

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

MASTER THESIS

**SOFT POWER OF TURKEY AND NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS:
THE CASE OF IDDEF**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKILET**

ISTANBUL, 2023

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by

MUHAMMAD AKBAR ANGKASA

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sociology**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKILET**

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APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’NİN YUMUŞAK GÜCÜ VE SİVİL TOPLUM KURULUŞLARI: İDDEF ÖRNEĞİ

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Kasım 2022, 133 Sayfa

İsmailağa, sivil toplum kuruluşları aracılığıyla yurt içinde ve yurt dışında inanç temelli faaliyetler yürüten dini bir cemaattir. İDDEF (İnsana Değer Veren Dernekler Federasyonu), başta Afrika ve Asya ülkeleri olmak üzere uluslararası düzeyde dinin tasavvufi boyutuyla eğitim ve insani yardım faaliyetleri yürüten İsmailağa'nın sivil toplum kuruluşlarından biridir. Bu araştırma, İsmailağa'nın bir sivil toplum oluştururken sahip olduğu değerleri araştırmakla birlikte İDDEF'in yaptığı uluslararası düzeydeki faaliyetlerin yumuşak güç bağlamında Türkiye'nin diplomatik ilişkilerini etkileyip etkilemediğini konu edinmektedir. Bu tezde cemaat, kimlik ve sivil toplumla ilgili kavramsal ve kuramsal çerçeve üzerinde durulmuş ve katılımcı gözlem, derinlemesine mülakat ve literatür taraması metotları kullanılarak nitel bir araştırma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma, ilk olarak İsmailağa cemaatinin İDDEF'in faaliyetlerinin merkezini oluşturan değer ve zihniyetini betimlemektedir. Daha sonra da İDDEF'in dini, tasavvufi ve ehli sünnet değerlerine dayalı uluslararası eğitim ve insani yardım faaliyetlerini analiz etmek suretiyle yumuşak güç bağlamında Türk dış politikasını nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cemaat, İDDEF, İsmailağa, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu, Türkiye, Yumuşak Güç.

ABSTRACT

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Ismailaga is a religious community implementing faith-based activities at the domestic and international levels with the instrument of an NGO, IDDEF. IDDEF (The Federation of Organizations that Value Humanity) is one of the NGOs of Ismailaga conducting educational and humanitarian aid activities with the religious spirit of Sufism at the international level, chiefly in African and Asian countries. This study first explores the values of Ismailaga in creating a civil society and analyzes IDDEF's international activities affecting Turkey's diplomatic relations in the context of soft power. In this thesis, the conceptual and theoretical framework related to community, identity, and civil society is emphasized, and qualitative research is carried out using participant observation, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and a literature review. The study describes the values and mentality of the Ismailaga community, which forms the centre of IDDEF's activities, and analyzes IDDEF's international education and humanitarian aid activities based on religious, Sufistic, and *ahlusunnah* (orthodox) values, revealing how it affects Turkish foreign policy in the context of soft power.

Keywords: Community, IDDEF, Ismailaga, NGO, Soft Power, Turkey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Understanding the dynamics of a religious community which is one of the important social movements practising Islam in the Turkish social context, appeared to be a compelling and challenging topic to me. In this research, I take a relatively traditional religious community of Ismailaga which is regarded far from modern values. However, the community entered a new phase by using technological means and developing its activities outside of the Turkish border, taking a transnational role by visiting Muslim population countries. The motto of the orthodox Ismailaga, "building madrasas in all corners of Turkey", widened to a broader context of "all corners of the world". The international activities structurally started in 2009 with the emergence of IDDEF.

Since international actions are related to the state, thus the activities of IDDEF are indirectly related to Turkish foreign policy. As a representative of the religious community, IDDEF consciously tries to execute its religious idealism in different levels of socio-theological approach. This thesis argues that the state benefits from humanitarian activities in establishing its soft power. While doing that, it is observed that the two institutions of state and NGO have a mutually beneficial relationship. Through the analysis, the thesis attempts to investigate how the social actions constructively directed by religion are still relevant in contemporary international politics.

The study took two years, starting from 2020 to early 2022. I am grateful to the IDDEF staff who helped me by providing interviewing opportunities related to their experiences and the information they shared. And I am also very grateful to the interviewees in the countries of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, who have explained how the IDDEF impacts people and governments.

I thank my supervisor, Prof. Alev ERKILET, for guiding, motivating, and providing precise recommendations regarding the main content of the thesis from the beginning

till the end. Last and not least, I am very grateful to my beloved wife, Refika ANGKASA, who has been able to accompany, help, support, and enrich my thesis.

Muhammad Akbar ANGKASA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZ	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Topic and Goal	1
1.2. Research Questions	3
1.3. Methodology	4
1.4. Literature Review	7
1.5. Limitations.....	10
1.6. The Content of the Study.....	10
CHAPTER II THEORY AND CONCEPTS	12
2.1. Community and Tariqa.....	12
2.1.1. Community.....	13
2.1.2. Religious Community and Tariqa	14
2.2. Civil Society and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations).....	16
2.3. Power.....	19
2.3.1. Realism and Neorealism.....	20
2.3.2. Liberalism and Neoliberalism	22
2.3.3. Realism and Liberalism on Soft Power	24
2.4. Types of Power.....	25
2.4.1. Hard Power.....	26
2.4.2. Soft Power	26
2.4.3. Smart Power	27
2.5. Soft Power: The Definition, Instruments, and Sources	28
2.5.1. The Origin of Soft Power	28
2.5.2. Sources of Soft Power	31
2.5.2.1. Culture	31
2.5.2.2. Political Values.....	32
2.5.2.3. Foreign Policy	33
2.5.3. Instruments of Soft Power	34

2.5.3.1. State and Civilian Institutions	35
2.6. Religion as Soft Power	36
2.6.1. Sharing Ideas	39
2.6.2. Advocacy	40
2.6.3. Pastoral Activity	40
2.6.4. Humanitarian Aid	40
2.6.5. Peacebuilding	40
2.6.6. Conflict Resolution.....	41
2.6.7. Faith-based Diplomacy.....	41
2.7. Conclusion.....	42
CHAPTER III TURKISH SOFT POWER AND THE INSTRUMENTS.....	43
3.1. Turkish Soft Power.....	44
3.2. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Its Activities ...	47
3.2.1. Effects of TIKA on Soft Power	48
3.3. The Yunus Emre Institute and Its Activities	49
3.3.1. Effects of Yunus Emre Institute on Soft Power	50
3.4. Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) and Its Activities	51
3.4.1. Effects of The Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) on Soft Power	53
3.5. The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) and Its Activities	53
3.5.1. Effects of The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) on Soft Power.....	55
3.6. Conclusion.....	56
CHAPTER IV THE COMMUNITY OF ISMAILAGA.....	58
4.1. Naqshbandiya	58
4.2. The Life of Mahmud Efendi (1929-2022).....	59
4.3. The Emergence of Ismailaga.....	60
4.4. Institutions within the Community of Ismailaga.....	63
4.5. Thoughts and Activities of Ismailaga.....	67
4.5.1. Implementing Islam in Worldly Life.....	67
4.5.2. Tariqa Activities as Re-generation and Preservation	69
4.5.3. Spreading Thoughts via Emri bil Meruf, Madrasa, and Dressings	71
4.5.3. Political Stance	75
4.6. Conclusion.....	78

CHAPTER V IDDEF: AN AFFILIATED RELIGIOUS NGO OF ISMAILAGA..	80
5.1. The Emergence of IDDEF.....	80
5.2. The Administration of IDDEF	83
5.3. The Goals of IDDEF	85
5.4. Principles and Approaches of IDDEF	87
5.4.1. The Understanding of Ahlusunnah.....	87
5.4.2. Sufism.....	88
5.4.3. Muslim Union of Ummah	90
5.4.4. Professionality	91
5.5. IDDEF Activities as Soft Power	93
5.5.1. The Statistic of IDDEF Humanitarian Aid.....	95
5.5.2. Education.....	99
5.5.3. Humanitarian Aid.....	104
5.5.4. Carrying the Flag in Every Activity	108
5.5.5. NGOs Move Faster Than Governments	109
5.5.6. Strategic Communication: A Mean to Enter Into a Conservative Population State.....	110
5.5.7. Gaining the Trust of the Government.....	110
5.5.8. Establishment of Good Relations with the Statesmen.....	111
5.5.9. Contribution to Government Infrastructure Development	112
5.5.10. Creating Humanitarian Diplomacy Between Clans	112
5.5.11. Becoming an Actor for Balancing Power Within Muslim Minority.....	114
5.5.12. Creating an Attractive Religious Approach in Modern Context.....	114
5.5.13. Approaching Through the Local Social System.....	115
5.5.14. Stimulating Islamic History as a Capital to Strengthen Modern Diplomatic Relations.....	116
5.5.15. The Attractiveness of Being Tolerant	117
5.5.16. Strengthening Sufi-Ahlussunah Communities	117
5.6. Conclusion.....	118
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....	119
REFERENCES.....	124
APPENDIXES	132
APPENDIX A	132
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. The Category of Hard and Soft Power.....	27
Table 3.1. Presidents' Visits to African Countries.....	45
Table 5.1. The Details of IDDEF Activities in 2021.....	96



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. The Diagram of Relationship Between State, Community, and Civil Society.....	13
Figure 4.1. The Relation Between the Community and NGOs.....	66
Figure 4.2. The Interception of Traditional and Modern Institutions.....	66
Figure 4.3. The Three Main Approaches of Ismailaga.....	72
Figure 5.1. The Interception of IDDEF and Ismailaga Identity.....	84
Figure 5.2. The Statistic of Qurban <i>Hisse</i> from 2018 Until 2022.....	98
Figure 5.3. The Effect of <i>Ahlussuna</i> Through Education.....	104
Figure 5.4. One of the Water Wells in Mali.....	106
Figure 5.5. Visit of One Clan Leader in Ghana.....	116

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Topic and Goal

Today, a religious community can be understood as a social phenomenon organically created in modern society in a constructive or reactive and persisting manner to form a sense of togetherness, and spiritual security, and create a unique world within the present hegemonical modern system on the border of a nation-state. Generally, the religious community based its existence on principles, identity, and values. As a social group, the religious community carries a passive behaviour toward political power; depending on pragmatic relations with the government to maintain a mutual interest.¹

The constructed values inspire and generate socio-religious actions (the religion mentioned in the research is Islam). Islam has many sides in terms of social action, including spiritual, humanitarian, and political activities. These three aspects have social, economic, and political functions which are strongly related to the community and the state.

The relationship between a religious community and the state can be analyzed regarding political common interest. Political communication benefits two sides; the community can spread the influence, increasing the follower, and creating credibility. On the other hand, the state takes benefit of domestic politics in terms of getting voters, and at the same time, also might positively affect foreign policy by creating soft power. In other words, the political relations between religious communities and the state are not only at the level of domestic politics but can also have an impact on international politics, where religious communities with their NGOs have international actions impacting the state's credibility, economic trust, and diplomatic relations.

¹ Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1990), p.62.

This study examines the Ismailaga community in Turkey and its NGO, namely The Federation of Organizations that Value Humanity² (IDDEF) from the perspective of soft power. According to Ismailaga, religious values are considered the source and reason for their social actions. These values are shaped via the teaching of Sufism in the form of Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya *tariqa*. Religion is considered the main guide in spiritual activities, education, and humanitarian aid. Ismailaga's international activities with IDDEF, focus on social contributions to Muslim communities in the world.

IDDEF, as an NGO, played a role in the realm of religion, humanity, and education, by being active in Muslim-populated countries in the continents of Asia, Europe, America, and most generally in Africa. This role is coherent with the general foreign policy of the Turkish Republic, particularly in the AK Party era.

The Turkish government from 2002 until now has been ruled by the AK Party, a conservative-liberal party separated from *Milli Görüş* (an Islamic movement spearheaded by Necmettin Erbakan and today politically represented by Saadet Party). The AK Party government, in the name of freedom reduced religious restrictions and opened opportunities to carry out religious activities.³

In fact, during the AK Party's reign, Turkey's foreign policy followed a similar strategy to the regime of Turgut Özal, who was trying to expand Turkish international political influence towards Muslim-populated countries. Furthermore, Ahmet Davutoğlu's theory of "strategic depth" was applied to create diplomatic relations with the international world. This strategy focused on the aspects of pragmatism by using cultural capital and historical heritage. The creation of soft power with the participation of religious movements became a strategic initiative to be a regional power.⁴ Therefore, this thesis focuses on IDDEF's activities related to the general aim of Turkish foreign policy during the period of the AK Party.

² The concept of IDDEF comes from its Turkish name as İnsana Değer Veren Dernekler Federasyonu. The latter, the concept of IDDEF, will be used during the thesis.

³ The example is like the exemption of the use of veils in universities in 2008 and followed by government workers in general in 2012.

⁴ Davutoğlu, Ahmet. "Stratejik derinlik." *İstanbul: Küre Yayınları* 110 (2011). p.1-3.

Analyzing the issue of the religious community and its international activities interconnected with state foreign policy requires an interdisciplinary approach. It concerns the field of political sociology due to the relationship between the religious community and the state. On the other hand, this study is regarded under the sociology of international relations due to the engagement with international actions of humanitarian aid that create soft power.⁵ Faruk Yalvaç argues that the main concern of the sociology of International Relations is the relationship between sociology and international concerns regarding social change.⁶

As a result, the thesis topic, in general, requires an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on observing the influence of religion in a socio-political context that affects international politics. The study takes the case of Ismailaga and IDDEF, which indirectly plays a role in international politics. Specifically, the study also aims to examine how a Turkish religious NGO (IDDEF) is formed from a religious community and sets the agenda, and creates the projects constructing the religious soft power to strengthen diplomatic relations. To observe and understand the issue, the study offers following research questions.

1.2. Research Questions

This study analyzes the structure of IDDEF, which has a background in the religious community of Ismailaga, and focuses on its international actions that create the soft power of Turkey. In theory, IDDEF is an NGO, that officially doesn't have an official relationship with the government. However, by implementing constructive international activities, it is assumed that it is indirectly affecting Turkey's international politics. To explore and analyze the case, the thesis formulates one main question and five sub-questions to analyze the first question.

1. How does a traditional understanding of religion, that is, Sufism, in the form of a community create an NGO implementing religious-based social activities

⁵ Başar Baysal, Uluç Karakaş, Çağla Lüleci Sula, *Uluslararası Siyaset Sosyolojisi ve Güvenlik: Küresel Terörizm, Sınır Güvenliği ve Vatandaşlık Örnekleri*, Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi 74 (2019), p.1206.

⁶ Bilal Yıldırım, Review on: *Uluslararası İlişkiler Sosyolojisi- Faruk Yalvaç*, Accessed September 19, 2022. https://www.bisav.org.tr/Bulten/207/1273/uluslararasi_iliskiler_sosyolojisi

in other countries coherent with the state foreign policy in the sense of creating soft power?

The following are the sub-questions related to the main question:

1. How is religion considered a source of soft power for Turkey?
2. How is the identity of Ismailaga constructed, which finally created the NGO of IDDEF?
2. What are the values, approaches, and purpose of IDDEF in carrying out its activities?
3. How does IDDEF realize its international socio-religious activities, which are based on its strategic agenda?
4. How are IDDEF's socio-religious activities coherent with Turkish foreign policy and create soft power?

1.3. Methodology

This thesis is based on a qualitative study that combines the methodology of literature review and fieldwork. The literature review requires an analysis of the previous research to shed light on the context of the topic in general. The fieldwork is conducted to obtain primary data, which is analyzed interpretatively with the concepts and theories. During the fieldwork, two qualitative methodologies are combined; participant observation, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.⁷

Participant observation is a method used to find out deeply about the object under study by positioning the subject as an object so that the world of meaning and feeling experienced by the object can be discovered by the subject. This is useful for researchers not to get hung up on biases and stereotypes. Often this approach is used in ethnographic research.⁸ The research combines overt⁹ and covert¹⁰ observations

⁷ Sharan B., Merriam, and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), p. 2-3.

⁸ Barbara B. Kawulich, *Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method*, *Qualitative Social Research* 6 (2005), p.4.

⁹ The object know that they are being studied.

¹⁰ The objects don't know that they are being studied.

using the participant observations methodology. This study involved participant observations in the office of IDDEF in Istanbul from 2020 to 2022 and in five countries, including Burkina Faso (12.02.2021-14.02.2021), Guinea (08.12.2021-13.12.2021), Ghana (04.04.2022-12.04.2022), Mali (15.04.2022-20.04.2022), and Nigeria (07.07.2022-17.07.2022).

The interview is a qualitative method relying on verbal data obtained from the interviewees as the source of knowledge. The research combines the semi-structured and in-depth interviews which are also referred to as ethnographic interviews. The semi-structured is defined as an interview proposing some questions; nonetheless, at the same time, the interviewer can ask random questions related to the topic to receive comprehensive data. The in-depth interview doesn't specify a planned and structural questionnaire; nevertheless, the interviewer aims to perceive the comprehensive information related to the context of the topic. The purpose of the combination of these two types is to get more reliable and broader information.¹¹

Adopting the qualitative method in this research is assumed to be more accurate in analyzing the case. Since it provides the observation of the deep layer of the social phenomenon through direct communication, experiencing the social life during observation, and initiating to acknowledge how people react towards NGO activities. The responses and reactions of the people during the observation are conceived as data of their perception towards the activities of IDDEF and Turkey. Thus, Dorothy E. Smith adopts the qualitative method to observe the institution in the study of "Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People".¹²

The interviews are conducted with twenty-three people. All interviewees are IDDEF workers. They have different backgrounds, some of them having Ismailaga backgrounds those who live in Turkey and abroad. Those staff who live in Turkey are the ones who have visited African countries. The interviewees that live in other countries are only the staff of IDDEF. All the interviewees are men due to the condition

¹¹ Merriam, Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, p. 110. & Amir B. Marvasti, *Qualitative Research in Sociology*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p.14-17.

¹² Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2005)

that the important and strategic positions of the staff are mostly men. Regarding location, the interviews are conducted in Turkey, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria. One of the interviews is conducted online. The languages that are spoken during the interviews are Turkish, English, and Arabic. During the observation, the researcher is exposed to learning French because some of the observed countries are French spoken.¹³

The interviews conducted in Istanbul were mostly in the Turkish language, especially with the Turkish citizen interviewees. The interviewees are those who have a long experience and affluent information regarding the institution, activities, and countries that they have visited, due to the time that they spent abroad. Even though the nationality of the researcher is not Turkish, there was no specific barrier like miscommunication or stereotype, because, as an observant, the researcher had established personal communication with the interviewees before the research. Because of this condition, the interviewees recognized the researcher as an insider. Nevertheless, taking notes and having the tape records during the interview created a sense of distance which showed the researcher as if he was not in ordinary communication, but rather in “a more special” conversation.

Several interviews that proceeded in Istanbul were conducted with non-Turkish citizens who were the IDDEF staff that came to Istanbul for a visit purpose. The interviews are conducted in Arabic and Turkish, in which, Arabic is considered a vernacular language among the staff abroad. To some extent, even though the researcher had personal relations with the interviewees before the research, compared to the workers in Turkey, there is more distance in communication. However, to create a better and calm atmosphere, the researcher tried to eliminate the barriers by changing topics during the interview.

The participant observation was conducted in Turkey and five Western African countries. During the observation in Turkey, notes were taken to record the details regarding the dynamism, office culture, and mentality of the NGO. The participant

¹³ Shazia Jamshed, *Qualitative Research Method-Interviewing and Observation*, Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy 5-4 (2014), p. 87.

observations are also conducted in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, respectively. In general, the duration of observation in every country took one week. The researcher tried to collect data about various IDDEF activities. At the same time, he also proposed unstructured interview questions to conceive the contextual condition. Those data are later categorized and systematized according to the research questions.

During the observation, while being within the circle of the institution, it is enough to use the language of Arabic in general. In addition, while communicating with the society in English-spoken countries like Ghana and Nigeria, the barriers were less than those faced in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali due to the French language.

1.4. Literature Review

The study focuses on the religious community of Ismailaga with the NGO of IDDEF implementing humanitarian activities in Muslim-populated countries. The study analyzes the issues related to the religious community, politics, and international relations. There are several studies conducted on the institutions such as IHH, Turkish Red Crescent, TRT, Yunus Emre Institute, and TIKA from the perspective of international relations. However, this research combines the perspective of international relations and sociology by taking the religious communities, religion, NGOs, and their sociological relation with the state into consideration. The relationship studied is how a social actor through religion can impact on the state with its international actions.

The studies that discuss Turkey and its soft power, which is related to this research are below.

Ibrahim Kalın explains the potential of Turkey's soft power collaboration between all actors to act strategically is optimized.¹⁴ Gül Oral examines Turkish foreign policy from the perspective of the instruments used to formulate the soft power between

¹⁴ Ibrahim Kalın, Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey, PERCEPTIONS 16/3 (2011), p.5-23.

2009-2014.¹⁵ Hazerfen Gültekin researches a similar topic about Turkish foreign policy in the context of soft power during the period of the AK Party.¹⁶ In addition, the research of Yahya Karataş articulates the application of soft power between 2002-2017.¹⁷ Mehmet Can Işık discusses the role of Turkey as a Muslim-populated country that can be politically an attractive model for Arab countries after the Arab Spring.¹⁸ These studies generally shed light on the research topic by showing the implementation of soft power by the Turkish government, especially during the regime of the AK Party.

Tunç Demirtaş's research aims to recognize how Turkish foreign policy is shaped toward African countries during the period of the AK Party.¹⁹ Serhat İbrahimoglu analyzes the development of Turkish influence on central African countries regarding humanitarian aid and education, in which the development is compatible with Turkish foreign policy.²⁰ Sema Er studies particularly the international education implemented by the Turkish government through the government institutions such as TİKA, Yunus Emre, YTB, and the Religious Directorate which are related to the creation of soft power.²¹ Radouan Yousfi's thesis regarding Turkey's soft power toward East and North Africa elaborates on the instruments used by the state and society. Religion was considered a soft power when other societies strictly adopted religious values.²² Merve Karaoglan articulates Turkish soft power towards Africa post-2005 in general, and especially Somalia post-2011, to benefit from the country by engaging in technology and construction business.²³ These studies mentioned above-helped researchers to see

¹⁵ Gul Oral, *The Assessment of Turkey as a Soft Power: 2009-2014*, Master Thesis, (Kadir Has University, 2016), p.1-5.

¹⁶ Hazerfen Gültekin, *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power Concept in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Master Thesis, (University of Beykent, 2015) p.67-69.

¹⁷ Yahya Karataş, *The Soft Power Strategy and Instruments in Foreign Policy of Turkey (2002-2017)*, Master Thesis, (University of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt, 2019) p. 76-77.

¹⁸ Mehmet Can Işık, *Turkish Soft Power Implementations and Results in the Middle East during 2003-2011*, Master Thesis, (University of Hasan Kalyoncu, 2019) p. 86-87.

¹⁹ Tunç Demirtaş, *Türkiye'nin Afrika Politikasında Yumuşak Güç Unsurunun Rolü*, Master Thesis, (Uludağ University, 2015), p.1-3.

²⁰ Serhat İbrahimoglu, *The Strategy towards Northern Central Countries by Turkey's Soft Power Potential*, Master Thesis, (University of Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl, 2015) p. 71-72.

²¹ Sema Er, *Turkey's International Education Activities in the Context of Soft Power Concept*, Master Thesis, (University of Atılım, 2015) p. 62-63.

²² Radouan Yousfi, *Turkey's Soft Power Policy toward North and East Africa*, Master Thesis, (University of Beykent, 2016) p. 132-133.

²³ Merve Karaoglan, *Turkey's Soft Power Policies in Africa: Somalia Example*, Master Thesis, (University of Gazi, 2018) p. 112-114.

Turkey's soft power in Africa. However, these studies didn't handle the role of Turkish civil-religious NGOs

Zeynep Atalay, in her dissertation entitled "Global Islam in The Age of Civil Society: Transnational Civil Society, Religion, and Power," focuses more on the role of Islam in transnational NGOs under UNIW (The Union of NGOs of the Islamic World). Atalay scrutinizes the compatibility between Islam as a religious teaching, and the civil society frame, which is an instrument of people initiative in a modern context. The approach used by Atalay does not focus on international relations but rather on sociological investigation.²⁴ In this regard, particularly by taking the issue from the perspective of sociology, her study is similar to the approach that is adopted in this study. Nonetheless, the difference between her research and mine is the case of study; this thesis is focusing on an NGO established by a religious community.

Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu examines the effect of IHH in determining Turkey's foreign policy where he considered that the role of post-World War II NGOs in the international arena was more significant than in the previous period. IHH, in this case, succeeded in contributing to the formation of foreign policy, mainly when IHH acted in a country that had not yet established diplomatic relations with Turkey.²⁵ Şahinoğlu's thesis does not particularly focus on the concept of soft power, rather, he focuses more on the relationship between NGOs and the state in terms of foreign policy. His research broadly focuses on international relations as opposed to the study of sociology. In addition, the study doesn't take the issue of how a community with a particular ideology seeks to spread to other societies. He acknowledges that IHH had an essential role in the formation of humane diplomacy and in shaping public opinion. The studies mentioned above are considered international relations studies due to the approaches and concepts. In addition, most institutions analyzed are government institutions, except the studies of Atalay and Şahinoğlu. However, their studies didn't take the issue of a community that found an NGO. This research focuses on the NGOs supported by the religious community. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no

²⁴ Zeynep Atalay, *Global Islam in The Age of Civil Society: Transnational Civil Society, Religion, and Power*, PhD Thesis, (University of Maryland, 2012), p.215-220.

²⁵ Muhammed Cemal Şahinoğlu, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları (STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi: İnsan Hak Ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH) Özelinde İnsani Yardım Kuruluşları Örneği*, Phd Thesis, (Selçuk University, 2020), p.1-10.

research particularly conducting Ismailaga and IDDEF concerning their international actions affecting the foreign policy of Turkey in terms of soft power.

1.5. Limitations

The research seeks to understand IDDEF, beginning from the formation process within Ismailaga, religious values, and activities that create social and political consequences which influence the soft power of Turkey. Therefore, this study specifically focuses on IDDEF and doesn't aim to generalize about other NGOs in Turkey.

In terms of methodology, the study uses a qualitative approach, which includes participant observation and interviews. Following the scientific method, the data are interpreted and evaluated with theories and concepts. Therefore, the quantitative approach is not adopted in this study. Nevertheless, in further research, quantitative research can be conducted to enrich other aspects of the topic.

This study aims to observe IDDEF's socio-religious activities which are related to Turkish foreign policy, in the sense of soft power. The study doesn't aim to re-measure the results of the soft power by the political reactions from other countries. Hence the study focuses solely on the cause and the actor, in which, as Nye mentioned, the main element of soft power is creating attractiveness.²⁶ In other words, this study attempts to recognize how much IDDEF leads to the achievement of attractiveness through religion.

1.6. The Content of the Study

The thesis contains six chapters: the introduction, concepts, Turkish soft power, community of Ismailaga, IDDEF, soft power, and conclusion. The first chapter explains the general contents discussed in this study, including the topic, research questions, methodology, limitations, and literature review.

²⁶ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), p.8.

In the second chapter, the study discusses the concepts and theories such as community, civil society, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), power, and soft power. It aims to determine the general overview of the theoretical framework. Concepts such as civil society, NGO, and community are used to look at IDDEF and Ismailaga sociologically. Soft power is used to understand Turkey in international politics and how a civil action that is not politically intended indirectly affects the accumulation of Turkish soft power.

The third chapter provides a general overview of how Turkey applies its soft power using various institutions, including governmental and non-governmental organizations. After explaining the history of Turkish soft power, to see other institutions other than IDDEF to get a general overview related the NGOs and soft power, the study articulates the state and civil institutions such as TIKA, Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Red Crescent, and IHH.

The fourth chapter explains Ismailaga sociologically with the concept of community and its identity as a tariqa with all repetitive actions and values. The aim is to explore the mentality and approach that IDDEF has as an NGO under Ismailaga.

The fifth chapter describes the ideas, approaches, structures, and activities of IDDEF. IDDEF has similarities and differences with Ismailaga regarding its values and administration. However, IDDEF is still in the Ismailaga community category. Furthermore, this chapter evaluates all IDDEF activities that simultaneously add to the accumulation of Turkish soft power.

The sixth chapter, the last part, expresses the conclusion of the research by critically answering the research questions.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND CONCEPTS

This study aims to analyze a community-based NGO sociologically and evaluate its activity in the context of international politics. To analyze an NGO, the research will describe concepts such as civil society, NGO, community, religious community, and Tariqa. To see the political consequences in the international realm, the research will explore the concept of power with its interpretations such as realism and liberalism which are considered foundations to comprehend the concept of soft power. Therefore, by utilizing these concepts the research aims to understand the sociological manner of the NGO, its relationship with the state, and its effect on international politics.

2.1. Community and Tariqa

A community is an organic part of society that traditionally evolved within the dynamism of social groups. The community emerges as a natural need formulated because of certain ideologies, values, or the sense of security and representing the people's voice. A community that bases its worldview on religious values is considered a religious community. Sufi Lodge or tariqa is part of a religious community with special characteristics such as the *silsile*²⁷ and religious leaders (*Shaikh*) and disciples (*murid*) who come together to explore spiritual power in a certain way. This concept will be explained to understand the religious community and tariqa called Ismailaga.

²⁷ *Silsile* means the sequence of shaikhs that begin from the Prophet until today. It is believed that the previous shaikh inherited his knowledge to the following one. This is a method that is used by Muslim scholars to ensure the authenticity of knowledge.

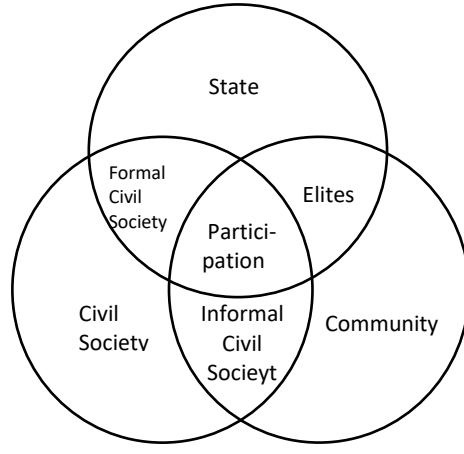


Figure 2.1. The Diagram of Relationship Between State, Community, and Civil Society

2.1.1. Community

The concept of community is the social relations formed from the values that the members of the community share based on a common sense of identity.²⁹ In other words, the community is the fusion of emotion and thought, tradition and devotion, belonging and will.³⁰ Ferdinand Tönnies, in his book “The Community and the Society”, names the traditional structure as a community (*Gemeinschaft*). The members of the community are connected by an organic bond. Since the sense of collective unity and movement is at the forefront of the community, individuality remains in the second plan.³¹ On the contrary, society (*Gesellschafts*) is connected by rational connection.³² Çelik defines society as a set of relations based on artificial and temporary relations of urban life, in which more rational relations are developed by its interests under the influence of trade and industry, where human relations take place at the level of contracts, where there is no place for feelings and closeness in the fast-dynamic competitive environment of life.³³

²⁸ S. Davies and N. Hossain, *Public Action, and Civil Society: A Review of the Literature*, (Brighton: IDS Working Paper 57, 1997), p.11.

²⁹ Gordon Marshall, *Sociology Dictionary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.90.

³⁰ Robert Nisbet, *Sosyolojik Düşünce Geleneği*, Translated by Yusuf Kaplan, (Istanbul: Paradigma Yayınları, 2020), p.136.

³¹ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Cemaat ve Cemiyet*, Translated by Emre Güler, (Istanbul: Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2019), p.61.

³² Ferdinand Tönnies, *The Community and the Society*, p.42.

³³ Mustafa Çelik, *Cemaatü'l Müslimin*, (İstanbul: Yenda Yayın, 2015), p.9-10.

Charles Horton Cooley makes a distinction between the community by the classification of primary and secondary groups. According to Cooley, primary groups are the groups experiencing intense emotional communication between the members. Nonetheless, secondary groups are people in unity of goal, have no emotional connection from experience, and often come together with legal regulations.³⁴

Zygmunt Bauman defines the community by distinguishing between “us” and “them”. According to Bauman, the concept of “us” and “them” does not consist of the two separate groups of people, however, it refers to the two different opposite attitudes (trust-doubt, cooperation-strife, etc.). According to Bauman, “us” is the group in which the person feels safe and understands the individuals within the group. “Them” is a group of the opposite in which the person is not known by the members, and the members don’t want to be a part of them. In addition, the member will be afraid of a danger that will come at any moment.³⁵

2.1.2. Religious Community and Tariqa

The concept of the religious community is defined as a community consisting of common beliefs and rituals. The religious community establishes an identity for individuals in the practice of religious rituals and the appearance of religion in the social sphere.³⁶ The tariqa is terminologically defined as the procedure to be followed, the way to go, and the path to be followed by those who want to reach Allah.³⁷ In social definition, the Tariqa is defined as an organization established by individuals who come together in the religious structure to live in a more pious way of religion. The nuance between the terminologies of the religious community and tariqa is in the sense of discipline and existence of shaikh. Every community is not considered a tariqa,³⁸ yet every tariqa is regarded as a community. Throughout history, there were some

³⁴ Memet Zencirkiran, *Sociology*, (Bursa: Dora Publications, 2015), p.110.

³⁵ Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May, *Sociological Thinking*, (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2019), p.51-53.

³⁶ Yasin Aktay, *Dinin Kökenlerini Uzaklarda Aramak: Durkheim’in Din Sosyolojisi*, In *Dini Hayatın İlk Biçimleri*, (Istanbul: Ataç Publications, 2019), p.28.

³⁷ Reşat Öngören, *Tarikat*, In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2011), vol.40, p.95.

³⁸ Aydın Taştan, *İsmailağa Cemaati Sosyal Kimlik İnşa Araçları*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul Sabahaattin Zaim University, 2021), p.16

tariqas transformed into communities due to the decrease in the quality of religious life compared to the past and the death of the religious leader.³⁹

Religious communities gain social legitimacy by serving society and conducting good deeds. The religious community implements rituals and symbols, which in the latter form a collective consciousness and identity.⁴⁰ The fulfilment of every religious ritual is an essential requirement of the existence of the tariqa. Carrying religious practices to the next generation takes particular importance.⁴¹ Community makes individuals from different backgrounds and ethnicities into a whole by melting them in its crucible.⁴²

Senior members manage the operations of the community. Loyalty to the leader of the disciple and mastering it by adopting his teachings allows the disciple to improve his spiritual level. Members who have received a good religious education and arrived at a certain level of the spiritual journey can become the head of the sect. The tariqa maintains the internal structure by applying the division of labor to its members.⁴³

Weber argues that the emergence of religious communities as a historical ideal type was through the prophets. Religious communities emerged because of the destruction of large political and social structures.⁴⁴ Prophets mostly took their power from their non-clergy followers and caused the clergy class to lose their value and maintained to find answers to social crises.⁴⁵

Regarding the role of the religious community in Turkey, Şerif Mardin acknowledges that the role of religious people in public service decreased with the secular policies of the Turkish Republic government. Religion has moved away from social life, nonetheless, it has not been finished. He adds that religion experienced a revival after

³⁹ Adam Efe, *Dini Gruplar Sosyolojisi (Isparta Örneği)*, (Istanbul: Dönem Yayıncılık, 2013), p.57.

⁴⁰ Ergün Yıldırım, *Simurgun Kanatları Sosyal Teori ve Din*, (Ankara: Tezkire Yayınları, 2016), p.46

⁴¹ Günter Kehr, *Din Sosyolojisi*, Translated by M. Emin Köktaş, (Istanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 2017), p.62.

⁴² Selim Eren, *Congregational Formation and the Role of Religion*, *Journal of Religious Studies* 3 (2000), p.7 - p.99.

⁴³ Max Weber, *Din Sosyolojisi*, Translated by Latif Boyacı, (Istanbul: Yarın Yayınları, 2016), p.172.

⁴⁴ Max Weber, *Din Sosyolojisi*, p.164.

⁴⁵ Ergün Yıldırım, *Simurgun Kanatları Sosyal Teori ve Din*, p.46.

the Second World War rather than being a radical movement and that there were three factors in this revival. First, cultural conservatism; second, cults; third, new movements that try to reconcile religion with modern societies. The emergence of the religious community in Turkey parallel this circumstance.⁴⁶

2.2. Civil Society and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations)

The conceptual roots of civil society may be traced back to Ancient Greece. Aristotle's works include the conceptual underpinnings of the concept of civil society. Aristotle coined the term "*political koinonia*" to describe political society. Aristotle never mentioned civil society in any of his known works. It is said that Aristotle translated the notion of *Politike Koinonia*, which he used to indicate political society, into Latin as *civitas appellator* or *societas civilis* in a translation made by Cicero, a Roman lawyer, in 1438.⁴⁷

The phrase "civil society" in its contemporary definition can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers via the works of Cicero and other Romans. However, in classical usage, civil society is equated with the state. In the late 18th century, the Scottish and Continental Enlightenments gave birth to the concept of modern civil society. From Thomas Paine to Georg Hegel, several political theorists have developed the concept of civil society as a parallel but distinct sector from the state in which citizens gather based on their interests and desires. The emergence of private property, market rivalry, and the bourgeoisie were all factors in this new way of thinking. It also arose from a growing popular yearning for liberty, as seen by the American and French Revolutions.⁴⁸

Civil society has developed as a third option between the dilemmas of the state and the economic model. Civil society was a new topic to which neither the capitalist nor the communist worlds were invited. In a now well-known definition, Cohen and Arato refer to civil society as a "third domain" distinct from the economy and the state. On

⁴⁶Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), p.28.

⁴⁷ Seyfettin Aslan, *Sivil Toplum: Kavramsal Değişim ve Dönüşüm*, Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi 33 (2010), p.190.

⁴⁸ Thomas Carothers, *Civil Society*, Foreign Policy 117 (1999-2000), p.18.

the surface, neither the logic of politics nor the logic of economics has tainted civil society as a space for associational activity. Both logics have been found unsatisfactory and entangled as they are in conflict politics on the one hand and competition politics on the other. In the hands of these two authors, civil society takes on the form of a normative paradigm of a societal realm distinct from the state and the market, with the following components: (1) plurality: families, informal groups, and voluntary associations whose plurality and autonomy allow for a variety of forms of life; (2) publicity: institutions of culture and communication; (3) privacy: a domain of individual self-development and moral choice; and (4) legality: structures of general laws and basic rights required to demarcate plurality, privacy, and publicity from at least the state and, in what may appear more tendentious terms, from the economy as well.⁴⁹

An active and dynamic civil society is the fundamental element that can guarantee both the existence and stability of a democratic political system against authoritarian and totalitarian governments. Civil society leads the expansion of democracy into the social sphere by removing it from being a system of rules, institutions, and procedures, which is one that the entire world has learned from the cold war. It has evolved into a “short tale-sharing.” As a result, a modern definition of civil society should contain the share of this story that the entire globe took away from the cold war, and democracy should be based on voluntary groups and social agreements in which individuals participate with equal rights. However, without including an active and dynamic civil society in the definition of democracy, as well as unrestricted freedom of association, negotiation, and expression for citizens, it is impossible to discuss a civil society phenomenon that will ensure the existence, effectiveness, and efficiency of democracy.⁵⁰

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the modern sense were established as an organizational entity category at the founding of the United Nations. Since then, the phrase has been informally extended to any non-public group to define a special interaction between civic organizations and the inter-governmental process. Outside

⁴⁹ N. Chandhoke, *The 'Civil' and the 'Political' in Civil Society*, Democratization, 8:2 (2001), p.4.

⁵⁰ Mete Kaan Kaynar, *Sivil Toplumun Kavramsal Tarihi ve Sivil Toplumla İlgili Güncel Tartışmalar*, H.Ü. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, Cilt 23, Sayı 1 (2005), p.362-363.

the United Nations, these NGOs may be better referred to as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Several labels and abbreviations have been devised to distinguish between different sorts of NGOs, many of which have competing goals.⁵¹

Non-governmental organizations, according to popular belief, are not a part of the state or the market but rather represent the full social field and cover society. Furthermore, it is becoming more widely understood that NGOs are both state and non-governmental organizations shaped by individuals. Social groups, communities, jobs, and other relationships form civil society organizations. NGOs have recently come to be recognized as a common means for people to fulfill their civic responsibilities and contribute to social and economic progress. Non-governmental organizations include a wide range of formal and informal organizations. NGO, on the other hand, is frequently used to describe non-governmental, non-profit, and volunteer organizations.⁵²

The importance of the role of NGOs in social action led the state to take over by forming its NGOs which were later referred to as GONGO (Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organizations). GONGO represents an ideology and national interest in its activities. Financial support is obtained from the government budget.⁵³

The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm formally launched the current age of international environmental decision-making and sustainable development. More than 250 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sent representatives to the Stockholm Conference, representing populations united by shared ideals, knowledge, and interests. These NGOs functioned as technical experts, assisted in the development of NGO participation regulations, took part in plenary sessions and committee meetings, and participated in several parallel forums aimed to deepen their contacts with one another. Willetts sees Stockholm as a watershed

⁵¹ Riva Krut, *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making*, UNRISD (1997), p.11.

⁵² Eyüp Sabri Kala, *Değişen Dünyada Sosyal Politika*, (Bursa: Ekin Basım Yayın, 2021), p.12-13.

⁵³ Çağla Diner. "Gender politics and GONGOs in Turkey." *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (2018): 101-108. p.102-103

moment in NGO involvement in global governance, heralding the start of a “slow yet progressive liberalization of the NGO system over the next two decades.”⁵⁴

To see how NGOs play a role in international politics, the concept of power must be examined. Particularly, in the context of international politics, especially post-World War II, along with globalization, it is undeniable that the emergence of new actors such as NGOs also affects politics. The NGO is part of the study of sociology, which is a civil society that seeks to realize its ideals in society. The NGO which acts transnationally, from a liberalist perspective, is the voice of people’s freedom, in realist terms, it can provide benefits to the state, so it is categorized as a state tactic.

2.3. Power

In terms of language, the concept of power can be interpreted as the “ability to act or produce an effect; legal or official authority or right, possession of control or influence over others”⁵⁵ in which the concept is closely related to influence and control. At the same time, it can also be understood that it is the hierarchical aspect of the relationship between two actors that places A as the patron and B as a follower.⁵⁶

Power became an important concept in the study of sociology and politics. Sociology approaches the concept from the point of view of the social structure, while politics approaches it with a normative and institutional outlook. In sociological studies, Max Weber analyzes power in the context of social change in modern society. He acknowledges several typologies in government management. The first is the charismatic leader, a government led by a leader with special powers and wonders that he is trusted as the community leader. The second is the traditional system that bequeaths power by the marital path. The third, rationalist leadership prioritizes laws and systems based on ratios in determining the government system.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Michele M. Betsill and Elisabeth Corell, *Introduction to NGO Diplomacy*, In *NGO diplomacy*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), p.1

⁵⁵ Merriam Webster. Accessed 18 November 2022.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/power>

⁵⁶ Ahmet Alkan and Ramazan Erdem, *Güç: Formal ve İnfomal Yönden Güce Kavramsal Bir Bakış*, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Vizyoner Dergisi, 10 (24) 2019, p.405.

⁵⁷Max Weber. *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*. Routledge, 2013. p.245-251

As a precursor to Weber, Karl Marx analyzes the concept of power through the existence of dialectic relations between the two social classes of bourgeoisie and labor. In the context of the modern world, power is owned by the bourgeoisie class due to the capital of investment. Marx focuses more on the economic aspect, where the social class plays dialectics or sought to control other classes. Power is regarded as a struggle for the status quo of the capitalist class.

In the context of international relations, there are two main approaches; firstly, realism, which later gave birth to neorealism; secondly, liberalism, which later gave birth to neoliberalism. Realism emphasizes that the state owns the concept of power in the international world, and every country is in an anarchist world where it seeks to maintain its interest. Meanwhile, liberalism focuses on individual freedom, where society has the freedom to carry out activities. Liberalism gained popularity in the economic field with the assumption that institutions can move freely outside the country's borders, affecting international politics.

2.3.1. Realism and Neorealism

Realism is the most classical approach in international politics, whereas neorealism is a new form of realism emphasizing the modern scientific method by adopting structuralism. This approach is the leading guide in understanding international politics, particularly in anarchist conditions.⁵⁸ This concept is explained to understand the background of the idea of soft power.

Realism is intuitive, historically grounded, and inspirational for policymakers. Generally, when compared to liberalism, realism is more popular among political scientists. Nye acknowledges that realism focuses on state demands using military instruments to maintain security and balance international power.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ K. Shimko, *Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism*, In *The Review of Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.281.

⁵⁹ David A. Baldwin, *Interdependence and Power: A Conceptual Analysis*, International Organization 34 (1980), p. 263.

There are several premises of realism; the first one is a postulate that the world is in anarchy due to the negative human nature which leads to insecurity.⁶⁰ The nation-state is a significant actor in international politics as the arena of the power struggle.⁶¹ The main goal of the state is to survive.⁶² Military power is the main helpful symbol for creating military security will.⁶³ The existence of other countries poses a threat.⁶⁴ Power becomes the usurpation of every nation, thus creating rivalry conditions. Every country acts intuitively and rationally⁶⁵, that is, by spreading influence due to fear of others' domination or desire to dominate others.⁶⁶

Regarding the focus of realism, E.H. Carr argues about the question of “what was and what is” which is considered far from utopianism. On the other hand, Hans J. Morgenthau views realism as the thought of “human nature as it is.” Meanwhile, L. Claude views that the focus of realism is the “balance of power.”⁶⁷

When it comes to neorealism, in general, the two approaches have the same premises; the state's demands for power and security, being rational, and the use of the military in the international world. However, the difference is related to the assumption of the cause of the change of power in international relations is not the human character.⁶⁸ In addition, realism prioritizes power as the goal, yet neorealism perceives power as an instrument for shaping security.⁶⁹

Waltz articulates that the equilibrium of power between states is crucial in the international arena. The state regulates power balancing in international politics and

⁶⁰K. Shimko, *Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism*, p.293.

⁶¹K. Shimko, *Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism*, p.286.

States are the highest institutions of authority. This realist approach was adopted by earlier thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. Look at; (Bound to lead, 206, from realism to glob. 1, the future of power;18-19) (Understanding global conflict; 11)

⁶² Robert Powell, Review: *Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate*, *International Organization* 48 (1994), p.318.

⁶³ Robert O Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and interdependence*, (Boston: Longman, 2011), p. 31.

⁶⁴ Robert H Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to international relations: theories and approaches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.68.

⁶⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.15.

⁶⁶ K. Shimko, *Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism*, p.294.

⁶⁷ David Allen Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism the Contemporary Debate*, (Colombia: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.9-10.

⁶⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.263.

⁶⁹ Steven Forde, *International Realism and the Science of Politics: Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Neorealism*, p.145-150.

maintains itself as self-help, especially the great powers. They don't rely on other protection. There are two important elements in international relations, the first is the hierarchic structure, and the second is the international system which consists of relations between units with the same function. Neorealism sees power not as a goal in human nature but as an intermediary.⁷⁰ Every country will behave to maintain the balance of power to establish independence under anarchic conditions. According to Nye, Waltz's theory has a broad range and is also static.⁷¹

Neorealism sees the structure of the international system in the form of bipolar, multipolar, hegemonic, and deep structures. The structure of international politics transformed from bipolarity into unipolarity.⁷² In the bipolarity system, the two states perform checks and balances in opposition. In the context of unipolar international politics, the structural constraint is decreased. The action space of the great powers becomes larger. The international system becomes a balance that occurs in the check and balance mechanism.⁷³ In that context, an environmental explanation is formed on state behavior and states spreading their influence under the system's logic.⁷⁴

2.3.2. Liberalism and Neoliberalism

Besides the tradition of realism, liberalism, and neoliberalism are important approaches to understanding international politics.⁷⁵ The two concepts of realism and liberalism are not contradictive. The primary difference is regarding the emphasis on the application of international politics, especially in the field of political actors: while realism emphasizes the nation-state as an actor, liberalism focuses on individuals and institutions, including commercial and non-commercial entities.

⁷⁰ Joseph M. Parent and Sebastian Rosato, *Balancing in Neorealism*, *International Security*, 40 (2015), p.52.

⁷¹ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.15.

⁷² Steven Forde, *International Realism, and the Science of Politics: Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Neorealism*, p.145-150

⁷³ K. Waltz, *Neorealism - Confusions and Criticisms*, p.4.

⁷⁴ K. Shimko, *Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism*, p.293.

