristics I find in my analysis of these organizations are likely to be common traits in many Muslim transnational NGOs in Turkey. As a minimum, my results can be used as a starting point for further investigation of this type of NGO in Turkey.

### 2.2.2 Using qualitative interviews

I have used individual interviews, to obtain a deeper understanding of what religion means to the organizations. The interviews ranged from one hour to one and a half hours, and all but one were conducted in the office of the interviewees (the last over Skype). The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I had prepared some overall topics, however, the interviewees could alter the sequence of the questions in an order more natural to them, and to a large degree decide what was for them most interesting to talk about. In each interview, we addressed four main topics decided by me beforehand; visions and aspirations of the organizations; the nature of donors and beneficiaries; religions role in aid, and being a Turkish aid organization. I chose semi-structured interviews because they provide rich description, are based on respondents expressing their personal views and interpretations of phenomena, and enable respondents and myself to follow up on unforeseen topics

(Rakodi 2012:647). In all but one of the interviews a translator was used, and she transcribed the interviews as well, translating everything from Turkish to English. It is very likely that some nuances were lost in translation, as the translator did not share the same knowledge-base as the interviewees and myself.

## 2.3 Data collection

My analysis is based on material that expresses or illustrates the representational discourses of the three organizations, as expressed in public documents and then the more unofficial, individualized representations, expressed by staff members in interviews (inspired by Juul Petersen 2015:10). However, I am also looking at how this representation connects with reality, therefore, at times the individualized representations are put up against quantitative data, such as the financial situation or which countries the organization primarily provide aid in.

I have collected materials about the organizations in three ways. First, I have collected material created by the organizations. This includes website information, information from Facebook, the organization's regulations, annual reports, advertisements, brochures and magazines (see appendix A for an overview). This material is created by the organizations themselves, and therefore helps give an understanding of how they represent themselves and wish to be seen by their audience. Second, as addressed above, I conducted semi-structured interviews during the period of December 2016 – February 2017. Third, I have collected secondary material in forms of newspapers and academic articles, although this has been limited. Together, this empiric material has helped give me a good knowledge about the organizations. However, the collection of materials has been limited by time, language barriers and not least by cultural misunderstandings, as I will explain in the next section. While I could have wished for more material, especially in the type of qualitative interviews, I contend that I can contribute to the literature on this type of NGOs, and thereby help fill a knowledge gap.

### 2.3.1 Accessing Turkish Muslim NGOs

In collecting material, I encountered some of the same problems as Juul Petersen did in the Gulf-countries, when she collected material for her dissertation. Her two explanations to why the Gulf-organizations were reluctant to give her access to material are also valid for my experience in Turkey. First, the organizations are influenced by secrecy, traditions of hierarchy, and skepticism towards the West (and in extension to us). Second, the reluctance was strengthened by unfamiliarity with the methods underlying the study, because of different educational traditions (2015:188).

In Turkey, the organizations are indeed influenced by secrecy, and it has been very difficult to find data on financial issues. In general, there is a lack of financial transparency among Muslim humanitarian NGOs outside the West (Benthall 2003a:42). Moreover, the Turkish people are highly skeptical of the West, and conspiracy theories about Western plots to undermine Turkey run deep in the nation's collective psyche (Arango 2016).

The military coup attempt on 15 July 2016 only made this worse, as following there has been a general feeling of mistrust in the country. The skepticism might be even worse with religious people, both because they have had to defend their position in Turkish society (as addressed below). But also because I am a Western-European woman, who wants to write about Islam, which after 9/11 has gotten an increasingly bad reputation in the West. Thus, they might pre-perceive me as critical towards Islam. I also met skepticism in the secular part of Turkish society, as they could not understand why I chose to write about religious organizations. People jokingly called me a European spy. This highlights the polarization between the secular and religious populations in Turkey. An issue I will return to below. While already being familiar with the temper of the Turkish people, and their tendency to skepticism, the second point took me by surprise. If I had anticipated the unfamiliarity with my study methods beforehand, I might have been able to more precisely explain my wishes to the organizations and gotten more positive responses back.

I contacted nine different organizations on Facebook and e-mail over a period of three months, most of them which I have had a shorter or longer correspondence with. In the end, I collected four qualitative interviews and one questionary over e-mail from the three organizations, plus a background interview from the secular organization Hayata Destek (see appendix A for an overview). I interviewed two directors, one office manager, one international officer and had an e-mail correspondence with one coordinator. I had to push for access to other staff than the directors and managers, and was met with questioning when asking. There seemed to be an attitude that no one could explain the organization better to me than them, highlighting one of the difficulties with their unfamiliarity with qualitative interviews. The persons are all referred to as 'representatives' throughout the thesis in order not to compromise their anonymity.

# 3. Analytical framework and literature review

## 3.1 Humanitarianism and development aid culture

Development aid culture is born out of the history of (Western) humanitarianism. Thus, after discussing how to define humanitarianism below, I will give a brief account of the development aid culture, and at the same time an overview of three periods, which has helped shape (Western) humanitarianism. Barnett calls these the ages of humanitarianism; from the early nineteenth century through World War 2; from 1945 until the end of the cold war; and from 1990 until today (Barnett and Weiss 2008:21).

### 3.1.1 Humanitarianism

Equating humanitarianism with compassion makes it as old as history. However, if we limit the history of humanitarianism to when individuals started using the concept to characterize their actions then humanitarianism is about two centuries old (Barnett 2011:19). The international humanitarian order is akin to the global economic and security orders, and is rooted in Western history and globalized in customs largely

responsive to interests and ideas from the West (Barnett 2011:16). The modern humanitarian system has its roots in the Christian evangelical tradition of the nineteenth century. Though, values of charity are present in all the world's major religions, including Islam (Ferris 2011:608) While neither the word 'humanitarianism', nor 'charity' has an exact equivalent in the formal language of Islam, Arabic, the emphasis on charitable giving in Islam is just as great as in any other religious tradition (Benthall 2003a:39).

In his book "Empire of Humanity", which as the first of its kind sets out to explain the history of humanitarianism, while having a "Western bias" (2011:15), Barnett opens up for the existence of other types of humanitarianisms as he concludes that "humanitarianism is a creature of the very world it aspires to civilize... Humanitarianism is not one of a kind, but rather has a diversity of meanings, principles, and practices; all humanitarians share a desire to relieve unnecessary suffering, but the agreement ends there" (Barnett 2011:221). Thus, in this world there is not only one humanitarianism, but humanitarianisms (Barnett 2011:10). Humanitarianism is defined in relation to the world it operates in, and is as historically fluid as this world (Barnett and Weiss 2008:10). Barnett thus puts forth three ages of humanitarianism; the imperial humanitarianism; neo-humanitarianism and liberal humanitarianism (see table 3.1). They are distinguished by the way the forces of destruction, production and compassion interact, which in turn shape the overall purpose of humanitarianism and constrains how humanitarian organizations confront the ethical dilemmas of their day (Barnett 2011:29).

TABLE 3.1: THE AGES OF HUMANITARIANISM

| Forces | 1800-1945 Imperial Humanitarianism | 1945-1989 Neo-Humanitarianism | 1989-present Liberal Humanitarianism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Destruction | Great Power war and colonialism | Cold War and de-colonialism | Liberal peace |
| Production | Commerce | Development | Globalization |
| Compassion | Civilization | Sovereignty | Human Rights |

(Barnett 2011:30)

In practice, humanitarianism is by many defined by the International Community of Red Cross and Red Crescent's (ICRC) principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and for many these principles have nearly sacred status (Barnett and Weiss 2008:4). They are instrumentally important for humanitarian agencies, because if followed and respected they create 'humanitarian space' (Barnett and Weiss 2008:4). To quote Janice Stein and Andrea Paras "'Humanitarian space' has come to represent humanitarianism's central values; it sanctifies humanitarianism as a meaningful and inviolable sphere of ethical action" (2012:213). While the political neutrality of humanitarian space has an instrumental purpose, ensuring access to all populations in danger, no matter their political affiliation or allegiance, and diminishing the

likelihood that humanitarians will become potential targets of violence, it also has an element of the sacred. This should be understood in the fashion that the purity of these principles gives humanitarians an authority that rise above the ordinary and flows from the universal beyond time and space (Stein and Paras 2012:213). Thus, by invoking the sacred, humanitarians get the authority and legitimacy that distinguishes them from others who claim to speak in the name of humanity (Stein and Paras 2012:214). This has helped create what Haysom calls a 'Northern Relief Elite' (cited in Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:6). The way humanitarian organizations consider their own principles sacred is illustrated in the way they defend the notion of 'humanitarian space' (Stein and Paras 2012:214). Thus, in contemporary humanitarianism, universalist humanitarian organizations also claim legitimacy from the sacred and the pure (Stein and Paras 2012:215). The actors in the Western humanitarian system claim to have found the correct, or true, form of humanitarianism.

However, the ICRC principles, and by extension the notion of 'humanitarian space' was not part of humanitarianism's original DNA, but has fallen into place over decades of debate, and did not become part of ICRCs code of conduct before the 1960s (Barnett 2011:6). As mentioned above, the 'Northern Relief Elite' has in form of these principles taken patent on the definition of humanitarianism. Thus, humanitarianism's definition is embedded within Western practices and Western systems of knowledge (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:6). Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh criticize this western monopoly; "Limiting the definition to such a narrow field of inquiry and excluding expressions of compassion that do not fall within the strictly delimited ICRC conception of 'humanitarian' is tantamount to pursuing an agenda fraught with Western bias" (2013:6). Scholarly research on the history of humanitarianism (like Barnetts) has tended to focus on the actions and agendas of Northern agents and institutions, and at the same time overlooked the capacity for agency of Southern actors (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:5). Per Barnett we live in a world of humanitarianisms and not only humanitarianism, thus we need to promote the understanding of other types of humanitarianism. Not to reject the existence or the legitimacy of humanitarianism based upon the notion of global citizenship as the Western, but to acknowledge the need to reject the idea that the Western is the only legitimate form of humanitarianism (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:25).

This thesis aspires to help take a step in that direction by looking at how Turkish Muslim aid NGOs understand themselves and the way they give aid. However, as will be apparent from my analysis below, Turkish Muslim Transnational NGOs partly operate with an understanding of aid as that in the Western development aid culture. This is because transnational Muslim NGOs can be conceptualized as sites of cultural encounters – where the cultures of Western and Islamic aid meet (Juul Petersen 2015:11). The division between a largely Islamic and largely Western aid culture should not be perceived as a repetition of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilization thesis, but rather that the organizations are shaped by both cultures, and draws on different aspect from each (Juul Petersen 2015:11). Below I will explain the emergence of the development aid culture.

### 3.1.2 Development aid culture

*3.1.2.1 Nineteenth century through World War 2: Imperial Humanitarianism*

The emerging modernization, manifested in rapid industrialization, urbanization and market expansion caused a perceived breakdown of society and rise of immorality. However, while the processes of modernization led to an increase in poverty, diseases and inequality, there was also a feeling that these problems could be solved because of the technical and scientific inventions (Calhoun cited in Juul Petersen 2015:18). Intellectuals, politicians, jurists and members of the clergy began pushing for a 'humanitarianism' language build on a combination of religious and Enlightenment ideas, promoting social and political reforms and public interventions to ease suffering and restore society's moral basis (Juul Petersen 2015:18). Their ideas were responsible for movements such as charity for the poor, regulations regarding child labor and the outlawing of the transatlantic slave trade (Barnett and Weiss 2008:21). It was no longer enough just to care for members of one's own family or community, there was also a need to care for distant others. This concern for the stranger was underlined by universalist notions of a common humanity, a cosmopolitan rejection of the relevance of national, ethnic or gendered boundaries in determining the limits of responsibilities for the fulfilment of human needs (Held cited in Juul Petersen 2015:18). The result being an internationalization of humanitarian aid. Two important factors, which helped shape contemporary aid was colonization and war (Juul Petersen 2015:19).

In the nineteenth century colonization ages, European states established national educational and healthcare systems, introduced vocational training programs and funded village banks all over Africa (Rist cited in Juul Petersen 2015:18). Non-governmental organizations, often Christian, helped in this colonization of societal structures. They combined missionary efforts with educational activities, establishment of hospitals and aid to victims of natural disasters. At the same time, many philanthropic organizations were set up in this period, which spent millions on medical research and the development of vaccines with the purpose of aiding the sick in former and current colonies (Juul Petersen 2015:19). The colonial powers justified their colonization by it being a form of civilizing mission, where the white Christian races had a responsibility to rescue the backward races from disease, poverty and immorality (Barnett 2011:62). These efforts were presented as a moral, philanthropic obligation, and led to the notion that progress and civilization are important elements in the provision of aid (Rist cited in Juul Petersen 2015:19).

Besides, technology was making wars more brutal, and at the same time giving the public easier access to war pictures and stories (Barnett and Weiss 2008:26). This led to the establishment of several transnational organizations which focused on humanitarian relief. The most well-known story is the one about Henry Dunant, who after witnessing the battle in Solferino in 1859 was so appalled by the misery of the wounded soldiers that he established what was to become the International Committee of the Red Cross and pushed for the emergence of international humanitarian law (Barnett 2011:1). Another story is about the Britt Eglantyne Jebb,

who established Save the Children with the purpose of providing food and clothes to German children after the war, stating that "there is no such thing as an enemy child" (Chabbott cited in Juul Petersen 2015:19). As illustrated in these stories, the concept of neutrality became important in the effort to help all victims of war. Taking sides would violate the commitment to help any human being in need. Thus, politics came to be viewed as a moral pollutant in humanitarian aid (Barnett and Weiss 2008:4). Actors involved in humanitarian aid were to remain neutral and impartial, shying away from political involvement (Juul Petersen 2015:20).

*3.1.2.2 From 1945 to the end of the cold war: Neo-Humanitarianism*
After the two world wars, the idea of a 'moral duty' to provide aid to promote progress and civilization to the victims of war and the colonies' "uncivilized" poor was strengthened and institutionalized. The new aid culture was not only normatively bound up in notions of universality but also structurally and institutionally based on ideas of the world as one place (an 'international community') (Juul Petersen 2015:20). After World War 2, this 'international community' worked for a different future. There was a demand for the protection of civilians, the dispossessed and for human dignity. This led to the creation of normative pillars such as the 1945 United Nations Chapter and the Declaration of Human Rights along with a growth of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations such as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Oxfam, Lutheran World Relief etc. (Barnett and Weiss 2008:23). Decolonization and the emergence of the development discourse fed into a desire to reduce suffering in what was to be called the "third world" (Barnett and Weiss 2008:23). A few years after the Marshall Plan, President Truman expanded US aid to include the "underdeveloped areas" in the South, and European governments followed suit, as well as the World Bank, which expanded its activities to reconstruct and develop the "third world" (Juul Petersen 2015:21).

