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**DIPLOMACIA HUMANITARE NË BOTËN ISLAME, E KALUARA
DHE KONTEKSTI MODERN I QASJES SË SAJ:
НДИМА HUMANITARE DHE NDËRMJETËSIMI NË KONFLIKT**

**ХУМАНИТАРНАТА ДИПЛОМАТИЈА ВО ИСЛАМСКИОТ СВЕТ,
МИНАТОТО И СОВРЕМЕНИОТ КОНТЕКСТ НА НЕЈЗИНИОТ
ПРИСТАП:
ХУМАНИТАРНА ПОМОШ И ПОСРЕДУВАЊЕ ВО КОНФЛИКТИ**

**HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD, THE
PAST AND THE MODERN CONTEXT OF ITS APPROACH:
HUMANITARIAN AID, AND CONFLICT MEDIATION**

Abstract

This paper examines the concept of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world, exploring its historical roots and modern approaches. It highlights examples from early Islamic history that demonstrate the importance of humanitarian aid and assistance to those in need, both within and outside the Muslim community. While on the other hand, highlights examples from early Islamic history that demonstrate the importance of humanitarian diplomacy, such as the protection of non-combatants, securing food and shelter, and restoring bonds between conflicting parties.

This paper also focuses on the contemporary context of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world, discussing the roles of countries like Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates in providing aid, engaging in negotiations, and mediating conflicts.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the continuity of humanitarian attention and the expansion of mediation efforts in the Islamic world, highlighting the importance of Islamic values in guiding these endeavors.

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1. Introduction

Humanitarian diplomacy indicates the use of diplomatic strategies by world political leaders in the interest of people affected by emergencies resulting from natural disasters or wars. Furthermore, humanitarian diplomacy is involved in the protection of Human Rights around the world and consequently preventing conflicts by promoting peace through mediation and negotiations, but not insubstantial, as there are many other efforts that Humanitarian Diplomacy can provide to vulnerable people affected by crises worldwide (Minear and Smith, 2007; Veuthey, 2012; De Lauri, 2018). While the first one to use the term “humanitarian diplomacy” is Oscar Straus at the beginning of the 20th century (Straus, 1912).

Whereas humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world is of high standing in providing different aid and assistance to people affected by natural disasters or other humanitarian emergencies. An example might be Türkiye and the Gulf countries of the Arabian Peninsula, which have offered many humanitarian aids in the conflicts of the last decades, such as in Bosnia, Kosova, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, etc. (De Lauri, 2018; Pericoli, 2021; V. and G. Seysane, 2022) as well as a significant donation in the time of Coronavirus (Soubrier, 2020), while the new approach of humanitarian diplomacy came to expression with the role of Türkiye in aid and negotiations with the groups in conflict in Syria and Somalia (Huda & Ismail, 2022), together with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (De Lauri, 2018), especially with the remarkable role of Qatar in mediating peace in Afghanistan between US and Taliban by signing peace agreement in Doha, Qatar (29 February 2020), but also the mediation of Qatar in Sudan, Yemen and Lebanon, and lastly the efforts and mediation of Türkiye between Ukraine and Russia.

These are just a few examples of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world, as there are many other organizations and actors who are also working to provide aid and support to people affected by crises in the region, thus creating and raising international authority.

Although the context of this subject is to comprehend how the meaning of humanitarian diplomacy has expanded in the Islamic world from humanitarian aid for vulnerable people to the new experience of negotiation and conflict mediation in recent years. Considering this as a renewal of humanitarian diplomacy from the memory of the past.

2. Background significance

There have been many studies about humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world, but most of them are just inferring the current situation. While the purpose of this research is to investigate and examine the significance of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world, its roots, and legacy, from the

early ages, and particularly the connection between humanitarian diplomacy in the modern context of its new approach, such as negotiations and mediation as part of the foreign affairs policy of the countries involved.

Humanitarian aid and charity are well known in the Islamic world, as they also have a religious basis. Charity from Muslim countries to people in need worldwide was a continuous activity for centuries, that was done in the wake of religious-based humanitarian activities, and this aid was not limited to Muslims only. Unfortunately, state-based humanitarianism had some interruptions for nearly two centuries.