⁷⁵ It is often faced between realism and liberalism, but the two approaches are not inversely proportional because, the opposite of liberalism is conservatism. Look at (Neoliberalism, Neorealism, and World Politics David A. Baldwin, 10)

In general, liberalism was influenced by the ideas such as human rights, separation of power, economic human nature, and liberty.⁷⁶ The notion of national security is significant, and it is not merely achieved by hegemonic power, yet it can be formed by economic welfare. Economic issues are considered as important as security.⁷⁷ Robert O. Keohane⁷⁸ defines political power as a ‘fusion of power and legitimate social purpose’ and sees neoliberalism’s social purpose as “to promote beneficial effects on human security, human welfare, and human liberty as a result of a more peaceful, prosperous and free world.” The institutions are built based on this goal.⁷⁹ Furthermore, liberalism has become very relevant because of the context of world politics, which prohibits state actors from using force against other countries.⁸⁰

According to liberalism, the political actors are not only the states. Nevertheless, the society has power and freedom in influencing political policy. Society is a collection of communities that based on freedom have interests represented by institutions. The actions of these institutions influence the domestic and international politics of the state.⁸¹ Even the state is the result of the clash of interests of society and is considered a segment that represents the interests of diverse communities.⁸² The relationship between state-society becomes significant which has an impact on domestic and transnational politics. Person-to-person communication or dialogue is considered a way to solve political problems.⁸³

With the continuation and the revival of classic liberalism, neoliberalism emerged to change the hegemony of the elite group that dominated the minority into the perception

⁷⁶ Eric Voegelin, Mary Algozin and Keith Algozin, *Liberalism and Its History*, Cambridge University Press, *The Review of Politics*, Oct., 1974, Vol. 36, No. 4 pp. 515 & Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.29 & Andrew Wyatt-Walter, *Adam Smith and the Liberal Tradition in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, *Review of International Studies*, Jan., 1996, Vol.22, No.1, p.6

⁷⁷ David A. Baldwin, *Interdependence and Power*, p.263. & Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation*, p.12.

⁷⁸ Keohane uses the concept of institutional liberalism instead of neoliberalism. In this research, the concept of neoliberalism will be used.

⁷⁹ Robert O. Keohane, *Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism*, *International Relations* 26 (2012), p.125-126.

⁸⁰ Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation: Intro to Theory & History Author*, (United States of America: Pearson, 2014), p.11.

⁸¹ Andrew Moravcsik, *Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics*, *International Organization* Vol. 51 No. 4 (1997), p.6. - p.513.

⁸² Andrew Moravcsik, *Liberalism And International Relations Theory*, (Harvard: Harvard University, 1992), p.6.

⁸³ Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation*, p.72.

of the state as an instrument for the minority to strengthen its position in the international arena.⁸⁴ In contrast to realism, neoliberalism does not place the state as an obelisk of power. The state focuses on strengthening technology and market-responsive subjectivities. Initiatives will be taken over by individuals: the state will facilitate the projects undertaken. Neoliberalism is understood as a radical approach to the application of the concept of “laissez-faire”.⁸⁵

Neoliberalism emphasizes the concept of liberty with three main branches: commercial, democratic, and regulatory.⁸⁶ It is upheld for creating interconnections in the global world covering economic, political, and social phenomena.⁸⁷ It is particularly in the economic sector that development occurs when it is devolved only to individuals, not governments. Instead, with the intervention of the government, the economy slumps because it reduces competitiveness between individuals, and the government is expected to decrease regulation. National economies are expected to become global actors that will give birth to neoliberal globalization.⁸⁸ Neoliberalism requires the government to privatize some of its business fields and facilitate the transnational transfer of goods and money. However, neoliberalism does not support regulations that make it easier for individuals to cross national borders.⁸⁹

2.3.3. Realism and Liberalism on Soft Power

Realism focuses on the concepts of power, state, security, and military force in international politics. In contrast to liberalism, realism does not emphasize individual initiatives. The realist background of assuming the state as a major actor in international politics fits with the philosophical background of the terminology of soft power, particularly the assumption of hegemonic power that determines the balance. However, realism is still so focused on military instruments that it is very relevant to the terminology of hard power.

⁸⁴ Rajesh Venugopal, *Neoliberalism As Concept*, *Economy and Society* 44:2 (2015), p.169.

⁸⁵ Rajesh Venugopal, *Neoliberalism As Concept*, p.170-172.

⁸⁶ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.29.

⁸⁷ Johanna Bockman, *Neoliberalism*, *Contexts* 12 (2013), p.14.

⁸⁸ Wendy Larner, *Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality*, *Studies in Political Economy* 63:1 (2000), p.509.

⁸⁹ David M. Kotz, *Globalization and Neoliberalism*, *Rethinking Marxism* 14:2 (2002), p.65-68.

Liberalism sees that international political actors are states and societies represented by international institutions. The state carried out political action to encourage a sense of fear and the motivation to live well. The instruments used are military power, trade, investment or economic interdependence, negotiation, and persuasion. In establishing interaction relationships, aspects of competition and cooperation are used.⁹⁰

According to the explanation above, soft power is a combination of perspectives; acknowledging the accumulation of power based on hegemonic power is an assumption used by realism and neorealism. However, the use of civil institutions in the context of the globalized world is more towards liberalism and neoliberalism. Soft power provides a perspective that connects individual initiation with influence on state politics. In essence, NGOs and religious communities are areas of sociological research. Still, because they are transnational, they indirectly affect the state, which is related to the accumulation of soft power.

2.4. Types of Power

Joseph Nye differentiates power into three types: hard, soft, and smart. According to the theory, the state becomes dominant in the international arena when it successfully accumulates the three forms of power. In his analysis, Nye observes the concept through US politics during its time as an influential country in international politics.⁹¹ Nye acknowledges four essential elements in power: coercion, inducement, agenda-setting, and attraction. The first two elements are used in hard power, while the latter is a soft power instrument. Soft and hard power are not two opposite sources of power but two elements compatible with each other. The combination of two powers is smart power.⁹² These three approaches will be explained in general; then the concept of soft power will be described in detail.

⁹⁰ Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict & Cooperation*, p.206.

⁹¹ Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. p.205-212.

⁹² Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), p.8.

2.4.1. Hard Power

Hard Power is a type of force used in a political agenda using a variety of instruments that often include economic and military forces. The utilization of hard power is applied without considering the consent of the other party, which sometimes is contrary to his interest.⁹³

Economic and military strength are two important elements in playing foreign policy. Its role is inconsistent with the times. These two aspects of power became a trend in the struggle of foreign powers during the first world war period. Military warfare is the benchmark that determines the winner in the arena. Economic pressure is also a trend when it is realized that it impacts suppressing other countries. These two forms of pressure are part of hard power because they tend not to pay attention to the consent and initiation attitudes of the intended country. Occasionally, the government does so by employing compulsion and often suffers losses on the one hand.⁹⁴

2.4.2. Soft Power

The terminology of soft power has several characteristics, and the main idea is “the ability to get what is wanted by being attractive”. The method is the application of a soft approach based on creating admiration and attractiveness for the other. The attractiveness is related to the consent of others. It will come to the point where the destination country not only agrees with what is conveyed but also will have a common political agenda.⁹⁵ The parameter of the achievement of soft power is that the affected state determines the policy of the condition that affects it on the consideration that the policy benefits itself.⁹⁶

⁹³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.29.

⁹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, p.80.

⁹⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p.21.

⁹⁶ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.11.

2.4.3. Smart Power

Smart power is the synthesizing of the two elements of power which is the hard and soft power to achieve the political agenda. Smart power implements the two methods by strategically utilizing the field of economic, military, and cultural instruments. US Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton often uses this concept in regulating her foreign policy.⁹⁷

Soft Power is the strategy of the state in international politics to succeed in political agenda. Merely applying the hard power is considered imperfect and even potentially reduces the soft power. Therefore, a balance of hard and soft power of a country is needed. Hence, these balance parameters are a sign of political success. In this perspective, the strongest country is not a country that has a military advantage alone but a country that can do what it wants by convincing and showing the legitimacy of its policies to other countries.⁹⁸

Table 2.1. The Category of Hard and Soft Power

	Behaviors	Primary Currencies	Government Policies
Military Power	Coercion Deterrence Protection	Threats Force	Coercive Diplomacy War Alliance
Economic Power	Inducement Coercion	Payments Sanctions	Aid Bribes Sanctions
Soft Power	Attraction Agenda-setting	Values Cultures Policies Institutions	Public Diplomacy Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomacy

⁹⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.21.

⁹⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.23.

2.5. Soft Power: The Definition, Instruments, and Sources

The three kinds of power expressed by Nye have been presented. This subchapter will explain more about soft power, including its origin, definition, instruments, sources, and the relation of these to religion.

2.5.1. The Origin of Soft Power

The concept of soft power had been practiced by the states throughout history. However, Nye theorizes the phenomenon and formulates the concept to be utilized as an analytical tool to observe the power in world politics in a non-classical manner of military and economic enforcement.

The terminology of soft power has been articulated by Nye in two stages. The concept is utilized first in the 1990s in the book “the bounds to lead”. The definition is not very clear and comprehensive, leading to a misunderstanding among the general public. Nevertheless, the concept became popular and received a great reception from politicians and academicians. To redefine the definition of the concept, Nye conceptualized it more comprehensively and dismissed interpretations that did not represent his thoughts⁹⁹ in the book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics” in 2004.

Tracing the historical background of the concept, realist thinker Machiavelli argues that a political leader shows two faces of being loved or feared, to maintain authority. Being loved is the root of soft power. However, in his articulation regarding the political context of the medieval age, Machiavelli argues that being loved is practically more difficult and lacked certainty in delivering results. Binding moral relations without being based on legal ties and economic interests does not affect the return on investments that have been formed. Nevertheless, Machiavelli acknowledges the probability of realizing by being loved, which became the principle of soft power.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, p.43.

Nye formulates the concept of soft power with the influence of Robert Dahl in the article “The Concept of Power”. Nye accordingly defines the concept of power in terms of the achievement of the state’s demand. Dahl divides power into two; the intuitive idea of power and the intuitive view of the power relation. The first is how a country can influence another country to do its will. The second is that a country is considered successful when another country takes appropriate action without intervention.¹⁰¹

From the division of definitions above, Nye also agrees with the existence of strengths based on aspects of attractiveness. Tracing the evolution of foreign policy, Nye acknowledges formal changes. The new context of international politics presents several new actors besides the state that make relations more complex interdependence, resulting in instruments of power turning into less coercive and less tangible.¹⁰²

Besides realism, the tradition of Marxism formulates the concept of the soft power approach with different terminology. The structure of thought is based on a dialectical approach to class conflict, where the bourgeoisie class uses tools in the form of ideas and thoughts such as nationalism and religion to deceive the proletariat class. The instrument is used to exploit the working class that makes them satisfied with the payment which is termed false consciousness.¹⁰³ In Nye’s terminology, the unconscious aspect is consent; a process of false consciousness for Marxists. Because it hinders the impeding of the upcoming social evolution of the socialist system of government. According to Marxists, there are only two possibilities in a political fight, between being the exploiter or the exploited, which is the basis of conflict theory and dialectic philosophy. Whereas Nye, in his explanation, does not mention the exploitation aspect, the success of influencing is a success in the strategy of achieving strength.

¹⁰¹ Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.53.

¹⁰² Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Boston: Longman, 2011), p.216.

¹⁰³ Ayhan Nuri Yılmaz, *Kültür ve Sanatın Ulusal Tanınırlığını Pozitifleştirilmesinde Bir Araç Olarak Kullanılması: Türkiye’nin Kültürel Yumuşak Güç Potansiyeli In Yumuşak Güç ve Kamu Diplomasisi Üzerine*, (Ankara: Nobel, 2018), p.240.

In parallel to the Marxist context of spreading false consciousness, Antonio Gramsci uses the concept of cultural hegemony,¹⁰⁴ which explains how an elite social class can create standards and norms. The proletariat class is passive and only exemplifies and follows each of these values. Forming such matters helps maintain social classes so that they become a tool to inhibit the emergence of consciousness of the oppressed class.¹⁰⁵ Gramsci's frame of mind is still within the scope of the Marxist style, which accepts the two social classes as dichotomies that are essential conflicts. He developed the aspects of how superstructure penetrates the social layers of the proletarian class. Thus, for him, resistance is not only by a material revolution but must be accompanied by intellectual action that must exist as a light to the proletariat.¹⁰⁶

The relationship with soft power lies in spreading hegemony, forming a standard from one class to another, and constructing consent from the proletariat to follow that direction. The concept of cultural hegemony has a close relationship with soft power. However, the idea is still very much tied to the Marxist frame that focuses on the economic conditions of society. The statement also does not clearly describe the strategic steps of how one country can influence the policies of another by offering actions that lead to attractiveness.¹⁰⁷

However, Nye doesn't emphasize his thinking by separating the two social classes to avoid falling into the Marxist dichotomy. Nye sees the international political arena as a struggle for power played by countries that rationally seek to gain interest and maintain their existence. Thus, he does not see the social world in terms of aspects of the structure of society that seems to know no national borders. Still, he emphasizes that society is trapped in a nation-state with political power in the international arena. The political aspect of society became the focal point in its conceptual framework. Therefore, although there are similar aspects in the Marxist interpretation of the form of soft power, in terms of his frame of mind, there are remarkable differences.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.9.

¹⁰⁵ Ayhan Nuri Yılmaz, *Kültür ve Sanatın Ulusal Tanınırlığını Pozitifleştirilmesinde Bir Araç Olarak Kullanılması*, p. 241.

¹⁰⁶ Antonio Gramsci. *Gramsci: Pre-prison writings*. Cambridge University Press, 1994. p.174

¹⁰⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, p.9.

Nye's concept of soft power and Marxist understanding of class conflict presents an analysis of how a group influences another in general. The Marxist analysis focuses on the oppressed class and analyzes the power relation between the groups, while Nye, apart from the study of social class, is more focused on the political aspects and the set of strategies to achieve power in the international arena.

2.5.2. Sources of Soft Power

To realize the formation of soft power, Nye expressed several sources and strategic ways of achieving soft power; in 1990, he stated culture, international laws, institutions, and American multinational corporations. Then in 2004, he modified his opinion by categorizing it in the form of, culture, political values, and foreign policies. In general, all the sources expressed are not forced from the military and economic aspects but psychological influences that lead to a condition of attractiveness.¹⁰⁸

2.5.2.1. Culture

The term culture has a broad meaning and different connotations. Nye in his conceptualization emphasizes the purpose of culture in terms of social habits and forms of interaction that are often related to entertainment. Generally, culture is divided into two types high and popular culture. High culture includes literature, art, and education, while popular culture is more related to mass entertainment.¹⁰⁹ However, the concept of culture can change according to the social context which makes it dynamic rather than static.¹¹⁰

According to Nye, these two forms of culture can significantly affect relations between countries and create soft power. This happened post-World War II when the United States helped a European country that was rebuilding its government, in addition to receiving assistance such as the Marshall Plan and the adoption of democratic values. The American culture was massively consumed by European society and served to speed up the process of reconstruction of the state so that at the same time the cultures

¹⁰⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.84.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, p.12.

¹¹⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.84.

had connotations such as “freedom, casualness, vitality, liberality, modernity, and youthfulness”.¹¹¹

Nye also argues that culture cannot always create soft power because the perceptions found by society can change significantly from each other. Therefore, exposure to two different countries’ cultures can positively and negatively impact each country. Like the Wahhabism movement spread by Saudi Arabia turned into a radicalism movement that is associated with terrorist behavior in several countries.¹¹²

Another cultural value that is considered a source of soft power is education. Education is one of the largest sectors in transferring heritage and knowledge to society. There are programs such as student exchange between countries. Students studying in a country indirectly absorb the values, information, and thinking styles of the state. And when these students occupy strategic positions in their government, this will smoothen diplomatic relations.¹¹³ Nye mentioned that in the US, nearly half a million students graduated from American universities and people who had worked in Silicon Valley. They will spread the values and the thinking style they learn.¹¹⁴

2.5.2.2. Political Values

Political values are the result of a collection of political ideologies adopted by the state and society. Political values adopted by a country can attract other countries as it appears safe, progressive, and harmless. For instance, a country that seeks a good relationship with Western countries would adopt a similar value.¹¹⁵

Political values can be divided into two types: the values adopted by the state and the values owned by society. This condition may vary according to the state. For example, in the context of the state, there are state policy, secularism, modern bureaucracy, and democracy. On the other hand, the political values adopted by the society such as religious and humanist ideologies promote the discourse of peace. These political

¹¹¹ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*. p.48.

¹¹² Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, p.12.

¹¹³ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, p.13-45.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Nye, *On the Rise and Fall of American Soft Power*, *New Perspectives Quarterly* 22, p.21.

¹¹⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.6.

values are regarded as attractive while maintaining universal benefits and having aspects of inclusivity.¹¹⁶

A domestic policy might affect international politics. For instance, the US in the 1950s issued policies that reflected racism towards blacks. Consequently, America lost its soft power in Africa. Another example is the relationship between a country and international law; a country will have soft power when it follows the rules and will lose it when it violates them.¹¹⁷

2.5.2.3. Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is the policy of a government related to foreign affairs and relations that prioritizes its national interest. At the same time, each country's policymaking automatically implements its national values. Foreign policy is intensely influenced on soft power while not directing the economic and military forces.¹¹⁸

Foreign policy is shaped by government bureaucrats. However, the community remains influential in the formation of foreign policy. Especially in a democratic society, an organization with civil societies, NGOs, or other lobbies can have a significant impact in forming a policy.¹¹⁹

One of the influential foreign policies which create soft power is public diplomacy. While it aims to form strategic communication with other states it is still based on reality and facts. It is necessary to know the culture, history, psychological conditions, and language used in the country. In addition to forming lobby activities, public diplomacy includes civil society and cultural activities.¹²⁰

Nye acknowledges three dimensions of public diplomacy, which are very important because they have different proportions; the first is daily communication, including domestic and foreign policies. The second is strategic communication, where the state

¹¹⁶ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.90.

¹¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.94.

¹¹⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.60.

¹¹⁹ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.90.

¹²⁰ İbrahim Kalın, *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey*, p.16

presents the brand of central political themes or improves government policy. The third is the formation of lasting relationships in the form of educational contexts such as pieces of training, scholarships, conferences, etc.¹²¹

2.5.3. Instruments of Soft Power

The concept of soft power is analytical categorization which refers to the results of using intangible sources and instruments. Soft power doesn't instrumentalize force and economic pressure; however, it is related to persuasiveness and attractiveness that results in the subjugation of other countries by consent. The idea of soft power has become essential due to changes in the international context where factors such as technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more critical than geography, population, and raw materials.¹²²

Nye argues that the differentiation between hard and soft power is because of the approach and instruments adopted. The element of soft power will always have a relationship with hard power instruments; they will affect each other positively or negatively. The vital component of hard power will also increase the amount of soft power. For instance, when a country can form a positive image in another country, it will increase the number of allies so that its defence power rises.¹²³

Soft power is the result of a persuasive and attractive approach used by the state in carrying out relations with other countries. Concretely, some institutions are actors in the formation of soft power. Civil society has a more effective influence than the state. The relationship between societies of different states reduces scepticism which leads to stronger relationships. However, in practice, the state utilizes two forms of the institution: state and civilian.

¹²¹ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power*, p.107-110.

¹²² Joseph S. Nye, *From Realism to Globalization*, p.55.

¹²³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.86.

2.5.3.1. State and Civilian Institutions

State institutions are those which have legality and official authority in actions. In terms of the task, it is divided into internal and foreign affairs. Both institutions can create attractiveness. However, those related to foreign affairs have a direct relationship with diplomacy.¹²⁴ The action of state institutions is inseparable from the agenda and strategic planning. Thus, it can be interpreted directly that the state will never execute any projects out of its strategic diplomacy, and this condition paves the way to insincerity or skepticism by the other states. However, the attractiveness still can emerge and be effective, especially when the other states start to adopt similar values and goals.¹²⁵

State institutions (GONGO, the NGO of the government) aim to maintain diplomacy and foreign policy. The strategic steps are occasionally related to the sector of development, infrastructure, education, and cultural recognition. In the Turkish context, those institutions include TIKA, Yunus Emre Institute, and YTB. They play a role in contributing to the development of the country that is considered strategic.

Civilian institutions emerged in the form of NGOs. NGOs are institutions that do not directly actualize the political goal of government and have no profit objectives. Nevertheless, it targets specific goals based on a certain idealism shaped by ideologies. NGOs cannot be separated from the aspirations of people who want to act as a reflection that the community could play an active role in making contributions. The results of the actions taken will be more effective in improving relations between communities and the accumulation of soft power. This is based on scepticism felt by the outside community because it does not have a direct relationship with the government. Therefore, Nye thinks that the use of NGOs in carrying out humanitarian actions will be more effective than government institutions.¹²⁶

In the context of the global world, NGOs gain more power due to the ability of information dissemination with technology development. The achievement of

¹²⁴ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, p.90.

¹²⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead*, p.94.

¹²⁶ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.109.

transparent information indirectly strengthens the foundation of NGOs, thus making them one of the major players in the globalized world. One of the roles NGOs can play is the establishment of public diplomacy with the people of other countries.¹²⁷

2.6. Religion as Soft Power

States have benefited from religion as a source of soft power in the international arena for centuries, such as the religion of Islam and Christianity. Religious communities promote the beliefs and change the religion of others due to the conviction of absolute truth. Thus, there is a transformation of values in society due to the adoption of values and norms. Religion appeared as the motivation of a state in building relationships with other states in the aspect of social, economic, and political aspects.¹²⁸

Rudolph illuminates that the actors in the pre-modern period consisted of state elites; they were engaged in trade and colonialism, leading to the suppression of other states. In contrast to modern-day actors, religion and civility give birth to a movement from below to up; in other words, it is more suggestive of civil society, which is initiated to apply its religious values, such as helping groups of people in need, within the framework of transnationalism, who know no national borders. Thus, transnational action motivated by religion has existed since the modern period. However, there are differences in terms of actors and approaches to action.¹²⁹

Regarding actors who performed cross-border religious acts in pre-modern times presented by Rudolph when compared to Barkan's research on Sufi Muslim communities' conquest, it cannot be said that this is entirely a top-down policy carried out only by elite statesmen. This is because of the initiatives initiated by religious denominations in forming a colony, spreading understanding, and increasing agriculture, i.e., the existence of more complicated relations due to the initiative of the religious group and being cooperative with the government.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, p.108.

¹²⁸ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion* p.143

¹²⁹ S. H. Rudolph, *Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society*, In *Transnational Religion And Fading States*, (Chicago: Westview Press, 1997), p.1-26.

¹³⁰ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler*, *İnsan ve İnsan* 2 (5), (2015), p. 148-149.

In the modern context, transnational religious action carried out by civil society might pave the way to political interest, called religious soft power. Following Nye's categorization, culture and social values are one of the sources of soft power, where the concept covers religious aspects. Thus, it can be mentioned that the use of religion to carry out social actions in other countries, which then ushers in attractiveness, can be defined as religious soft power.¹³¹

Religious similarities between two societies result in a close relationship, the similarity of perception, and belief in each other. Especially in the context of Islam, where people once had a shared history, who do not see differences between tribes and ethnicities as separators of identity, but rather know that religion is an element of unification between societies. This historical factor corroborates that shared memory by Muslims smoothly makes it easier to establish relationships in modern times.¹³²

Haynes, in his analysis, acknowledges that religion became a bridge that forms a collective identity for two countries that were ethnically and historically. Basing the relationship on religion could maintain diplomatic relations that lead to a persuasive approach.¹³³

Haynes supports Thomas's argument that religious NGOs move under the state's foreign policy. Hence, NGOs support the accumulation of soft power to the state, and therefore, the state relatively co-opts religious NGOs.¹³⁴ However, the cooperation does not pave the way to fully limit the freedom of NGOs due to the existence of a religious community with its distinctive agenda. It is assumed that the agenda is not intervened by the government directly.¹³⁵ The actions taken by NGOs are still categorized as soft power producers because the foreign public sees that the NGOs are supported by the relevant countries.¹³⁶

¹³¹ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion And The Transformation Of International Relations: The Struggle For The Soul Of The Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.6-7.

¹³² S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.5-7.

¹³³ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.219.

¹³⁴ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.40.

¹³⁵ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.46.

¹³⁶ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.219.

Rudolph argues the approach of Haynes and Thomas, acknowledging that religious NGOs have freedom, where the policies might parallel with state policy or vice versa. Therefore, it is possible that religious NGOs negatively affect the condition of a country's foreign relations, and religious NGOs may be used by the state for their benefit only. Thus, Rudolph assumes that NGOs can be interpreted and directed in many ways.¹³⁷

In the state, religious policies often occur due to individuals who have close ties to certain religious communities. The policies automatically affect foreign policy. For example, a group of political elites adopt the evangelist tradition and then propose a policy that is in line with the agenda of these evangelists.¹³⁸ In the Turkish context outside of lobbying actions that occur domestically, there is an institution of *Diyanet* (Presidency of Religious Affairs) that forms a strategic agenda under the direction of the state.

Thomas argues that in terms of its action, the NGO is divided into three: substate religious actors, transnational religious actors, and inter-governmental religious actors. Substate religious actors move within the state, not forming expansion out of the country, so the action is only limited to the domestic population. Institutionally it includes NGOs, Voluntary Organizations, and Non-Profit Organizations. All these institutions, although different, are under an umbrella of a large community, so that they can represent the aspirations of religious groups.¹³⁹ This is included in the category of soft power because it is by Nye's conceptualization, that foreign countries can also be affected by the value possessed by a country.

