

IHH and AK Party's Parallelism: HNGO and Government Foreign Policy

Paralelisme Antara IHH dan AKP: HNGO dan Dasar Luar Kerajaan

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ABSTRACT

This paper's objective is to understand the growing indirect relation between the humanitarian efforts of Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organization (HNGO) and states' foreign policy. This paper argues that the HNGO Foundation for Human Rights Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) has been acting as a counterpoint to Turkey's leading government since 2002, implementing the foreign policy of Humanitarian Diplomacy (HD) of the ruling AK Party (Justice and Development Party). This study uses the term 'parallel' to address the similarities in actions, particularly in terms of humanitarian narrative between IHH and AK Party. Even though NGOs oftentimes challenge the government, they can also complement each other. Qualitative data was obtained from empirical methodology and International Relations literature which highlights the important role of non-state actors in foreign policy making of nation-state. This paper also incorporates interviews with IHH's committee and primary sources, including official reports from IHH and TİKA.

KEYWORDS

*IHH, AK Party,
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ABSTRAK

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk memahami hubungan tidak langsung yang semakin meningkat antara usaha kemanusiaan Pertubuhan Bukan Kerajaan Kemanusiaan (HNGO) dan dasar luar negara. Artikel ini berhujah bahawa sebuah HNGO iaitu Foundation for Human Rights Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) bertindak sebagai titik balas kepada kerajaan terkemuka Turkiye, AKP (Parti Keadilan dan Pembangunan), sejak 2002 yang melaksanakan dasar luar Diplomasi Kemanusiaan. Kajian ini menggunakan istilah 'parallel' '(selari)' untuk menunjukkan persamaan dalam tindakan, khususnya dari segi naratif kemanusiaan antara IHH dan AKP. Walaupun HNGO dilihat sering mencabar kerajaan, dua entiti ini juga boleh saling melengkapi. Data kualitatif diperoleh daripada metodologi empirikal dan literatur Hubungan Antarabangsa yang memaparkan peranan penting aktor bukan kerajaan dalam penggubalan dasar luar negara. Kertas kerja ini juga menganalisa temu bual dengan jawatankuasa IHH dan merujuk sumber utama, termasuk laporan rasmi daripada IHH dan TİKA.

KATA KUNCI

IHH, AKP, Bantuan Kemanusiaan, Diplomasi Kemanusiaan, HNGO, TİKA

1.0 Introduction

Turkey is well known for being a generous country. It is the fourth largest humanitarian donor among OECD countries, in the aspect of provision of development aid relative to national income (TİKA, 2017). Turkey also hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees, making Turkey the world largest host country for asylum seekers. These humanitarian efforts are fueled by the Humanitarian Diplomacy (HD), which is a term related to “humanitarian foreign policy” that is consistently used by Erdoğan, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). TİKA is known for supporting nations on every continent with a wide range of projects, such as vocational training, agricultural support, health services, and infrastructure. TİKA claims that Turkey has established itself as a global leader in humanitarian assistance (Erbay, 2018). According to their report, the country's emergency and humanitarian aid fund had a total of \$3.2 billion in 2015 and had already exceeded \$8 billion in 2017, which is equivalent to 0.85% of the national dividend (Erbay, 2018). In addition, Turkey contributed 0.95 percent of its national dividend to official development assistance, exceeding the United Nations' goal of 0.7% that year (Erbay, 2018). Turkey has surpassed a number of developed nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, to become the sixth highest ranked country in official development assistance (Erbay, 2018). In 2020, throughout the pandemic, Turkey has provided assistance to at least 57 nations, including Spain, Italy, and the UK, while continuing to be the third-largest recipient of humanitarian aid worldwide (Sabah, Daily Sabah, 2020). Humanitarian Diplomacy indeed reflects AK Party's aspirations to position Turkey as a leader in the region as well as the Muslim world and identify itself as a rising non-Western leader.

IHH is a faith-based organization that started with humanitarian relief during the Bosnian War in 1992. It was the first HNGO in Turkey and has aided 135 countries across 5 continents (IHH, History: IHH's History, 2022), beyond religious and sectarian boundaries, as IHH has aided non-Muslim countries as well (Kara, Mehmet, & Karacaoglu, 2021). IHH was the first Islamic non-governmental organization to engage in Humanitarian Diplomacy (IHH, History: IHH's History, 2022).