The institutionalization of the aid culture into a system of development assistance relied largely on the dominant economic and political theories of the time. These build on modernization theory and are based on the idea of poverty as a matter of material deprivation, thus, viewing aid primarily as a facilitator to economic growth (Juul Petersen 2015:21). Religion came to be viewed as a conservative and traditional force, and many in the West concluded that modern life was characterized by the ascendance of secularism at the expense of religion in public life (Barnett and Stein 2012:3). The continuing participation of Christian organizations in the development system therefore depended on their readiness to subscribe to a quasi-secular notion of religion (Juul Petersen 2015:22).

*3.1.2.3 From 1990 to now: Liberal Humanitarianism*
Transnational (often Western) NGOs came to play an increasingly important role in the system of development aid. Especially after the 1980s, when they integrated into the state and intergovernmental system of aid provision. States and intergovernmental organizations started channeling aid through NGOs, moving away from the government-organized projects and interventions characterizing the first decades of development

aid (Lewis and Kanji in Juul Petersen 2015:22). Combined with an emerging neo-liberalist agenda this paved the way to 'structural adjustment programs', promoting the market rather than the state as a key to economic growth (Juul Petersen 2015:22). The end of the Cold War and waves of democratizations in Eastern Europe and South Africa further supporting the turn away from state-led models of aid provision, as it prompted a focus on "civil society". Donor's began to consider democracy to be an important element in aid provision (Juul Petersen 2015:22). NGOs were considered effective service providers, as well as providers of an alternative to the state, and a driving factor of democratization and good governance (Juul Petersen 2015:23).

However, the achievement of neo-liberalism and privatization fell short of expectations and poverty increased (Rakodi 2012:638). This led to a reconceptualization of development. The narrow conception of development as economic growth was slowly replaced with a broader understanding of development, "human development", which emphasized social and cultural aspects. Economic development was not an end in itself anymore, but a means (Rakodi 2012:638). NGOs became crucial actors in the implementation of this "human development" aid, which takes its starting point in the individual and the community rather than in the market, emphasizing the importance of principles such as 'participation', 'sustainability' and 'capacity-building' (Juul Petersen 2015:23). While there is consensus on these aims, there is less agreement how to achieve them, and critics (including some from religious traditions) continue to challenge the ongoing emphasis on economic growth in development (Rakodi 2012:638).

The developed understanding of aid as fundamentally secular caused the culture of mainstream aid to prioritize quasi-secular organizations as the only religious organizations eligible for donor funding, as they were compatible with the secular development principles (Clarke 2007:78). While secular NGOs were seen to be proponents of a 'progressive', 'democratic' civil society, religious organizations on the other hand were seen to be 'conservative', 'patriarchal' and even 'un-democratic' (Juul Petersen 2015:24).

## 3.2 Defining religion, Islam and Ideology

### 3.2.1 Religion and Islam

Because of this understanding of aid as fundamentally secular, religion and spirituality was long neglected in studies on development and humanitarian aid, and was even considered a development taboo (Ver Beek 2000). However, today, the acknowledgment of religion's presence in the aid world is unescapable (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011:46). Some even refer to religion as the new hot topic in development studies (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1292). Four developments explain this. First, the persistent importance of religion in most of the world challenged the narratives of modernization and secularization (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1292-3). Modernizing societies were not abandoning their religion, and the total number of people who profess loyalty to the major world religions is still growing (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011:47). Second, there has been a dramatic increase in the number and visibility of faith-based organizations (FBOs). FBOs in the broader sense are not a

new phenomenon, as most religions encourage their followers to have compassion for the poor. However, FBOs as NGOs have become more popular in development circles. Today some of the largest development NGOs are faith-based, while many smaller religious entities are involved in social welfare activities all over the world (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1293). Third, the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington and the subsequent 'war on terror' have made religion, especially Islam, important to the formulation of foreign and security policy in the major donor countries. This has led to hard measures, such as increased regulation, control and closure of organizations, and to soft measures, such as the encouragement to cooperate with Muslim NGOs to prevent radicalization and to strengthen relations with potential bridge-builders (Juul Petersen 2012:136). Thus, Muslim NGOs has been forced to relate to the 'mainstream' aid field (Juul Petersen 2012:137). Fourth, the fragmentation of development studies has created space for religion. As explained above, there has been a shift away from classical political economy frameworks towards more heterodox approaches (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1293), partly driven by the recognition of the limitations of a purely secular approach to the solution of the world's economic, environmental, and social problems (Berger 2003:17). Thus, the growing influence of concepts such as 'human development', 'social capital' and 'participation' resulted in an opening of the development space, providing more room for the study of religion and religious actors (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1294).

But how do you study a 'concept' such as 'religion'? Any academic discipline is based on assumptions influenced by the social, political, and cultural context in which it develops. Thus, the social science disciplines (which provide the basis for development studies) have tended to make the normative claim that religion and the state should be separate; assume that the perceived decline in institutional religion in Europe was a worldwide trend; and regard religion as an obstacle to technological and social progress (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011:49). Deneulin and Rakodi address the need to look away from traditional methodological tools used in social science studies when analyzing religion. Using an empiricist-positivist stance, which is commonly adopted in these studies (except in anthropology), brings with it two considerable challenges; (1) the heterogeneity of religion makes its use as a concept or variable problematic; and (2) the meaning-giving and contextual nature of religions makes the use of empiricist-positivist research methods inadequate on their own (2011:50). Instead they propose adopting an interpretivist method of analysis, as this can portray the religious values and beliefs held by adherents, as well as the meaning of rituals in which they participate and symbols they use, through their eyes as far as possible. While, of course, at the same time the researcher must recognize that ultimately, observation is always filtered by the observer's own lenses (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011:52).

In this thesis, the definition of religion is based on the above discussion, and in turn inspired by Juul Petersen, which argues that something becomes religion, by being 'religionized' – or 'sacralized' (2015:7). This means that something becomes religion not primarily by virtue of its specific context but by its claims to transcendent

authority and truth. Activities, things, phenomena, people and ideas are not religious per se but become religious when they are given religious meaning through religious discourses, practices, communities and institutions (Lincoln cited in Juul Petersen 2015:7).

Turning to the definition of Islam, something is thus Islamic when it is constituted as such through discourses and practices that are concerned with matters of Islam, such as traditions, figures, concepts, rules, stories etc., and claim a transcendent authority by reference to Allah, the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. This means that anything can be recorded as 'religion' or 'religious', even in spaces such as NGOs and in aid provision (Juul Petersen 2015:7). However, Juul Petersen argues that there are limits to what can count as Islam, because religions are not detached from power, history and context, they are limited and curtailed by these. Thus, the fact that everything in principle can become religionized, does not mean that everything does. In constructing 'Islam', actors build on and are restricted by hundreds of years of Islamic discourses and practices, framing what is doable and thinkable within the limits of Islam (2015:7). Viewing Islam as a discursive field of contesting powers results in varying interpretations of Islam from setting to setting. However, at any given moment in time, there is also a relatively stable core of Islamic discourses that somehow connect most Muslims (Mandaville in Juul Petersen 2015:7). This makes the use of terms such as 'Islam' and 'Muslim' meaningful (Juul Petersen 2015:7).

### 3.2.2 Ideology

In this thesis 'Ideology' does not refer to political ideologies, or to ideology in the idea of Marxism. Instead it is "conceptualized as the framework though which meanings of Islam and aid are organized and presented" (Juul Petersen 2015:8). It should be understood in a wider sense based on the understanding of the social as having a hermeneutic (interpretive) dimension. Thus "ideology is understood as sets of references that frame the way actors understand, categorize and act upon the world; as ensembles of ideas, concepts, and categories through which actors organize and give meaning to their observed, experienced and/or recorded reality". This means that everyone can use ideology as a tool in the signifying work and the struggles for fixation of social meaning (Juul Petersen 2015:205). In my analysis, I look at how the three organizations formulate and present different ideological elements to understand how they conceptualize the provision of aid and Islam and how they fit into the overarching aid cultures of development and Islamic aid (2015:83). The analytical framework is built on Wilson's decomposition of ideological dimensions into three component parts, which Benford and Snow refers to as 'diagnostic framing', 'prognostic framing' and 'motivational framing'. The former fosters or facilitates agreement whereas the latter fosters action, moving people 'from the balcony to the barricades' (Benford and Snow 2000:615). Juul Petersen refers to the three frames as visions, rationales and strategies (Juul Petersen 2015:83). The diagnostic frame 'visions', seeks to establish what aid is to the organizations, and correspondently, what purpose aid has. The prognostic frame 'rationales' seeks to explain why the organizations should engage in aid provision at all, in other words, what rationales (motivations) goes beyond

the diagnosis of problems and the formulations of visions. Finally, the motivational frame 'strategies' explores the remedies or solutions and the general means and tactics for achieving the organizations' visions (Juul Petersen 2015:84-98). These questions will be answered in the analysis below.

## 3.3 Conceptualizing Transnational Muslim NGOs

At first, the interest in religious organizations and the role of religion in development mainly came from the development organizations and donors themselves, and not from the university departments (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1294). In this context, religious organizations came to be viewed as relevant and useful tools in carrying out development work, and to be perceived as having strengths and qualities that their secular counterparts do not (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1296)[1]. Jones and Juul Petersen critique the literature for overlooking other, more complex, aspects of the nexus between religion and development, by only focusing on the positive role religion or religious organizations can play in donor-funded development efforts.

They argue that the literature is *instrumental* in its approach, has a *narrow* focus on FBOs, and that it is based on *normative* assumptions about religion and development (2011:1291). It is instrumental in the way that the interest is to explore whether religion makes a difference in the implementation of development activities or not. Therefore, researchers mainly focus on the benefits of working with religious organizations, and overlook more complex aspects of the nexus between religion and development (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1297). The narrow focus on FBOs is a related criticism. The primary focus is on formalized religious actors (FBOs), at the expense of other types of religious actors, religious expressions or forms. This results in an engagement with religion only as institutions and organizations that can be clearly categorized as religious or faith-based and moreover there has been a tendency to focus on Christian organizations. Besides, "faith-based organization" is taken to be a relatively unproblematic size, and is often studied in comparison to secular organizations (Jones and Juul Petersen 2011:1298). The third criticism implies that much literature is based on normative assumptions concerning religion and development. To quote Jones and Juul Petersen "FBOs and religious practices are seen to be apart from 'mainstream' development, somehow more radical and alternative, while development is defined as the thing that development agencies do" (2011:1299).

As Jones and Juul Petersen point out, the term 'Faith-based organization' is problematic, because it gives the impression that all FBOs are alike. In contrast, FBOs are "extraordinarily heterogenous in the ways in which their faith identity plays out in their world" (James 2009:4). There never was an agreement on a generally accepted definition of faith-based organizations (Ferris 2005:312), because scholars have not been able to come up with a definition which connects different faith traditions with a multitude of organizational expressions (Sider and Unruh cited in Ferris 2011:607). Jeavons makes a good point when he argues "The current catch-all term FBO

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[1] See for example Ferris (2005); Berger (2003); James (2009)

confuses and divides because no clear definition exists of what it means to be faith-based... One-size-fits-all language yields one-size-fits-all policies; what we need now is a whole wardrobe of options" (quoted in James 2009:5). While he talks about policies, it is also well-said in relation to how we perceive these organizations. It is not helpful for the way we understand religion in organizations to box together a Christian Pentecostal church from the US, sending small donations to their partner church in Uganda with an NGO like the British based Islamic Relief, which have a turnover of several million pounds a year. As Jeavons says, we need to move away from the umbrella term 'FBO' and explore these NGOs as a whole wardrobe of options.

In this thesis, I am moving away from the term FBO. I define transnational Muslim NGOs, in line with Juul Petersen, as "those NGOs that constitute themselves with reference to Muslim discourses, that is, NGOs that define themselves as Muslim, either by simply referring to Islam in their name, or by explicitly referring to Islamic authorities, traditions, figures or concepts in their practices, structures and community" (2015:8), and which delivers aid abroad (Bruno De Cordier 2008).

## 3.4 Islamic aid culture

The Islamic aid culture developed in parallel to the institutionalization of development aid. Like the development aid culture, Islamic aid culture has roots that go back much further than the twentieth century. The Islamic traditions of charitable giving, *sadaqa*, and the obligatory alms tax, *zakat* have existed since the birth of Islam and have historically been part of Islamic institutions of social welfare (Juul Petersen 2015:24). Today, the traditions are important elements in the way contemporary Muslim humanitarian NGOs collect funds (Krafess 2005:339). Their work is founded on the Quranic and hadith[2] texts, to mobilize human and financial resources for a variety of humanitarian programs (Krafess 2005:339). Therefore, it is important to understand these mechanisms, and thus, below I will briefly explain the traditions of *zakat* and *sadaqa*.

### 3.4.1 Islamic terminology

#### *3.4.1.1 Zakat*

*Zakat* is a fundamental pillar of Islam (the third) and of the same importance as the four other pillars, which are faith, praying, fasting during Ramadan and pilgrimage to Mekka. It is a system which organizes the transfer of money from the well-off to the poor and needy, revealing Islam's acknowledgement of the existence of poverty in society, and highlighting an obvious relationship between charity and poverty. This relationship is dialectic, as charity is seen to lead to the alleviation or eradication of poverty and poverty then in turn leads to charity (Ali 2014:15) It is a duty imposed by Allah upon the wealthy, and a right endowed by Allah to the poor (Juul Petersen 2015: 97). It reflects Islam's strong focus on social and economic justice and serves to provide, through the enforcement of social obligation, fiscal measures and legal responsibility, a fair and equitable

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[2] Sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

redistribution of wealth. Thus, it helps maintain harmony and stability in the community (Ali 2014:15). All capable Muslims are obligated to donate one-fortieth of their assets every year to a specific list of eight categories of people: poor people; the needy; those employed to minister the *zakat*; those who might be converted to Islam, or assist in the cause; slaves; debtors; those committed to the 'way of God'; and travelers in need (Benthall 2003a:39).

*Zakat* is a way to purify your wealth (Ali 2014:19). In fact, *Zakat* derives from the verb *zaka*, which means to purify. By giving up a portion of one's wealth, one purifies the portion that remains, and in turn oneself – through a restraint on one's selfishness, greed and imperviousness to other's sufferings. Likewise, the recipient is purified from jealousy and hatred of the well-off (Benthall 2003b:9). Thus, payment of *zakat* is an act of wealth purification which in itself is an act of worship (Ali 2014:19). Besides, *zakat* payment is associated with the idea of return, in which wealth is taken from the rich and returned to the poor. Wealth should not be something that circulates among the rich. The never-ending cycle of return has an economic function too, as *zakat*, when paid regularly to the poor, eventually finds its way into the economic system and allows the economy to flow smoothly. In contrast, if wealth is hoarded, it fails to generate further wealth, as hoarded goods cannot move. Greed and hoarding eventually lead to the fracturing of social and political structures in society. Therefore, *zakat* is considered an essential act of worship (Ali 2014:19).