Transnational religious actors foster relationships, contacts, interactions, and coalitions outside the state boundaries with intermediaries of non-state institutions which include profit and non-profit organizations, and international NGOs, which are not directly controlled by the state. Nevertheless, these institutions still play their role

¹³⁷ Rudolph, S. H., *Dehomogenizing Religious Formations*, p.256.

¹³⁸ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.34.

¹³⁹ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.99.

in the realm of international relations. This research falls in this category, as IDDEF is an international religious NGO.¹⁴⁰

The third form is inter-governmental actors, which in terms of organizational form, are classified as non-state institutions because they are not owned by a state. However, the actions are very related to the government's strategic policy, which forms soft power. Because the value based on this organization is religion, it is categorized as religious soft power. One example is the OIC and The Arab League.¹⁴¹

Religious NGOs, in general, carry out their actions not because of self-interest, but because of shared values, human development, relief for poor countries, and the desire to expand the influence of their religious understanding.¹⁴² One of the main motivations as a driving force for a religious NGO is the religious faith itself. Workers in the NGO may be from a certain hierarchy in a certain religious denomination structure.¹⁴³

Social activities based on religious worldview can cover several areas, such as forming relationships by influencing ideas or ideologies, conducting humanitarian aid, forming peacebuilding, offering conflict resolution, forming faith-based diplomacy, carrying out interfaith dialogue, and contributing to economic development.¹⁴⁴

2.6.1. Sharing Ideas

Every thought produced by each country might become the basis and potential to form an attraction for other countries.¹⁴⁵ Like the ideology of pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism emerges as an attraction to create states with similar identities to merge, thus creating greater political power. Similarly, Haynes agreed, for him, transnational ideas are the source of soft power.¹⁴⁶ In the context of this study, the ideas offered by IDDEF are religious values that reek of the *ahlusunnah* and are tied to the teachings of Sufism.

¹⁴⁰ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.99-100.

¹⁴¹ S. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.100-101.

¹⁴² J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.47.

¹⁴³ Thomas, S., *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.101.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas, S., *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.101-102.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas, S., *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.8.

¹⁴⁶ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.45.

Although different groups of tariqas, the cooperation was formed under the umbrella concept of genuine Sufism.

2.6.2. Advocacy

Advocacy is a strategic effort that aims to convince the governing elites of a country to realize universal ideas adopted by an NGO. Religious NGOs expressed several needs that must be achieved such as peace and interfaith dialogue.¹⁴⁷ In the IDDEF case study, they have certain advocacy tools, which may be different from other religious NGOs, but this is inseparable from the universal value of humanity, so that it can be categorized as mutual interest by the two countries.

2.6.3. Pastoral Activity

Pastoral activity is an effort to apply the teachings of a group transnationally. This action is based on a sense of interest in strengthening the faith of the community, where the religious group believes its teaching is the only truth. Pastoral activity is one of the main functions that religious NGOs have.¹⁴⁸

2.6.4. Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is one of the goals of NGOs in carrying out their transnational actions. This action is based on the humanitarian aspect that seeks to form a sense of mutual attention and help when in distress. The existence of this action forms bilateral relations, which is also at the same time an investment in the soft power of a country.¹⁴⁹

2.6.5. Peacebuilding

Most religions have motivations such as against poverty, service provision, respect for religious dignitaries, and concern with moral issues.¹⁵⁰ Then religion itself plays an

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, S., *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.101.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, S. *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.102.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas, S. *The Global Resurgence Of Religion*, p.102.

¹⁵⁰ J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.16.

important role in international relations and diplomacy, and it also leads to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Religion, as the main motivation, can direct activists, observers, advocates, NGOs, and other institutions to direct peacebuilding actions. Religious NGOs often play a role in peacebuilding between countries or internal conflicts that occur within a country.¹⁵¹

2.6.6. Conflict Resolution

The religious NGOs with religious idealism with the approach of peacebuilding also emphasized conflict resolution. The status of NGOs that are not related to the state directly would maintain the trust of the other state. Indirectly the NGOs don't represent the status of the state. Since the NGOs support the security issues of other states, therefore, it would strengthen the diplomatic relation and create the credibility of the state, which is considered soft power.¹⁵²

2.6.7. Faith-based Diplomacy

Faith-based diplomacy is the establishment of bilateral relations between two countries or entering the area of international politics by prioritizing religious elements. Religion is considered to have the potential to unify a society that has conflicts based on problems of race, ethnicity, tribe, and different religious dimensions. According to Johnson and Cox, there are three situations where faith-based diplomacy can be carried out: first, as a conflict predicament when religion becomes an important thing for two groups; second, as an estrangement between religious traditions when two societies that have the same religion but different countries; the third, as a third party mediation when both groups do not have the same religion, but other religions can approach with their religion to improve the relationship between the two groups.¹⁵³

In general, soft power is part of the cultural resources owned by the state, which is carried out by state and non-state institutions. However, the utilization of non-state

¹⁵¹J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.219.

¹⁵² J. Haynes, *Introduction To International Relations And Religion*, p.89.

¹⁵³ Johnson and Cox, *Faith-based Diplomacy and Preventive Engagement*, In *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.11-29.

institutions is more effective because the relationships built with the public appear more attractive. With religious values, the actions taken are the dissemination of ideas, maintaining advocacy, conducting pastoral activities, creating humanitarian aid, making peacebuilding, carrying out conflict resolution, and lastly, conducting faith-based diplomacy. In this study, an international religious NGO is examined that functions to carry out humanitarian aid, which includes education and ideas that seek to bind religious groups in the Sufism style.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed several concepts such as civil society, NGO, and community to observe the background of IDDEF sociologically and use the concept of soft power to see how the impact of NGOs in terms of international relations. The concepts of community and civil society were defined as social elements aiming to proceed with its values within the regulation of the nation-state. The NGOs are the official institution representing the state and communities. Transnational NGOs create international action affecting foreign policy in terms of soft power.

Soft power in general, is an effort to establish attractiveness by offering a religious approach that is part of the cultural values adopted by Turkey in building diplomatic relations. IDDEF is considered one of the NGOs playing the role. IDDEF is a representation of the Ismailaga religious community. This describes the existence of a religious community affecting the foreign policy of a country with its existence with the actions of humanitarian aid and education.

CHAPTER III

TURKISH SOFT POWER AND THE INSTRUMENTS

Civil societies and NGOs have developed and evolved since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Particularly, religious civil societies appeared as non-formal and based on organic movements during 1924-1950. Later, between 1950-1980 civil societies took a new shape in the form of community. The forms of civil societies and NGOs were shaped politically and ideologically between 1980 and 2000. From Post 2000s until today, the NGOs in Turkey entered the era of formalization and professionalism, focusing on specific issues by using technological instruments.¹⁵⁴

Turkey utilizes soft power instruments to broaden its political effect and to become a regional power. During the Turgut Özal period (1989-1993), Turkey expanded its influence with the support of the United States in Central Asian countries, as recently separated countries from the Soviet Union. Turkey strategically utilized soft power instruments, particularly during the period of the AK Party. In this regard, Turkey formulated foreign policy, created government institutions, and supported civil NGOs to participate the activities in the realm of education, humanitarian aid, and culture in different countries, particularly African countries.

In this chapter, to shed light on the general overview of the Turkish institutions that played a significant role in international actions and soft power, the study takes the representatives of NGOs and GONGOs acting in several fields of humanitarian aid, development, and diplomacy. Those are the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), which assists with physical and human resource development. The Institute of Yunus Emre was established to promote cultural values. The Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay) is responsible for humanitarian assistance. These institutions are funded directly by governments, while The Foundation for Human Rights and

¹⁵⁴ Lütfi Sunar, *Türkiye'de İslami STK'ların Kurumsal Yapı ve Faaliyetlerinin Değişimi*, (İstanbul İLKE Publishing, 2018), p. 56.

Freedoms and Humanitarian Aid (IHH), a humanitarian aid and diplomacy organization, represents civil society.

3.1. Turkish Soft Power

The Cold War led to a global policy shift and brought a substantial change in the power dynamic. Non-military power took the place of military power. The shift from military power into non-military is a transformation from one-sided to multi-sided political poles. Turkey shifted its foreign policy in this direction. Soft power has been increasingly important in foreign policy since the Cold War.¹⁵⁵

In current international politics, Turkey has acknowledged the importance of soft power in foreign policy. The governments may have difficulty implementing it even if they know the soft power potential. Turkey has a significant potential for soft power due to its geopolitical location and values.¹⁵⁶ Turkey has a deep and ancient root based on Islamic beliefs and Turkish culture, thanks to its historical, cultural, linguistic, religious, and geographic resources. This effect is recognized worldwide, from the Balkans to Europe, Africa to the Middle East, and the Caucasus to Central Asia. Turkey will be able to employ its soft power more effectively due to this situation. However, during challenging moments such as the 1980 coup d'état, the 1999 earthquake, and the 2001 economic crisis, it is difficult to assert that Turkey was able to employ its power resources in foreign policy.¹⁵⁷

Turkey had a multinational state structure throughout its history to comprehend the sociological and historical approaches to soft power. Turkey's current soft power initiatives focus on the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caucasus. Turkey has grown soft power through collaborating with new regions and rising actors. It continues to build a unique capacity for global soft power and communication tactics as it implements its policies.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Burhanettin Duran, *Türk Dış Politikası Ortadoğululaşıyor Mu*, In *Ortadoğu Yıllığı 2008*, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009), p.387.

¹⁵⁶ Tuba Çavuş, *Dış Politikada Yumuşak Güç Kavramı ve Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Güç Kullanımı*, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi 2 (2012), p.28.

¹⁵⁷ Recep Can Hacıoğlu, *Türk Dış Politikasında Yumuşak Gücün Rolü: Orta Asya Örneği*, Master Thesis, (Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2017), p.22.

¹⁵⁸ İbrahim Kalın, *Soft Power*, p.5.

In terms of Africa, Turkey shows significant improvement in strengthening diplomatic relations. Turkey's diplomatic approach to the African state improved considerably in the AK Party period from 2002 until now. It can be seen from Turkey's visit to the African country, which started from the formation of the Republic until now:¹⁵⁹

Table 3.1. Presidents' Visits to African Countries

Turkish President Visits African Countries during 1923-2018		
President	Period of Ruling	Countries Visited
Mustafa Kemal	1923-1938	-
Ismet inönü	1938-1950	Egypt
Celal Bayar	1950-1960	Libya
Cemal Gürsel	1960-1966	-
Cevdet Sunay	1966-1973	Ethiopia, Tunisia Libya
Fahri Korutürk	1973-1980	-
Kenan Evren	1982-1989	Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria
Turgut Özal	1989-1993	Egypt, Senegal
Süleyman Demirel	1993-2000	Egypt, Morocco, Algeria
Ahmet Necdet Sezer	2000-2007	Egypt, South Africa
Abdullah Gül	2007-2014	Egypt, Tunisia, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Republic of Democratic Kongo, Tanzania, Kenya, Senegal
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	2014-	Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia, Mauritania, Mali, South Africa, Zambia

Specific internal and foreign policies have changed due to the change in government in 2002. These alterations are divided into three categories. The first is the dynamism that has evolved in foreign policy orientation and activity. Turkey's dynamism stems

¹⁵⁹ Serhat Orakçı, *Türkiye Afrika İlişkileri Tarihi Süreç, Yaklaşımlar ve Beklentiler*, (İstanbul: İNSAMER, 2018), p.108.

from the fact that it has a dimension in the geostrategic environment in which it finds itself in the twenty-first century. The second factor is Turkey's interest in new areas of expansion, risk-taking, and influence, which coincided with the new government's desire to broaden its political sphere of influence. The third category is the methods and mechanisms to achieve these goals and objectives.¹⁶⁰

The points mentioned above have significantly impacted a new foreign policy understanding because of the changes experienced. Turkish governments utilized soft power elements before 2002. However, their more extensive use by AK Party governments has led to the notion that AK Party governments solely use them in society and academia.¹⁶¹ During this time, Ahmet Davutoglu, as foreign minister, influenced the country's foreign policy by implementing his "deep strategic" doctrine, which focuses on transforming historical and cultural values into contemporary political advantages to develop bilateral and diplomatic ties. The existence of national academicians, according to Ibrahim Kalin, helps Turkey build its soft power potential by shedding light on notions related to soft power as a tool for promoting cultural values.¹⁶²

The following is Monocle magazine's rating of the countries with the most successful soft power. Turkey was perceived as 23rd place in 2011, 20th place in 2012, 26th place in 2014, and 26th place in 2015. However, due to domestic politics, developments in Syria and Iraq, and terrorist attacks, Turkey dropped out of the top thirty in soft power rankings in 2016.¹⁶³

Turkey engages in a variety of measures to maximize its soft power potential. Increasing visa exemptions between countries, improving Turkish Airlines' flight quality, effectively using television activities through the national broadcaster, the TRT institution, international acceptance of TV series, and establishing institutions that will bring foreigners together. Turkey's soft power instruments include safeguarding cultural places associated with Turks living abroad, opening courses to

¹⁶⁰ Ibrahim Kalin, *Soft Power*, p.8.

¹⁶¹ Recep Can Hacıoğlu, *Türk Dış Politikasında Yumuşak Gücün Rolü: Orta Asya Örneği* p.23.

¹⁶² Ibrahim Kalin, *Soft Power*, p.5-10.

¹⁶³ Jonathan McClory, *The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power*, Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://portland-communications.com/pdf/The-Soft-Power-30-Report-2016.pdf>

learn the Turkish language, and humanitarian relief initiatives. The institutions that Turkey has formally utilized will be explored in this section by elaborating on some examples of Turkish soft power instruments.

3.2. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Its Activities

Turkey has attempted to build more realistic, balanced, and mutually cooperative policies from 1995 to the present, which better examine its power and regional reality without excluding Russia. The politics of how the balances would shift after the Cold War has had a considerable impact. During this time, Turkey's regional foreign policy steadily switched from pursuing political dominance to fostering economic cooperation, which was considered effective in the Eurasian region. Turkey shifted from hard power and attempted to maintain its position as a soft power that built economic cooperation zones for the region's reform and growth. The formation of TIKA in Turkey is a crucial indicator of this policy shift. TIKA began operations on January 27, 1992, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. TIKA underwent considerable structural and operational changes in the 1990s and began to resemble the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) operation, which served as a model for its establishment in the 2000s.¹⁶⁴

Turkey's initial focus with TIKA was on the newly independent countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus; however, this tendency has shifted as development partnerships have expanded to include countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. TIKA works with 23 development partners, 26 local program coordination offices, and 23 international offices to cover more than 100 nations.¹⁶⁵

TIKA, with official branches, engages in development-focused collaboration in approximately 150 countries across five continents. Turkey exchanges its knowledge and experience with a wide range of countries, from the Pacific to Central Asia, the

¹⁶⁴ Emrah Denizhan, *Türkiye'nin Kafkasya ve Orta Asya Politikası ve TİKA*, Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi 2/1 (2010), p.18.

¹⁶⁵ T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16.02.2012. T.C Dışişleri Başkanlığı, Türkiye'nin Kalkınma İşbirliği: Genel Özellikleri ve En Az Gelişmiş Ülkelere Yönelik Yaklaşımı, Accessed March 2 2022. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiyenin-kalkinmaisbirligi.tr.mfa>.

Middle East, and Africa to the Balkans, and the Caucasus to Latin America, through TİKA.¹⁶⁶

TİKA's foreign aid, which began in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, grew to countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Africa until 2003. Between 2002 and 2005, Turkey assisted Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. Turkey supplied enormous amounts of humanitarian aid to the region between 2004 and 2005 due to the earthquake in Pakistan and the tsunami in South Asia. The Gaza conflict in late 2008, the Haiti and Chile earthquakes in 2010, the devastating floods in Pakistan, the Japanese earthquake in 2011, and the Libyan crisis all prompted the relief operation.

TİKA established its first coordinators in 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Then, TİKA expanded by establishing a coordinator in Khartoum in 2006 and Dakar in 2007. Through these three offices, TİKA serves 37 African countries. TİKA's areas of expertise include social infrastructure, cultural cooperation and communication, production sectors, economic infrastructure, and urgent humanitarian crises. TİKA launched the African Agricultural Development Program, which will be implemented in 13 African countries, including Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Comoros, Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. Turkey's official development assistance totalled 714 million USD at the end of 2006. When private donations are factored in, the figure rises to 1.7 billion USD, making Turkey one of the world's leading donors.¹⁶⁷

3.2.1. Effects of TİKA on Soft Power

Identity and cultural approaches were at the forefront of determining foreign policy. As a result, the identity dimension brings the aid to the fore. At this point, NGOs, or organizations such as TİKA provide an international identity through their aid or projects. In addition to these assistances, civil actors play an active role in developing

¹⁶⁶ T.C. Başbakanlık TİKA, Hakkımızda, Accessed February 5 2022. <https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/sayfa/hakkimizda-14649>.

¹⁶⁷ Mehmet Özkan and Birol Akgün, *Turkey's Opening to Africa*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 48/4 (2010), p.538.

new social and cultural structures. This interaction and construction process in the international system is beneficial because it makes people's daily lives more accessible and livable by transforming the social world and bringing countries closer together. Societies and states become closer with social and cultural programs carried out by NGOs or official assistance organizations, and in this way, they establish a common culture.¹⁶⁸

TIKA engages in public diplomacy and soft power operations to preserve and enhance Turkey's historical relations with other countries. TIKA aims to promote Turkey and spread the Turkish language while also attempting to raise Turkey's international prestige in trying to solve problems, meet needs, and provide technical support to the countries involved in the project.¹⁶⁹

3.3. The Yunus Emre Institute and Its Activities

On May 5, 2007, the Yunus Emre Institute was created as a public foundation to give services to persons seeking education in the Turkish language, culture, and art, as well as to promote Turkey's cultural interchange and goodwill with other countries.¹⁷⁰ The Yunus Emre Institute promotes Turkish culture, history, language, and literature, supports scientific studies by collaborating with various institutions, and publishes the results to the public through multiple publications. Yunus Emre Institute improves the perception of Turkey by opening Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centres overseas. Yunus Emre Institute is one of Turkey's most important soft power instruments in this area.¹⁷¹

Yunus Emre Institute Centres have grown from two in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Tirana, Albania, in 2009 to 44 in 34 countries. The Institute's aims to project a strong and culturally rich Turkey worldwide and promote Turkish culture

¹⁶⁸ Tuncay Kardaş and Ramazan Erdağ, *Bir Dış Politika Aracı Olarak TİKA*, Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi 7/1 (2012), p.184.

¹⁶⁹ Ahmet Karafil, *2002 Sonrası Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Gücü ve Kamu Diplomasisi: Araçlar, Uygulamalar Ve Etkileri*, Master Thesis (Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2017), p.43.

¹⁷⁰ Yunus Emre Enstitüsü (06.02.2012), Yunus Emre Vakfı, Accessed February 6 2022.

<https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/kurumsal/yunus-emre-enstitusu>

¹⁷¹ Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Resmi Kurumsal Sitesi, Accessed March 21 2022. <http://www.yunusemreenstitusu.org/turkiye/index.php?lang=tr&page=53>

by considering regional differences and effectively addressing the target audience. In addition, the Institute offers Turkish as an optional foreign language to 7,500 students in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Jordan, Morocco, Tokyo, and Romania. The Institute organizes summer schools to ensure that the Turkish language is studied.¹⁷²

The Yunus Emre Institute's mission is to make Turkish the world's language. As a result, it is underlined that the Yunus Emre Institute's activities can be classified as educational, cultural, and artistic. Turkish Teaching, My Preference is Turkish, Distance Turkish, Turkish Summer School, Education Programs, Scientific Meetings, Turkish Education Sets, and Supplementary Materials are among the educational activities carried out by Yunus Emre Institute under the framework of the Turkish Education Directorate. Online Turkish language instruction is a project designed to assist students and teachers who desire to learn the Turkish language regardless of time or location. The Institute's goal for this project is to make the Turkish language more widely spoken worldwide. In addition, during the summer months, the Institute hosts students in Turkey by hosting a "Turkish Summer School" program. Students who travel to Turkey as part of this program will have the opportunity to practice their Turkish. They will have the chance to learn Turkish and explore Turkey's historical, geographical, and cultural resources.¹⁷³

3.3.1. Effects of Yunus Emre Institute on Soft Power

According to Ibrahim Kalın, the Yunus Emre Institute and institutions such as Kızılay and TİKA are soft power instruments. These institutions are Turkey's political, cultural, economic, and diplomatic public institutions. He claims to have institutions that are involved in diplomacy. For these institutions to be more effective, they must collaborate.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Kurumsal Sitesi, Accessed May 11 2022. <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/kurumsal/yunus-emre-enstitusu>,

¹⁷³ Ahmet Karafil, 2002 Sonrası Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Gücü, p.46-47.

¹⁷⁴ İbrahim Kalın, *Soft Power*, p.5-23.

Turkey emphasizes the concept of religion, particularly during the AK Party's period. More references to names like Mevlana, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Yunus Emre, and other vital parts of Islam and Turkish identity, have been made during this period. However, rather than being a religious mission, these are carried out from a cultural standpoint. UNESCO declared 2007 as the World Mevlana Year, based on a proposal by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Turkey is trying to increase its cultural activity, especially in the Muslim geography, through these internationally known and loved names.¹⁷⁵

3.4. Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) and Its Activities

Humanitarian aid is one of the factors that will make a country's soft power policy acceptable to other countries and the public. The Red Crescent is one of Turkey's foreign policy institutions that coordinates political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural activities and contributes to Turkey's soft power.¹⁷⁶

Kızılay, which helps vulnerable people in Turkey and supports society's disaster-prevention efforts, is seen as assisting other countries. On June 11, 1968, the Red Crescent was founded to help soldiers injured or sick on the battlefield without discrimination. The Red Crescent, which was founded as the Ottoman Wounded and Sick Soldiers Aid Society¹⁷⁷, was renamed the Ottoman Crescent Society¹⁷⁸ in 1877, the Turkish Crescent Society¹⁷⁹ in 1923, the "Turkish Red Crescent Society"¹⁸⁰ in 1935, and the Turkish Red Crescent Association¹⁸¹ in 1947.¹⁸²

The Red Crescent's second strategic goal for 2010-2015 is to "play an active role in humanitarian diplomacy by nurturing global culture through the models and local

¹⁷⁵ Kadir Sancak, *Yumuşak Güç Kaynağı Olarak Kültür ve Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Gücünde Kültür Faktörü*, Balkan ve Yakın Doğu Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 2/4 (2016), p.22.

¹⁷⁶ Tuba Çavuş, *Dış Politikada Yumuşak Güç Kullanımı Türk Dış Politikası*, Master Thesis, (Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2012), p.50.

¹⁷⁷ In Turkish called as Osmanlı Yaralı ve Hasta Askerlere Yardım Cemiyeti

¹⁷⁸ In Turkish called as Osmanlı Hilali Ahmer Cemiyeti

¹⁷⁹ In Turkish called as Türkiye Hilali Ahmer Cemiyeti

¹⁸⁰ In Turkish called as Türkiye Kızılay Cemiyeti

¹⁸¹ In Turkish called as Türkiye Kızılay Derneği

¹⁸² Türk Kızılayı Kurumsal Sitesi, Tarihçemiz, Accessed April 11 2022.
<http://www.kizilay.org.tr/kurumsal/sayfa.php?t=-Kurumsal-Tarihcemiz>

values created by the Turkish Red Crescent, as well as the dissemination of internationally and locally recognized principles".¹⁸³

The Turkish Red Crescent, founded in 1886, responds successfully to natural disasters in 138 countries worldwide, providing the supplies needed to improve the living situations of those in need. It also constructs sectors such as education, social support, public facilities, housing, schools, and community centres, aiding persons' health. The Turkish Red Crescent, which continues to help those in need worldwide in areas like drought, famine, and health issues, has much clout in political circles.¹⁸⁴

The Turkish Red Crescent responding to the region's urgent needs following a disaster, provides victims with high-quality and timely nutrition services through its mobile bakery oven, mobile kitchen, and mobile catering vehicles. Turkish Red Crescent, which has tent business and production workshops in Ankara and Erzincan produces unique tents for needs and disaster tents that can be used for long periods in domestic and international humanitarian aid work.¹⁸⁵

The Turkish Red Crescent carries out humanitarian aid and has become a global actor by continuing its efforts without prejudice based on language, religion, or race. In the last ten years, the Turkish Red Crescent has responded to natural disasters in 138 countries, providing shelter and food to those in need. The Turkish Red Crescent has taken out various permanent welfare initiatives in nations such as Palestine, Sudan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Somalia, and Pakistan, in addition to humanitarian relief. Construction of facilities, provision of support for livelihoods, health, education, social assistance, agriculture, and irrigation are all areas where aid is needed.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Türk Kızılayı, <http://www.kizilay.org.tr/kurumsal/sayfa.php?t=-Kurumsal-Tarihcemiz>

¹⁸⁴ Nisa Efendioğlu, *Turkey's Public Diplomacy And Soft Power: An Analysis Of Turkey's First English Speaking News Channel Trt World*, Master Thesis (Galatasaray University, 2021), p.65.