In the 1980s, Humanitarian NGOs (HNGOs) were not considered to be important actors in development and humanitarian work, but nowadays NGOs have overtaken the world of development and HNGOs may be either fully independent or in cooperation with the government. To a certain extent, NGOs that

are in cooperation with the government receive funding and often take the government's agenda into consideration on particular issues (Aras, 2015).

In the foreign policy of today's world of accelerating globalization, non-state actors such as HNGOs, the private sector, lobby groups and the media have all been drawn into the process of reshaping policy decisions (Foyle, 2003). To understand Turkey's humanitarian practices and impact, a nuanced understanding of what drives its foreign policy is crucial, because in Turkey, humanitarian assistance has "emerged as one of the major pillars of international relations" (Erten, 2013).

Addressing political and humanitarian aid, Benthall, an anthropologist and a contemporary scholar on transnational Muslim NGOs, has stressed the political discourse of charitable organizations by elucidating it as part of the politics of global humanitarianism (Benthall, 2003). In addition, academic literature is emerging on how official foreign policymakers determine when and how to work with non-state actors in foreign policy implementation (Hocking, 2004).

Are the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) and AK Party (Justice and Development Party) linked? This is often debated amongst Turkish scholars. Even though IHH and other Muslim HNGOs have emerged as heroes in many famine problems and disputes in the eyes of the world, Israel has marked IHH as giving fund to terrorists. According to Köse, IHH is a faith-based organization in Turkey which serves as a vehicle for indirect political patronage. She identifies IHH's social assistance as playing an intermediary role of civil society between state and the public (Köse, 2019). The New York Times has reported on IHH as a "governmental-non-government organization (GONGO) as well as a "quasi, non-governmental organization" (QUANGO) (Bilefski & Arsu, 2010). Chiratti has pointed out that through this dimension of GONGO, having a direct or indirect relationship with government, IHH role could be assumed as tool for AK Party to manipulate civil society in Turkey and the world for its own interests (Chiratti, 2018).

However, IHH has never claimed a direct relationship with AK Party, and neither has the AK Party. However, their Humanitarian Diplomacy and mission to aid the globe, and particularly Muslim nations in need, are parallel. AK Party has been demonstrating appreciation of IHH efforts by visiting IHH projects around the world (IHH, IHH.ORG, 2018). Interestingly, in Ramadhan 2016 at a breaking fast event, exactly two days after Turkey announced its reconciliation with Israel, Erdoğan asked IHH in his speech regarding to Mavi Marmara, "Did you ask me before you set sail? Did you ask my permission?" (Celik&Iseri,2016).

This paper examines the growing indirect relation between the humanitarian efforts of Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (HNGOs) and states' foreign policy, in the context of a case study of IHH and AK Party Humanitarian Diplomacy.

This study consists of three parts. The first part is an explanation of AK Party's Humanitarian Diplomacy. The second part is an examination of the complementary nature of IHH and AK Party's Humanitarian Diplomacy. In the third part, the international role of IHH as a leading actor of Turkey's HNGO in the case of Africa, particularly in Somalia, will be analyzed critically in order to study the harmonization of Humanitarian Diplomacy. Qualitative data obtained from empirical methodology and International Relations literature, by highlighting the important role of non-state in foreign policy making of nation-state. This paper also includes interviews with IHH's committee and primary sources from IHH's official reports and TİKA reports. This paper argues that even though NGOs oftentimes challenge the government, they can also complement each other. In addition, this study utilizes the term 'parallel' to address the similarities in actions, particularly in terms of the humanitarian narrative between IHH and AK Party.