In the last two centuries, most of the Muslim countries were colonized by European powers. A majority of Muslims experienced the contempt of colonialists, who were so thoroughly ingrained with the modern ethos that they had no choice but to be appalled at the backwardness, inefficiency, fatalism, and corruption of Muslim society. Last century, while Muslim countries were seeking independence, many bitter conflicts were left behind by the European occupation (Armstrong, 2000).

However, following independence, Muslim countries began gathering wealth, especially Gulf countries. Along with improving the lives of their citizens and developing their infrastructure, Gulf countries focused on restoring humanitarianism among Muslim nations and beyond. As a result, in the last few decades, there has been a new approach to this kind of humanitarianism when some Muslim countries emerge on continuing to implement Humanitarian Diplomacy while widening its' practical meaning and expansion of their political influence in the region and beyond. In the meantime, the historical facts lead us to a valuable heritage of humanitarian diplomacy of the Islamic world from the past. However, in this article, I will limit myself to only a few examples from both eras to highlight this point.

3. Humanitarian Diplomacy in the early Islam

As I mentioned above, Islam emphasizes humanitarian acts as an integral part of its religious practice. Many Quranic and prophetic texts indicate, define, and order humanitarian action. There are either obligatory or inciting aspects to them, and non-Muslims are not excluded from receiving humanitarian aid (Krafess, 2005). Humanitarian actions and charity are mentioned many times in Quran, like: “*They are` those who donate in prosperity and adversity, control their anger, and pardon others. And Allah loves the good-doers.*” (Qur’an, 3:134, English translation: Khattab, 2020); as the other verse, that says charity must also be shown to enemies (prisoners): “*And give food—despite their desire for it—to the poor, the orphan, and the captive.*” (Qur’an, 76:8, English translation: Khattab, 2020); Likewise, as Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) says in a hadith: “*The believer’s shade on the Day of Resurrection will be his charity.*” (Hadith, transmitted by Ahmad, hadith no. 151)

Thus, we can say that the whole history of Islam contains examples of humanitarian diplomacy. Not just giving charity, but securing food and shelter, protecting non-combatants, and restoring the bonds between conflicting parties.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which is mandated by the Geneva Convention as the guardian of International Humanitarian Law, notes that Al-Awza'i (Islamic scholar, y. 707 – 774) and Al-Shaybani (Islamic scholar, y. 749 – 805) paved the way for modern international law of armed conflict by asserting humanity in the midst of war. These early codifiers of the Islamic law of war affirmed the principle of humanity (Aly, 2014). And most of the fundamental categories of protection that the Geneva Conventions offer were already contained in Islamic teachings more than a millennium before the codification of the Conventions (Bennoune, 1994).

In this regard, the International Committee of the Red Cross legal adviser, Al-Dawoody, noted that Islamic legal literature that deals with the regulation of armed conflict, is vast and detailed, and it is apparent that classical Muslim jurists had in mind more or less the same philosophical and legal principles that are incorporated into modern International Humanitarian Law. It is the goal of Islamic legislation to humanize armed conflict by protecting the lives of non-combatants, respecting the dignity of enemy combatants, and prohibiting damage to the property of an adversary (Al-Dawoody, 2017). Therefore, in International Humanitarian Law, the concept of humanitarian corridors and the protection of specific categories of individuals intersects with the Islamic concept of safe passage, or "Aman", which refers to "safe conduct and quarter" in Islamic law, and in some ways entails the protection and specific rights that are provided to non-combatants, humanitarian relief and aid workers. These rights can accomplish the same objectives, in some respects, as the "hors de combat" status: in the words of the classical jurists (Munir, 2022; Al-Dawoody, 2017). This is not strange to Islamic law as it complies with Qur'an verses, like this one: "*And if anyone from the polytheists asks for your protection 'O Prophet', grant it to them so they may hear the Word of Allah, then escort them to a place of safety, for they are a people who have no knowledge.*" (Qur'an, 9:6, English translation: Khattab, 2020).