¹⁸⁵ Türk Kızılayı Kurumsal Sitesi, Neler Yapıyoruz-Afet Yönetimi, Accessed April 12 2022. <https://www.kizilay.org.tr/neler-yapiyoruz/afet-yonetimi>

¹⁸⁶ Türk Kızılayı Kurumsal Sitesi Neler Yapıyoruz-Uluslararası Yardımlar, Accessed April 12 2022. <https://www.kizilay.org.tr/neler-yapiyoruz/uluslararasi-yardimlar>

3.4.1. Effects of The Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) on Soft Power

Soft power features may also be found in the Red Crescent's activities, a state entity similar to TİKA. Because the Turkish Red Crescent provides humanitarian relief in war-torn areas worldwide, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. In this framework, the Turkish Red Crescent responds to natural catastrophes in our nation and worldwide by assisting governmental institutions and providing emergency shelter, food, and partial health care to disaster victims".¹⁸⁷

With 151 out of 192 votes in the election, soft power elements directly impacted Turkey's temporary membership in the United Nations Security Council. The efforts of the Red Crescent, which boosted its humanitarian help activities overseas, and the development aid programs carried out by TİKA in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a significant role in this process.¹⁸⁸

3.5. The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İHH) and Its Activities

The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İHH) is a non-governmental organization founded in 1995 by Fehmi Bülent Yıldırım and Mahmut Savaş to aid the victims of the Bosnian War. Following the war, the organization maintained its work by supplying help to war-torn areas such as Chechnya, Palestine, and Kosovo. Its efforts are not restricted to these regions; it also provides aid to numerous African countries in education and health, particularly food aid. The Middle East, Europe, Africa, the Balkans, South America, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Caucasus are among the 135 countries.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Mehmet Çamır, *Yumuşak Güç Kavramı ve Türk Dış Politikasında Yumuşak Güç* Master Thesis (Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı, 2009), p.27.

¹⁸⁸ Soner Karagül, *Türkiye'nin Balkanlardaki Yumuşak Güç Perspektifi: Türk İş Birliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı*, *Girişimcilik ve Kalkınma Dergisi* 8/1 (2013), p.87.

¹⁸⁹ Muhammed Kotan (2010). *Küresel Bir Sivil Toplum Örgütü Olarak İHH*, Master Thesis, Selçuk University, Sosyal Bilimler Institute, Konya. p.10.

IHH is involved in many projects, including schools, hospitals, mosques, cultural centres, orphanages, and water wells. The aim of IHH can be seen in its slogan "To offer required relief to all individuals who have been in difficulty, who have suffered disasters, who have been victims of war or natural disasters, who have been injured, who have been left out in the open or exposed, or who have been persecuted".¹⁹⁰

IHH is known in public opinion for its humanitarian relief efforts. The NGO is also involved in humanitarian diplomacy, human rights, and educational, cultural, and health aid. IHH is the only institution that can bring these three sectors together. Generally, the activities have the potential to strengthen Turkey's soft power, however, political issues such as the phenomenon of Blue Marmara (humanitarian support organized by IHH from Turkey to Palestine) at the same time can influence negatively the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel.¹⁹¹

Regarding humanitarian aid, IHH aims to assist individuals worldwide affected by war, internal strife, natural disasters, disease, poverty, drought, food, health, shelter, and education. IHH prepares reports on human rights abuses, activities restricting freedom, and constructing international public opinion as part of its advocacy efforts. In addition, IHH organizes protests, conferences, symposiums, photographic exhibitions, documentaries, television programs, and social media initiatives to raise awareness of crisis concerns in domestic public opinion.¹⁹² IHH's humanitarian diplomacy activities include looking after civilians where wars and crises occur, finding missing persons, rescuing hostages, participating in diplomacy to represent an oppressed society that is rarely visible, to mediate in areas where wars and crises occur.¹⁹³

IHH claims to be the first international NGO operating in the field of humanitarian diplomacy in the Islamic world¹⁹⁴ and the only Turkish NGO dealing with

¹⁹⁰ Şahinoğlu, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları (STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi*, p.138.

¹⁹¹ Şahinoğlu, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları (STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi*, p.137.

¹⁹² İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı İnsan Hakları, Accessed May 10 2022. <https://www.ihh.org.tr/insan-haklari>

¹⁹³ İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı İnsani Diplomasi, Accessed May 10 2022. <https://www.ihh.org.tr/insanidiplomasi>

¹⁹⁴ İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı İnsani Diplomasi Accessed May 10 2022. <https://www.ihh.org.tr/insanidiplomasi>

humanitarian diplomacy. This situation reveals that IHH does not limit itself to aid only. In a sense, IHH tries to go beyond the dimension of aid with its humanitarian diplomacy activities. Because humanitarian aid in crisis or war offers temporary solutions for IHH. Therefore, humanitarian diplomacy aims to save human life and provide humanitarian aid.¹⁹⁵

IHH organizes professional development and training courses related to development aid. It provides professional infrastructure for educators in cases where the infrastructure is insufficient. For example, barber sets in India, fishing boats in Aceh, and rikshaw distributions in Bangladesh were made for this purpose.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the IHH gives more importance to infrastructure investments than short-term aid, even in charitable works. IHH constructs water wells instead of distributing potable water. Instead of transporting orphans to Turkey, IHH builds orphanages, schools, etc., in the respective countries. It mediates the self-development of societies by building structures. In other words, long-term solutions are sought rather than temporary solutions.¹⁹⁷

3.5.1. Effects of The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) on Soft Power

Purtaş argues that IHH conducts diplomacy from person to person, which formulates the "invisible face" of Turkey's foreign policy. Humanitarian aid groups function as a bridge between societies, with the phrase "touching people." Africa and Southeast Asia, which were not on Turkey's agenda until the 2000s, have risen to prominence in Turkey due to these groups' efforts, and significant awareness of these regions has been formed. Humanitarian relief organizations have outperformed many state institutions and demonstrated their importance by displaying their potential while

¹⁹⁵ Dağ, Ahmet Emin, *Moro Peace Monitoring Mission: A Humanitarian Diplomacy Experience*, (İstanbul: İNSAMER, 2016), p.2.

¹⁹⁶ İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı Yetim Gülerse Dünya Güler (YDG) Proje Kitapçığı 2019, Accessed April 11 2022. <https://ihh.org.tr/public/publish/0/129/ydg-kitapcik-2019.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ Senem Çevik, Efe Sevin and Banu Baybars-Hawks, *State-Civil Society Partnerships in International Aid and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Turkey and Somalia*, In *Diplomacy The Politics of Foreign Aid* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.169-193.

contributing to Turkey's foreign policy through humanitarian and catastrophe diplomacy.¹⁹⁸

Humanitarian aid NGOs working in Africa, particularly IHH, may have influenced official action by reporting about humanitarian issues in Africa in general and Somalia to government authorities through reports or lobbying efforts. Due to the civil war in Somalia, Turkey's mission in the country was dissolved in 1991. The embassy was reopened in 2012. NGOs may have been among the first to provide information from the region at this time. Since 1996, IHH has been active in the area. Aras and Akpınar's (2015) analysis demonstrates that NGOs existed in Africa before the Turkish government. In this regard, IHH is a pioneer for humanitarian aid NGOs in Africa.¹⁹⁹

3.6. Conclusion

The soft power strategy of Turkey began in the late 1990s and peaked under the AK Party's tenure. It was discovered that the states targeted by Turkey had historical ties or common identity, making it a relay connector for diplomatic connections that lasted beyond the republic's period. This is consistent with Davutoğlu's approach, which is based on a long-term strategy to transform Turkey into a regional power or a global player in international affairs.

Turkey relies on two institutions: government non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) and civil non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work in diplomacy, social development, humanitarian aid, and religion. All these instruments, in principle, can help to make Turkey a country that the public and government are familiar with. Turkey maintains connections with other countries using different techniques. For example, religious identity becomes a bargaining weapon for a country dominated by a Muslim majority. And all these initiatives contribute to Turkey's soft power development.

¹⁹⁸ Fırat Purtaş, *Türk Dış Politikasının Yükselen Değeri: Kültürel Diplomasi*, Gazi Akademik Bakış 7/13 (2013), p.1-14.

¹⁹⁹ Muhammet Cemal Şahinoğlu, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları (STK)'nın Dış Politikaya Etkisi*, p.154.

Humanitarian aid is one of the most critical areas, and humanitarian groups help to improve Turkey's image. Even if these groups do not formally represent Turkey, their assistance is interpreted as Turkey's support. Because the Turkish flag is displayed on the jackets of humanitarian relief personnel. Humanitarian assistance workers' warm relationships with other populations naturally impact governments. Therefore, humanitarian workers are referred to as state envoys on a volunteer basis because NGO personnel go to places where officials are afraid to go or travel with protection armies of their own volition.

As a result, volunteer actions improve inter-societal interaction, develop social networks, and shift perspectives. Humanitarian relief organizations contribute to Turkey's public diplomacy through cooperative projects with official entities. Because on the one hand, humanitarian assistance groups send aid to individuals in need, and on the other hand, official aid shows that the organizations that offer aid in the country/region where it is provided are also actors. Another benefit of humanitarian relief NGOs is that they can supply reliable information from the field because of their local contacts. This allows NGOs to provide diplomatic space to governments.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Hüsrev Tabak, *Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation*, *Insight Turkey*, 17/3 (2015), p.193-215.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMMUNITY OF ISMAILAGA

This chapter will explain Ismailaga, adopting a sociological approach, examining it as a religious community or tariqa whose thoughts and actions shape identity, which is the definition of “us”. It aims to shed light on the background of IDDEF as an NGO of Ismailaga. In general, while observing the structure of Ismailaga, the study will emphasize the views of Sheikh Mahmud Efendi since the community is a tariqa, where the sheikh is the main reference. The subchapter examines the general view regarding Naqshbandiya, Mahmud Efendi, the origin of the identity, and the worldview of Ismailaga.

4.1. Naqshbandiya

Naqshbandiyya is a tariqa established by Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband (d.1389) which originated from tariqa Hacegan. The thought of Naqshbandiya is believed to have originated through Abu Bakr (d.634) from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Bahauddin as the founder of the tariqa, developed and systematized Sufistic spiritual training methods such as silent zikr. The tariqa was revived with the works of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in India, which is also known as *muceddid elfi sani* (the revivor of the second millennium), and Imam Rabbani. The Naqshbandi tariqa was later strengthened by Maulana Khalid al-Baghdadi (d.1827)²⁰¹ who later formed a school called “Naqshbandi-Khalidi”, which became one of the most popular tariqas in Anatolia in the late Ottoman period and the initials years of the Turkish Republic.²⁰² Khalid al-Baghdadi spread his tariqa to Anatolia through disciples and later formed significant communities within Turkish society. The branches include the tariqa of

²⁰¹ Bahauddin Naqshband (d.1389) -Alauddin Attar (d.1400) – Yakubi Cherkhi (d.1447) - Ubeydullah Ahrar (d.1490) – Muhammed Zahid Wahshivari (d.1529)- Darwish Muhammad (d.1562) – Hajegi Imkenegi (d.1600)-Muhammed Baqi Billah (d.1603)– Ahmed Sirhindi or Imam Rabbani (d.1624)– Muhammed Masum Sirhindi or Urwatul Wusqa (d.1668)- Seyfeddin Sirhindi (d.1685) -Nur Muhammed Bedayuni (d.1723) - Mazhar Jan Janan (d.1781) - Abdullah Dihlevi or Gulam Ali (d.1824) – Muhammed Can Efendi – Mawlana Khalid Baghdadi (d.1827)

²⁰² Hamid Algar, *Nakşibendilik*, Translated by A. Cüneyt Köksal, (İstanbul: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2007), p. 56. & Hamid Algar, “Mevlânâ Hâlid el-Bağdâdî”, (İstanbul: DİA XV, 1997), p. 284.

Erenköy, İskenderpaşa, and Menzil, which has a lineage that relates to Khalid al-Baghdadi but separates on several genealogies.²⁰³ Even though the tariqa separated into several religious communities, they had common rituals such as silent *zikir*²⁰⁴, *rabita*²⁰⁵, and *hatme hacegan*²⁰⁶.²⁰⁷

The community of Ismailaga came from the lineage of Abdullah al-Makki, Yanyalı Mustafa İsmet (d. 1872), Mustafa İsmet, Halil Nurullah (d. 1893), Ali Rıza el-Bezzaz (d. 1911), and Ali Haydar Gürbüzler (d. 1960) who was engaged in the coordination of Issues Compilation Commission (*Te'lif-i Mesâil Heyeti*) in 1915 and active in spreading Naqshband tariqa in the tekke of İsmet Efendi. In 1960, Ali Haydar Efendi left the heritage of Tariqa to his successor, Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu, who was to become the leader of the Ismailaga community.²⁰⁸

In general, Naqshbandiyya plays an important role in its religious communities during the period of the Turkish Republic. Each community has different approaches, actions, and goals, which makes them focus on their fields such as Islamic social life, education, and politic. Ismailaga focuses on the public in the realm of traditional Islamic education and religious-social life.²⁰⁹

4.2. The Life of Mahmud Efendi (1929-2022)

Mahmud Efendi was born in 1929 in Trabzon, in the village of Miço. He began his religious education and memorized Holy Quran with his father, Ali, and mother, Fatma. He continued mastering Islamic studies in Kayseri and Trabzon, especially with Dursun Feyzi Güven (the teacher of the Süleymaniye Madrasa) until he received

²⁰³ Necdet Tosun, *Nakşibendiyye, Türkiyede Tarikatlar Tarihi ve Kültür*, In *Türkiye'de Tarikatlar*, (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2015), p.611-615.

²⁰⁴ Zikir literally means remembrance. In tariqa discipline, the zikir is the main lesson that must be conducted by the disciples in order to continue the spiritual journey.

²⁰⁵ Rabita means to connect. In tariqa, rabita is defined to connect between disciple and shaikh by imagining the existence of shaikh. This functions to make disciple feel watched and controlled. Rabita helps disciples to discipline themselves easier.

²⁰⁶ The zikir is implemented by a group of people in the region.

²⁰⁷ Zehra Fatma Özyağlı, *Examining The Formation Of Women's Identity In A Naqshbandi Community: The Case Of Ismailaga*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi, 2018), p.28.

²⁰⁸ Himmet Hülür, *Technology and Naqshbandi Sufism-An Empirical analysis of İsmail Ağa and İskender Paşa Branches*. Selçuk Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Edebiyat Dergisi 13, 2000, p. 302.

²⁰⁹ Necdet Tosun, *Nakşibendiyye*. p. 675-681.

his diploma at the age of 16. Besides receiving education, Mahmud Efendi was working as an imam in a mosque and educating students.²¹⁰

Mahmud Efendi got married, and started his life in Sufism in 1954 as a disciple of Ali Haydar Gürbüzler (d. 1960), who was active at İsmet Efendi Lodge.²¹¹ Following the request of Sheikh Ali Haydar, Mahmut Efendi came to Istanbul and became the imam of the İsmailağa Mosque. After the death of Shaikh Ali Haydar, he became the successor of the Tariqa in 1960. However, he preferred to conduct religious activities in İsmailağa Mosque than the tekke of İsmet Efendi until 1997. Due to his health conditions, he retired from being an imam in 2000 and started living in Beykoz.²¹² Lastly, he passed away on the 23rd of June 2022 in Beykoz due to a health condition.

4.3. The Emergence of İsmailağa

The tariqa led by Shaikh Ali Haydar was active in İsmet Efendi Lodge. However, after the succession to Mahmut Efendi, the central activities of the tariqa took place in the Mosque of İsmailağa, where Mahmut Efendi officially worked. In addition, the area of Çarşamba and the mosque of İsmailağa were already known in the past as the place of Naqshibandi-Khalidi disciples' gathering centre. However, during the republic period, the mosque was inactive until Shaikh Ali Haydar instructed to reconstruct it and chose Mahmud Efendi to become the imam. This condition maintained the revival of a place to get its previous atmosphere.²¹³ Due to the new centre, the community is named İsmailağa, referring to the mosque,²¹⁴ Çarşamba due to the location, and Mahmud Efendi community due to Shaikh's name.²¹⁵

Mahmud Efendi as the imam of the mosque and successor of Ali Haydar Efendi spread the understanding of Sufism and the teachings of *ahlusunnah*. During the activities,

²¹⁰ Hüseyin Demir, *Die Naqşbandiyya unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Naqşbandiyya Scheichs Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu*, PhD Thesis (Universität Wien 2013), p.91.

²¹¹ Semih Ceyhan, *Türkiye'de Tarikatlar*, (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2015), p.678.

²¹² Ferda Balancar, *Politics and Religious Order In Turkey*, Democratic Progress Institute (2019), p.24-25.

²¹⁴ The mosque which built in the name of Ebu İshak İsmail as Shaikhul İslam in the Ottoman period in 1723

²¹⁵ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community: Shifting Religious Patterns In Contemporary Turkey, Russia and the Moslem World* 11/281 (2015), p. 28-35.

the number of disciples increased, and the religious seminars of Mahmut Efendi were influential. Those who gathered became a community. The people who gathered then became the disciples of tariqa, which means that they pledged allegiance (*biat*) to the shaikh to be disciples. In the beginning, the tariqa was not known as a grand community; nonetheless, the transformation of the place and the emergence of a new charismatic leader of Mahmud Efendi contributed to the community formation.²¹⁶

According to Semih Ceyhan, the formation of the Sufi community is an organic social consequence, and he argues that in Islamic tradition, like the *fiqh madhhab* of Hanafiyya was never established as a sociological imagination of creating the social group. The Sufi community is an organic consequence that is the result of the implementation of Sufistic teachings.²¹⁷ In the Ottoman period, this kind of community was called the *Tekke* movement. The movement was fully autonomous and independent until 1812, when it was placed and supervised under the scholar's council (*meclis-i meşayih*).²¹⁸

Ismailaga with the form of a religious community constructing a form of habitus.²¹⁹ The similarity of thoughts, actions, values, and lifestyles possessed by the disciples in one district of Çarşamba is a cultural capital inherited by each generation. Some of the values applied, such as the way of dressing, came from one of the Ottoman traditions are considered a cultural capital that is a continuation of the previous culture. Ismailaga's habitus, which is the determinant of identity and the form of the definition of "us", is maintained and reproduced with daily activities such as *sohbet*, madrasa, and gatherings. The community with certain values, norms, beliefs, and actions created the definition of "us" which maintains its existence in the public space.²²⁰ Concretely, the tariqa formed an Islamic ghetto in Çarşamba, Fatih district in Istanbul, especially the mosque of Ismailaga.²²¹

²¹⁶ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.28-35.

²¹⁷ Semih Ceyhan, *Tarikat ve Tekke Kavramlarına Dair*, In *Türkiye'de Tarikatlar Tarih ve Kültür*, (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2011), p.29.

²¹⁸ The mosque which built in the name of Ebu Ishak Ismail as Shaikhul Islam in the Ottoman period in 1723

²¹⁹ The concept used by Pierre Bourdieu to explain values formed by certain societies and transmitted through generations which determines social class and status.

²²⁰ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 65.

²²¹ Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1990), p. 62.

The location occupied by Ismailaga, namely Çarşamba in the Fatih district, can indirectly be regarded as a religious power struggle, where there are areas such as Fener and Balat. Fener is a place for orthodox Christian communities, while Balat is a place inhabited by Sephardic Jews who came to Istanbul in the 15th century. The existence of three religions in the same place makes it similar to the mini Jerusalem. The existence of Ismailaga became a symbol of Muslims among other religions, especially Orthodox Christians, because there was a patriarchate in that place.²²²

Regarding the types of society that attend the community, Ismailaga attracted a stratum of society from the labour class, which in terms of education was not high and nor among entrepreneurs in contrast to the Erenkoy community, which is attended by businessmen, and the community of Iskenderpaşa which targets politicians. However, the stratum of society that joined Ismailaga was relatively more than other tariqas. Also, Ismailaga's majority elite group comes from the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey which makes them have a religious-nationalist perspective.²²³

Regarding the historical development of Ismailaga, the community started in the 1960s, which was after the inauguration of the Reformation (*İnkılap*) law which abolished traditional institutions such as *tekke*, *dargah*, and *zawiya* in 1925.²²⁴ The religious community emerged organically and only focused on social relations and religious activities.²²⁵ However, the community was able to create an association or NGO. Still, religious activities were controlled and restricted by the government. This condition continued until the presidency of Turgut Özal in 1983, when religious activities started to increase.²²⁶

In the 1970s, Ismailaga experienced rapid progress where organizations and madrasas spread into different regions.²²⁷ The progress continued until the ‘post-modern’ coup d’état on February 28, 1997. The government decided to stop supporting religious

²²² Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 34.

²²³ Himmet Hülür, *Technology and Naqshbandi Sufism*, p. 306.

²²⁴ *Tekke ve Zaviyelerle Türbelerin Seddine ve Türbedarlıklar ile Bir Takim Unvanların Men ve İlgasına Dair Kanun*. Date: 13/12/1925. No: 243. This law was inaugurated after the rebellion of Shaikh Said. The activities of Sufism were restricted and controlled after the inauguration of law. In 1949 the criminal law for who disobeyed the law was inaugurated, which increased the pressure on the issue.

²²⁵ Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa Community and Its Relationship with The AK Party, Democracy and Security* 14/3 (2018), p. 277.

²²⁶ Hüseyin Demir, *İsmailağa Cemaati Medreselerinde Arap Dilinin Öğretimi*, Bartın Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi 6/9 (2018), p.3.

²²⁷ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 61.

communities and closed all educational institutions that were not under the Religious Affairs Presidency. The circumstances changed when AK Party won the election in 2002. The opportunity for religious communities to expand activities revived because of the new political actors that didn't find the problems towards activities.²²⁸

Ismailaga faced three critical tragedies, and the first one was the accusation of Mahmud Efendi regarding the suicide of one mufti and the suicides of two important figures within the tariqa. In 1982, Mahmud Efendi was accused of causing the murder of Üsküdar's Mufti by giving a fatwa regarding the death of Hasan Ali Ünal because of his anti-tariqa position and preventing Mahmud Efendi from giving religious seminars. The Court, after investigating, acquitted Mahmud Efendi, being found not guilty.²²⁹ Two influential figures within the community, Hızır Ali Muratoğlu, committed suicide in 1998, and Bayram Ali Öztürk was murdered in 2006. The loss of two influential figures negatively influenced the growing and expanding process of the community.²³⁰

In conclusion, Ismailaga's historical development can be categorized into two phases; the first is the period before the post-modern coup in 1997, and the second is the period of the AK Party after 2002 until today. The second period is the ongoing process where the community has good relations with the government, and the improvement of the community is better than in previous periods.²³¹

4.4. Institutions within the Community of Ismailaga

Ismailaga, a community and tariqa, has no purpose in forming an institution. Sufism is the spiritual journey that the disciple undergoes in search of the truth. Meanwhile, a community and institution are formed as social consequences that are not strategically planned. However, they were considered instruments to carry out social activities

²²⁸ Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.278. Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 29.

²²⁹ Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 280-281.

²³⁰ Accessed 15 August 2022. <https://www.ismailaga.org.tr/hizir-ali-muradoglu-hoca> and Accessed 15 August 2022. <https://www.ismailaga.org.tr/bayram-hocanin-hayati>

²³¹ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 29.

organizationally.²³² Thus observing the Ismailaga institution sociologically is an attempt to see the results of that form an organic improvement within the community.

Since Mahmud Efendi, Ismailaga has begun community activities without an official association. Within the community, the relationship between Shaikh and the disciples is a social relationship based on charisma and respect. Thus, in these conditions, individuals who are classified as independent within the community do not have a strict hierarchy. Therefore, the Ismailaga is a form of community or tariqa which doesn't have official regulations that are controlled by the state.²³³

Within the community, especially, the figures who had finished traditional Islamic education within the community can create an association. However, each organization is independent and has no hierarchical relationship. The founder of the association, those are the *hocas*, have an important role in the continuity of relations between organizations. Thus, Ismailaga generally has two faces: the first is a religious group community which is the tariqa that doesn't have an official face; the second is a group of different associations.

Due to the deteriorating health condition of the sheikh, there were internal debates and fractions within the community. In general, there are two main groups, and there is one group that became popular under the first group. The first is the scholar council (*heyet*) based in the Ismailaga complex, and the second is the organization namely, Marifet Association led by the husband of Mahmud Efendi's wife's sister, Muhammed Keskin which is based in Beykoz where Mahmud Efendi lived. Another group that became popular under the scholar's Council is the follower of Cubbeli Ahmet Hoca. Cubbeli became famous because of his religious seminars and activities in creating the TV station of Lalegül and the Association of Hayder.