2.0 AK Party and IHH Complementary in Humanitarian Diplomacy

In Turkey, Islamic-based organizations suffered in the aftermath of the military coup on the 28 February 1997 against the 'National Outlook Movement' led by former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of the Islamist Welfare Party. Since then, Islamic grassroots organizations faced stricter bureaucratic control and campaigns to discourage donations (Celik & Iseri, 2016). Nonetheless, when AK Party came to power, these struggles were diminished. AK Party has encouraged HNGOs by facilitating their international activities (Akpınar, 2013). For instance, the AK Party provides Union of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Islamic World (UNIW) and its influential Turkish NGOs with immense support (Atalay, 2013). According to Atalay, government organizations facilitate international connections, give material aid, and occasionally covertly assign political responsibilities to these NGOs (Atalay, 2013). Atalay added, "The Turkish government's interest in employing the UNIW as a soft-power instrument in its foreign-policy strategy is advantageous for the latter as well" (Atalay, 2013). UNIW is the largest Muslim NGO's coalition in the world. Its objective is to ensure cooperation and coordination between non-governmental organizations of the Islamic world, and the projects that has done by UNIW including the mobilizing humanitarian aid organization under the coalition of Muslim HNGOs all over the world. IHH itself is a member of UNIW (UNIW, 2019).

According to Yesiltas, AKP has a liberal-oriented geopolitical practice in shaping Turkey's regional policy, but at the same time has a conservative and Islamist geopolitical vision in terms of connecting history and culture to foreign policy (Yesiltas, 2012). In addition, according to Ozkan and Akgun, Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy implemented by AK Party is perhaps the most conservative party in Turkish politics, representing a new type of political elite with many party leaders and cabinet members can be considered as pious Muslims (Akgun, 2010). In this case, the Islamist geopolitical vision and conservative identity of AK Party is parallel with IHH's identity as an Islamist based HNGO targeting their humanitarian help beyond Turkey. This parallel identity can smoothen both endeavors.

It can be argued that IHH has a quiet massive supporter. This can be shown from the total amount of donations given. According to IHH 2020's annual report, the 2020 annual income of donation and from other activities has reached to 1.03 billion Turkish Lira (IHH, IHH Annual Report 2020, 2020). Ahmet Emin Dag, IHH coordinator and speaker, had said that the conservative society which supports AK party has also contributed aid to IHH, while also stating that IHH has no direct connection to AK Party:

The AK Party is a political party and the IHH is a non-governmental organization. So the two are completely different from each other and the working areas are also separate. For this reason, there is no direct connection between the IHH and the AK Party. Our foundation does not have any ties to any community, ideological movement, or political party. Our foundation carries the foundation features of Islam and is an institution established within the Turkish legal system. The purpose of our organization; To provide assistance to all the people in need, wherever they are hungry or exposed. In doing so, human rights violations, wars, occupations, etc. As well as a preventive role. People from all segments of the society are among the members and donors of the IHH. However, since Turkey is a conservative society, a large part of the people who voted for the AK Party also support the IHH on charity work, so the proportion of those who love IHH on the AKP is big. However, the IHH has donors from different party bases. (Dag, Does IHH have a relationship with AK Party?, 2016)

Davutoglu's conviction verified the perfect combination of four sources of power and bolstered the willingness to implement humanitarian diplomacy. The first power is the ministry as the main source of power. Second includes the persistence of political authority, the power of political will, and dedication (Davutoglu, Turkey's Humanitarian Diplomacy: Objectives, Challenges and Prospects, 2013). In third and fourth place are synthesis between ministry and related institution, as well as the genuine source

of power being support from the people in AK Party vision. It could be said that one of the institutions are HNGOs in Turkey, including IHH, which is in parallel with AK Party in terms of humanitarian diplomacy and crisis. An interview about the reasons IHH has sent aid beyond boundaries to the international dimension contained the following quotation:

"IHH is an international charity. It implements urgent humanitarian and development assistance in war, disaster and crisis regions. For this reason, it does not matter whether the war zone or the disaster-affected geographical area is a Muslim country or a Muslim country. Our foundation does not discriminate on the basis of religion, language, race or gender. It is the most important priority. However, when we look at the communities that are experiencing war and occupation today, it can be seen that these regions are the regions where the Muslims live. In our work, our priority has always been to help needy people. For example, when assistance is provided to Africa because of the famine, Muslims as well as those belonging to other religions and beliefs are being helped. Apart from Hurricane Katrina, aid work we have done in Italy, Haiti, Japan, Philippines and Nepal earthquakes are examples of this understanding." (Dag, Does IHH have a relationship with AK Party?, 2016)

According to Ahmet Emin Dag, IHH coordinator and speaker, in his talk in IHH Help School (Dag, IHH Help School, 2016), the three main pillars of IHH are to help people; humanitarian right activism; and humanitarian diplomacy. As for IHH's humanitarian diplomacy aspect, IHH has been a mediator of the Kurdish national issue in Turkey, in addition to becoming a mediator for issues related to ISIS, Bangsamoro in the Philippines and the Uyghur conflict in Asia. IHH has a more comprehensive understanding of humanitarian diplomacy, which sometimes goes beyond providing life-saving protection to those in need to mediate between conflicting parties in order to reach a lasting peace.