In Islamic traditions, conflict is considered to be a negative phenomenon that negatively impact the social order and, therefore, should be avoided. As part of Islam's teachings, Muslims are instructed to take action to resolve conflicts and restore harmony since conflict is considered harmful to both divine harmony and communal harmony (Abu-Nimer, 1996). And it is based on verses in the Qur'an, such as the following: "*...If they do so, then make peace between both 'groups' in all fairness and act justly. Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.*" (Qur'an, 49:9, English translation: Khattab, 2020).

In this context, mediation as a tool of humanitarian diplomacy, is a very praised assignment in Islam. Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) said: "*Shall I not tell you of what is better in degree than (voluntary) fasting, prayer, and charity?*"

They said: “*Of course!*” The Prophet said: “*Reconciliation between people. Verily, corrupted relations between people is the razor.*” (Hadith, transmitted by Tirmidhi, hadith no. 2509; and Abu Dawud, hadith no. 4919)

Dr. Aroua cited a prominent Muslim scholar Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawzi (1292-1350), that according to him, “conflict is defined as the situation where the origins are incompatible, the ways are divergent, or the goals are contradictory.” And it should also be noted that conflict does not seem to be an inherent characteristic of the parties. In contrast, it is viewed as a broken relationship between parties that needs to be repaired. In accordance with this tradition, the Islamic Arabic term for mediation is “bond mending” (*islāhu dhātīl bayn*). The existence of such a breakdown in a relationship may be related to people who are not necessarily “bad” in any way (Aroua, 2017).

While the frames of mediation are determined by the Qur’anic verses and hadiths, we found that the essential component for reconciliation is “just”, no matter in what case or between whom: “*O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then know that Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do.*” (Qur’an, 4:135, English translation: Khattab, 2020). As the other verse commands the same: “*O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.*” (Qur’an, 5:8, English translation: Khattab, 2020).

In the same way, Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) encouraged his companions to be just when bond mending between people by saying: “*...To judge justly between two persons is regarded as Charity (Sadaqa)...*” (Hadith, transmitted by Bukhari, hadith no. 2989).

As we can see, “just” is the starting point principle that mediation should commence, and it has been achieved many times in Islamic history.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was known as “The Trustworthy” for his high level of faithfulness, which made him an excellent mediator when it came to resolving conflicts in Mecca. In addition, he was accepted by all the communities in Yathrib (Medina) as a mediator and arbitrator between the tribes. And his role was recognized in the Constitution of Madina as a mediator-arbitrator. One of his most well-known interventions involved the process of relocating the Black Stone of Ka’aba, which involved him being the only person who was trusted by the three major Meccan tribes to mediate their dispute over who would carry and move the Black Stone. This is a compelling example of this skill of the Prophet (pbuh), who was often in consultation with the leaders of the various communities and demonstrated a willingness to listen to the viewpoints of each community (Yetkin, 2006).

In addition, the “Hudaybiya Treaty”, which was signed between the Prophet (pbuh) and the Meccans, represents an example of a public “sulh” – reconciliation, which aimed to establish a 10-year ceasefire (Weigert, 1997), despite unfavorable terms for the Muslim community. As the peace had been achieved, the Prophet (pbuh) favored reconciliation and a long-term peace treaty, rather than some advantages that could be enjoyed by the Muslim community.

And lastly, I would like to add an example from the Middle Age of Islam as a continuation of the trace of humanitarian diplomacy engagement of Muslims, the example of Sultan Bayezid, the monarch of the Ottoman Empire, at the end of the 15th century. In the Alhambra’s resplendent Hall of the Ambassadors, Ferdinand and Isabella, Spanish monarchs, signed a commandment on March 31, 1492, called the Alhambra Decree, expelling the Jews from Spain. According to this document, Spanish Jews were given four months to decide whether to abandon their religion or leave the land on which their families had lived for over a thousand years (Tartakoff, 2022). When Sultan Bayezid, learned of all the persecutions of the Jews by the king of Spain, he heard that the Jews were seeking refuge. Afterward, Sultan Bayezid decreed that all Jews fleeing Spain or Portugal would be welcomed into his dominions without restriction. It was ordered that Ottoman officials do everything in their power to facilitate the entry of Iberian Jews into Ottoman territory, and strict punishments were implemented against all those who mistreated the immigrants or caused them any harm. Deported Jews numbered in the thousands and tens of thousands and filled the territory of the Ottoman Empire (especially, the territory of today’s Türkiye) (Shaw, 1991).