There are several NGOs established under the supervision of the scholar council, the first one was Ismailaga Cami, İlimi ve Hizmet Vakfi in 1979, but in 2011 it was changed to İsmailağa Derneği,²³⁴ and in 2020, it was inaugurated as İsmailağa Vakfi.

²³²Semih Ceyhan, *Tarikat ve Tekke Kavramlarına Dair*, p. 29.

²³³ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 63.

²³⁴ Accessed 21 June 2022.

It is an NGO that is at the core in the continuity of social and educational activities, particularly the institution of specialization (*tekamul*) of Islamic studies.²³⁵ The existence of the Ismailaga Foundation does not make other NGOs submissive and become the branches that make the NGOs autonomous.

The process of bureaucratization and the development of administration developed over time. Due to the emergence of the tariqa community, but then caused by the imposing of regulation from the government and the internal improvement of institutionalization, the establishment of an official institution led to the construction of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, Ismailaga's existence in terms of its community is regarded as solid, which makes two spirits co-exist. The co-existence then provides space for other NGOs to be active simultaneously.

The presence of several NGOs gave birth to competition, where every NGO with success achieved can produce electability and legitimacy from the community. Thus, IDDEF appears in this social context. Therefore, relationships that often shift between each other can occur because each NGO is still in the same community but with different administrations.

The core team that chairs the community is a council formed by chosen scholars. It has the authority (*vekalet*) to allow someone to join the community by being a disciple of Mahmud Efendi's tariqa. The Council represents the Ismailaga community and directs all scholars in various locations. Thus, the council is the biggest actor in the dynamics of Ismailaga's development. IDDEF is one of the organizations that have an affiliation with the Ismailaga council that carries out its activities abroad.

<https://ismailagadernegi.org.tr/hakimizda#:~:text=Mahmud%20Efendi%20Hazretlerinin%20yeti%C5%9Ftirdi%C4%9Fi%20hocalar,pl%C3%A2n%C4%B1%20bir%20%C5%9Fekilde%2C%20yeni%20projelerle>

²³⁵ Accessed 21 June 2022. <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/5850057/ismailaga-vakfi-resmen-kuruldu-kuruculari-arasinda-bes-isim-vare>

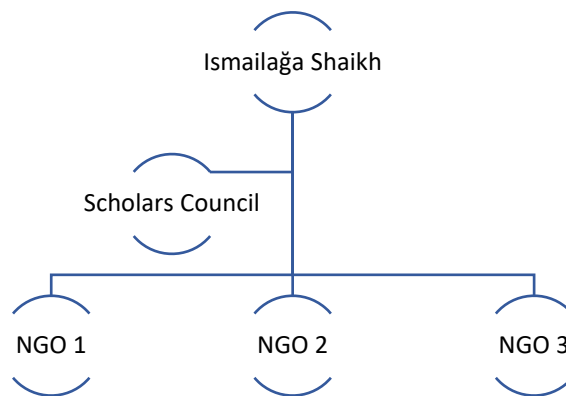


Figure 4.1. The Relation Between the Community and NGOs

In terms of dynamism that occurs, especially in the process of bureaucratization, there is friction between traditional and modern institutions. A traditional institution, namely *tekke* is a gathering place for people around a figure who has reached a certain level of gaining knowledge. A *tekke* with an owned profile can still be considered part of the community. However, when this mentality is transformed into an NGO, in terms of regulation, there is no hierarchical relation between the NGO and the community structure, which shows that the NGO is independent. Therefore, there are numerous NGOs are formed within the community. NGOs are autonomous in their relationship with the community and independent among other Ismailaga NGOs. The relationship between NGOs is difficult to control because there are no structural relations among them. Ismailaga has traditional and modern patterns; traditional i.e. the presumption of tariqa, community, *tekke*, shaikh, and council, and the modern assumption in terms of the formation of many NGOs, which are sometimes considered a modern *tekke*.

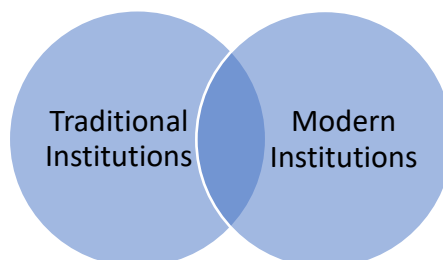


Figure 4.2. The Interception of Traditional and Modern Institutions

4.5. Thoughts and Activities of Ismailaga

Ismailaga has several thoughts and approaches which were influenced by Mahmud Efendi as the leader of the tariqa. The activities of Ismailaga are carried out by different NGOs, and the most influential is the Ismailaga Foundation.²³⁶

The mentality of Ismailaga is constructed with a religious-centric perspective which aims to form a religious generation and seeks to carry out movements that lead from the bottom up. While doing so, Ismailaga necessitates a strong mental and intellectual relationship between the shaikh and the disciple.²³⁷

4.5.1. Implementing Islam in Worldly Life

Ismailaga categorizes itself as the religious community implementing Islamic values and trying to live under the values of the Age of Bliss (*Asr-i Saadet*) in the sense of individual and social aspects. The community emphasizes the transformation of society by spreading Islamic values.²³⁸ Living Islam vividly by the appearance and the way of dressing makes it different from other religious communities.²³⁹

According to Mahmud Efendi, the position of the *Sunnah* in Ismailaga is very significant, positioning it as the main parameter in tariqa. The effort to practice the sunnah is often associated with realizing the *asr-i saadet* in modern times. It is a form of persistence that focuses on aspects of the way of life and efforts to manifest in the public sphere by using symbols. The existence of the community with the teachings of the sunnah and not supported by political ideology makes Ismailaga a movement that does not prioritize the struggle for power in politics.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.64.

²³⁷ Himmet Hülür, *Technology and Naqshbandi Sufism*, p.309.

²³⁸ Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa*, p. 279. Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community: Shifting Religious Patterns In Contemporary Turkey*, p. 37-38

²³⁹ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community: Shifting Religious Patterns In Contemporary Turkey*, p. 48

²⁴⁰ Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa Community*, p. 279.

In terms of rituals (*ibadet*), Ismailaga prioritizes *sunnah*²⁴¹ rituals because it is believed that they are the way to lead to piety. Mahmud Efendi himself showed and strongly implemented the teachings of the sunnah in several aspects of daily life. For instance, the continuation of the *rewatib*²⁴² sunnah prayers next to the *fard*²⁴³ prayers, *tahajjud*²⁴⁴, *ishrak*²⁴⁵, *dhuha*²⁴⁶, *awwabin*²⁴⁷, *tahiyyatu'l-masjid*²⁴⁸, and *shukr*²⁴⁹ prayers. He emphasized the importance of *nafilahs*²⁵⁰ in his life with the following statement: "Mahmud should die than to abandon the mid-morning prayer",²⁵¹ and "Leave my tariqa if you saw me leave the sunnah even if (I did it) intentionally".²⁵² The practice of sunnah rituals became the characteristic of Ismailaga.²⁵³

Ismailaga adopts the approach of *ahlussunnah* which in its general definition means that the followers of one of the four *mazhab*²⁵⁴; Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali, and in terms of theological creed (*akide*) the community accepts the *mazhab* of Ashari and Maturidi. In addition, the conceptualization of *ahlussunnah* is understood as an Islamic tradition that has been formed throughout history by the earlier classical scholars, particularly, in the Ottoman period. The concept of *ahlussunnah* defined by Ismailaga excludes other Islamic groups such as the Shia, Wahhabi, and modernist Muslims.

Ismailaga in the name of spreading the teaching of *ahlusunnah* carried out its educational activities with madrasas and *sohbet*²⁵⁵. Besides, while promoting the

²⁴¹ The extra rituals are beside the main obligation (fard). Conducting sunnah is perceived as practising Islam more than the basic imperatives. It is aimed at getting closer and God's consent.

²⁴² The prayers that are not considered obligatory but better to do in Islamic teachings show that there is an emphasis on implementing Islam more than ordinary Muslims by obeying all the extra prayers that showed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

²⁴³ The main five obligatory rituals in Islam including the salutation of God, praying five times, fasting in Ramadhan, giving the alms, conducting pilgrimage in Mecca.

²⁴⁴ The ritual that conducted at midnight between Isha and Subh prayers.

²⁴⁵ The prayer after the subh is practiced at the time of sunrise.

²⁴⁶ The prayer after the Ishraq prayer. Conducted until before Noon prayer of *Dhuhur*.

²⁴⁷ The complementary prayer after Maghrib, or afternoon prayer.

²⁴⁸ The prayer implemented while entering the mosque.

²⁴⁹ The prayer is conducted at any time to praise the God

²⁵⁰ Complementary prayers implemented before and/or after the obligatory prayers.

²⁵¹ Ahıska, Hazrat-ü Mevlânâ eş-Şeyh Mahmut en-Nakşibendî, (Istanbul: Ahıska Publication, 2010), p. 47.

²⁵² Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu, *İrşâdü'l Mürîdîn*, (İstanbul: Arifan yayınları, 2005), p.452.

²⁵³ Filiz Kafadar, *Gündelik Hayat Sosyolojisi Bağlamında Cemaatlerde Kadın: İsmailağa Örneği*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul Sabahaattin Zaim University, 2019), p.69.

²⁵⁴ Madhhab is the religious school of Islamic practices.

²⁵⁵ Religious seminars held in the houses and lodges.

teachings there is a council of scholars functioning to give fatwas to the public.²⁵⁶ Fatwas are religious regulations issued by scholars who don't have a legal connection with the government. Ismailaga became an alternative to other religious institutions for the Turkish Muslim community, especially for followers of the tariqa and the sympathizers.²⁵⁷

Sociologically, Ismailaga as a community is formed with a pattern of thought constructed by Islamic values. Islamic values are a collection of general thoughts, ideas, and approaches that are part of the Islamic worldview. From this perspective, the idea of the Islamic worldview was defined by Shaikh with the method of the tariqa forming the identity of Ismailaga. Therefore, the formation of Ismailaga is more inclined to the crystallization of thoughts which later construct a community.

4.5.2. Tariqa Activities as Re-generation and Preservation

Ismailaga, as a Naqshi-Khalidi tariqa, implements several social and individual rituals which strengthen the aspects of solidarity. The main components of the ritual are religious leaders, religious seminars (*sohbets*), and remembrance (*zikir*). Shaikh (religious leader) is an important figure in tariqa, playing the role of an essential part in the structure. *Sohbet* and *zikir* are activities that are conducted in groups and *zikir* is carried out individually.

Shaikh is a guide of the disciples to find the truth inherited from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The relationship of shaikh with disciples is a form of education to understand the deep spiritual aspects of Islam. Shaikh is obliged to train the disciples to get a high spiritual level. In the process of learning, disciples are asked to follow all the commands.

²⁵⁶ Fatwa is religious regulations which produced by scholars depends on the Islamic classical books or the ijthad (endeavour) which based on the authentic Islamic sources of Qur'an, Hadith, Ijma and Qiyas.

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A shaikh with charismatic and charming characteristics has the effect of bringing the masses together and influencing and directing the masses.²⁵⁸ It is believed that shaikhs have supernatural power due to these influences. This quality of religious leaders evokes an admiration of the sheik in the followers.²⁵⁹

In the tradition of Ismailaga, being loyal to a shaikh is conducted by following the prophet's footsteps. Although the members of the congregation know that the sunnah of the prophet is important, they also think that there may be some issues that they may have difficulty applying.²⁶⁰

The shaikh educates and trains the disciples by giving *sohbet* (religious seminars) which functions to formulate the *muhabbet* (love and respect for each other) between disciples and the shaikh, as well as among disciples themselves. In Istanbul, Ismailaga's *sohbet* is held once a week at the Yavuz Selim grand mosque on Sundays after a morning prayer that lasts one to two hours. The giver of *sohbet* is a *hoca* appointed by the Council of Ismailaga (*heyet*).

The role of *hoca* is very important in giving *sohbet* because he is a representative of the religious values. Every detail of Islamic teachings like the references to the sayings is occasionally recited to make it more influential when conveying the message.²⁶¹ *Hoca* normally gives seminars related to the value and practice of Sufism, emphasizing self-sacrifice, telling stories of previous Muslim communities like the companions of the prophet, the life of great shaikhs, as well as stories from their own life.²⁶²

Zikir which is carried out collectively in the Naqshibandi-Khalidi tradition is referred to as *Hatme Hacegan* which means finishing of grand scholars, which is shortened only by the concept of *hatme*. The *hatme* is led by a leader who sometimes does not have to be in the position of shaikh. Unlike another tariqa, Naqshbandi does not perform *cehri zikir* (vocal zikir), instead, *hatme* is done performing *hafi zikir* (silent

²⁵⁸ Ergün Yıldırım, *Simurgun Kanatları Sosyal Teori ve Din*, (Ankara: Tezkire Yayınları, 2016), p.46-47.

²⁵⁹ Aydın Taştan, *İsmailağa Cemaati Sosyal Kimlik İnşa Araçları*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul Sabahaattin Zaim University, 2021), p. 47.

²⁶⁰ Aydın Taştan, *İsmailağa Cemaati Sosyal Kimlik İnşa Araçları*, p. 55.

²⁶¹ Aydın Taştan, *İsmailağa Cemaati Sosyal Kimlik İnşa Araçları*, p. 58.

²⁶² Zehra Fatma Özyağlı, *Examining The Formation Of Women's Identity*, p. 41.

zikir).²⁶³ *Hatme* is purposeful to be conducted collectively which is part of worship, and spiritual maturation, to strengthen solidarity and the creation of identity.

In each region, there is an association (*dernek*) that functions as a tekke. Disciples performed the *hatme* of each of those places. It is usually done twice a day, after morning prayers and before evening prayers. Disciples are encouraged to do so even if it is not an obligation. In addition to worship and efforts to cleanse oneself, *hatme* is regarded as an endeavor that carries a blessing (*bereket*).

Naming the self as *ahlusunnah*, having a certain style of religious practice successfully constructs the definition of "us" and "other" in Turkish society. Supported by the formation of a ghetto of Çarşamba strengthened social relations between disciples' which later formed a secure area. The culture of Ismailaga is one of the cultural capital that shapes its NGOs including IDDEF.

4.5.3. Spreading Thoughts via Emri bil Meruf, Madrasa, and Dressings

Ismailaga has several values which shape its own identity. In the social context, some activities are functioning to show and spread the influence of the community. The first is *emri bi'l me'ruf* which means calling to kindness. In this pastoral organization, the disciples are scattered to various places to spread the general Islamic values to the society, such as calling to come back to the Islamic lifestyle, conducting religious rituals, and doing kindness. Secondly, to spread and inherit the accumulation of traditional Islamic knowledge, Ismailaga developed a traditional educational institution called a madrasa. Madrasa was only passed by the disciples who wanted to deepen their Islamic knowledge and later become the madrasa lecturer namely *hoca*. Thirdly, one of the actual ways of preaching is the way of dressing, which becomes body language that exists in public spaces. The form of clothing spreads the meaning of religious understanding.

²⁶³ Accessed 3 July 2022. <https://cdn2.islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/dosya/16/C16005717.pdf>

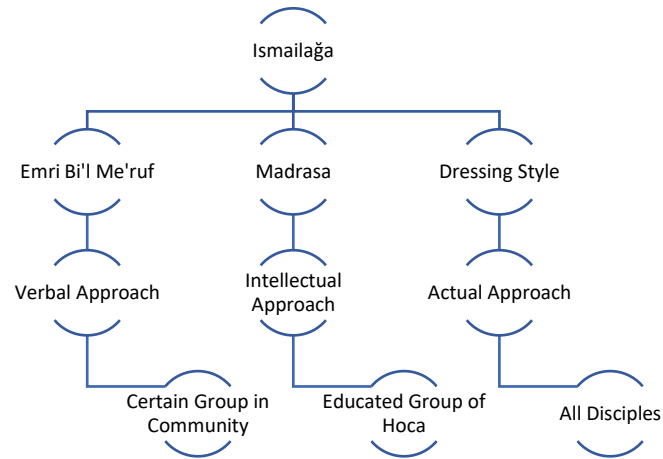


Figure 4.3. The Three Main Approaches of Ismailiyya

Emri bi'l me'ruf is believed to be a method used since the time of Prophet Muhammad that aims to save people from misguidance. The activity is carried out systematically. Shaikh Ali Haydar asserted that the existence of Islam depends on *emri bi'l me'ruf*. Similarly, according to Mahmud Efendi, " The religious preaching must be conducted by going from door to door, village to village". Preachers are a special group that has been carefully trained in the field. The main target is ordinary people, the places that are often visited include merchants, cafes, and bars.²⁶⁴

Sociologically the application of *emri bi'l me'ruf* is a method of communication between "us" and "other". However, during the action, the definition of "other" melted to the definition of "us", due to the common religion. In other words, the community reminds people and spreads its thoughts to live with Islamic moral values. If some audiences repent, Ismailiyya would show itself as a forum and place to stay with. Later, the consistent new member will become a true disciple and the agent of spreading the thoughts to the "other".

Madrasa, which is the centre of Islamic education, is the main pillar of Ismailiyya. Madrasa is becoming increasingly important because it is an alternative to state institutions. Schools provided by the government are classified as inconsistent with Islamic values in terms of Islamic academic curriculum and moral regulations.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Accessed 27 July 2022. <https://www.ismailiyya.org.tr/emri-bil-maruf>

²⁶⁵ Himmet Hülür, *Technology and Naqshbandi Sufism*, p. 331.

The madrasas are in the form of associations named such as cultural centres, educational foundations,²⁶⁶ etc. established in many regions of Turkey. Children begin their religious education in madrasa starting from the age of four. Due to the obligation of government education the children, parallel with madrasa lessons, take public school lessons from the open schools. The curriculum of the madrasa includes memorizing of Qur'an, Arabic lessons, and Islamic studies. Following religious regulations, the madrasa for girls and boys is separated.²⁶⁷

Ismailaga is known as the community that emphasizes the importance of Islamic sciences, therefore, building the madrasa and widening the range of studying Islamic studies become the priority. Mahmud Efendi says that "If I have three breaths left in my life, I will say read, read, read"²⁶⁸ and "There is a need for a teacher as many grains of sand on earth! A male and female madrasah should be opened in each neighborhood. Let men be taught by male teachers, women by female teachers, everyone from seven to seventy should learn their religion in these madrasas!"²⁶⁹

Madrasa is the main instrument to strengthen the identity because it represents the elite of the community which at the same time is the intellectuals. The madrasa transmits the values and discipline of the community intensively. This will form *role models ulema* social class that will lead every community organ and become role models for disciples. Thus, the *hocas* serve as the main source of regeneration of values.

Preservation of the madrasa is also a shield that protects the concept of "us". In the Turkish educational context, Ismailaga madrasas are considered an alternative to the government education system. The difference in cultural knowledge promoted by madrasa and public schools lead to the crystallization of community identity and the formation of security sense in the concept of 'us'.

²⁶⁶ In Turkish the concepts are "kültür merkezi, eğitim vakfı, dernek". Some of them are Quranic Courses. In the Turkish context, especially, the establishment of association is built for social activities like gatherings, seminars etc. In the Ismailaga context, the establishment of association is considered as an instrument fulfill the legal way of the activities. Because, before the imposing of regulation, the madrasa was built independently. However, some of Ismailaga institutions like The Quran Course of Ismailaga (Kuran Kursu) is belong to the presidency of religious affairs.

²⁶⁷ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.45-52.

²⁶⁸ Esra Ege, *Cemaat Anlatılarında Kadın: İsmailağa Cemaati Örneği*, Master Thesis, (Ankara Üniversitesi, 2020), p.24.

²⁶⁹ Accessed 1 June 2022. <https://www.ismailaga.org.tr.html>

Thirdly, the dressing style (*kılık kıyafet*), as mentioned above is the main symbol, which is a declaration of Islamic values on the surface of the public space. Men use *shalwar* (large pants), *cübbe* (robe), and *sarık* (turban) as well as keep beards. Women use *çarşaf* (burqa) which is usually black. This dressing style was chosen to describe the condition of the age of bliss (*asr-ı saadet*), as an attempt to revive the sunnah.²⁷⁰

İsmailaga, compared to other religious communities, is stricter in terms of dressing style. It is an endeavor of living Islamic values in an idealist way. In social life, dressing becomes the code of identity and a declaration that shows one as a follower of the community.²⁷¹

The dressing way can also be interpreted as a persistent struggle against the current Modernism and Turkish secularism, which is very strict with dressings rules. Being existed in public space makes İsmailaga an actor who represents a certain cultural pattern. The message that is often given from the form of clothing is a moral value that means to cover the *avret*²⁷² and beyond that is reminding the age of bliss which represents the understanding of true Islam.²⁷³

The wearing of *kılık kıyafet* also appeared as a formulation of the identity. This is in line with the constructivist view of how people construct their identities and ranges of action according to the norms to which they adhere. The formation of the Self is very evident in the use of clothing, as in Bauman's view of the categorization of “us” and the “other”. Uniforms create a self, thus creating a sense of security, solidarity, and togetherness. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of uniforms, in addition to the application of normative values, functions as an identity reinforcement to maintain positive benefits for society. The İsmailağa community creates a representation through clothing and draws the boundaries of their group with the meanings they attribute to these symbols. In addition, the fact that the symbols used by the İsmailağa community are Sunnah, which makes these symbols stronger.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.54.

²⁷¹ Zehra Fatma Özyağlı, *Examining the Formation of Women's Identity*, p.63.

²⁷² The body parts that must be covered according to Islamic rules.

²⁷³ Zehra Fatma Özyağlı, *Examining the Formation of Women's*, p.63.

²⁷⁴ Aydın Taştan, *İsmailağa Cemaati Sosyal Kimlik İnşa Araçları*, p.70.

4.5.3. Political Stance

One of the main characteristics of a religious community in Turkish politics is pragmatism. Continuing the existence of the community is a priority because the main mission of the *tariqa* is to live with Islamic values in a way that is not aggressively expressive towards the government, but rather focuses on the social level. In this context, the relationship between *Ismailaga* and the government is also based on the concept of pragmatism and neutrality. Behaving community-centric, which benefits from the government in freedom, spiritual support, and being an influence on society.

Coser argues that the social group that claims to be non-politic is considered political in different ways, due to the interrelated and more sophisticated social action which allows the social institutions to have connected.²⁷⁵ *Ismailaga* focuses on a lifestyle that resists the hegemonical stream and the effect of globalization and Westernization. The location of *Çarsamba*, which is the meeting point of three religious' groups, appeared as the centre of the *tariqa* showing the existence of Islam as strong identical symbolism representing the state. The preservation of existence by being present in the social environment affects socio-political conditions. At least, although *Ismailaga* did not have a particular political party, their inclination toward a party also became representative in the democratic political space.

Ismailaga acknowledges the concept of the state is beyond the boundaries of institutional meaning. However, the definition of the state is mostly interpreted as the relationship between individuals, society, and territory. *Ismailaga* doesn't focus on modern ideologies that emphasize the institutional form of a nation-state, which leads to the preservation of community existence without living with the contradiction of state theories. It is supported by the sentence, "Mullah Mahmut has nothing to do with politics, I don't understand politics anyway, but I can explain the Shari'ah".²⁷⁶ *Ismailaga* focuses on the material form of the state itself which is the society. Thus, their activities focus on the approach of society-centric because there is an assumption that the state will transform automatically while the society changes. Social changes

²⁷⁵ Lewis Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict*, (New York: The Free Press, 1964) p. 154-155.

²⁷⁶ Ahıska, Hazrat-ü Mevlânâ eş-Şeyh Mahmut en-Nakşibendî, p.79-80.

emerge over a long period which shows that Ismailaga's goal is to succeed in long-term plans.²⁷⁷

Despite the absence of consent regarding the state political system, the community accepts the legitimacy of the current state. It is proved by the prayers that are occasionally conducted by the community regarding the protection of the state from internal and external threats. In addition, the participation of shaikh in military duty is considered evidence of acceptance of legitimacy.²⁷⁸

According to Ismailaga, the absence of a state is more dangerous than the deficient state due to the postulate of a stateless community leads to chaos and anarchy. Theologically, the approach is termed *ehvenul şerr* which means preferring the bad over the worst, it is the main principle of Islamic jurisprudence used to solve a problem such as complex political conditions. The concept requires the community to take an alternative decision that gives more benefits and interest (*maslahat*). From this point of view, the interest of real individuals is more important than the status of individuals in the theoretical system. In other words, Ismailaga doesn't expose the disciples to be the agents to realize a political ideology.²⁷⁹

According to the explanations above, it appears that there is no certain political ideology adopted by Ismailaga. It contradicts the articulation of Gabriel Pirický arguing the community is influenced by Said Qutub and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek in terms of political conceptualization. Pirický bases his argument on the status of Saadettin Ustaosmanoğlu, the author of the group chaired by Salih Mirzabeyoğlu, as a nephew of Mahmud Efendi.²⁸⁰ However, in the structure of the community, there is no special status for Saadettin as an ideologist within the community. The condition that some disciples agree with the ideology relies on individual choice which is not instructed by the council of Ismailaga.