In the past, Islamic governments oversaw *zakat* through a mechanism known by the name of "*Bait-Al-Maal*" (Treasury House) (Krafess 2005:339). Today, *zakat* has been marginalized and no state in the world organizes *zakat* as Islamic teaching prescribes (Benthall 2003b:18). *Zakat* is now used as a fundraising device by charities both in the Islamic world, and among the Muslim population in Western countries (Benthall 2003a:39). The widespread problem with lack of trust in centralized *zakat* systems has given legitimacy to Muslim humanitarian agencies to take on the task of distributing *zakat* and other forms of charity donations (Krafess 2005:339; Benthall 2003b:9). Traditionally, *zakat* has been expected to try to meet local needs before outside needs, and this practice is still the norm in many Muslim societies (Benthall 2003b:11). Also in Turkey where zakat mostly is given directly to relatives or neighbors (Çarkoğlu 2007). However, with the growth of mass media and organized relief agencies, some Islamic scholars have ruled that it is acceptable to spend zakat funds wherever the need is greatest (Benthall 2003b:11). Thus today, transnational Muslim NGOs are very dependent on *zakat* contributions by their Muslim communities. This is also perceived to be one of the benefits of being a Muslim NGO, as they have a solid source of funds to raise (Interview with Hayata Destek).

### 3.4.1.2 Sadaqa

Unlike *zakat*, *sadaqa* is not obligatory, however it is highly encouraged in the Qur'an. Acts of *sadaqa* committed by individuals are rarely declared or documented, because it is advised that when you give *sadaqa* with your

right hand, your left one should not know about it (Abuarqub and Phillips 2009:5). It is a way for transnational Muslim NGOs to fundraise sources other than zakat (and thus they can use it for non-Muslims) (Saddiq 2009:5).

A form of *sadaqa* is *waqf* (continues alms), which is also a major institution in Islam, and can be broadly compared to a charitable foundation in Europe (Benthall 2008:88). *Waqf* is not grounded in the Quran, but is based on the tradition that the Prophet Muhammed bestowed almost nothing, except a little plot of land for public use (Benthall 2003a:40). It signifies "imprisonment of bequeathed wealth", and consists of making an endowment of property or rendering it inalienable for the benefit of a religious organization or for the common good. The structure concerned gets the responsibility of managing the endowment and distribute the incomes to the needy. This property or wealth (money, property, shares, etc.) should yield a continuous and lasting profit (Krafess 2005:337). Fountains, roads, hospitals or schools could be nominated as *waqf* (Benthall 2003a:40). The significance of *waqf* can be illustrated by looking back to the way it was used during the Ottoman Empire, when half of the Ottoman lands were legally tied up this way. Today, almost all Muslim countries have nationalized *waqf*, and although Ministries of Awqaf are now generally limited to looking after mosques and religious schools, the institution has been revived in several countries as a vehicle for charitable activity with an Islamic face (Benthall 2003a:40). Conclusively, without *zakat* and *sadaqa*, "faith is incomplete" (Singer cited in Khan 2012:96).

### 3.4.2 Islamic aid culture

Many factors contribute to explain the emergence of international Muslim charities. Foremost, international Muslim charities and the notion of Islamic aid is a part of a general Islamic resurgence (Juul Petersen 2014:2). The Islamic resurgence goes back to the time of the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967, soon succeeding revolutionary socialism and pan-Arabism as a political cause in the region (Benthall 2003a:37). The result was a global-wide renewed interest in Islam as a model for community, which showed in growing Muslim solidarity and greater religious devotion. The introduction of Islamically defined institutions and organizations, such as Muslim charities followed (Juul Petersen 2014:2). Two factors particularly fostered the Islamic resurgence. First, the experience of European colonialism. Muslim thinkers in socio-cultural and regional settings turned to religion as a type of anti-colonial liberation discourse, calling for Islamic solidarity based on the notion of the *umma*, to face the challenge posed from the West (Mandaville cited in Juul Petersen 2015:25). Second, the emergence of secular Arab regimes after First World War served as a catalyst for the resurgence. These regimes, based on ideologies of modernization and progress and led by secular elites, wanted to model their states in the image of Western states. However, the post-colonial Arabs were unsuccessful in providing social welfare for their citizens. Thus, coupled with an oppressive form of government, the ideology of modernization came to have a radically different meaning to people in the Middle East than in the West. As a response, Islamic

groups and movements started appearing, as alternatives not only to the West, but also to the Middle East's secular states and ideologies (Juul Petersen 2015:25).

The most important of these was the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt in 1928 a few years after Egypt's independence and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Juul Petersen 2015:25). Under the founder, Hassan Al-Banna's leadership, the brotherhood wished to combine Islam and modernity, preserving the usefulness of modern technology, industry and science (Mandaville cited in Juul Petersen 2015:25). They rejected the Western models of modernity, and wanted to interpret modernity within an Islamic normative framework. The brotherhood spread to other Middle Eastern and later African countries, and laid the basis for some of the largest Islamic NGOs today (Juul Petersen 2015:25). Al-Banna had a strong social awareness, and saw the provision of aid to the poor as an important religious obligation of the brotherhood or any Muslim, thus, building the foundation of a strong link between Islam and aid (Juul Petersen 2014:2). At first, the brotherhood focused on social welfare activities, relief and the building of school and hospitals, rather than politics, presenting an alternative to the unsuccessful state (Juul Petersen 2015:26). Education became a core activity, and the brotherhood sought to provide new generations with an Islamic identity, by extension strengthening and reforming the Muslim community. The conversion of non-Muslims became secondary to the reestablishment of believers to follow the 'righteous Islam' (Juul Petersen 2015:26). The brotherhood wanted education to bring more than mere individual spirituality. Religious feelings should generate action. Al-Banna said: "Belief is the basis of action. Sincere intentions are more important than outward actions. However, the Muslims is requested to attain improvement in both spheres: purification of the heart and performance of righteous deeds" (quoted in Juul Petersen 2015:27). Organizations connected or related to the Muslim Brotherhood emerged all over the Muslim world. Some of these had a political vision, aiming to establish Islamic states, governed by Islamic laws. From the 1940s the Brotherhoods activities also became increasingly political, and under subsequent leaders, it started to call for Islamic states based on Islamic law. At the same time, the movement continued its engagement in social and cultural activism, and thus remained popular (Juul Petersen 2015:27).

From the 1960s and onwards, the Gulf countries also started to play a role in shaping contemporary Islamic aid. In contrary to the Muslim Brotherhood movements, the movement from the Golf countries was transnational and missionary in its outlook. Many transnational activities came from Saudi Arabia (Juul Petersen 2015:28). In response to Nasser's secular Arab nationalism, the Saudi King Faisal promoted the idea of pan-Islamic, international solidarity, arguing that all Muslims are one people with a responsibility to support one another in times of crisis (Juul Petersen 2014:3). The emergence of Islamic economics was a very important factor to help facilitate this new movement of international aid. As oil prices increased dramatically in the 1970s huge funds became available to governments, businesses, and individuals in the golf countries, boosting efforts

to create distinctively Islamic financial institutions. As a way of purifying interest (*riba*), many would channel large amounts of funds to aid activities, contributing to the strengthening of Gulf-based aid organizations (Juul Petersen 2014:3). Islamic economies were presented as an alternative to the dominant capitalist theories of economic growth, central to the culture of Western aid (Juul Petersen 2015:28). *Zakat* got a renewed role in the resurgence of Islamic economies (Juul Petersen 2015:29). As explained above, *zakat* is a convenient tool for purifying interest money, otherwise prohibited in Islamic economics. Interest is impossible to avoid in a globalized banking system, so the new Islamic institutions would instead convert interest into charitable work (Bellion-Jourdan 2003b:72). Thus, the rise of Islamic economics and Islamic businessmen released large sums of money to be distributed to charity, often through NGOs (Juul Petersen 2015:29).

The establishment of transnational organizations also played an important role in shaping this particular Gulf-based, trajectory of Islamic aid in the 1960s and 1970s. The idea that all Muslims had the responsibility to support each other in time of crisis gained impact. The ultimate expression of this pan-Islamic movement was the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and intergovernmental organizations established with the purpose of protecting Muslim interest in the world. This included the provision of aid to fellow Muslims through the OIC's Islamic Development Bank and its Islamic Solidarity Fund. Several non-governmental organizations were established to promote cooperation, mutual solidarity and religious awareness, while exporting a Saudi-style Islam (Mandaville cited in Juul Petersen 2015:30). In 1962, the Muslim World League was established, with the involvement of religious leaders from twenty-two different countries as well as official religious and political institutions in Saudi Arabia. The organization's purpose was to build a global Islamic public, through mission activities such as publishing, media, education, coordination of preachers and scholars, Arabic language instruction, Qur'an schools, mosques, Islamic centers and finally through relief aid and charity work (Mandaville cited in Juul Petersen 2015:30).

Also, the migration of Muslims from the Middle East and Asia to Europe and the USA in the 1960s, led to international Islamic charities and Islamic aid. Muslim migrants requested organizations to which they could pay their *zakat*, thus, fulfilling religious obligations and helping people from their home countries (Juul Petersen 2014:3). Among the immigrants were many Muslim Brothers and Jama'at-e Islami activists (Juul Petersen 2015:31). In the 1980s they began to establish more permanent structures in Europe, adjusted to the new surroundings. These organizations engage in a variety of Muslim causes and activities, acting as representatives and places of gathering for the migrant Muslim communities (Juul Petersen 2015:32). In the beginning the charity took form as mosque collections of *zakat* and money for Kurban offerings to be channeled to the home region of the contributors. However, this changed with generational shifts, and the first professional Muslim aid organizations emerged, copying the organizational structure and forms of British NGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid (Juul Petersen 2015:32).

## 3.5 Dichotomies of Islamic and development aid culture

Both aid cultures emerged as responses to and are shaped by processes of modernization, colonialism, and globalization. However, their proponents have interpreted these processes in different ways, leading to different cultures of aid provision (Juul Petersen 2015:32). While the Western aid culture grew out of an experience of power and hegemony, of colonization, but also out of sentiments of collective guilt and a sense of complicity in the creation of the "distant sufferer" stemming from the colonial legacy, the Islamic aid culture grew out of experiences of marginalization, of being colonized, and of the poor as a fellow member of the (religious) community (Juul Petersen 2014:3).

Historically, the cultures of Western and Islamic Aid have had largely parallel existences. The Western aid culture centers around actors such as the United Nations and the World Bank, Western governmental aid agencies, and international secular or Christian charities such as Oxfam, CARE and Doctors without Borders. The Islamic aid culture has been shaped by actors such as the Muslim World League, the OIC and the International Council for Da'wa and Relief and charismatic personalities, such as Al-Banna (Juul Petersen 2014:3). The two aid cultures worked through parallel economic structures, where Western aid came to be based on a formalized system of economic transactions, and Islamic aid relied on a more informal and personal system of transaction (Juul Petersen 2015:33). Finally, the cultures have grown out from two geographically different places (Juul Petersen 2015:33). The actors operating in the cultures have come to rely on two different sets of values. Juul Petersen has conceptualized some values in the form of three dichotomies, which shapes the symbolic languages of Western aid and Islamic aid (Juul Petersen 2015:33).

First, the dichotomy of solidarity and universalism. The Islamic aid culture turned on notions of brotherhood and Islamic solidarity, binding Muslims together in a global community, the *umma*. This means that Muslims are all part of the same religious brotherhood, and therefore mutually interdependent, and has a duty to help one another. This has meant that Muslim charities rarely aimed to bring help to non-Muslims, but focused their aid on fellow Muslims (Juul Petersen 2014:4). Conversely, universalism became a central value in Western development aid. Universalism is understood in terms of the inclusive, non-discriminatory approach to recipients, based on a cosmopolitan understanding of humanity as one, and is in sharp contrast to particularistic approaches which are often perceived to be discriminating (Juul Petersen 2015:34).

Second, the dichotomy of neutrality and justice. Neutrality became a core value in the development aid culture. The neutrality of aid was foremost in the sense of being apolitical, ensuring a universalistic approach to recipients, but later also in the sense of being professional, technical and objective rather than personal, normative and emotional. In Islamic aid, neutrality is not an essential value, and there was not a dichotomy

between aid and the political. Actors used aid as a tool for justice, a way of realizing and extending sentiments of solidarity to protect fellow Muslims from external threats (Juul Petersen 2015:35).

Finally, the dichotomy of the secular and the religious. In Islamic Aid culture, there is a conception of aid as fundamentally sacred. Thus, aid is both practically and theologically intertwined with Islam. Islam can be relevant to all aspects of aid; providing the motivation for action and in mobilizing supporters, playing an important role in identifying beneficiaries and partners, and providing the basis for engagement (Juul Petersen 2014:5). In contrast, despite its religious history, development aid has come to rest on a secular understanding of aid. While religious actors are still involved, the culture is largely based on a secular understanding of "religion" in terms of a dichotomy between the public and the private. Religion is kept in the private sphere, and the public sphere remains largely non-religious, with a preference for secular and quasi-secular NGOs (Juul Petersen 2015:37).

Table 3: The Cultures of Development aid and Islamic aid.

|  | Development aid | Islamic aid |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Language | Universalism | Solidarity |
|  | Neutrality | Justice |
|  | Secularism | Religion |
| Geography | The West | The Middle East |
| Organizational types | Transnational NGOs | Transnational missionary organizations |
|  | Governmental aid agencies | National political groups |
|  | Intergovernmental organizations | Immigrant community associations |
|  |  | Ministries of *zakat* and *waqf* |
|  |  | Prominent individuals |

*(Juul Petersen 2015:37)*

## 3.5.1 A secularized or sacralized aid

In the aftermath of 9.11, Muslim aid organizations in the West experienced an integration into the mainstream (development) aid culture, for reasons explained above. They got access to increased funding from Western donors and parallel to the economic integration into the mainstream aid culture, they started incorporating a new type of staff (young professionals with experience in aid provision), which in contrast with the first generation of staff was not pious Muslims. From this new position, Muslim charities in the West presented a new kind of Muslim aid, adjusted to the norms and values of the mainstream aid culture (Juul Petersen 2014:9).

First, this aid responds to conception of poverty as material, not spiritual. Thus, poverty is best fought through economic development projects and humanitarian aid, and not through Islamic education or mosque construction (Juul Petersen 2014:9). Second, as poverty is not spiritual, aid can be given to all. Aid provision is

not restricted to Muslims, and recipients are no longer understood in terms of the *umma*, but in as a part of a global humanity. Thus, recipients in their orphan sponsorship programs; microfinance loans or of Ramadan food packages are not necessarily Muslim (Juul Petersen 2014:9-10). Third, the organizations reject conceptions of aid as justice, and actively seek to dissociate themselves from any association with political parties and organizations. Thus, pledging alliance to the Western principles of accountability, transparency and neutrality as the way to respond to perceived injustices (Juul Petersen 2014:10).