In case in Philippines, IHH played the role of peace mediator as Third-Party Monitoring Team (TPMT) in the Bangsamoro peace process and, consequently, in the disarmament of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The Philippines government did not readily accept the IHH's nomination by the MILF as the international NGO member, which resulted in their membership in the TPMT (Tabak, 2015). However, the MILF demanded that the IHH join the TPMT as a mediator. According to a senior IHH official, the MILF insisted on the IHH because the IHH "had a history of close relations with the Moro Muslims, provided humanitarian relief whenever needed... and because the MILF knew that the IHH would support the best interests of the Muslims in the country." This was the explanation for the MILF's insistence (Tabak, 2015). In the meantime, it would appear that Turkey also played a significant role in bringing the peace process in the Philippines to fruition. Turkey was a member of the International Contact Group that helped facilitate the peace talks that Malaysia started in 2010, before taking over as chair of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB). However, despite acknowledging that Turkey's participation in the Philippine peace process was crucial and promising, the IHH was dissatisfied with Turkey's performance, particularly in its role as a facilitator (Tabak, 2015). This is due to the fact that between 2010 and 2012, Turkey did not send a diplomat to follow the negotiations and rarely attended, whereas Japan and the United Kingdom never missed a meeting (Tabak, 2015). However, Ebrahim, the Chairman of MILF, made a subsequent statement which suggests that Turkey was influential, and that the MILF viewed the roles of the Turkish government and the IHH as complementary (Tabak, 2015).

In the case of Gaza in Palestine in 2010, IHH together with 6 international nongovernmental organization launched an initiative called Mavi Marmara, a freedom flotilla to transport donated aid supplies to Gaza and end the siege. When Israeli forces attacked the Mavi Marmara, the flotilla's flagship, in international waters, they killed ten civilians and injured 56 others, killing more than 700 peace activists from 37 nations, including parliamentary deputies, international journalists, and Nobel Peace Prize winners (IHH, IHH, 2010). The incident was historic for the IHH because the campaign to

help Gaza directly challenged government policy and sought to increase awareness throughout the world of Israel's actions and the human suffering in the area. IHH saw the Mavi Marmara incident as a successful campaign, despite the controversy it generated, notably in the eyes of the world media (Tabak, 2015). This was because it drew attention to Israel's "savagery" on a global scale (Bayram, 2015). Due to the strained relations between Turkey and Israel as a result of this incident, Turkey's foreign policy was also affected. Turkey subsequently became a strong third party in the Middle East, claiming sovereignty over the Palestinian issue.

As for Syria, Turkey has not only helped with the humanitarian crisis in Syria, but has also hosted the most Syrian refugees in the world and made it easier for international aid organizations to ship supplies across international borders (Seysane & Tanriverdi-Seysane, 2022). In humanitarian crises, Turkish humanitarian aid officials and humanitarian NGO workers demonstrate and use diplomatic skills to carry out their day-to-day activities on the ground, such as negotiating with local authorities, gaining access to victims, providing expertise, and mobilizing, deploying, and coordinating resources (Seysane & Tanriverdi-Seysane, 2022). This statement is supported by IHH's effort in 2013, when they helped to free more than 2,000 prisoners and captives in Syria (IHH, History: IHH's History, 2022). IHH also has five coordination centers in Turkey and four in Syria to manage humanitarian aid in the Syrian crisis (IHH, Comcec.org, 2016).