4. The new approach of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world

In the modern context of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic World, there are many examples in the last two-three decades, like The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and state members of OIC together with several United Nations (UN) organizations and The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), that works with governments and non-governmental organizations in the Islamic world and other parts of the world. Where together they provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters, like in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, etc. (De Lauri, 2018; Pericoli, 2021). But, in this writing, I want to point out only a few examples. For instance, Türkiye is a prominent Islamic country in this field. By providing aid and support to millions of people affected by conflicts and crises in Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen. And is considered a humanitarian diplomacy leader in the region (Huda & Ismail, 2022). As we have Qatar and the UAE from Gulf countries with remarkable efforts in humanitarian diplomacy. Qatar's role in raising humanitarian relief efforts throughout

the Muslim world and beyond, with huge relief efforts by Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Palestine, etc., affected by conflicts and crises, as well as the mediation of Qatar, (Barakat, 2014; 2019; De Lauri 2018) I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Additionally, the example of UAE in this regard, where Dubai International Humanitarian City (IHC) is currently the largest humanitarian aid warehouse in the Middle East (Gokalp, 2020).

4.1 Türkiye

The increasing relief activities and NGOs in Türkiye are compatible with the containment of Islamic movements in the socio-political sphere and their reemergence in contemporary Turkish politics. Türkiye's economic progress and foreign policy ambitions contribute to its prominence on the global scene today (Cevik, 2014).

There have been several studies that have examined the motivations for Türkiye involvement in humanitarian diplomacy. Considering its growing status as a medium-sized global player, Türkiye has become more involved in humanitarianism. On this matter, as a soft power tool, the use of humanitarian diplomacy can serve as a means of demonstrating global solidarity and problem-solving skills - which are expected from rising powers - and increasing their political influence. As a result of this diplomatic strategy, the country has been able to enhance its international credibility and prestige on the humanitarian front (V. and G. Seysane, 2022).

Türkiye took advantage of the opportunity to optimize its resources in order to bring about the impact of humanitarian diplomacy on other nations by utilizing an alternative approach to public diplomacy. As a tool for synthesizing the position of a state in the global marketplace, humanitarian diplomacy serves as an essential tool. As an example of a benevolent and righteous initiative, the "Turkish model" in humanitarian diplomacy shows the international community how to manage refugee crises (Huda and Ismail, 2022). This can be considered a continuation of the efforts of humanitarian diplomacy from the example of Sultan Bayezid that we have mentioned above, as similar efforts are continuing.

Today Türkiye is a respected mediator in the Middle East, Africa, and beyond the Islamic world. In this context, we can mention the mediation of Türkiye between Ukraine and Russia. Amid a devastating war between two ostensible allies, Türkiye might have found itself in a bind. Instead, Türkiye, a NATO member, continues to supply weapons to Ukraine, while refusing to impose sanctions on Russia, and is respected by both sides enough to serve as a mediator between the two parties (Osterlund, 2022).

4.2 Qatar

Based on a review of aid recipient countries over the past decade, Qatar's humanitarian program has reached more than 25 countries, many of which are non-Arab, and includes several international organizations, including the World Food Program, UNESCO, UNHCR, WHO, etc. (De Lauri, 2018).

Qatar is a new donor country that combines support for peace negotiations with the active use of humanitarian and development aid. It was during the Arab Spring of 2011 that Qatar's foreign policy underwent a significant change, shifting from one of independence to one of partisanship and intervention to influence the outcome of the Arab uprisings. Qatar has evolved its Humanitarian Diplomacy program from a reactive, short-term strategy to one that employs a more sophisticated, long-term approach built on the lessons learned from previous failures and successes (Barakat, 2019).