These features results in the promotion of a *secularized aid*, which is based on a division between aid and Islam. The organizations have moved away from the first generation of Islamic aid – the *sacralized aid* - in which religion was an all-encompassing feature. In the secularized aid, Islam is confined to specific and well-defined functions and spaces. Meant to Inspire and motivate people, rather than shape organizational activities and structures in concrete and visible ways (Juul Petersen 2014:10).

The Muslim charities in the Middle East were not able to capitalize on the openings into the mainstream aid culture, instead they experienced a general climate of suspicions and allegations. Many of them were stigmatized and excluded as "fundamentalists" or "extremists" accused of connections with terror networks (Juul Petersen 2014:11). Furthermore, many viewed these organizations as "traditional" and "old-fashioned", contrary to the Western Muslim charities which were viewed as "moderate" and "progressive", willing to adopt mainstream conceptions and practices of aid (Juul Petersen 2014:11). These organizations are still firmly embedded in a traditional Islamic aid culture, and still promote what seems to be a highly sacralized notion of aid. However, their conception of aid is not easily categorized as a straightforward continuation of the sacralized aid found among Muslim charities before 9.11. Instead, they attempt to reinterpret and modernize the culture of Islamic aid, integrating new concepts and practices, and reaching out to organizations in the mainstream aid culture (Juul Petersen 2014:12). Juul Petersen presents three examples of ways these organizations adopt, adapt and reinterpret elements from the mainstream aid culture and integrate them into Islamic aid culture.

First, there is the concept of empowerment. It has been a strong element of mainstream aid for decades, and has recently become important in the work of the Gulf organizations, referring to income-generating activities and vocational training. The focus on productive projects and job opportunities as important tools in the fight against poverty reflects shifts in the conception of poverty. However, these organizations' understanding of empowerment is not the same as that found in mainstream aid culture. The concept of empowerment has been Islamized, adjusted to fit Islamic principles. Hadits are used to define, explain and legitimize the concept in Islamic terms (Juul Petersen 2014:13).

Second, there is the attempt to merge notions of universalism and solidarity. While the shift from a particularistic aid to a more including aid is not desirable for the Gulf-based charities, as most of their donors expect zakat contributions to go to fellow Muslims, they have introduced a 'principled universalism' or 'pragmatic particularism'. Wanting to avoid accusations of discrimination, the organizations argue that they do in principle support a universalistic approach, but they focus primarily on Muslims out of pragmatic reasons. Similarly, they defend da'wa through the arguments of cultural sensitivity (language adopted from mainstream aid culture), by arguing that the proselytizing efforts of Christian organizations are forcing them to respond with similar measures. Thus, the organizations seek to align important elements from the Islamic aid culture with values of the mainstream aid culture without radically changing the significance of either (Juul Petersen 2014:14).

Third, the emphasis on professionalism. Charities emphasize professional ideals of neutrality, transparency and accountability, while downplaying the focus on compassion and justice, which was so central to earlier generations of Islamic aid. To some degree the organizations have started making annual reports and budgets available on their websites, wishing to signal financial transparency. Similarly, there seems to be a movement towards professionalization of staff, emphasizing skills and experience over religious convictions. As these are examples were the organizations simply adopt elements from mainstream aid culture, the promotion of professional staff, may clash with ideals of piety, as principles of accountability and transparency may run counter to Islamic traditions of donor anonymity (Juul Petersen 2015:15-16).

These developments are those Juul Petersen found in Muslim NGOs in Britain and Saudi Arabia. Below, I will investigate whether they are found in the three Turkish NGOs, and thereby place the organizations in the continuum between the different cultures and conceptions of aid. As perhaps hinted above, the positioning of NGOs in the aid cultures are best understood as poles in a continuum, stretching from an embedded Islam, encouraging a thoroughly Islamized aid to an invisible Islam, accompanied by an almost secularized aid (Juul Petersen 2012:126). However, before I turn to the analysis, I will give an overview of the Turkish socio-political situation, and the context in which Turkish Muslim NGOs emerged from and operate in.

## 4. The Turkish context: The Emergence of Turkish Muslim NGOs

Turkey is a unique country, in the way that it is a secular Muslim country, often referred to as the bridge between Europe and the Middle East. It is difficult, if not impossible to analyze culture and religion separately (Rakodi 2012:642). Some argues that religion is so embedded in culture that the distinction is meaningless (James 2009:4). In Rakodi's words; "Generally, religious beliefs, specifically a notion of the sacred, impact people's socio-cultural identities, relations, and practices, and influence everyday life. But culture also influences the shape of religious spaces and the identities and practices associated with them" (2012:642). As

will be clear from my analysis below, Turkish humanitarian NGOs are partly characterized by their national pride and promotion of Turkey abroad (Aras and Akpinar 2015:240). Therefore, it is important to look at the Turkish context in which the three transnational Muslim organizations have developed and operate from. Turkey has been a secular republic since 1923, and following there has been an ongoing struggle about what role Islam should have in society (Sunier and Landman 2015:9). Taking starting point in Sunier and Landman's four historical stages (2015), I will give a brief account of this struggle. These stages also explain the environment Turkish transnational Muslim NGOs developed out of.

*Stage 1 (1923-1945)*

The foundation of the Turkish republic in 1923 and the following social, cultural and political reforms is often depicted as a historically necessary process of modernization, in which the role of Islam was relegated to the private sphere. However, there was never a complete breach with Islam (Sunier and Landman 2015:11). While the Kemalist state was modelled after the Western concept of people's sovereignty, only one party was allowed, the Republican People's Party (CHP), with the objective to promote the new Turkish national identity. Any organization based on class, ethnicity or religion was forbidden (Sunier and Landman 2015:12). Many symbolic reforms followed. The first ones concerned secularization of state, education and legal institutions. The republic's founder Kemal Mustafa Atatürk considered Islam to be a natural aspect of the Turkish people; however it should not play a role in the building of the nation state. Thus, Atatürk and CHP sought to domesticate Islam, and build a new secular state. In 1924, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) was founded to centralize and reorganize religious life in Turkish. All mosques were brought under the Diyanet, and imams became employees of the state. Rather than separating state and religions, the reforms led to a reorganization of Islam. Thus, the Turkish concept *laiklik* (secularism), came to have a different meaning than in the West (Sunier and Landman 2015:13). Other reforms were aimed at secularizing culture, and removing religious (Arabic) symbols from the public sphere. This 'Turkification' was to cut of the Turkish population from the Arab world (Sunier and Landman 2015:15).

The main goal of all reforms was complete state control over the religious field. The role of Islam was reduced among a large section of the urban population. However, as the reforms hardly reached the rural areas, their existing social, economic and administrative structures closely intertwined with local religious leaders were kept intact. However, the countryside was indirectly affected by the economic reforms, which at the expense of agriculture focused on industrializing the country (Sunier and Landman 2015:15). While no massive rebellion mobilized, there were opposition and protests. The resistance had a strong local character, and was based on existing religious networks and new organizational structures, constituting the organizational basis for the new

wave of organizations which emerged in the period after the Second World War. As a result, a parallel Islam emerged along with the official Islam monitored by the state (Sunier and Landman 2015:15).

*Stage 2 (1946-1979)*

In 1946, Turkey introduced a multiparty-party system. Islam became a crucial factor in the political struggle to establish a new political agenda, deeply affecting the place of Islam in society and politics. Most of the population lived in the rural areas, and they constituted an important electoral potential. Thus, all parties proposed to soften the legal and institutional restrictions on Islam. CHP won the first election, however their support gradually diminished, because of the opening to the country-side. In 1950, CHP was defeated by the Democratic Party (DP). DP had worked to build up an electorate by acquiring support from the local Islamic leaders and networks, and thus made use of the electoral potential of the rural population. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes reversed some of the most radical measures of the Kemalists in the 10 years he was in office until he was executed after the military coup in 1960. However, he never questioned the secular foundations of the Turkish Republic (Sunier and Landman 2015:16-17). Besides, the DP initiated a series of economic measures fundamentally impacting the political landscape. The party was founded by the new mercantile elite who opposed the centrally planned economic model of the Kemalists, and its electorate was the farmers who felt themselves victims of this economic model. The new policies aimed at increasing the export-oriented agricultural production. The richer farmers benefitted from this, while the poorer farmers were driven out, resulting in a mass migration of the pious traditionalists to the cities (Sunier and Landman 2015:18). Thus, during the time the DP was in power, the political, economic and social landscape of Turkey was radically and permanently changed, and the sharp divide between town and country was blurred. Islam was before associated with rural backwardness and underdevelopment, but now got a new meaning, as the massive urbanization of the 1950s and 60s generated new dividing lines and marked a beginning of the liberation of Islam in Turkey. New forms of Islamic organizations emerged, which instead of being local, focused on the entire country. In 1965, the policies of the DP were continued by the Justice Party (AP), which still did not question the secular foundations of the Republic, but applied a form of liberalization with respect to Islam. The meaning of *laiklik,* became a big political controversy, and the parties would challenge each other's take on the issue (Sunier and Landman 2015:19).

Towards the end of 1970s an increasing number of political parties considered Islam as a major social force for renewal that should not be ignored. A movement which thrived under these circumstances was Milli Görüs, a political-religious movement founded by Necmettin Erbakan. Under this movement, a series of political parties have been established, marking the political landscape since the 1970s. While the movement had an Islamic agenda, its focus was the struggle against the liberal economic policies that harmed peasants and other small

manufacturers. The National Order Party (MNP) a short-lived precursor to the National Salvation Party (MSP) was the first of Erbakan's political parties. MNP was founded in 1970, and was a fierce opponent of the further institutionalization of the economy and the growing dependence of Turkey on the West (Sunier and Landmand 2015:20). For many decades, groups like Milli Görus, that tried to challenge the central state authority faced marginalization into the periphery of power and suppression by state authorities (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1018). After the military coup in 1971, MNP was banned for criticizing the secular foundations of the Republic, but already in 1972, the MSP appeared on the political stage, adopting a more cautious Islamic rhetoric. The main slogan of the party was 'yeniden büyük Türkiye' (a mighty Turkey again), referring to the days of the Ottoman Empire (Sunier and Landman 2015:20-21). The movement has been a crucial factor in the shift of Islam from something that is 'lived' and is associated with traditions and communities to something that is about belief, conviction and political program. It has played an important role in making politically legitimate religious claims (Sunier and Landman 2015:22).

*Stage 3 (1980-2002)*

In September 1980, Turkey again experienced a military coup. Religious groups now found some space to organize around grassroots civil society, as the military aspired to eliminate the 'threat' from the left using religion as a tool (Sarkassian and Özler 2013:1018). A moral campaign was launched in which 'islamic values' were given a central place. Turkish society was to "sail on a moral compass in which Islam and Turkish nationalism were interrelated" (Sunier and Landman 2015:22). The new policy intended to re-introduce Islam as a part of the Turkish nationalist identity (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1018), presenting Islam as an enlightened religion, open to science and technology and at the same time restoring the central role of the state (Sunier and Landman 2015:23). The new ideology was to be spread through education. Ethics and Islam became compulsory subjects in schools, and the budget of Diyanet increased rapidly. It was now Diyanet's role to spread out the teaching of this new Turkish-Islam synthesis ideology (Sunier and Landman 2015:22-23).

In 1983 Turkey transitioned to electoral democracy, with further liberalization encouraged by the European Union harmonization and accession process and Turkey's integration into the global economy. These democratic openings resulted in more space for civic participation and organization (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1018). A new party was founded, the Welfare Party (RP), in which present president Erdogan was a prominent member. In the same year, another party was formed, the Motherland Party (ANAP), led by Turgut Özel. Özel became Prime Minister in 1983 and ended the protectionist economic policies of the Kemalists that had shaped the political decision-making for many years. Thus, there was a radical break with the centrality of the Turkish state in economic policies, which in turn resulted in the emergence of the Anatolian tigers. The Anatolian tigers is a nickname for a new generation of entrepreneurs who combined neo-liberal economic

activity with a conservative Islamic worldview. These changes resulted in a growing middle class that no longer identified with Kemalism. The old image which equated Islam with underdevelopment and deprivation was broken (Sunier and Landman 2015:23). While the numbers of civil society groups increased in the 1980s, their impact on participation in public life was relatively trivial (Şimşik 2004:48). Many of the associations were organized by the RP and functioned as clients of the political party rather than as free associations in an autonomous civil society sector (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1018). In 1992, Özel founded the Turkish International Cooperation Deveopment Agency (TIKA), which is equivalent to USAID and was established to "assist in the development of the newly independent states [of post-soviet Asia]" (Cohen cited in Atalay 2012:175). In the 1990s the RP occupied a key position in Turkish politics, and in 1995 they won the general election, and Erbakan became Prime Minister. Erbakan had a vision to replace the strong ties Turkey had to the West with a diplomatic focus on the Arab world. However, this was perceived as an attempt to turn Turkey into a 'second Iran' and in 1997, the military organized a silent coup, and Erbakan resigned. After that the RP was banned by the Constitutional Court (Sunier and Landman 2015:24). In the 90s the state also partially abandoned its oppressive policies regarding the civil society, trying to establish peaceful relations with the policy "*devletle toplumun barişması*" (setting the state and society in peace) (Şimşik 2004:68).

Following, the Islamic movement split into two main factions, the traditionalists and the reformists. The reformist Erdogan founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which presented itself as a 'conservative democratic' party to avoid close association with Islam (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1019). AKP criticized the Islamist and anti-western policies of Erbakan, which they argued damaged Turkey's as well as Islam's reputation by contributing to the image that Islam and democracy do not match. In 2002, the AKP won a landslide victory, and the majority in parliament. AKP introduced a new meaning of *laiklik*, more like the western, emphasizing that Islam and the secular order was not opposing principles, and stressing that being a democratic state also means freedom of religion. The party pointed out the need for a strong civil-society to guarantee democracy, and argued that civil society is a better guarantee for the continuation of the modernization project of Atatürk than state control over religion. The intention of the party was to transform Turkish political system after the model of Western democracies (Sunier and Landman 2015:25).

*Stage 4 (2003-present)*

In AKP's first period of rule, from 2003 to 2007, Erdogan enjoyed general support for the party's new political wind. The government concentrated on economic problems, and wanted to improve relationship with the opposition to remove the political polarization that had developed until the end of the 1990s. Besides, the government began renewed negotiations with the EU in 2005. The country went through economic growth in those years, resulting in broad support of the party. The election in 2007 brought another victory for the party,

which then felt secure enough to push for their other main goals; to reduce the power of the military and put an end to the measures against Islam that were put in effect after 1997. After that, the polarization between AKP and CHP began to increase again (Sunier and Landman 2015:25). The era of the AKP can be divided between the period before and after August 2007, when AKP's former foreign minister Abdullah Gül became president. His predecessor was largely secular and a strong defender of the Kemalist model, so when Gül became president, AKP was released from its toughest adversary, and in the years after that the government would gradually remove legal restrictions on the public confession of Islam, and introduce restrictions on alcohol in public places and other measures impacting public life. In 2014, the AKP again had a big victory, and the same year Erdogan became the first publicly elected president (Sunier and Landman 2015:26).