IHH is also associated with a foundation for international students in Turkey. The founder of IHH, Bulent Yildirim, had the idea of establishing the international students foundation called UDEF, Uluslarasi Ogrenci Dernekleri Federasyonu, in order to give assistance and provide welfare (Dag, Does IHH have a relationship with AK Party?, 2016). IHH and UDEF made a partnership to offer scholarships for international students in Turkey (IHH, IHH, 2014). International student in Turkey has mushroomed rapidly. Statistics from the Council of Higher Education show that the number of international students in Turkey has grown by one hundred thousand every year (Turkey S. I., 2022). IHH has similar initiatives to the Turkish government's offering of the Turkiye Burslari Scholarship for international students.

IHH offers vocational training in a range of professions including farming, carpentry, handicrafts, tailoring and hairdressing (Akpinar, 2013). IHH had received awards from the government, including the Grand National Assembly of Turkey's "Outstanding Service Award in 2007". The Department of Waqf of Republic of Turkey defines IHH as "The Foundation Which Uses its Resources with Highest Efficiency" (IHH, History: IHH's History, 2022). IHH also receive an award from AK Party Civil Society Awareness Awards Contest in the Humanitarian Aid Category in 2017 (IHH, History: IHH's History, 2022). These prestigious awards exhibit a symbol of recognition and appreciation from AK Party to coax further efforts on pursuing humanitarian aid. All of these efforts would not have been successfully realized without support from the government. Examples of support from the government are include public interest status (Article 27) granted by the government to allow HNGO to collect donations without prior bureaucratic permission and provide additional public incentives to donate (Celik & Iseri, 2016). The government has also given tax-free status for expenditures, property and vehicles and also decreased HNGOs' financial and administrative burden; for example, the transfer of real estate from the state to HNGOs has been simplified, and HNGO vehicles are able to use the black identifications plates normally permitted for use only by government vehicles. For donors, annual tax credits for donating to HNGOs could total as much as five percent of their income (Celik & Iseri, 2016).

3.0 IHH and AK Party Parallelism: Case of Humanitarian aid in Africa

The "Africa Policy" was developed in 1998 by Turkey's Foreign Ministry along with an 'Action Plan' paper (Genc & Tekin, 2014). The Africa Policy sought to increase Turkey's influence on the continent by encouraging political, economic, and cultural co-operation as well as diplomatic contacts. Subsequently in 2005, government declares it as 'African Year (Genc & Tekin, 2014). In the same year,

Turkey sought and was granted "observer status" within the African Union (AU). Erdogan also visited Ethiopia and South Africa in 2005. Since 2008, the African Union has recognized Turkey as a strategic partner. In the same year, Turkey hosted the first-ever Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit, which was attended by participants from 50 different African nations (Özkan, 2008). Turkey was portrayed as one of the new major actors in Africa (along with China, India, and Brazil) in the "African Economic Outlook 2011" produced by the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Genc & Tekin, 2014).

In addition to Turkey's historical ties to the countries of North Africa, Ankara is becoming increasingly involved in the economies of Sub-Saharan countries. After turmoil in many Arab countries in Arab Spring and Syrian War, Turkey lost access to some of its most profitable markets. As a way to reduce reliance on traditional Middle Eastern trading partners, African sources were tapped. Africa is an important untapped market for Turkish exports. In 2011, Turkish trade with sub-Saharan Africa reached \$7.5 billion, up 72% from the previous year and tenfold since 2000 (Langan, 2016). Turkey needed to protect their access to African markets. In term of investment, observers proclaimed that the stalled EU accession talk is a reason for the Turkish elites to go beyond their circle of influences outside traditional geographies (Langan, 2016, s. 2).

Turkey and Africa diplomatic relations are aggressively shown from the multidimensional foreign policy of AK Party. By symbolically highlighting a shared geography, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has positioned Turkey as a committed regional player and claimed that it been a part of the continent for centuries, sharing historical, religious, and economic ties: "Relations with Africa constitutes one of the prime orientations of Turkish foreign policy. Being an Afro-Eurasian state, Turkey's policy of opening up to Africa is not just the reflection of a transient political and economic expectation" (Turkey, 2014). Turkey also assumes an international leadership role in the region by stressing the commonality of Turkey's and Africa's goals and norms (Umut & Civekoglu, 2012). Turkey's growing ties with Africa represent not only the rise of various cooperation opportunities likely to yield beneficial economic gains for the country, but also a forum in which Turkey can enhance its political visibility in world affairs and it was a major step in presenting Ankara as a regional power, as Turkey's successful bid for a seat at the United Nation security council (Umut & Civekoglu, 2012). Turkey is frequently portrayed as a benevolent actor because, in contrast to Western powers, it does not carry any colonial baggage from its past. All of these reasons have led Turkey to become an investor in Africa as a humanitarian actor, peacebuilder and trade partner.