It is generally agreed that Qatar's strengths as a mediator helped to bring parties to the negotiating table, although the efforts were more successful when it came to defusing short-term crises rather than providing long-term resolutions to conflicts. There are several notable mediating efforts by Qatar, including mediation between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels in 2007-2008, negotiations to defuse a political conflict in Lebanon, and facilitation of discussions between the Sudanese government and various rebel groups in Darfur. (Barakat, 2014), and the remarkable role of Qatar in mediating peace in Afghanistan in two parallel lines, one between US and Taliban by signing peace agreement in Doha, Qatar (29 February 2020) and the second line inter-Afghan peace talks (between Taliban and the Afghan government, 12 September 2020), personally attended in both events.

Many observers have interpreted Qatar's mediation efforts as part of its efforts to brand itself while building its global reputation, as evidenced by the state's investment in Al Jazeera and its bid for hosting the 2006 Asia Games and the 2022 World Cup. Hence, the mediation efforts of the Qatari government can be viewed as an opportunity for the government to enhance its diplomatic credentials and build its reputation as an influential player in the region. Qatari officials additionally describe mediation as a moral obligation while emphasizing the broader strategic advantages of engaging in mediation (Barakat, 2014).

4.3 United Arab Emirates

The founding father of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, emphasized humanitarianism as a foreign policy priority and as a significant part of Emirati identity during the 1970s. Based on Gross National Income, the United Arab Emirates became the third largest donor of humanitarian aid in 2016 (Gokalp, 2020).

As an ambitious political and economic actor in the international arena, the UAE's Humanitarian Diplomacy today is to be understood as part of a broader shift in UAE foreign policy to one of dynamic engagement with the rest of the world (De Lauri, 2018).

Meanwhile, several initiatives were implemented by the United Arab Emirates in order to strengthen its position in the Middle East and North Africa. Several types of international roles have been adopted by the UAE in order to realize this concept. To begin with, the UAE assumed the role of a donor that invests resources to assist friendly partners in developing their economies and prospering. In addition, the UAE has adopted the role of a promoter, seeking opportunities to recruit new partners actively. During this time, a framework for humanitarian diplomacy was created as a result of the UAE's increasing international involvement in foreign aid (Krzyszowski, 2022).

The United Arab Emirates has emerged as a regional power over the last two decades with an increasingly assertive foreign policy and a prominent role in the humanitarian field, as well as visibility in the fields of foreign aid and strategic investment. Several strategic foreign policy and security goals have also been pursued by the UAE in the Balkans and the Middle East through both foreign and development aid. The UAE took an active role in Kosovo in the aftermath of the war by contributing more than 1,000 troops to the NATO peacekeeping force (KFOR). Additionally, it provided substantial assistance to refugees as part of its humanitarian relief efforts. It is important to note that Kosovo was the largest humanitarian mission undertaken by the UAE ever. (Bartlett, 2017).

Conclusions

Humanitarian Diplomacy in the Islamic world is reviewed here in two dimensions, the conventional approach, and the modern perspective of its activity, emphasizing the significance of this new approach. Highlighting the importance of humanitarian aid activities in the Islamic world, with the added influence of negotiations and mediation in resolving conflicts in the daily life of people affected by wars.

In this very brief essay, I presented only a few examples among many others. As my point was just to emphasize the continuity of humanitarian attention of the Islamic world toward all kinds of emergencies, natural disasters, or wars, based on Islamic values, with examples from the early ages of Islam to this day. In addition to the modern context of its approach, with the new experience of humanitarian diplomacy, like negotiations and mediation, as part of the foreign affairs policy of these countries in peacebuilding and conflict recovery within the Muslim countries and beyond.

In conclusion, Muslim countries, especially Türkiye and other Gulf countries, have enough capacity and they can expand their mediation efforts

in the future. This can be done by cooperating with other international players from the Islamic world or other countries, bearing in mind that it is the credibility and objectivity of mediators that contribute to the successful resolution of conflicts.

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* All hadiths (sayings) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) are cited from the website: Sunnah.com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) where are all 9 (nine) books of hadith.