Despite these developments, religion is still highly regulated in Turkey and the Turkish political institutions still operates under the ideology of *laiklik*. Diyanet is still active as a state agency to regulate the majority religion, Sunni Islam, and most other religions are restricted from organizing and building houses of worship. When it comes to religious social mobilization, the mosque is not the place for religious debate or religious organizing, but strictly a place provided for individual prayer. Political parties are restricted from organizing around religious beliefs and issues. Thus, religious interest representation is pushed outside of the mosque and the political party arena into the realm of civil society (Sarkissian and Özler 2013:1015).

I will now give an account of three game changers, or defining moments in Turkey, which led to the emergence of transnational Muslim NGOs; the war in Bosnia 1992-95; the Marmara earth quakes of 1999; and the rise of AKP.

## 4.1 Game changers
As Turkish humanitarian organizations mostly stem from Islamic grassroots movements, they suffered in the aftermath of the military coup in 1997, facing strict bureaucratic control and campaigns to discourage donations. For many years, the only organizations which were authorized to collect raw hides during the *eid-ul-adha* were Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish Aviation Society. All other NGOs were excluded from this profitable activity. These measures curtailed the involvement of Muslim NGOs in aid activities abroad (Çelik and Işeri 2016:434). This changed when the AKP came to power, which is arguably the most important development for Muslim NGOs in Turkey. However, two defining moments preceded that; the war in Bosnia 1992-1995 and the Marmara earth quake in 1999. All three will be explained below.

### 4.1.1 The war in Bosnia 1992-95
"When one part of the body of the umma suffers, it is all the parts together which must react" (hadith cited in Bellion-Jourdan 2003a:131). The war in Bosnia and the suffering of Bosnian Muslims acted as a catalyst to the establishment of humanitarian NGOs not only in Turkey, but in the Islamic world in general, as public reaction

emerged in the form of protests organized by the Islamic communities (Juul Petersen 2012:769). Already in the very beginning in the conflict, there were local appeals from Muslim leaders in Bosnia for the *umma* to unite against the threat of Serbian nationalism to the Muslim population in the country. Thus, the struggle for the liberation of Bosnia was presented as a *jihad* that all Muslims must support. The Islamic humanitarian organizations took part in this process (Bellion-Jourdan 2003a:129-30). The Islamist movements succeeded in creating a notion that whoever did not bring support the Bosnian Muslims was not a 'true' Muslim, thus failure to take responsibility would challenge one's own 'Islamic legitimacy' (Bellion-Jourdan 2003a:131). The Bosnian conflict was also used as a site of jihad (in the militant meaning), and this echoed in a suspiciousness of the activities of the Muslim relief organizations, however, while there were a few rotten apples, most organizations did only help with relief aid (Bellion-Jourdan 2003a:139). As a result, most transnational Muslim NGOs adopted a sharp demarcation between aid and jihad, emphasizing neutrality, although still driven by a religiously defined sense of solidarity, leading them to focus on Muslim recipients, rather than taking a universalistic humanitarian approach. The war in Bosnia thus marked a shift in how Islamic aid was conceived (Juul Petersen 2012:770-71).

The first Turkish transnational NGO, IHH, was created under this atmosphere (Çelik and Işeri 2016:434). IHH started with the humanitarian relief work of a handful of volunteers, in response to the Bosnian War, and their humanitarian efforts eventually led to the registration of the foundation in Istanbul in 1995. According to IHH, they were the first NGO to reach Sarajevo under siege and "show the plight of Bosnians to the World" (IHH.org.tr). The IHH representative explained to me that IHH was established to "stop the genocide made by the Serbians" and "help the desperate Muslim people", because "the Europeans did not do anything about it". Thus, as many other Muslim NGOs at the time, IHH was established in solidarity with and to provide justice for the Bosnian Muslim population.

### 4.1.2 Marmara earthquake 1999

The earthquakes in Turkey's western region in 1999 generating a need for humanitarian action within Turkey (Aras and Akpinar 2015:233). The state did in many ways fail to address the need after the earth quake and was lunged into a crisis of legitimacy, creating room for the civil society and Turkish citizens to act (Kubicek 2001:38). New Turkish Humanitarian NGOs were created in response to the massive need of aid. The NGOs were quick, active and efficient, and surpassing the capacity of the state to help the victims of the earthquakes. While being a catalyst for the creation of Turkish humanitarian NGOs, the success of these NGOs also had a positive influence on the state, helping it to overcome its hesitancy to make more space for NGOs in humanitarian campaigns (Aras and Akpinar 2015:233). Thus, the NGOs effective handling of the earth quake has resulted in a higher profile for civic society in Turkey (Kubicek 2001:38). However, relief organizations were still subject to

a lot of regulations and the empowerment of civil society was in the end not as strong as many could have hoped (Kubicek 2001:40).

### 4.1.3 The rise of AKP

The most important "game changer" in the emergence of transnational Muslim NGOs was the rise of the AKP (Atalay 2012:165). The abovementioned limitations, put under effect after the coup in 1997, have been gradually eased since the AKP came to power, creating opportunity spaces for religious civil society (Tabak 2015:195). Before then, civil society in Turkey existed "more as a slogan than as a reality" (Kubicek 2001:38), and its impact on and participation in public life was relatively trivial (Şimşik 2004:48). In 2004, a new legal framework made up of modifications to the Law on Associations fostered the Growth of Turkish humanitarian NGOs. This allowed them to form partnerships with NGOs in other countries and to receive donations from abroad, while also relieving them of the obligation to work through the Turkish Red Crescent when organizing activities abroad. In addition, they became allowed to collect donations without prior bureaucratic permission and provided additional public incentives to donate, such as annual tax credits (Çelik and Işeri 2016:435). In 2007, the AKP granted tax-exempt status to IHH and Cansuyu among other Muslim transnational NGOs, providing these NGOs with both governmental backing and the ability to be more proactive in the international arena (Tabak 2015:196). Both Cansuyu and Çare were established after these measures, respectively in 2006 and 2009. In many ways, the AKP's success with its Islamic program had laid bare the democratic deficit of the Kemalist model (Cinar cited in Sunier and Landman 2015:11).

## 5. Analysis

The analysis first seeks to find out how the three Turkish NGOs IHH, Cansuyu and Çare (from now on referred to as 'the Turkish NGOs') frame the visions, rationales and strategies of their aid, then followed by a short discussion, aiming at positioning the Turkish NGOs in the two aid cultures, and examining whether they carry out a mainly sacralized or secularized aid. First, I will briefly present the organizations.

Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) was established in 1992 in Germany by Turkish Muslims who had migrated there, led by Fehmi Bülent Yıldırım and Mahmut Savaş. As explained above the foundation was established in reaction to the war in Bosnia in 1992. In 1995, IHH was registered in Istanbul, where they still have their headquarter today. They now operate in 140 countries spread over five continents (IHH representative; IHH.org.tr).

Cansuyu Charity and Solidarity Organization (Cansuyu) was established in 2005. Cansuyu means life water, which is the first drops of water you give to newly grown plants. Cansuyu have their headquarter in Ankara, and is led by director Mustafa Köylü, who is a former parliament member of the Welfare Party. Cansuyu operate in 75 countries spread over three continents (Cansuyu representative; Cansuyu magazine).

Finally, Çare Assistance and Development Association (Çare) was officially established in 2009, by a group of volunteers who has been involved in a number of projects beforehand, and is now directed by Mehmet Südlü. Çare's headquarter is in Istanbul, from where they reach 46 countries.

## 5.1 Visions of aid

This section addresses what aid is to the organizations. Whether it is a response to economic poverty, spiritual degeneration, inequality or physical suffering. Furthermore, it addresses what the purpose of aid is, whether it is to generate income, strengthen faith, restore justice or relieve suffering. Paraphrasing Juul Petersen "in other words, how do the organization define the problems they seek to solve, the solutions they present to these problems, and the ideal situations they strive to obtain through their solutions?" (2015:85).

### 5.1.1 Adressing material and spiritual needs

The main problems in the Turkish NGOs are poverty and suffering. In Cansuyu's regulations it is written that the objective of the organization is to "provide in kind, in cash and all kinds of material and moral help and support such as food, clothes, health, training, fuel, rent, asylum, marriage, home, employment, accommodation, etc. to the needy people". Çare's objective is to "bring all people suffering from material and spiritual sufferings to the level of human life and to prevent the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms of these people, especially education and food" (Care.org.tr). Likewise, IHH wants to "give all needy and oppressed people the chance of a dignified life while delivering aid wherever they are with an understanding of universal brotherhood to help prevent evil and to let the good and justice prevail". The aid-recipients are characterized by their needs and wants: "the needy" "the deprived", "the hungry", "the oppressed" and "the poor". Hence, the discourses of the Turkish NGOs echo the language of many secular NGOs (Juul Petersen 2015:85). However, their notion of poverty is about more than material deprivation, it is also about spiritual needs, and therefore different from secular development organizations conceptions of poverty. Poverty is for them also about the aid recipients' religious and social needs, as well as their economic and health needs. This understanding of poverty builds on conceptions of the inseparability of the material and the transcendent, underlying the thinking of most contemporary Islamic movements and groups (Juul Petersen 2015:85). Çare directly states they want to address 'spiritual suffering', Cansuyu use the phrase "moral help and support", and they "want to support the mental healthy development of the children" (Cansuyu.org.tr). Both implying that welfare is not only about having food to eat and clothes to wear, but also about spiritual and social wellbeing.

Another of the organizations' visions, closely related to this "multifaceted conception of poverty" (Juul Petersen 2015:86), is the dignified life for the poor. In IHH's statement above, they explicitly write that they aspire to give needy and oppressed people a chance to lead a dignified life. Çare aims to strengthen "the sense of self-esteem and the spirit of cooperation in Muslims" with their social assistance aid activities (such as orphan care and education) (care.org.tr). Thus, while focusing on the dignity of the individual, Çare also emphasize the

importance of the Muslim community (the *umma*). This will be addressed in more detail below. The right to a dignified life is deeply related to religious motivations. In Islam, the poor part of society is a problem for all, not just for the poor (Ali 2014:25). As explained above, *zakat* is a declared right for the poor, imposed on the wealthy. In fact, Muslims must be proactive and identify the needs of the poor and help fulfill them, before the poor ask (Ali 2014:25). A Cansuyu representative echoes this by telling me that *zakat* is "neither a grace nor a favor" but a "right of the poor". The Prophet Muhammad made it clear that all Muslims are equal and deserving of respect; "You know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal", and the Quran connects the neglect of a Muslim's obligation to help the poor as a neglect of religion; "Have you observed him who denies religion? That is he who repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the needy" (in Clarke 2014:53). Thus, in Islam the dignified life of the poor is crucial, and this is echoed in the language of the Turkish NGOs. As will be explained further below, the Turkish NGOs view this as a Turkish and Muslim characteristic in aid provision.

A vision closely connected to that of the dignified Muslim is that of a strengthened *umma*. Aid provision is not just for the individual but for society as a whole. In Islam, charity has a function and a purpose, existing as a way to spread out the provisions Allah has created for everyone (Ali 2014:23). Thus, the aid recipients are largely subjectified within an overall framework of the Muslim *umma* rather than within a global humanity (Juul Petersen 2015:87). As noted above, Muslim organizations have been criticized for this particularistic approach, and since the War on Terror, this distinction between universalistic and particularistic approaches has been coupled with a distinction between moderate and fundamentalist or extremist organizations. In this perspective, Muslim NGOs cannot maintain a strictly particularistic approach, if they want to attract an 'international' audience, but must find a way to align their vision with mainstream principles of development aid (Juul Petersen 2015:88). The Turkish NGOs have all done this by stating that they 'help everybody, regardless of color, religion or ethnicity', however, in practice the Turkish NGOs mainly focus on Muslim recipients. They justify this by explaining that most of the poor in the world are Muslim, and therefore it is natural to give this group most attention. Thus, the Turkish NGOs want to maintain a particularistic focus on Muslims, and a strengthening of the *umma*, without compromising international discourses of universalism and non-discrimination.

## 5.2 Rationales of aid

This section seeks to answer more fundamental questions as to why the organizations engage in aid work. Whether they frame it as a religious obligation, or a human duty. As well as why people should support their work, and how the organizations motivate their donors.

### 5.2.1 Religious rewards: A way to paradise

Doing charity in Islam is a way of securing your way to paradise; "The first to enter paradise are those who do charitable works" (hadith cited in Krafess 2005:328). Muslims undertake charitable acts as a way of receiving Allah's assistance, atoning for sins, escaping punishment, thanking Allah for his mercies, and getting closer to paradise (Khan 2012:96) In Islamic traditions, when doing good deeds for the sake of Allah, prayer, *zakat* or so forth, a Muslim collects religious rewards, known as *thawab* – the opposite of *ithim*, which is negative remarks recorded by Allah whenever one commits a sin. When a person dies, Allah decides if they go to heaven or hell based on their account of deeds. Among the good deeds that one can carry out for Allah, doing charity, helping others, paying *zakat* and *sadaqa* are considered some of the most important, and therefore they result in the most rewards (Juul Petersen 2015:91). This can be illustrated with a story one of the Cansuyu representatives told me. He said, that if you on the way to Friday prayer saw an injured dog, it is your duty to care for it. If you continue to Friday prayer and afterwards find the dog dead, then you are responsible for its death. This story shows that helping and caring for others, also animals, is very important in Islam, even more important than going to Friday prayer. Investigating the motivations of Muslim donors, Khan found that the majority donate to fulfill their religious obligations (2012:96). Thus, in Islamic charity, the aid chain is 'a relationship of reciprocity', meaning that not only the recipient, but also the donor credits from the aid (Juul Petersen 2015:91). Thus, one of the rationales of giving aid is that of religious rewards, and the Turkish NGOs facilitate ways for donors to attain rewards by fulfilling both their duty to give *zakat* and to do charity (give *sadaqa*).

The Turkish Muslim NGOs use this rationale to collect funds and attract donors. Çare is running a campaign on Facebook, where every Friday (the holy day in Islam), they upload a picture with a hadith reminding their followers to do charity. Some examples are; "Make up for your sorrows and troubles with sadaka. If you do so, Allah will overcome your troubles, help you against your enemies, and make your feet stable in times of violence and distress"; "If you have a date, give it as a charity; For it, in a little way, stops hunger and destroys sins as water extinguishes fire" and "Sakada closes seventy evil gates". Cansuyu's slogan is: "Takes *you* to those in real need" [my emphasis], showing the emphasis of the donor in their aid provision. Likewise, during Qurban, Cansuyu share livestock meat at Eid al-Adha, under the motto: "Qurban means getting closer to Allah and sharing with the needy", again emphasizing the reward for the donor; to get closer to Allah. Orphanage programs are another example of how religious rewards are used to motivate donors to donate. Islam pays particular attention to the situations of orphans and as a testimony to this, many verses in the Quran demand kindness on their behalf, promising the worst punishment for those who ill-treat them and equally "promising the highest rewards" for those who look after them (Krafess 2005:333). The Prophet Muhammad was an orphan himself (Juul Petersen 2015:91). For this reason, the Turkish NGOs all have an orphan sponsorship program,

and they are very popular among the donators. The representative from Çare referred to it as 'the most important aid program' of the organization.