Somalia was the first African country that drew Turkey's attention to convey humanitarian aid. Erdoğan was the first foreign world leader to visit refugee camps and hospitals as an eyewitness to the desolation caused by a dreadful drought. Erdoğan also visited Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti in January 2015. After this visit, Erdoğan stated that Turkey would increase aid, investment and diplomatic links with Africa (Sabah, Daily Sabah, 2017). Ankara's involvement in Somalia can be elucidated with a special focus, policy focal points on three approaches. First is humanitarianism as the main theme. Second is convergence of state apparatus and civil society organization on the ground and third approach is the regional approach, as Turkey realized that the "Somalia issue" goes beyond the nation state and includes regional and global dimensions (Orakci M. O., 2015). A combination of the first and second approaches has paved the way for IHH to support this policy, as shown when IHH participated in the meetings first called by the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gul, on 4 August 2011, for the coordination of contributions and humanitarian assistance to fight deadly droughts and famine in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda. Subsequently, a second meeting was called by the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erdoğan, on 21 August 2011, on his way back from a visit to Somalia along with the Prime Minister (IHH, East Africa Activities, 2011).

Humanitarian Diplomacy is one of the tools used to advance Turkey's political and economic interest. In 2017, Turkey officiated its largest military training exercise in Mogadishu, Somalia. In addition, Turkey has been associated in the maintenance of International Mogadishu Airport, the Somalia Mogadishu Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Training and Research Hospital and Mogadishu Port (Mukami, 2020). Also in 2017, Erdoğan stated during a press conference with Somali President Mohamed Farmaajo:

“Famine is affecting 14 million people across Africa, primarily women and children. Many created western nations are playing the ostrich notwithstanding such human misfortunes. However, we are making every effort to provide assistance through the Turkish Red Crescent and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)” (Altunisik, 2019)

In 1996, IHH launched its first inventiveness in Africa, when it went to Somalia to escort humanitarian aid (Akgun, 2010). IHH opened the largest orphanage complex in Somalia. IHH has taken up the cause of Somali agriculture, and it has built wells and constructed irrigation channels to provide clean drinking water and increase agricultural capacity (Orakci M. O., 2015). IHH also has well-drilling projects and supports technical and vocational education by setting up schools and hospitals. Mehmet Ozkan and Birol Akgun in their writing about IHH in Africa: Solidarity, Self-Developed and Brotherhood, had interviewed Aydin, Director of Foreign Relations of the IHH (Akgun, 2010). Aydin stated that IHH opened more than 1000 well across Africa. This was due to a lack of available clean water during their intensification projects in the region from 1999-2000 (Akgun, 2010).

Serhat Orakci, IHH Africa Director, said that calls came from Somalis in April 2011 to IHH offices seeking for aid (Orakci, 2012). Eventually, in July 2011, UN has announced the famine in Somalia. IHH almost failed to attract people in Turkey to donate about Somalia's famine because of lack awareness regarding to this issue. However, Turkey later convened an emergency meeting, at which \$350 million were collected to assist with the famine. The visit of Turkish Prime Minister during Ramadan increased awareness, as journalists accompanied the trip. The visit of the Turkish prime minister to Somalia during Ramadan had a big effect for many in Somalia (Orakci, 2012). He was accompanied by a large number of journalists, and images of his trip were widely shared and bolstered support for Turkey in Somalia. The manner in which Turkish citizens queued to make contributions to IHH's Somalia appeal during Ramadan was unprecedented (Orakci, 2012).