²⁷⁷ This is the conclusion from the interviews conducted with the interlocutors.

²⁷⁸ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.56.

²⁷⁹ This is the conclusion from the interviews conducted with the interlocutors.

²⁸⁰ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.43.

In this political context, Ismailaga doesn't play the role of an active player in domestic politics, because there is no direct representative of the political party which directly engages in political power. This circumstance makes Ismailaga a target of the political party. The community seeks representation through the common interest between the party and the community. In this condition, the approach of Ismailaga is a pragmatist. The role of Ismailaga is significant because the number of disciples has reached approximately one million.²⁸¹

Efrat Aviv acknowledges that there was a close relationship between the Islamist political party and the Naqshbandi Sufi order, where the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) (1983-1998) was a party that had been in power. Political figures such as Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan often followed the *sohbets* tariqa Iskenderpaşa chaired by shaikh Mehmet Zahid Kotku. Thus, the Sufism pattern was incorporated into Turkish politics, although it changed according to time. Usually, religious communities approach politics because of pragmatic reasons such as gaining legitimacy so that it can establish their existence in the social sphere. Ismailaga gave votes in several elections to the Welfare Party, Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi), and lastly, generally the AK Party. However, a small number of the community still vote for the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi).²⁸²

There is a mutual interest between the community and the regime, and the support of the government to the community increased after AK Party won the election. Particularly, after the failed coup d'etat on 15th July 2016 Ismailaga's role became more influential in public space due to the decreasing number of other religious communities. AK Party maintains opportunities and gives space to spread and carry out activities.²⁸³

Ismailaga's relationship with the state apparatus of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*²⁸⁴ (Directorate of Religious Affairs) is considered to fluctuate, Ismailaga positions itself

²⁸¹ Accessed 6 July 2022. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/turkiye-nin-iran-inda-bir-gun-dokunulmayan-cemaatten-dokunulan-semte-311268>

²⁸² Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.282.

²⁸³ Accessed 6 July 2022. <https://www.posta.com.tr/gundem/turkiyenin-yukselen-cemaati-ismailaga-267583> . Efrat Aviv, *The İsmailağa*, p.285.

²⁸⁴ Later will be mentioned as *Diyanet*

as an alternative institution in living a religious life; because for Ismailaga *Diyanet* is an institution that is under the control of the government. Meanwhile, *Diyanet* regards itself as a legitimate institution responsible for all domestic religious affairs. The clash between Ismailaga and *Diyanet* occurred during the assassination of Hasan Ali Ünal in 1982, then Ali Bardakoğlu as the chairman of *Diyanet* during 2003-2010, considering that Ismailaga's claim to several mosques was not following Islamic regulations. Bardakoğlu also claims Ismailaga is discriminating against people who are not from the community.²⁸⁵ However, the relationship between *Diyanet* and Ismailaga doesn't reflect the relationship between AK Party and Ismailaga. In addition, during the period of Mehmet Görmez (2010-2017) and Ali Erbaş (2017-...), there has been no noticeable friction between the two institutions.

Ismailaga emerged as a local community focused on domestic religious issues in the country. However, this does not mean that there is no relationship with Muslim communities outside Turkey. Mahmud Efendi's attention to the Islamic world can be seen from his approach of educating disciples from abroad, collecting donations to help the Muslim community that is in crisis, and praying for them at every *sohbet*. Ismailaga started receiving disciples from Central Asia and the Caucasus after the end of the cold war and the creation of the Turkic nations in 1991. This activity was active until 1997 when restrictions on religious communities were imposed. Regarding the Palestine issue, Ismailaga supported spiritually and materially with support with the delivery of aid.²⁸⁶

4.6. Conclusion

Ismailaga is a religious community that has a lineage of tariqa Naqshibandiyya Khalidiyya centered in Çarşamba in the city of Istanbul. Pioneered by Mahmud Efendi, and later continued by Hasan Efendi, it formed a religious identity based on the understanding of Sufism and *ahlusunnah*, who granted the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali schools in terms of jurisprudence, and Ashari and Maturidi schools in terms

²⁸⁵ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.60.

²⁸⁶ Gabriel Pirický, *The İsmailağa Community*, p.38-39.

of theology. In terms of Sufism, it considers all tariqa in the circle of *ahlusunnah* such as Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, Shaziliyya, etc.

Ismailaga community succeeded in developing a special identity in Turkish society with a religious understanding of social practices. The definition of "us" with "the other" is crucial where on the one hand the community forms a sense of security, and on the other, there is also provocative dialogue that aims to increase the number of communities. In the process of forming "us," Ismailaga often carried out persistence against the hegemony of secularism and westernization. The persistence appears by forming alternative spaces such as madrasas and dressings, which, function to maintain the preservation of identity. Therefore, the ghetto formed in Çarşamba is a habitus that potentially reproduces next to similar generations.

From a political point of view, Ismailaga does not form a political ideology and shows the approach of pragmatism with the state. The political policies taken are categorized as community-centric because they focus on community existence. The actions taken are more suggestive of social issues such as religious life and morality, which are carried out from bottom to top. Political changes are considered a consequence of changes in society.

With the development of the community, several NGOs were formed, most of which functioned as madrasas at the same time. Most of these NGOs are engaged in the country, to provide religious facilities for the community. With the improvement of the Turkish economy and the start of the AK Party government, which is moderate and conservative in traditional values, it has become one of the factors for the development of activities abroad giving birth to the NGO of IDDEF.

CHAPTER V

IDDEF: AN AFFILIATED RELIGIOUS NGO OF ISMAILAGA

This chapter explains how the formation, structure, and approach of IDDEF carry out international activities and contribute to the creation of Turkish soft power. IDDEF, a representative of Ismailaga in the field of foreign affairs, realized the religious agenda as an effort to spread religious values in the form of action and thoughts. The actions have an impact on Turkey's foreign policy because tackling global issues such as security, education, and humanitarian crisis. The study will focus on African countries - the most active region for IDDEF.

5.1. The Emergence of IDDEF

IDDEF began its movement as a department of *emri bi'l me'ruf* under the community of Ismailaga. Mahmud Efendi started his activities in the 1950s, which was known as the formation of the first generation of the community. As a result of the first generation, Ismailaga developed a systematic *emri bi'l me'ruf* movement since the 1980s spreading to different regions of Turkey in the form of social activities which was not based on official institution. However, in early 2000, all branches in various regions were required to become official so that they entered the state registry and had an official structure.²⁸⁷

All these organizations are a collection of *emri bi'l me'ruf* organizations called IDD. Specifically, between 2004 and 2009, 256 organizations were working independently, but working for the same purpose. The organization utilized several functions, such as traditional education centres, religious seminars, and the *hatme* following the function of the *tekke*.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Mehmet Turan, Interview by author, Istanbul, May 05, 2022.

²⁸⁸ A way of group dhikr conducted by Naqshabandi Tariqa.

In 2009 IDD was changed to IDDEF (The Federal of Organizations that Value Humanity), which was a combination of 45 Ismailaga NGOs formed to explain the religion. However, the focus of the federation is not creating socio-religious activities in Turkey, and the aim was changed to spreading the religion to the world. In this context, Mahmud Efendi said, "the whole district was built madrasa for girls and boys", IDDEF developed the interpretation into a mission to suggest the whole world with the words of Mehmet Turan:

The opening of a madrasa for boys and girls in every neighbourhood of the world is the priority of the people in line with the *ahlusunnah* and the community, the believers and Muslims will learn their religion well, and then they will learn whatever other necessary knowledge is²⁸⁹ (Mehmet Turan, 57)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Ismailaga community essentially is not an institution. However, it is a community that does not have an official hierarchical form. In the community, the influential figures who lead their institutions appeared significant in the body of the community. Influential figures from their NGOs compete and coordinate with each other. There must be approval from the Ismailaga council, which consists of several important figures known as Ismailaga's successors. Institutions that stand out in the competition will get recognition from the community. The relationship between institutions is bonded by the identical unity of *tariqa*. Examples of institutions affiliated with Ismailaga other than IDDEF are Hayder, Vuslat, Hayfed, etc.²⁹⁰

Baran an IDDEF worker since the beginning of its establishment, said that during its formation, there was internal pro and contras regarding the activity out of Turkey. Since it was not a final goal at that time for Ismailaga to focus on international Muslim society.²⁹¹

One day, a businessman from Guinea came and said, "We have so much land", and then Mehmet Turan's head wondered why we didn't establish an association to operate in Africa. First, the association called Beraa association was founded... He received a great reaction from İsmailağa. There was a great advantage at that

²⁸⁹ Dünyanın her mahallesinde bir erkek ve kız medresesinin açılması ehlisünnet ve'l cemaat çizgisinde mutlaka ve mutlaka önceliği önce insan, müminler Müslümanlar, dinlerini güzelce öğrenecekler ondan sonra diğer gerekli olan ilim ne ise onları öğrenecekler

²⁹⁰ Ömür Hasçıçek, Interview by author, Istanbul, June 06, 2022.

²⁹¹ The name is changed due to privacy. Baran worked at IDDEF between 2009 until 2021. He was engaged in some critical periods in the establishment of the NGO

time, the dollar of that time was 1.25. There was self-confidence... The work started with Conakry... The breaking point of IDDEF was the completion of the complex. The aeroplane was leased. They called people who criticize IDDEF. All doubts at that time were eliminated when the complex was finished. IDDEF was convinced that it was doing something. After becoming a mosque, it came out of a chaotic environment and turned into an oasis. Later American Saudi, and Iran embassies and national television channel was established. Previously the place was scrap. (Baran, 29)²⁹²

According to Baran the success of the mega project in Guinea, which is a complex (*külliyeye*) with mosques and madrassa with Ottoman architecture, became a milestone in IDDEF credibility. All community representatives were invited to attend the opening ceremony. In terms of administration, the influx of professional workers makes IDDEF able to show greater influence due to the growing system and a more organized division of labour.

In terms of name, IDDEF means the Federation of Organizations that Value Humanity.²⁹³ The definition has a religious foundation rather than the concept of humanism, which is oriented in Western discourse. Giving value to humanity is interpreted as thinking about the conditions of the people's afterlife. A principle that is the basis of *emri bi'l me'ruf* activities. Therefore, giving value to humans means giving religious warnings related to worship and ethic to live a better religious life.²⁹⁴

There has been an evolutionary development in terms of its area of activity since its establishment in 2022. At the beginning of the establishment, it focused more on religious humanitarian assistance such as sacrifice (*kurban*), building several madrassas, and the formation of a religious scholar network of *ahlussunnah*. In 2016, bureaucratic processes and strategic steps began to be formed, and in 2021 and 2022, IDDEF began to be included in the agenda of an activity planned by the government,

²⁹² Baran Ceylan, Interview by author, June 03, 2022.

Bir gün Gine'den bir iş adamı geldi, dedi ki bizim bu kadar aramız var, sonra Mehmet Turan hocanın kafasına biz için Afrika'da faaliyet yapacak dernek kurmuyoruz diye. İlk olarak Beraa derneği isimli dernek kuruldu... Büyük tepki aldı İsmailağa'dan. O zamanda büyük avantaj vardı, o zamanın doları 1.25 idi. Özgüven vardı... Konakri ile başladı çalışma. İDDEF'in kırılma noktası külliye'nin bitmesiydi. Uçak kiralandı. O zamanda İDDEF'e eleştirenleri çağırdılar. O zamandaki bütün şüpheler külliye bitince bertaraf oldu. İDDEF hakaten bir şeyler yapıyor diye ikna oldu. Cami olduktan sonra kaotik bir ortamdan çıktı vahaya dönüştü. Daha sonra Amerikan suudi, iran, ulusal televizyon kanal oluşturuldu. Önceden hurdamer idi.

²⁹³ In Turkish called as İnsana Değer Veren Dernekler Federasyonu

²⁹⁴ Mehmet Turan, interview.

such as the construction of bracket houses in Idlib, Syria. In this issue, Abduh articulates that:

Kudret, who has an enlightened mind, started to create the division of labor. He came in 2016.²⁹⁵

IDDEF in 2022, has a centre in the district of Eyüp in Istanbul and has branches in several regions; Istanbul (5 branches), Ankara (1), Sakarya (1), Trabzon (1), Kayseri (1), Afyon (1), Aydın (1), Konya (1), Malatya (1), Muş (1), Bursa (1), Balıkesir (1), Erzurum (1), Kocaeli (1), Sivas (1), Samsun (1), Çorum (1), Bitlis (1), Antalya (1), Kütahya (1), Manisa (1) with a total of 26 offices. Each branch generally serves as a place for fundraising and enlightenment related to every activity carried out by IDDEF. The centre focuses on planning and implementing all activities abroad.

5.2. The Administration of IDDEF

The relationship between IDDEF and Ismailaga is not structured by a bureaucratic hierarchy. In other words, IDDEF has the form of an independent institution. However, the council of Ismailaga scholars (*heyet*) is very significant due to their authoritative decisions. Thus, in terms of the administration system, there are no direct relations. However, the relationship with the community is in the aspect of spirituality, mentality, and goals.

IDDEF, as an International religious NGO normatively, is required to be open, inclusive, and professional. The concept of competence and professionalism towards the working system and responsibility is regarded as very crucial. It appears that the principle of competence (*ehliyet*) makes IDDEF open to recruiting workers, even those who do not have the background of Ismailaga. Competent individuals and adopting a sufficient religious identity are the criteria for hiring labourers. Prioritizing labor standards leads to the emergence of good administration. It may be said that the administration practices improved from 2019 until 2022.

²⁹⁵ Abduh, interview by author, Istanbul, June 15, 2022.

عندما جاء قدرت هو صاحب العقلية المتنورة بدأ بالانزياح، جاء في ٢٠١٦

Regarding competence, the chief manager of IDDEF Mehmet Turan, emphasizes that "the difference between IDDEF and Ismailaga lies in the internal structure", employment, and professionalism. This professionalism requires institutions to look at the role of a worker with the role of Ismailaga members. The role of the worker is considered a member of the IDDEF even though it is not affiliated with the community. Some workers are members of Ismailaga carrying out the second responsibility of representativeness.

In the formation of the administration, there is a new identity, namely IDDEF, and the second identity is Ismailaga. Therefore, not all IDDEF identities are included in the Ismailaga identity, but all workers who have an Ismailaga identity have an IDDEF identity. The existence of such a relationship does not give birth to a clash of identity but is balanced with the modern concept of professionalism and the realization of a common goal, namely the IDDEF agenda.

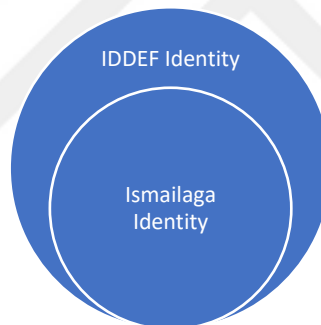


Figure 5.1. The Interception of IDDEF and Ismailaga Identity

The development of the IDDEF administration from 2009 to 2022 can be divided into three phases; 2009-2016 was the formation phase, and 2016-2018 was the start of the establishment of a more organized management system. The third phase is the 2018-2022 period of administrative development. The year 2016 is a milestone where the management of administration is strengthened professionally, determines the division of labour more regularly, uses instruments of technology more massively, and determines the agenda more regularly.

In terms of the development of bureaucratization, Weber revealed that in the process of modernization of society, there is a process of rationalization and bureaucratization

in institutions. For him, the process serves to make state affairs more controlled, full of hierarchy, and dynamic, in addition to the occurrence of paradoxes that make the system an iron cage.²⁹⁶ This development also occurred in the process of institutionalization of IDDEF in the Ismailaga context, especially in terms of the formation of a more hierarchical system under the supervisor of the council of Ismailaga. The transformational process of IDDEF is caused by the condition of adaptation of modern structure to be fit and compatible with the terms of modern society.

In general, the administration of IDDEF is divided into ten departments: call centre, media, project, education, student affairs, branch affairs, Europe affairs, human resources, accountants, and secretariat. Every department is obliged to conduct the tasks, such as the call centre department is responsible for communication with the donators. The media department proceeds the digital and non-digital streaming and advertisement. The project department coordinates with the construction in the fields. Education and student affairs departments are responsible for the madrasas in every country. The branch and Europe affairs departments are maintaining coordination with every branch of IDDEF. The human resources department is engaged in collecting information about the staff. The accountant department controls the financial process of the institution. Lastly, the secretariat department has the duty of recording the activities of the institution.

IDDEF establishes a bureaucracy that includes the administration and division of labour to facilitate communication and streamline the performance system. The good mechanism of the institution will give birth to strategic steps and the formation of tactics. This all makes it easier to realize the goals and targets of the institution.

5.3. The Goals of IDDEF

In general, following the motive of Ismailaga, the main goal of IDDEF is to spread the Islamic teachings of ahlusunnah transnationally. The approach is formulated by the

²⁹⁶ Max Weber. *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*.p.196-203.

collection of values such as the emphasis on *ilim-amel-ihlas*²⁹⁷ and *tedris-teblig-tasavvuf*²⁹⁸ are the main sources in determining agendas and setting strategies. IDDEF plans its short-term target of 30 years since its official establishment in 2009 by dividing three decades which includes the greetings (*tanişma*) for the first decade, education (*eğitim*) in the second decade, and Sufism (*tasavvuf*) in the third-decade plan.

The greeting period, which is the first decade is an undertaking in which a lot of humanitarian aid is carried out, aiming to establish constructive communication that does not dominate and create otherness, but rather focuses on the similarity of values and strengthening solidarity relations between Muslims despite the different state borders. Realizing educational activities by spreading the madrasas which are generally inspired by the construction of the Ismailaga madrasa in Turkey. It aims to educate the people to study their religion according to the line of *ahlussunnah*. Sufism means the spread of Sufistic values as an effort to invite to conduct good deeds in a structured and systematic manner.

The three targets can be concluded into one main, namely the dissemination of education and the establishment of the centre of social activities. In the Ismailaga tradition, Islamic literature and spiritual studies are placed at the main centre, which gives direction to the community to become an Islamic generation. This is following the saying of Mehmet Turan, "building madrasas for women and men in all districts in all corners of the world".

In addition to idealistic goals, IDDEF became a forum or an alternative for Ismailaga to distribute alms. Because previously, the community was used to distribute social aid to other institutions. This continued until doubts arose regarding the approach and

²⁹⁷ The concept literally means knowledge, practice, and sincerity. The three concepts are mostly used in Ismailaga's defining the methodology to be an ideal Muslim. The concepts are considered a summary of all of Mahmud Efendi's teachings. The concepts are mostly repeated by popular figures in the community as a daily reminder.

²⁹⁸ The literalist meaning of the concepts are spreading, teaching and Sufism. These are the summary of ways to preserve the identity and spread the teachings all over the world. The concept of teblig also mentioned as *emri bi'l me'ruf* (reminding the people). *Tedris* is related to the educational process by establishing the madrasas. *Tasavvuf*, as the last reason because it is related to not all people, however for those who want to deepen the spiritual life. The three concepts are the periodic goals of IDDEF within thirty years.

values adopted by those institutions which were in contradiction with the value of Ismailaga, such as the sensitivity of *ahlussunnah*. With the establishment of IDDEF, the community has the instrument to give religious support and aid to a trusted institution.

Goals and targets are formed by philosophical foundations that are the main foundations related to the reasons for action. The philosophical foundation includes thoughts, ideologies, and approaches. In general, since IDDEF emerges within the realm of Ismailaga, IDDEF has focused on implementing and spreading the religious worldview of the community. However, as an NGO that has a transnational action, there is an emphasis on certain values.

5.4. Principles and Approaches of IDDEF

IDDEF as the representative, generally inherited Ismailaga's thoughts derived from Mahmud Efendi. This thought includes the approach of *ahlussunnah*, traditional Islam. In Sufism, the Naqshbandi is the community tariqa; however, IDDEF accepts other tariqas that are still within the rules of sharia. In its performance, IDDEF prioritizes professional aspects that make it easy to adapt to domestic conditions and foreign cultures often different from Turkish culture.

5.4.1. The Understanding of Ahlussunnah

Ismailaga's approach is more about emphasizing living according to Islamic values or practising the legacy of the prophet as well as possible. However, in the context of IDDEF, it emphasizes more on the concept of spreading or protecting *ahlussunnah* in the Islamic world. Theologically, the community excludes the communities that are not Maturidi and Ash'ari from the definition of *ahlussunnah*.

In the Turkish context, spreading the *ahlussunnah* is not a mission, because the religious belief adopted by society is mostly monotype. Despite the domestic arena, the community focuses on worship and morality. Meanwhile, the conditions in the Islamic world are different, in which, other Islamic teachings, such as Shia and Wahhabism can be more popular. Therefore, spreading the understanding of *ahlussunnah* is

considered the main goal. In this context, IDDEF argues that the two religious ideology is not compatible with the true Islam that they adopt. Therefore, being an alternative and deepening the Sufistic *ahlusunnah* becomes crucial.

The spread of *ahlussunnah* was carried out with the establishment of the madrasa. With the principle of tolerance, IDDEF does not spread the understanding of Hanafi-Maturidi-Naqshbandi teachings, but rather by building networks with local tariqa and uniting agendas with them so that it leads more to support to spread values and teachings that are familiar to the local community. It creates a commonality of thought between two different societies of the state. In soft power, this is included in cultural values, where similarities of beliefs are formed that increase trust.

5.4.2. Sufism

Sufism view has a profound impact on the social aspect of a community because it encompasses relationships between individuals based on the value of morality (*ahlak*). Ethics is a motivation as a basis for realizing the purpose of life, which is the cause of the return of the afterlife. Sufism has a close relationship with the formation of a person or a perfect human being who succeeds in the field of worship and social action.

In this regard, IDDEF, with its Sufistic understanding seeks to maintain and form an identity in Muslim society. In general, many Islamic worlds have previously adopted certain Sufistic approaches, but it is just that due to the social, political, and economic context, some of these groups are under pressure due to outside world influences with different Islamic approaches, such as Shiism, Wahhabism, or Modernist Islam. IDDEF is here to strengthen local groups dealing with those new streams.

IDDEF functions to empower the status quo and does not promote a new idea or approach. The approach is not a renewal that often replaces previous teachings but serves as a reinforcement to get the identity of each religious group that has been rooted in its community. The presence of IDDEF is also an effort to form a network, an in-depth relationship involving humanitarian and educational assistance, in addition to formal communication.

Sociologically, the communication between societies developed is not based on objectification but considering the interlocutor as an equal subject avoiding the formation of superior relations. Thus, this contrasts with the colonialism approach which is patterned towards the spread of civilization, which has a dichotomy of self and other, placing the self more superior to the other, which assumes the other must be civilized.²⁹⁹ Equalizing the status of the position is based on the basis that the other is not the other, but it is a part of the self because of the common criteria owned by the self.

IDDEF's approach is based on the Ismailaga mentality, which is based on passive resistance as referred to by Sina as the "silent revolution". The silent revolution that does not associate its actions with interests includes politics, the economy, and the military. The silent revolution of Ismailaga is conducted with the action of preservation of the values and identity with an idealist approach. This gives birth to an attitude of active passiveness. Namely, trying to spread values indirectly, not associating with individual interests, but by only talking related to religious ethical values.

Some countries reflect their religious understanding as a brand and part of an identity. Like Iran with Shia and Saudi Arabia with Wahhabism, Turkey, until now, politically there has been no specific religious approach offered, due to the concept of laicism. According to Mehmet Turan, it is seen as a void that must be filled by IDDEF by using the opportunity to promote Sufism and moderate Islamic ideas that are far from radicalism and fundamentalism.

This pattern of Islamic views supports the security of the state because it keeps people away from acts of terrorism. This is in line with the resistance put forth by the governments of African countries, for example, in the Western part of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, etc. with movements affiliated with al-Qaeda and ISIL such as Boko Haram. In this context,

²⁹⁹ Laura Wright, *Wilderness into civilized shapes: reading the postcolonial environment*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), p.7.

IDDEF offers enlightenment action to the community with the establishment of an education centre and humanitarian assistance to deliver the message meaningfully and inwardly.³⁰⁰

5.4.3. Muslim Union of Ummah

IDDEF takes a role in applying the union of Muslims formulated by Ismailaga. Institutions under the umbrella of Ismailaga are mostly active in Turkey. IDDEF emphasizes the concept of ummah more in line with its areas of activity outside Turkey. IDDEF's formulation of the *ummah* is different from the narrative of pan-Islamism having the political side.³⁰¹ Ismailaga does not generate a concrete political imagination; therefore, the conceptualization of *ummah* tends to be more in a social aspect functioning in the creation of a transnational identity. The emphasis is more on the formation of "us" consciousness between different communities of state borders. This awareness was created following Ismailaga's approach which has a bottom-up approach which is the education of people.