Thus, because of the rationale of religious rewards, donors play a very central role in the organizations. In Islam, the dichotomy between the rich and the poor or between wealth and poverty cannot only be understood in terms of whether one does or does not possess material wealth, but also in terms of whether one is or is not in possession of spiritual wealth. The economic concept of poverty and its alleviation and eradication inevitably and indirectly address the poverty of spirituality. By giving *zakat*, Muslims can elevate their spiritual lives by improving their material life through eradicating material deprivation in society for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of others (Ali 2014:23). As traditionally in Muslim NGOs (Khan 2012:90), the donors in the three Turkish NGOs are primarily private individuals. It is Islamic tradition that the donor decides how, when and where money should be spent (Juul Petersen 2015:92). One of the motivations for the aid organizations is to serve the need of the donor to give *zakat* and *sadaqa* and thus get a better relationship to Allah. In the words of the Cansuyu representative: "…someone wants to help those in need. We lead him… we provide them to deliver their aid to those in need". All the organizations have a system where donors can choose which programs they wish to support. The powerful position of the donors in the organizations can also be illustrated with the fact that the donors are often celebrated during the aid distribution. Mosques or hospitals might be named after them; their names are put on the Wells they donated; or their name is read out loud while sacrificing animals for Qurban. Çare's representative specifically mentioned 'trust' as the most important thing (in giving out aid), and he related 'trust' to the fact that the donor could count on the organization delivering aid correctly and get proof of that. As he did not mention the recipients in this context, his answer helps illustrate the importance of the donors to the organization.

Furthermore, the employees of the organizations also benefit from the relationship of reciprocity; "Our Prophet Muhammad also commands, "Whoever leads to good, he is like the one who does it." Let's suppose that someone wants to help those in need. We, in return, lead him. In other words, we provide them to deliver their aid to those in need. With our deed, we are also rewarded just as the one who does that good deed" (Cansuyu representative). Likewise, on their website Cansuyu promises volunteers that they can "make deep-rooted investments in the afterlife by tasting the impossible, insatiable taste of tiredness in an activity performed for Allah's purpose".

### 5.2.2 Solidarity in 'the brotherhood'
A second rationale is solidarity within the brotherhood. "The body of believers is one, and when one part of it is unwell, it is the whole body that suffers" (hadith quoted in Bellion-Jourdan 2003b:69). Apart from being motivated by religious rewards, the Turkish NGOs also have another motivational frame, which turns on notions of solidarity. Paraphrasing Juul Petersen "Solidarity is about a mutual interdependence among people,

stemming from what they have in common. This community obliges its members to stand together and show solidarity, supporting one another. To let another person down, to turn one's back on a needy person in the community, is to pretend there is no community – it is to break the bond of solidarity" (2015:93). All Muslims have a responsibility for one another. This was clear in Bosnia, at the time IHH started its operations. The IHH representative started working for IHH at that time. He could not remain silent about "the genocide" in Bosnia and wanted to "help those desperate Muslim people". Clearly showing the connection of Muslims across borders. On their websites and in other material, the Turkish NGOs all use phrases such as "the *umma*", "Muslim solidarity" and "brotherhood" to underline and nurse a sense of solidarity and pointing out the responsibility (of Muslims) to take care of one another. Çare uses the hadith "It is your faith to smile to your Muslim brother" on a promotional picture on Facebook. As one of the Cansuyu representatives points out a Muslim should not sleep with a full stomach if his neighbor is hungry. The donor gives to fellow Muslim brothers (or sisters) in a country far away, because he sees himself and his fellow brother as members of an 'imagined community' perceived as a deep horizontal brotherhood, the *umma* (Kochuyt 2009:106). As Juul Petersen stated above, if you refer from helping a needy person in your community, it is to break the bond of solidarity, and the Turkish NGOs communicate this to their audience (among them their donors).

Chouliaraki argues that relations between donors and recipients are often based on 'a logic of complicity', because as the donor witnesses the suffering of the recipient, he or she is complicit and therefore obliged to help. In Western aid the relationship between the recipient and the donors is weighed down by massive collective guilt, stemming from the colonialization period (cited in Juul Petersen 2015:94). This does not apply to the Turkish donors, as they have no memory of a colonizing past, thus nothing to be guilty of. So instead of invoking emotions of guilt and shame, photos and narratives of the suffering and oppressed poor is used by the organizations to stir sentiments of solidarity (Juul Petersen 2015:94). Thus, the Turkish NGOs appeal to the donors not out of guilt but out of brotherhood. Besides, as Turkey has also been a poor country before, the Turkish population can relate to the recipients in another way then the Western populations. The representative from the secular organization Hayata Destek addressed this. She argues that Turkish aid organizations engage with the recipients in a more solidary way than Western aid organizations, because Turkish people have experienced some of the same feelings, especially the feeling of inferiority in relation to the West. This shared experience of inferiority results in a sense of brotherhood and solidarity (even outside the *umma*), making the relationship between the recipient and the donor more equal, because in her words "they are in the same boat".

In a similar vein, the Turkish NGOs perceive their understanding of the aid recipients to be different from that in the West. These differences lie in the way they perceive the recipients and in the unconditionality of their aid. A Cansuyu representative explained that the secular way of thought in Europe indicates that the "needy

people are parasites", and "a burden to society". However, in Turkey, he continued, even the secular people would never look at the poor as a burden. Thus, for him, this perception is also a question of culture and not just religion. Turning to the unconditionality, the Turkish NGOs all emphasize that Western aid organizations want something in return from the recipients, be it conversion to Christianity or compliance with Western norms and values. Çare stated that for centuries aid activities had been made with a religious extension (thus implying Christian missionary activities), however, that Çare takes care of "God's providence" (among it the aid recipients) without any expectation (Care.org.tr). This lead to another point, which is the intention of the benefactor. This is an important element in the relationship between the rich and the poor in Islam. The intentions of the donor should be good and without ulterior motives, and thus he cannot expect anything in return (Kochuyt 2009:107). If one does not give selflessly, with a good *niyya* (conscience), then the gift will not be rewarded by God (Kochuyt 2009:112). The Turkish NGOs all stress this point.  In the words of a representative from Cansuyu, they have an "absolute and pure thought of helping people" without expecting anything in return. Thus, the Turkish NGOs' perception of the recipients is influenced by the Islamic emphasis on a clear conscience.

Furthermore, they all argue that Western aid agencies spent most of the donations on administration costs, whereas Muslim organizations, in contrast, try to spent as little as possible on administrative costs. Thus, the organizations frame themselves as sincere and trustworthy with a personalized, emotional rhetoric towards the recipients. They view and address the recipients as brothers and sisters who need help. In this perspective, an aid based on religious solidarity comes to stand in stark contrast to (Western) values of professionalism. Consequently, in relation to the rationale of religious solidarity, personal care and compassion are more important qualities than efficiency and professionalism (Juul Petersen 2015:95).

Despite the strong focus on the brotherhood or *umma*, all representatives from the organizations stressed to me that they help all people regardless of region, religion, language and race. "… we took a mission to go beyond the 'sacred' national borders, even beyond the Ottoman's former borders, and to build bridges and networks between Turkey, the entire Muslim world, and suffering people worldwide" (IHH Senior officer quoted in Tabak 2009:199). In fact, they were all very defensive about their universalist position. They all stressed that they also give aid to non-Muslims, wanting to avoid accusations of discrimination. There is an ongoing discussion in Islam, whether *zakat* donations are restricted to fellow Muslims, or whether they can be used on non-Muslims as well. The Hanafi-school, the largest of the Sunni-Islamic schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) strongly believe that *zakat* can only go to the needy inside the *umma*. This school is the dominant school of Islamic thought in Turkey. However, as explained the organizations do not share this exclusive view – at least not on paper. Some scholars, such as al-Quradawi, the chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, holds the opinion that Muslims should help Jews and Christians, though, with the reservation that *zakat* funds can

only be used outside the *umma*, when they are abundant and cover the needs of all Muslims. This condition, of course, might never be fulfilled (Kochuyt 2009:105). A way around the conditions of *zakat* money is by using non-*zakat* donations (*sadaqa*) on non-Muslims, as these donations are voluntary and therefore free of stipulations (Saddiq 2009:5). Most Muslim NGOs in the West, such as Islamic Relief, stress that Islamic texts do not exclude non-Muslims from receiving aid, and thus perform humanitarian actions independent of religious criteria (Krafess 2005:341). The Turkish NGOs use the same logic. One of the Cansuyu representatives referred to the hadith "a man is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbor is hungry", emphasizing that this 'neighbor' could also be non-Muslim, as it is not specified that he should be Muslim. Thus, justifying their (claimed) universalistic approach using Islamic scriptures, in this case with a hadith.

Although, in practice, most of the organizations' aid is used within the limit of the *umma*. This is apparent by the nature of their aid programs, and the way these are presented on the organizations' websites and in other material clearly show a bias towards helping Muslims. Apart from seasonal religious activities, such as delivering aid during Qurban and Ramadan, they also build mosques and madrassas and take care of the *umma*'s orphans. Thus, a large share of their aid activities is directed especially towards Muslims. Moreover, as seen in table 5.1, the top 13 recipients of Turkish NGO assistance in 2013 were Muslim or majority Muslim countries, with about half of the aid going to Syria (90.95 million USD out of a total of 280.23 USD) (TIKA 2013). This shows that Turkish NGOs generally target Muslim countries, and thus, most likely, so does IHH, Cansuyu and Çare.

TABLE 5.1: Largest recipients of Turkish NGO Assistance (2013)

| Country | Million USD |
|---|---|
| Syria | 93.95 |
| Somalia | 36.10 |
| Niger | 10.84 |
| Palestine | 8.83 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 8.40 |
| Chad | 7.33 |
| Mali | 5.07 |
| Bangladesh | 5.02 |
| Pakistan | 4.74 |
| Burkina Faso | 4.43 |
| Azerbaijan | 4.12 |
| Kazakhstan | 3.79 |
| Egypt | 3.63 |

Numbers from: TIKA (2013)

Besides, in the organizational material there are rarely any examples of the Turkish NGOs helping other groups than Muslims. In the presentation of the aid they give to their donors, they focus primarily on the *umma*. The wish to illustrate to me that they do carry out a universalistic approach is apparent from the following example.

A Cansuyu representative told me that his favorite aid program is the water well program, because it unlike many of their other programs were not restricted to Muslims, but benefitted everyone in the community.

Conclusively, the rationale of solidarity in the brotherhood is used as a way for the Turkish NGOs to collect funds, by framing the aid recipients as brothers and sisters of the Muslim community and thereby also of the donors.

### 5.2.3 A historical responsibility

A final rationale is the idea that Turkey has historical responsibilities stemming from being the nation-state that rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. This rationale of historical responsibility has developed in the Turkish mentality in recent years, closely connected with AKP's new take on Turkish foreign policy. Recently, Turkish Foreign policy has been turned into a domain of epistemological reconstruction, through political and intellectual concepts such as zero-problems-with-neighbors; strategic depth; historical responsibility; humanitarian diplomacy and civilization. These concepts help reconstruct the conceptual map of the people in Turkey regarding their geography, history and outward responsibilities (Tabak 2015:197). This reconstruction has been most popular among religiously-motivated circles, and their internationalist frames of reference and applications have been stimulated through this scope. This has encouraged a rise in nongovernmental internationalist concern with emphasis on a historical responsibility towards the communities and countries which are part of contemporary Islamic civilization (Tabak 2015:197). Thus, for the Turkish faith-based NGOs, the assumed moral responsibility emanating from the "imperial legacy" converges with the religious duty of serving fellow Muslims (Atalay 2012:176), and the idea of historical responsibility thus fits very well into the framing of the responsibility for the *umma*.

IHH and Cansuyu explicitly state that they consider their aid being a historical responsibility. IHH says "That is the IHH's vision: Firstly supporting oppressed groups. We regard it as a historical responsibility. Naturally Muslims are on the top of the list. 90 percent of the oppressed peoples in the world are Muslims" (quote by IHH representative in Çelik and Işeri 2016:436). Likewise, a Cansuyu representative explains "We are trying to do what the Ottoman Empire did. We do not hide this" (quoted in Çelik and Işeri 2016:436). Furthermore, an IHH representative tells "I do not regard Turkey as an ordinary nation-state. It is a country that shouldered serious responsibilities in its past. The Ottoman Empire was dissolved, we are a new state, and we cannot say that the developments there do not interest us. A Bosnian or Egyptian looks to Turkey for help when he faces problems. You cannot escape even if you wish" (quoted in Çelik and Işeri 2016:436).

Conclusively, the organizations frame their rationales for giving aid as religious rewards; defending the dignity of the poor (Muslims); solidarity among the *umma*, and as a responsibility they inherited as descendants from the Ottoman Empire. Thus, they view aid both as a religious duty and as a historical responsibility. In contrast

to that of the West, the Turkish notion of historical responsibility does not stem from a history of colonization and exploitation (and thus guilt), but out of solidarity with their fellow community, and out of responsibility as the protectors of the former Ottoman community.

## 5.3 Strategies of aid

Now I will move to the final of the three frames; the strategies of aid. In other words, how the Turkish NGOs want to achieve their visions. They want to obtain their vision through activities such as 'relief', 'social projects', 'orphan care', 'education', 'drilling of wells', 'healthcare', 'building of mosques and madrasas', and 'seasonal activities' (such as Ramadan and Qurban). These activities are echoing the language of Islamic aid more than that of mainstream development. As can be seen in table 5.2, IHH spent most of their budget on so-called 'social activities', which include emergency aid, orphans, seasonal activities, wells, shelter and vocational training. They spent the least money on cultural activities, such as building mosques, and conducting religious courses. I have not been able to get a budget over Cansuyu and Çare's aid activities, however both organizations highlight projects of the kind that IHH calls 'social activities'. Their main programs are orphan care, water well projects, seasonal activities, mosque and madrasa projects, relief aid and education. Below, I will present five (sometimes overlapping) strategies, which presents different ways of conceptualizing the provision of aid. The strategies are; the provision of immediate relief aid; mission and worship; education; empowerment and human rights.