Turkey's perceptions of Somalia have changed as a result of engagement over the past year, and Turkish Airlines' new routes between Istanbul and Mogadishu have also been significant. These have greatly simplified the work of local organizations. The new opening route by Turkish Airlines to many African countries for instance has also pave easy way for HNGO in Turkey to escort aid, remarkably during the time of Somalia's drought, Turkish Airline open a new route to Mogadishu. Moreover, the growth of opening the new Turkish embassy in Africa, for instance, helped IHH tremendously, as one of the IHH's officer stated:

“For example, having a Turkish embassy in a country helps you a great deal. Turkey has opened many embassies; that is a good thing. Also, THY's direct flights make a great contribution. [...] We naturally cooperate with the government, for example, with the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı – AFAD) in case of disasters. In aid activities we cooperate with TİKA. But that should not be understood as if we are under their control. We exchange ideas with governmental bodies. We cooperate on matters related to logistics. In the case of the Nepal earthquake, the transfer of our equipment was done by AFAD. Sometimes we also meet their needs. We can go to places they cannot go. [...] We provide information to governmental bodies. [...] But that does not mean Ankara pays attention to all of your suggestions.” (Celik & Iseri, 2016)

IHH has played a crucial role in Turkey's existence and relation in a vigorous growth of development in Africa in humanitarian aid dimension. IHH has performed approximately 100,000 cataract surgeries on needy patients in 14 African nations over the past decade. This project began ten years ago under the adage "If you see, they will see." People in 14 African nations were helped by the project, including Somalia, Sudan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Mali, Chad, Uganda, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Niger, and Mozambique (Ozdemir, 2017). According to the IHH, the World Health Organization, the Islamic Development Bank, TİKA, and the Health Ministry worked together on that project (Ozdemir, 2017).

Many Somalis expressed that Turkey is a country which "talks to Somalis and stands beside them." Somalis believe Turkey wants to cultivate a distinct identity and image from other donors, which is viewed with suspicion (Sucuoglu & Jason Stearns, 2016). Turkish schools have provided 1,000 scholarships to Somali students (Orakci, 2012).

4.0 Conclusion

Iseri and Celik have pointed out that HNGO may face serious risks if they are seen as actors directly supported by the Turkish government and serving its interests – that is, as GONGOs – as they could be targeted by hostile groups. Another side effect of being viewed as an arm of the current government may be that these HNGOs could unintentionally deter potential donors and recruits from the broader political spectrum of Turkish citizens (Celik & Iseri, 2016). Facing these risks, IHH have not given up; to the contrary, they have become more dynamically active.

Aras and Akpinar outlined the key characteristic of Turkish HNGO, which is flexibility (Aras, 2015). Flexibility is an important feature of Turkish HNGOs which suggests that they do not confine themselves to a limited area of work, for instance, IHH's mediation in Syria between the opposition and the Assad government for the release of the Iranians held by the opposition as well as the release of the Turkish journalists held by the Syrian intelligence are examples of this type of interaction and flexibility (Akpinar, 2013) This implies a characteristic possessed by IHH but not possessed by AK Party, and is an advantage for AK Party to resolve problems in the region. As Davutoglu noted, Turkey is trying to carry out an active policy towards the problems caused by the humanitarian tragedies in the region, while it continues to exert efforts to find a political solution to these problems (Sabah, Daily Sabah, 2014). This characteristic feature also implies the importance of HNGO's role in contributing to AK Party's foreign policy and soft power.

Constructivists have emphasized that identities define states' interests and constructivist theory dimension developed by Alexander Wendt that state identity is an essential element in elucidating international relation (Bozgaglioglu, 2003). AK Party's Pro-Islamic Liberalism identity is a synthesis between Islamic conservatism and liberalism, and has established an ideological hegemony (Kosebalaban, 2011). AK Party has manifested its identity and explained its foreign policy in the context of broadening power and geopolitical Islamist vision throughout the region, and particularly on Islamic countries generally, using humanitarian aid as a tool.

HNGOs such as IHH act as auxiliaries in the pursuit of foreign policy, since their identity and aims are in parallel to those of the state. IHH has proven that it has benefitted from and contributed to the humanitarian foreign policy as well as the identity that AK Party manifest to be the leading role in Muslim politics. AK Party supported other initiations by IHH, but this does not imply that the IHH and the government collaborate. Instead, it shows that they share a similar sense of duty and internationalist pro-activism (Tabak, 2015). The impact from this indirect relation has been pragmatic and constructive, as both parties have mutually benefitted while achieving their goals through humanitarian aid and diplomacy.

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