TABLE 5.2: IHH aid activities (2014) (IHH Annual Report 2015)

| Activities | Budget |
| --- | --- |
| **Education** (School, madrasa, prep school, polytechnic, stationary, scholarship) | $ 3.148.922 |
| **Healthcare** (Hospital, clinic, mobile clinic, medical equipment, medicine, examination, treatment, cataract) | $ 5.642.188 |
| **Social** (Emergency aid, Ramadan, Eid Al Adha, orphans, wells, shelter, vocational training) | $ 106.503.369 |
| **Culture** (Mosque, masjid, culture center, religious course) | $ 1.528.026 |
| Grand total | $ 116.822.506 |

### 5.3.1 Aid as relief

The first of the organizations' strategies is relief aid, which is the straightforward and immediate provision of goods and services, attending to the urgent need of the poor (Juul Petersen 2015:99). In its regulations, Cansuyu states "[The organization] shall provide the survivals of all kinds of disasters such as flood, earthquake, avalance etc... with all kinds of physical and moral support". Likewise, IHH "delivers emergency aid such as food, clothes, blankets, tents, temporary shelters to the internally displaced people and refugees of wars and catastrophes; settles victims with their relatives or charitable host families. It sets up soup kitchens and settlements; builds, rents or buys guesthouses for the victims to stay or contributes to the facilities built for these purposes; delivers financial aid to the victims if it fails to deliver in-kind aid to the areas hit by disasters." (IHH.org.tr). And Çare states that "All kinds of material and spiritual things in the form of food, clothing, cleaning materials, fuel, rent, accommodation, health, education, business establishment, and conditions as required by all the people in need of help with earthquake, flood, fire and other reasons" (Care.org.tr). The strategy of relief is shaped by sentiments of spontaneity, immediacy and urgency, rather than long-term planning and sustainability (Juul Petersen 2015:100). IHH was created spontaneously as a direct response to an immediate need to help the 'desperate Muslim people' in Bosnia (IHH representative). Likewise, Cansuyu was established to "help those who are in difficulty, are hard up, are exposed to disaster and/or war, are stranded or left as an orphan" (Cansuyu representative). Juul Petersen stresses how this immediacy echoes ideologies of traditional humanitarian organizations in the West (Juul Petersen 2015:100). IHH was established because they witnessed misery, just like Henry Dunant witnessed it, and had an urgent wish to help those in need. This points to differences between ideologies of development and humanitarianism. In contrast to the long-term strategies of development, humanitarianism is inherently presentist, focusing on the immediate needs of living human beings in distress; "the lives and welfare of those now living fundamentally matter and cannot be consciously sacrificed in the pursuit of other goals" (Bornstein and Redfield cited in Juul Petersen 2015:100).

Meeting the basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter of the members of Islamic society is a collective responsibility (Ali 2014:24). Thus, relief aid is easily integrated into Islam, which is also evident in the provision of *ifthar* meals in relation with Ramadan, where the three organizations all distribute food to many thousand needy families, and at the same time celebrate an important Islamic tradition. In the Turkish NGOs relief aid, spiritual deprivation is also very important. This is clear from Cansuyu's regulation which stresses the importance of both physical and *moral* help and support after emergencies. IHH built an orphanage in Pakistan after a large earthquake aimed at "protecting the children against the missionary organizations"; illustrating that in connection with emergency aid, spiritual aid is also given priority. Similarly, Çare writes in their declaration for the reasons of establishment that they want to help people suffering from material and *spiritual* deprivation. Thus, religion is framed as an integrated part of relief aid in the three organizations. This integrated

approach is also apparent in the orphanage program, which takes care of physical needs, such as clothes, food and shelter, but where the Muslim upbringing and education is equally important.

### 5.3.2 Aid as *da'wa*

The second strategy is aid as *da´wa* or education about Islam. *Da'wa*, is a more controversial way to frame strategies of aid provision (Juul Petersen 2015:101). This was clear in my meeting with the representatives of the organizations, who all stressed to me that they do not actually engage in missionary activities. As one of the Cansuyu representative explicitly pointed out;

*"[Cansuyu] serves those who are not able to perform their religious activities, do not have the opportunity, do not have a mosque in order for them to believe in and perform their religious activities freely. And also, those people are the ones who have already chosen the religion that they are going to believe in. In other words, it is just in accordance with their wishes. But Cansuyu, for example, have never offered in a Christian village, 'We are going to build a mosque for you and distribute food packages; in return, you are going to convert into Islam'".*

Thus, explaining that they only engage in *da'wa* with recipients who are already Muslim. Likewise, IHH "do not approve of missionary activities", because as the representative points out, the Islamic holy book is the last of the religious books, and in that it is explained that the missionary activities carried out by other religions were never correct practice. In other words, Muslims should not force their religion on others, as it is not Allah's intention. The representative from Çare also explicitly stated that they do not use religious rituals when distributing aid. Meanwhile, the organizations underline the importance of protecting the values and culture of the *umma* in their mission and vision statements. One of IHHs mission statements is to "keep up practicing unchanging values in a changing world" (IHH.org.tr). Likewise, one of Çare's visions is to "preserve the cultural heritage that needs to be protected" (Care.org.tr). Cansuyu "continues to build bridges of soul all across the world", while "lending a helping hand" to "all the suffering people in the world particularly in the world of Islam" (Cansuyu brochure). The Çare representative wrote me that the purpose of their orphan program is "to educate our own collective and beneficial individuals". Thus, while all the organizations strongly emphasize that they do not target non-Muslims with missionary activities, they still carry out *da'wa* and religious education to strengthen the Muslim *umma*. The building of mosques, madrasas and the distribution of Qu'rans are the most concrete examples of this.

It is difficult for a Western non-Muslim to get a complete picture of the organizations' da'wa activities, as they try to downplay them. Juul Petersen along with others had the same experience. She explains this as a sign of the hegemony of mainstream development norms, which requires a sharp distinction between mission and relief. In this perspective da'wa is not a legitimate activity in itself, but must be justified in order to be accepted (2015:102). The Turkish NGOs justify the use of da'wa with many four main reasons. Their main justification is

the one I touched upon above, that what they do is in fact not real da'wa, as it is not aimed on conversion, but targets recipients who are already Muslim. The second reason is that they simply oblige to the wishes of the recipients; the locals want the organizations to builds mosques, so they have a place to perform religious activities. Supporting this view, Çare have a story on their website about a community they visited in Myanmar, where the recipients told them "We do not need to eat, we have to make our mosque". The third justification is the fact that many donors wish to donate towards the building of mosques or the carrying out of other religious activities, and thus the organization simply respond to the wishes of their donors. Their final justification is that they do it as a defense mechanism against the proselytizing efforts of Christian organizations. The IHH representative claimed that Western aid organizations (secular as well as Christian) spent most of their donations on missionary propaganda, both in missionary terms, but also to spread the Western way of life. Likewise, one of Cansuyu's representatives said that while admittingly never witnessing it, they often heard stories of Christian organizations' missionary activities in poor countries, demanding the recipients to convert to Christianity in exchange for food packages. The other Cansuyu representative claimed that in areas where both Christians and Muslims live together, if there is a well in the garden of the church, then the Christian people do not allow the Muslim people to collect water there. IHH writes on their website that "missionary organizations grab millions of children [orphans] who have no one to protect them in Muslim countries and use them for their own missionary interests". Cansuyu explains how they give out Qu'rans in Africa to counter the "propaganda", which has been spread for hundreds of years in the region (Cansuyu magazine). Likewise, while being less explicit in its criticism, Çare also mentioned the history of missionary activities of the Western charities. Thus, they perceive da'wa as a defense against the aggressive behavior of Christian missionary organizations.

Conclusively, the representatives of the organizations do not consider themselves advocates of da'wa, but as Islamic educators, who informs fellow Muslims about Islamic values, norms and morality and protect their cultural identity. Their aim is merely to strengthen the faith and make people stay in Islam. This way of framing missionary activities is closely related to the next strategy I will address, which is aid as education.

### 5.3.3 Aid as education
All three organizations have education programs. Çares is the smallest of these, and directed at Syrian refugees in Turkey. They educate 500 Syrian refugee children in both "scientific and religious curriculum". Likewise, in relation to their mosque and madrasa projects, Cansuyu offers "scholarly and religious" education to children. Cansuyu writes that they want to help Africa get "in touch with its spirit again" through these projects (Cansuyu Magazine). The organizations are mixing 'scientific' or 'scholarly' education, also found in western development aid, with what they call 'cultural' or 'moral' education. IHH build, renovate and refurbish educational institutions, schools and madrasas in regions where education is cut off and the necessary items are unavailable, and at the

same time they also carry out 'cultural activities' in areas where cultural imperialism and missionary activities are predominant. The Turkish NGOs thus connect their educational activities with their da'wa activities. For example, in one of IHH's refugee camps in Syria, called the Ummah Camp, the children's homework is to learn to cite verses from the Qu'ran (IHH Annual Report 2015).

One of the best examples of the connection between 'scholarly' and 'cultural' education is the organizations' orphan programs. A hadith says "If you wish to have a tender heart and be able to realize your goals, have pity on orphans, touch their heads with your hand and feed them from your own food…", showing that the care of orphans should be comprehensive, and include both material and psychological needs (Krafess 2005:333). All three organizations live up to this obligation. IHH; "support them [orphans] until they are able to stand on their own feet and provide for their needs from accommodation to healthcare, to education and food" (IHH.org.tr). Cansuyu's main purpose of their orphan program is to "make financial and moral contributions to the orphans… to reach their sufficiency on their own feet, to provide their education and to prepare their life with their father's compassion" (Cansuyu.org.tr). Likewise, Çare wants to provide "not only food, beverages and shelter to the orphan activity, but also education, hoping to raise people who are useful to their own countries" (Care.org.tr). Thus, apart from helping orphans with food, accommodation and other physical necessities, the orphan programs are also a way to strengthen the *umma*, by raising beneficial individuals, who grow up with religious teachings about what is right and wrong; what Bornstein calls life-style evangelism (Juul Petersen 2015:105). In this way, being a good Muslim is not only about being able to recite the Qu'ran or going to the mosque, but also about treating others well and being active citizens (Juul Petersen 2015:105). The orphan programs are meant to raise good citizens, because as Çare's representative wrote me, the resolution of troubles in the world depends on honest people, of people who considers the rights of others and is useful to other people. Likewise, IHH's education centers seek to "equip children who had to quit school due to civil war or poverty with necessary skills and qualifications to join the society" (IHH.org.tr). Thus, the organizations wish to educate orphans to be beneficial individuals. At the same time, it is important for the organizations that the orphans do not lose their culture. This explains that the Turkish NGOs work to ensure that the orphans stay in their homeland and as far as possible depend on their relatives.

### 5.3.4 Aid as empowerment

The fourth strategy is aid as empowerment. The wish to help eliminate the causes of the suffering is something that quite recently have grown out of Western development aid culture, whereas the Islamic aid culture is more concerned with meeting the immediate needs. However, the Turkish NGOs all carry out programs which focus on long-term development. One of the Cansuyu representatives told me that Cansuyu has a policy based on the proverb "Do not give me the fish, but teach me to fish". This is echoing the language of many Western organizations. Though, instead of calling these programs development projects, they are called "permanent

projects". In IHH, these permanent projects include programs such as vocational training, mosque building, wells and orphanages. Among other initiatives, IHH has started an agricultural school in Somalia with the aim to teach the local population how to handle draughts and climate change, and in turn become self-sustainable. Likewise, Cansuyu wish to contribute to the local development with their livestock distribution program, in which they give poor families livestock to contribute to the economy of the families, so they can send their children to school. So far, the organization has given out 500 livestock to families in Cameroon, which is the pilot country for this new type of project.

Indeed, a representative of IHH has said to Tabak that not doing anything about the causes of the conflicts is "like watching someone die on a full stomach" (2015:201). Thus, there is a recent tendency in the organizations to be more attentive to development projects, or 'permanent projects', echoing the discussions, the development agencies in the West started having decades ago about keeping alive the "well-fed dead" (Barnett 2011:4). IHH is no longer satisfied with just relief activities but also engage in activities such as post-conflict reconstruction, human rights, development and peacebuilding. While Cansuyu and Çare keeps their 'development' activities to ones such as building wells and mosques, vocational training and orphanages (and in Cansuyu's case the livestock distribution program), IHH has taken it a step further and engaged in human rights programs and humanitarian diplomacy, as I will elaborate on below. However, while the Turkish NGOs are not explicitly using the concept of 'empowerment' when talking about them, projects similar to those of the Western aid organizations, such as the livestock distribution program and the agricultural school, are becoming more popular with the organizations. The strategy of developmentalizing Islamic aid has the potential to facilitate entrance into the mainstream aid field, serving as a common language or a 'bridging frame' through which to communicate with mainstream development actors (Juul Petersen 2015:110).

### 5.3.5 Aid as human rights: a call for justice

The final strategy only applies to IHH and is aid as human rights. "We believe that every human being deserves a dignified life without needing assistance of others and this is only possible by upholding justice and human rights" (IHH annual report 2015). Recently, IHH has begun channeling its operational capabilities and motives to fields beyond delivering humanitarian relief, acting as a mediator in disputes and intra-state conflicts (Tabak 2015:193). In addition to the existential emphasis on the *umma* and the AKP's practical support by opening opportunity spaces, the reconstruction of the conceptual map of the people in the country – which includes Turkey's role in global (Muslim) politics, and Turkey's so-called "civilizational" responsibilities – has provided religiously-oriented NGOs with the cognitive and intellectual tools to direct their attention and effort towards the realization of Turkey's internationalist role (Tabak 2015:197). Thus, in recent years, the IHH has intensified their focus on human rights and humanitarian diplomacy programs. IHH runs four activities in the scope of humanitarian diplomacy; first, protecting the life and rights of people in zones of conflicts and war from

terrorism, state oppression and torture; second, preventing the deportation of asylum seekers; third, campaigning to find the missing; advocating for the release of kidnapped, imprisoned or captured civilians in war zones; fourth, mediation (Tabak 2015:201).

Their human rights activities play into the pragmatic particularism they carry out in relation to their aid, and which will be explained in more detail below, as IHH state on their website *"[The] Middle East leads the list of places in the world with highest number human rights violations. Millions of people's lives are constantly under threat while hundreds of thousand people are jailed without any legal precedent. Just like in Syria and Iraq that was plunged into chaos international community turns a blind eye to the human rights violations in Palestine".* Furthermore, the idea of "the West" as oppressors and exploiters are voiced again *"In spite of international conventions and agreements protecting human rights and dignity the violations of human rights and freedoms are escalating around the world while oppressors get away with their crimes. Although social justice should prevail all around the world the human exploitation of economically stronger countries knows no end".*

IHH seek to validate their human rights actions in Islamic terms. The IHH representative told me that the Prophet Muhammed's taking leave message was the first Human Rights Declaration in the world. IHH has taken this as a reference. Likewise, they use a verse in the Qu'ran which says "if two groups of Muslims fight against each other, reconcile them" to explain their activities, in which mediation is considered a sacred duty imposed on the organization by the Qu'ran (in Tabak 2015:201). Another example is that IHH references religious law in relation to the treatment of captives. An IHH representative told Tabak "what really matters is the protection of human life and dignity... regardless of one's religion, either Muslim or non-Muslim, the religious law clearly defines how we treat captives; you will feed them with whatever you eat, you will cloth them with whatever you wear" (cited in Tabak 2015:203). Conclusively, IHH seeks to establish justice to the oppressed (mostly Muslim) peoples, who suffer from the exploitation of powerful countries, and at the same time seeks to live up to Turkey's historical obligations stemming from the period of the Ottoman Empire.

## 5.4 A sacralized or a secularized aid?
I have now established how the organizations frame their visions, rationales and strategies, and will move on to discussing whether they operate with a sacralized or a secularized aid, seeking to position the Turkish NGOs in the continuum of the two aid cultures.

Above, I stated Juul Petersen's three examples of how Muslim NGOs in the West had moved to provide a secularized Muslim aid that resonates with the values of the development aid culture. Summarizing, this has resulted in three developments; first, an aid that responds to conceptions of poverty as material and not spiritual. Second, the adoption of a universalistic approach. Third, the adoption of Western standards of "professionalism", meaning that the NGOs pledge allegiance to the principles of accountability, transparency

and neutrality. Thus, they have undergone much of the same secularization processes to integrate into the mainstream aid culture, as their Christian counterparts did before them. However, this is not the case with the Turkish Muslim NGOs. Although like the gulf NGOs Juul Petersen examined, the Turkish NGOs are also not carrying out a 'clean' sacralized aid, as it was before the 'war on terror'. The Turkish NGOs do to some extend reinterpret and modernize the culture of Islamic aid by adopting, adapting and reinterpreting elements from the mainstream aid culture, integrating them into the Islamic aid culture.

First, as shown above, the Turkish Muslim NGOs carry out an aid that responds to conceptions of poverty as both material and spiritual, and thus, they do not fit into the development cultures notion of poverty as strictly material. In fact, they distance themselves from this way of thinking about poverty. As one of Cansuyu's representatives told me "the secular way of thought in Europe indicates that the needy persons are like parasites that benefit the rights of the rich persons. In a sense, they are [perceived as] a burden to the society… We do not have that understanding". However, in recent years Cansuyu and IHH have engaged in what they call 'permanent projects', which is meant to "make permanent changes in people's lives" (IHH annual report 2015). One of the Cansuyu representatives mentioned the proverb "do not give me a fish, but teach me to fish", and explained that this is a new policy for Cansuyu. The most concrete example of this new policy is their recently launched Livestock distribution program, meant to make the family financially independent. IHH has projects such as agricultural schools and vocational training, meant to be "an investment for the people in the region as it contributes to the development of the country" (IHH annual report 2015). Two of the three Turkish NGOs thus have projects, which are similar to the projects Western aid agencies would call empowerment projects. The focus on productive projects and job opportunities as important tools in the fight against poverty reflects shifts in conceptions of poverty. In these projects poverty is primarily a question of unemployment and lack of income, not about religious ignorance or limited access to mosque and Qu'ran schools, and as such, the solution is economic rather than spiritual empowerment (Juul Petersen 2014:13).

While the Turkish NGOs have initiated some projects in which the notion of poverty is mostly a material one addressing spiritual poverty is still very important for the organizations. This can be illustrated in the example of IHHs activities in Nepal. In Nepal, IHH is building an Islamic Centre because;

*"Nepalese Muslims happen to be the poorest segment of society. They are extremely vulnerable and lonely. Being a Muslim in Nepal is like being a Muslim in Mecca before the Hijrah… There are cases where newly convert Muslims are tortured by their families. We are constantly reminded of the first years of Islam as we listen to their stories. Nepal is a place of temples and icons and being a Muslim here is like being a Muslim in Mecca in the early years of Islam. Each Muslims here are like Prophet Abraham and with each new Muslim an icon is destroyed"* (IHH annual report 2015).

Thus, while wanting to educate and 'empower' the Nepalease Muslims, this is done with a strong focus on spiritual empowerment as well. All three organizations refer to their mosque-building projects and orphanage projects as 'permanent projects'. Hence, while the organizations recently have started several projects meant to empower the local populations with a notion of poverty as material, they still focus largely on spiritual empowerment projects. Conclusively, the NGOs seek to integrate the notion of empowerment into their projects without compromising their focus on poverty as partly spiritual.

Second, the Turkish NGOs seek to avoid accusations of discrimination, arguing that they in principle support a universalistic approach. However, they mostly carry out projects in majority Muslim countries, and in countries with a Muslim minority that needs help. For example, in Malawi and Nepal, where all three Turkish NGOs carry out projects aimed to help the 'oppressed' Muslims minority populations (IHH annual report 2015; Cansuyu magazine; Care.org.tr). Exceptions to this particularism are their emergency aid activities after the earthquakes in Haiti and the Philippines, which both the Cansuyu and IHH representative stressed are largely non-Muslim countries, seeking to use them as examples of their universalistic approach. The Turkish NGOs defend being primarily active in Muslim countries out of pragmatic reasons. Introducing what Juul Petersen refer to as 'pragmatic particularism', aimed at aligning the solidarity driven focus on Muslims with principles of universalism (2014:14). IHH explains that 90 percent of the oppressed peoples in the world are Muslims and therefore "naturally Muslims are on top of the list [of the people IHH help]" (IHH representative quoted in Çelik and Işeri 2016:436). Cansuyu explains "Muslims live in a geography being problematic, having crisis and troubles. Therefore, we help those areas... If there were no trouble in the Islamic geography, then we would be obliged to help those areas in which the Christians live and have trouble" (Cansuyu representative). Another point all three organizations make; the *zakat* donations are conditional, and thus they cannot give them to non-Muslims. Consequently, as *zakat* donations, according to the three organizations, constitute most of their income, it is difficult to see how the NGOs in practice can have a largely universal approach to aid recipients.

The importance of the NGOs to emphasize to me that they do not discriminate shows sensitivity towards the hegemony in the international aid community of the development aid cultures principle of universalism. Thus, the NGOs have sought to align important elements from the Islamic aid culture with values of the mainstream aid culture without radically changing the significance of either (Juul Petersen 2015:14).

Third, while the organizations view themselves as professional, they do not try to live up to the standards of professionalism, dominant in the development aid culture; accountability, transparency and neutrality. While the Turkish NGOs make a virtue out of providing their donors with picture evidence, and even trips, to see how the donation is spent, they do not live up to Western standards of accountability and transparency. Only IHH make an annual report stating how, on what (and in some cases) where they spent their money. I have not

been able to acquire any financial overviews from Cansuyu or Çare, despite several attempts, and no such reports are available on their websites. This might be related to the fact that in Islam, it is not custom to 'brag' about the amount of *sadaqa* and *zakat* you give as the intention behind the donation is the most important, and therefore, there exists a secrecy around these types of donations.

In my experience, the organizations still prefer to hire staff with the same religious (and political) associations as the organization. I lack data to fully examine the organizations claim to professionalism. However, in contrast to the Gulf NGOs Juul Petersen examined who used the Western professionalism as an example to strive to, the Turkish organizations refrain from referencing to "Western" or "International" organizations as a standard to measure themselves or as an ideal towards which they should be striving (2015:15). In fact, the Turkish NGOs talk about Western organizations as incompetent [my choice of word] both in relation to how they handle donations and how they treat the aid recipients. Representatives from Cansuyu and IHH claimed that UN spent 80 or 90 percent of their incoming donations on itself, and only 10 – 20 percent on the recipients. The Turkish aid organizations seem to have an idea of themselves as more professional opposed to the 'selfish' and 'politicized' Western organizations. Thus, instead of adopting, adapting or integrating the western standards of professionalism, the Turkish organizations actually seek to distance themselves from them. This attitude fits into the Turkish mentality of skepticism towards the West.

Furthermore, the Turkish Muslim NGOs are not neutral, in the way the word is understood in Western development aid culture. This is illustrated by the fact that the three Turkish NGOs all wear the Turkish flag on their uniforms and make use of it in several other ways when they are giving out aid. I asked one of the Cansuyu representatives and the IHH representative if wearing the Turkish flag could signal that the organizations worked for the government of Turkey. Both laughed at my question, asking me what flag I wanted them to carry, and explained that carrying the flag is a way to introduce the people who are giving out the aid to the recipients. The Cansuyu representative added that the Turkish flag makes their work abroad easier, in terms of controls and the police, and stated that Cansuyu "benefits from being a Turkish aid organization". This statement is in sharp contrast to the ideas of the Western aid NGOs, which seek to distance themselves from the association with their governments, with the creation of 'humanitarian space'. The Turkish NGOs do not have the same worry, and even consider themselves as "representing Turkey abroad" (Cansuyu representative) and as "contributing to Turkey's recognition and responsibility" (IHH representative in Çelik and Işeri 2016:437). As apparent from their website and Facebook page, Çare has the same relationship to the Turkish flag and promotion of Turkey abroad. Interestingly, in the interviews, the organizations took distance from the Turkish government, in the sense that they all stressed that they are in fact Non-governmental organizations. Thus, for them representing Turkey is not the same as representing the government of Turkey. To illustrate that they are indeed non-governmental, the organizations all gave the example that they, in contrast with Western NGOs,

do not receive funds from the government. The IHH representative told me that the Turkish government might suggest in which regions to help, however, IHH had the right to say no. Hence, the Turkish NGOs frame their own form of 'neutrality' in which they distance themselves from the Turkish government, but not from the country.

This frame quickly falls apart though, if you look at their websites, which all have tributes to how "democracy won" after the attempted coup on 15 July 2016. Likewise, all organizations have pictures from meetings with president Erdogan, and the directors and managers of the organizations are all connected to political parties in Turkey. Cansuyu's director Mustafa Köylü (whom I interviewed) is a former member of the Welfare party, and a supporter of Necmittin Erbakan, which is clear from the fact that Cansuyu has named several mosques and a hospital after him. Thus, the organizations are all more political than they expressed to me during the interviews. Hence, besides carrying out a highly sarcralized aid, they also carry out a (politicized) nationalized aid.

To sum up, the NGOs are only in a very limited degree moving towards integration into the mainstream aid culture. They have integrated the notion of empowerment into their aid programs, and sought to align the dichotomies of universalism and solidarity. However, at the same time, they distance themselves from the professionalism of development aid culture, positioning themselves as the truly professional NGOs as opposed to the Western organizations, which in their opinion in fact are not acting very professionally, or at least not with a professionality that is admirable. Besides, they have sought to establish a balance between promoting Turkey abroad, but not promoting the government. This balance, however, is difficult for them to uphold in practice, as they all have bonds to the government. Hence, they carry out a highly sacralized aid, and also to some degree a politicized or nationalized aid.

# 6. Conclusion

This thesis sought to explore the role of three Turkish Muslim Transnational Organizations by examining their visions, rationales and strategies and on that basis position them in relation to the 'mainstream' Western development aid culture and the Islamic aid culture.

The three Turkish NGOs are strongly embedded in an Islamic aid culture. This is clear from their visions, rationales and strategies. After examining their visions, I found that the most important problems for the organizations are poverty and suffering. The organizations hold a notion of poverty as not only material, but in a high degree also spiritual, and they all seek to relieve spiritual deprivation by building mosques, handing out Qu'rans, and educating the *umma's* children with Islamic teaching. This 'multifaceted conception' of poverty is connected to their other visions; the idea of a dignified life (for Muslims), and in turn the strengthening of the Muslim community, the *umma*. The organizations frame their rationale as religious rewards; defending the

rights of the poor (muslims); solidarity among the *umma*; and as a historical responsibility stemming from the period of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, they view aid as both a religious duty and a historical responsibility, integrating Islamic and national contexts into their aid provision. This shows in their strategies of aid. In other words, the way they seek to achieve their vision through activities such as 'relief', 'social projects', 'orphan care', 'education', 'drilling of wells', 'healthcare', 'building of mosques and madrasas', and 'seasonal activities' and in IHH's case also 'human rights'. These activities are echoing the language of Islamic aid more than that of mainstream development.

However, while being deeply embedded in Islamic aid culture, the organizations have sought to integrate concepts from the development aid culture into the Islamic aid culture. Examples of this is the recently initiated aid activities, or so-called 'permanent projects', which seeks to develop the local communities and aid recipients to become self-sufficient, much like the western concept of 'empowerment'. Thus, the organizations signal a move towards a more material notion of poverty. Another example is that of 'pragmatic particularism', in which the NGOs want to integrate the western concept of universalism to avoid accusations of discrimination. While the NGOs claim that they are universalistic, they hardly give any aid to non-Muslims. They all defend that stand with the fact that most of the poor in the world are Muslims, hence the concept of 'pragmatic particularism'. Finally, the NGOs seem to have adapted the concept of neutrality, and given it another meaning than the one it has in the development aid culture. In contrast with Western aid organizations, the Turkish NGOs proudly wear the flag of their country and even believe 'being Turkish' makes their aid work easier. For them, neutrality is solely about being independent from governments, especially when it comes to funds. Turkish NGOs are not funded by the government (or so they claim), and thus they frame neutrality in this way, seeking to fit the concept of neutrality into a context suitable to that of the Turkish NGOs. A notion of neutrality many western NGOs do not live up to. However, while not admitting it, Turkish NGOs are in many ways closely related to the Turkish government and Turkish politics.

Hence, the role of religion in the three Turkish Muslim Transnational Organizations I examined is strongly influenced by the principles and traditions of Islamic aid culture. Moreover, the Islamic traditions of the Ottoman Empire and thus the perception of a historical responsibility fit very well into this conception of aid provision as sacred.

## 6.1 Recommendations for further research
Turkish Muslim NGOs are greatly understudied, despite being increasingly active on the international aid scene. Studying Turkish Muslim NGOs is in many ways challenging, especially for a Western person. This is partly because of the Turkish attitude and skepticism towards the West, but other challenges in general include the organizations' secrecy about their financial situation and the tense situation in Turkey following the attempted

coup on 15.07 2016. This can be illustrated with the fact that several of the Turkish professors, who wrote the journal articles used in this thesis was jailed on accusations of being part of the so-called FÊTÖ (Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization). The political climate in Turkey makes it difficult to carry out critical research.

However, while I have sought to avoid focusing on the Turkish Muslim NGOs as political actors, it has shown to be difficult to paint a full picture of these NGOs without mentioning their political engagement. There are many reasons for this, these being partly historical as exemplified above. Another big reason might be the type of donors the NGOs attract. It would be fruitful in the efforts to improve the understanding of these NGOs, to look at their donors, and in turn the donors' political affiliations, and how this influences the organizations. Thus, I will recommend to investigate further what role the donors have in relation to the type of aid the organizations carry out.

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