The *ummah* concept is the most significant in terms of the motivation for IDDEF's implementation of the mission and vision. *Ummah* is a religious concept that views Muslims with different political, economic, and status backgrounds as having a common ground which creates a sense of solidarity, unity, and progressiveness of *ummah*. IDDEF's focus in the *ummah* mission is to look at the shortcomings of Muslims and strive to develop them. In contrast to the political agendas that are spread, such as Hizbu't Tahrir and Muslim brotherhood, which focuses on the formation of practical political missions.³⁰²

One of the hallmarks of the IDDEF union of the *ummah* approach is tolerance in certain domains except for the ideology of Salafism and Shiism. IDDEF doesn't impose the specific thoughts of Ismailaga. Instead, the NGO oversteps beyond the horizon within

³⁰⁰ Bülent Turan, interview by author, Istanbul, 23 May, 2022.

IDDEF, mesajı anlamlı ve içsel bir şekilde iletmek için bir eğitim merkezi ve insani yardım kuruluşuyla topluma aydınlanma eylemi sunmaktadır.

³⁰¹ Dwight E. Lee, *The Origins of Pan-Islamism*, *The American Historical Review* 47/2 (1942), p.286-287.

³⁰² Hizbu't Tahrir is an Islamic organization built in 1953 by Muhammad Takiyyuddin An-Nabkhani in Jerusalem. Hizbu't Tahrir, with its Pan-Islamism approach has the aim of forming a caliphate system that combines all Muslims under one Islamic caliphate state.

the understanding of *ahlussunnah* and tolerates the approaches and values adopted by another tariqa abroad. It can be mentioned that the intertwining of relationships between tariqa encourages the creation of a general identity that accepts differences.

The creation of IDDEF's ummah concept can be depicted from the statements of Abdussalam from Ethiopia regarding the Sufism groups abroad:

The tariqa only moves locally and there are no institutions from abroad that support them, as among Salafists and Shia. But with supporters like IDDEF has had, the tariqa realized that they also have comparable power. IDDEF which originated from Turkey created the perception; the religious traditions embraced by the Turkish people were Sufism.³⁰³

5.4.4. Professionality

IDDEF has the principle of giving priority to professionalism. Professionalism is implemented in the administration system, the use of media, and its approach to donors, such as transparency and sustainability of projects.³⁰⁴

IDDEF's professionalism can be measured with the approach of not adopting nepotism by recruiting the community of Ismailaga. The social background of the workers is varying, including non-followers of Ismailaga, and foreigners as well. The capability and potential possessed by workers are prioritized compared to their background. In general, the workers come from religious communities, so they still have similar worldviews.

The administration is formed with a clear division of labor, and the regulations required by the government are well implemented. Many portions of the work are done in digital form. There is a special automation developed by the institution in creating the work environment. Therefore, information related to all projects and education is recorded in the digital system through the software application.

³⁰³ Abdussalam, Interview by Author, Istanbul, June 09, 2022.

فالطريقة تتحرك محليا فقط، ولا توجد مؤسسات من الخارج تدعمهم كسلفيين وشيعة. ولكن مع المؤيدين كما فعل IDDEF ، أدركت الطريقة أن لديهم أيضا قوة مماثلة. شكل IDDEF الذي نشأ في نفس الوقت في تركيا تصورا بأن التقاليد الدينية التي اعتنقها الشعب التركي كانت نمط الصوفية كما كانت.

³⁰⁴ 2021 Faaliyet Raporu, IDDEF Publication. p. 6-7.

The use of media is very intense, which includes billboard ads, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. In addition to advertising, there are digital dialogue programs such as interactive dialogues that aim to disseminate information related to the Muslim world, humanitarian crises, and education.

IDDEF's principle regarding its commitment to provide evidence of work to donors is ensuring transparency. Large donations, such as the construction of the madrasa building could be followed and watched by the donors through visiting the country. In general, the activity implemented from the donation is shared digitally through the official website, which is directly related to automation. As for education, donators can see firsthand the scores and development of students through the application.

Besides professionalism and transparency, Bülent Turan adds sustainability and continuity as a principal approach of IDDEF, he mentions:

When we look at the people in need in the region, we see two important things: sustainability, and permanence. We must carry out sustainability and permanent studies to take care of Turkey's reputation... Continuity is not only opening a school, even when doing any project, but this can also even be an agricultural activity, this can be a healthy activity, these activities are not one-time, that is, they are spread over the years teaching people those countries.³⁰⁵

Sustainability and continuity mean a project that targets the long term that only does not build a building or water well without control, but rather the development around the area, which then leads to the construction of a social centre. In general, the idea that is often adopted is the construction of a complex that includes a madrasa, mosque, water well, and workshops. Thus, each project focuses on the recovery from the humanitarian crisis by forming a centre for social gatherings.

³⁰⁵ Bülent Turan, interview.

Bölgedeki ihtiyaç duyan insanlara baktığımızda iki önemli şey görüyoruz, sürdürülebilirlik ve kalıcılık... Türkiye itibarını gözetmek için sürdürülebilirlik ve kalıcı çalışmaları yapmalıyız... Süreklilik, sadece okul açmak değil herhangi bir proje yaparken bile bu bile tarım faaliyeti olabilir bu bir sağlık faaliyeti olabilir bu faaliyetlerin tek seferlik değil yani yıllara yayılması o ülkelerin insanların öğretilmesidir.

5.5. IDDEF Activities as Soft Power

Soft Power is essentially builds attractiveness to other countries by creating a sense of trust affecting diplomatic relations. Therefore, humanitarian activities which aim to tackle the global crisis in terms of basic human needs are considered one of the main ways of shaping attractiveness. In this context, Nye mentions that in addition to the relationship between the two states, the humanitarian diplomacy implemented by society to society can form a stronger sense of trust than the state to society. The state activities are often understood as pragmatic and instrumentalist, which creates suspicion towards the other.³⁰⁶ Following the strategy presented by Nye, Turkey realizes with the addition of the theory developed by Davutoğlu, where accumulative diplomacy from history became the foundation of foreign relations.³⁰⁷

In this subchapter, it will be explained the activities carried out by IDDEF and analyzed with a theory soft power approach. These activities can be categorized into two forms; abstract form, such as spreading free education services aiming to impose religio-cultural values. Secondly, concrete form, with the approach of humanitarian aid, is based on the idea of *ummah* caring for the Muslim community transnationally.

While implementing the activities, IDDEF manages a strategic agenda of three decades vision, including the activity of education, humanitarian aid, and spreading the socio-religious understanding of Sufism. Mehmet Turan mentions:

IDDEF has a strategy of dividing the period over thirty years to reach the endpoint. The first ten years of the introductory mission. The second ten years of the mission of disseminating education by facilitating madrasa to be able to provide education free of charge. The third ten years of IDDEF were targeted as the spread of Sufism thought. Seeing that IDDEF was formed in 2009, 2022 has entered the second target. The first target is met with humanitarian aid activities. Humanitarian needs are considered always positive, even if they are done to non-Muslims. The second target, namely religious education, is more focused on Muslim communities that find it difficult to get an education because of costs. Here, cultural values and religious understanding are taught. The last is the proselytizing of Sufism, where which has not been done until now. Only a new phase introduces self-identity as a group of tariqas originating in Turkey.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Joseph S. Nye, *The Information Revolution and Soft Power*, Current History 113/759 (2014), p. 22.

³⁰⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, p. 7-8

³⁰⁸ Mehmet Turan, Interview by Author.

IDDEF, son noktaya ulaşmak için süreyi otuz yıla bölme stratejisine sahiptir. Giriş misyonunun ilk on yılı. Misyonun ikinci yılı medreselere kolaylık sağlayarak eğitimi yaygınlaştırmak ve ücretsiz eğitim vermektir. IDDEF'in üçüncü on yılı Sufizm düşüncesinin yayılması olarak hedef alındı. IDDEF'in 2009

Within the first decade since 2009 and the beginning of the second decade, IDDEF carries out its activities in several countries on the African continent, Asia, Europe, and America. On the African continent, there are such countries as, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Cameroon, Chad, South Africa, Sudan, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Benin, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau. On the Asian continent, there are Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Yemen, Palestine (Gazza Strait), Syria, and Lebanon. In European countries, the region of the Balkans; is in Kosovo, Serbia (Novi Pazar), and Albania. In the American continent, Mexico was active until 2021 and became passive in 2022.³⁰⁹

The social activities of IDDEF include education by providing free education opportunities, especially targeting the poor people; humanitarian aid such as water well, and emergency aids; activities of socio-religious aid; building religious infrastructures like mosques, and school buildings; and sacrifice and Ramadan aid like iftar, and zakat.³¹⁰

It is important to see the relationship between the typology of humanitarian aid provided by IDDEF as the representative of Turkish society. The typology is related to the Turkish cultural and religious understanding, which has been formed and become part of the tradition. Compared to other Muslim societies in the world, Turkey has a certain pattern, with a focus on activities such as disseminating food to get prays from the benefit receivers and slaughtering the sacrifices, including *adak*³¹¹ or *akika*³¹².

yılında kurulduğunu görünce 2022 yılı ikinci hedefe girmiş oldu. İlk hedef insani yardım faaliyetleri ile karşılanmaktadır. İnsani ihtiyaçlar, gayrimüslimlere yapılsa bile her zaman olumlu karşılanmaktadır. İkinci hedef, yani dini eğitim, maliyetler nedeniyle eğitim almakta zorlanan Müslüman topluluklara daha fazla odaklanmaktadır. Burada kültürel değerler ve dini anlayış öğretilir. Sonuncusu, şimdiye kadar yapılmamış olan Sufizm'in nesirleştirilmesidir. Sadece yeni bir aşama, Türkiye kökenli bir tarikat grubu olarak öz-kimliği tanıttır.

³⁰⁹ 2021 Faaliyet Raporu. IDDEF Publication p.2.

³¹⁰ 2021 Faaliyet Raporu. IDDEF Publication p.1.

³¹¹ *Adak Kurban* which means the sacrifice of vow as an instrument to praise God. The *adak* sacrifice is carried out aimed at carrying out the obligation because it has promised God to express submission to gratitude by slaughtering animals such as cow and goat to be donated to underprivileged communities. This worship is a worship that is often carried out by the Turkish people and is part of the custom.

³¹² *Akika* sacrifice is the cutting of goats as a sign of gratitude for having been blessed with a child born. The purpose of *akika* is to do it abroad because it is considered that there are people who need it more to consume it.

In terms of constructivism, the thing that motivates action is not only economic or political interest, or an attempt to form hegemonic power over other societies, but ideology and identity are also the reasons why an institution does something. Here, IDDEF can be categorized as not an institution that acts to gain interest, but because of ideology and identity. The ideological foundation does not provide concrete results directly that strengthen and benefit IDDEF directly but only helps in shaping the identity of all Muslim communities that have idealist principles.³¹³

Marx's approach, which says that the cornerstone of community action is economy or infrastructure becomes very irrelevant because humanitarian aid does not exploit working classes, but rather improves their economic conditions. Weber argues that ideology is crucial in social life because it leads to creates motivation for actions which closely related to humanitarian action. However, in the actions of religious NGOs, there is no rationality like what Weber describes in modern society. Religious understanding has its rationality that is based on the principle of metaphysics, in line with what Wittgenstein said in his arguments in the world of games which leads to the understanding of the absolutism of truth is not constructed by the positivistic reason.

5.5.1. The Statistic of IDDEF Humanitarian Aid

The activities of IDDEF include the area of education, humanitarianism, and religion. The humanitarian activities conducted from 2009 until 2022 are mentioned below, and some of them are only the activity of sacrifice in 2021, and humanitarian aid in 2022:³¹⁴

³¹³ Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch, *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), p. 3.

³¹⁴ From IDDEF Archives

Table 5.1. The Details of IDDEF Activities in 2021

No.	Country	School	Educational Circle	Total Students	Mosque	Grand Mosque	Water Well	Complex	Qurban as of Hisse 2021	Humanitarian aid 2022
Eastern Africa										
1.	Ethiopia	4	10	389	0	2	129	0	700 cows and 1070 sheep	800 iftar, 442 aid boxes
2.	Somalia	4	0	364	0	0	136	0	700 cows	454 iftars, 100 aid boxes, 100 zakats, 1340 Qurans
3.	Kenya	1	1	44	0	0	66	1	1920 cows and 9987 sheep	1.447 iftars, 1100 aid boxes, 200 Qurans
4.	Uganda	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 sheep	100 iftars, 50 aid boxes
5.	Tanzania	3	0	152	1	0	18	0	900 cows and 3500 sheep	1.750 iftars, 1.300 aid boxes, 1240 zakats
Central and South Africa										
6.	Cameron	0	0	0	0	0	28	0	500 cows and 2000 sheep	1.764 iftar, 50 aid boxes, 30 zakats
7.	Chad	0	0	0	0	0	77	0	70 cows and 500 sheep	495 iftar, 276 aid boxes, 95 id-ul-fitr aids, 200 zakats, 1400 Qurans
8.	South Africa	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	10.000 iftar, 100 aid boxes
9.	Sudan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 cows	0
Western Africa										
10.	Guinea	6	17		3	1		1	100 cows	92.978 iftar, 200 aid boxes
11.	Mali	1	0	114	1	0	71	0	250 cows	100 iftars
12.	Senegal	1	0	37	0	0	0	0	100 cows	0
13.	Gambia	1	0	17	0	0	0	0	5 cows	0
14.	Burkina Faso	19	1	2663	15	0	23	1	800 cows	4.847 iftar, 200 aid boxes, 250 zakats
15.	Ivory Coast	2	0	46	4	0	0	0	600 cows	540 iftar, 100 aid boxes
16.	Benin	1	0	19	0	0	45	0	500 cows	100 iftar, 50 aid boxes, 50 zakats
17.	Niger	1	2	97	0	0		1	300 sheep	100 aid boxes

Table 5.1. (cont.)

18.	Ghana	1	0	39	0	0	360	0	20 cow	663 iftar, 50 aid boxes, 40 zakats, 500 Qurans
19.	Nigeria	0	4	283	0	0	183	0	650 cows	500 iftars, 100 aid boxes
20.	Sierra Leone	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21.	Guinea Bissau	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Asia										
22.	Afghanistan	1	0	649	0	0	0	0	0	Emergency aid, 900 iftars, 15.600 aid boxes, 900 id-ul-fitr aids, 150 zakats, 400 Qurans
23.	Pakistan	1	0	40	0	0	3	0	100 sheeps	100 aid boxes
24.	India	1	0	118	0	0	179	0	5 cows	0
25.	Sri Lanka	1	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
26.	Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	358	0	0	314 iftars
27.	South Korea	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28.	Indonesian	1	0	773	0	0	0	0	0	50 aid boxes
29.	Malaysia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30.	Cambodia									600 iftar
31.	Georgia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.000 iftar, 50 aid boxes
32.	Azerbaijan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 sheeps	0
33.	Kyrgyzstan	1	0	98	0	0	0	0	36 cows	200 iftars
34.	Kazakhstan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35.	Iran	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36.	Bangladesh	6	0	817	9	0	1.976		0	970 iftar, 50 aid box 100 zakats
37.	Philippines	0	0	0	1	0	32		0	100 aid boxes
Middle East Asia										
38.	Yemen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	324 sheeps	400 iftars, 1.143 aid boxes, 50 id-ul-fitr aids, 105 Qurans
39.	Palestine (Gazza Strait)	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	10 cows and 9 sheep	3.420 iftar, 600 aid boxes, 192 id-ul-fitr aids, 200 zakats
40.	Syria	1	4	183	0	1	2	0	60 sheeps	900 iftars
41.	Lebanon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.750 aid boxes

Table 5.1. (cont.)

European Balkan Region										
42.	Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
43.	Serbia (Novi Pazar)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2 cows	50 aid boxes
44.	Albania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300 sheeps	0
45.	Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100 aid boxes
America										
46.	Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50 aid boxes
	Total						7.3	80		125.142 iftars, 29.811 aid boxes, 1237 id-ul-fitr aids, 2360 zakats, 3.945 Qurans

Below is a graphic of sacrifice from 2018 to 2022 which shows that every year succeeds to improve. According to the sacrifice number conducted by IDDEF in 2022 shows that IDDEF is the biggest civil organization that conducted the sacrifice program.

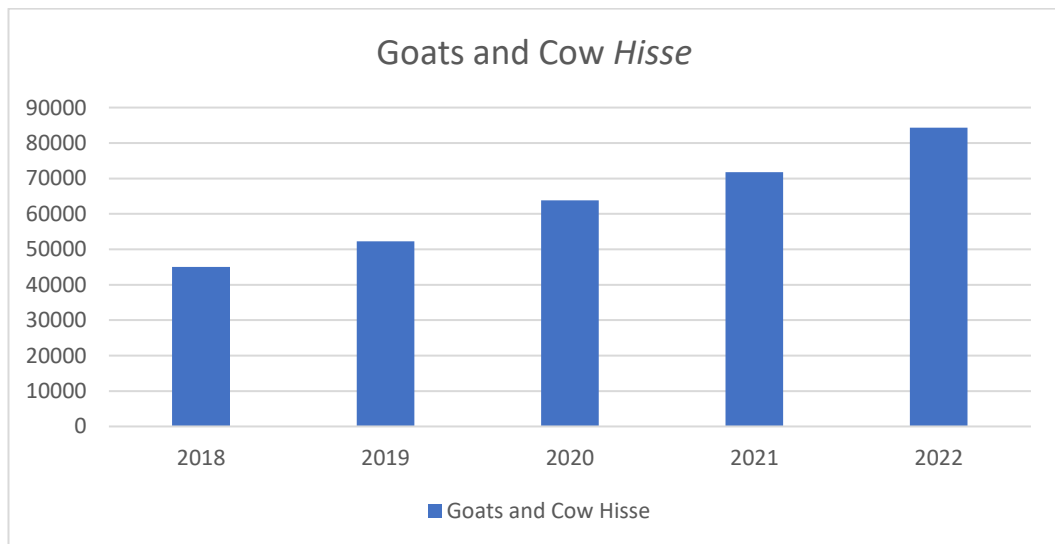


Figure 5.2. The Statistic of Qurban *Hisse* from 2018 Until 2022

5.5.2. Education

IDDEF has been conducting education activities since 2009 by constructing the complexes (*külliye*) which include the infrastructure of mosques, schools, and water wells. Some madrasas provide dormitories maintaining the living cost of students and mentors. The activity of building a complex started in Guinea, as the model and sample of IDDEF activities.

Education is the most significant sector of IDDEF. The importance given to the field makes IDDEF different from other humanitarian aid NGOs in Turkey. Mehmet Turan argues that education was what distinguished IDDEF from other NGOs, and this became the main characteristic of the purpose of forming an institution. Parallel with this issue, Bülent Turan mentions:

I see that the biggest difference between IDDEF and other NGOs is an emphasis on education... We are not only talking about 10 years of education. Education is a hope for the people there, especially for the young generation; we are here, we can exist, and we can be useful to our own country.³¹⁵

In general, the educational institutions supported by IDDEF are in the form of religious schools. Some schools only receive Islamic studies education, and some are formal schools that facilitate secular sciences and Islamic studies. Regarding the way of support, occasionally IDDEF builds schools from the foundation, and some schools only have partnership relationships. The partnership relationship means providing financial support that can help the sustainability of the school by not receiving fees from students. The support targets the communities in need who are unable to send their children to school.

And at the same time, one of the main goals is to protect schools from the influence of Shia and Wahhabi approaches. Compared to other states, it is given that the influence of Shia and Wahhabism is more massive, particularly in African countries. Local groups adopting a similar religious understanding with Ismailaga, which usually have

³¹⁵ Bülent Turan, interview.

IDDEF'in diğer STK'lardan en büyük farkını eğitimde olduğunu görüyorum... Eğitim sadece 10 yıllık olan eğitimden bahsetmiyoruz sadece, eğitim oradaki insanlara bir umut, özellikle genç nesle biz burada varız, var olabiliriz, kendi ülkemize faydalı olabiliriz.

affiliations with Sufi tariqas, such as Tijaniya, Sanusiya, Qadiriya, etc, lost influence due to a lack of financial power to develop their influence and action. In this context, IDDEF with education support emerged to be an alternative to Shia and Wahabism. IDDEF acts inclusively strengthening the relationship based on common values in understanding the concept of *ahlusunnah* and Sufism relations.

In this regard, IDDEF, which is based on the Ismailaga community, targets to spread the moderate teachings of Sufism, away from radicalism and acts of terrorism. This is following what was conveyed by Bülent Turan;

Ahlusunnah can be understood differently in each country. What is meant here is the real understanding of Islam, that is, the non-radical understanding that we have in Turkey, which is more precise, which is apparent in the sense of creed, especially the African continent, which works in a continent that is very open to exploitation in the religious sense and is facilitating the educational opportunities of the Muslims here to protect people from radical groups.³¹⁶

As mentioned above, the madrasas, which are built by IDDEF have a long-term target. The construction of schools is built in a complex form. The complex can be utilized for various activities. One of them is IDDEF's third-decade goal, which is to spread Sufism teachings to the environment.

The educational institutions carried out as mentioned above are usually in the form of schools with special buildings for education. Besides that, there is also an education circle (*halka*) in which a teacher is responsible for the student's circle. The circle is usually carried out in mosques and does not require special buildings making it more portative. The role of the teacher in the circle is very important because no institution regulates it directly. In general, IDDEF's policy is to spread the understanding of

³¹⁶ Bülent Turan, interview.

Ehli-sünnet her ülkede farklı şekilde anlaşılabilir. Burada kastedilen, gerçek İslam anlayışdır, yani Türkiye'de yaşadığımız, daha kesin olan, inanç anlamında belirgin olan, özellikle dini anlamda sömürüye çok açık bir kıtada çalışan Afrika kıtasında yaşayan radikal olmayan anlayış, buradaki Müslümanların insanları radikal gruplardan korumak için eğitim olanaklarını kolaylaştırmaktadır.

ahlusunnah with a circle path to accelerate the development or maintain religious understanding in the region.³¹⁷

Regarding the education centres, the madrasas are supported by IDDEF are below: Afganistan (1 school with full relationship), Bangladesh (6 school with partner relationship), Benin (1 school with full relationship), Burkina Faso (19 full relationship school and 1 circle), Ethiopia (4 full relation madrasa and 10 circles), Ghana (1 full relation school), Gambia (1 full relation school), Guinea (6 full relation school and 17 circles), India (1 partner relation school), Indonesia (1 partner relation school), Ivory Coast (2 full relation school), Kenya (1 partner relation school), Kyrgyzstan (1 partner relation school), Mali (1 partner relation school), Niger (1 full relation school), Nigeria (1 partner relation school), Pakistan (1 full relation school), Senegal (1 full relation school), Serbia (Novi Pazar) (1 full relation school), Somalia (2 full relation school), South Korea (1 circle), Sri Lanka (1 partner relation school), Syria (1 partner relation school and 4 circles), Tanzania (2 full relation school).

In each of these countries, all the schools are not in the city centre, but a significant number of them are in the villages. Following the goals of not only reaching the people in the city centre but also the range of people in the peripheries. As Bülent Turan mentions that "one of the motivations for doing all this good is to be a hope for them".³¹⁸

There are several kinds of schools: the first is a school that focuses on memorizing the Quran, the second is teaching Islamic studies, and the third kind is a combination of Islamic studies and secular sciences. The school is divided into several levels: primary, secondary, and college. IDDEF education policies often follow local regulations according to the conditions of each country. For example, in Ethiopia religious schools are not allowed to get official status; therefore, the conditions in Ethiopia are not official. But countries in western Africa have more regulations, where they provide

³¹⁷ Mentioned as Halaqah in Arabic which means a circle. The shape of circle in which students and a teacher gather in a place normally in mosques, particularly around of a girder. This kind of education has established since the period of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) until today. Therefore, circle can be considered as traditional education way in Islamic world.

³¹⁸ Bülent Turan, interview.

Tüm bu iyilikleri yapmanın motivasyonlarından biri de onlara umut olmak

official government letters for those studying in any educational institution, such as schools in Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Thus, IDDEF does not standardize all schools but rather follows local regulations to reduce conflicts.

The teacher workers recruited by IDDEF are from the local communities who have passed the test from central institutions. Some of the workers are teachers who have received an education in Turkey. They tend to communicate more easily with the central party, but it's just that most of them only get an education in their country or Arab country. Most teachers can speak Arabic, while those who cannot speak Arabic do not teach Islamic studies or the Quran.

Following the principle of adjustment and the absence of strict standardization from the centre, each school uses a personal curriculum and books that are well-known in the country. Therefore, the centre does not impose one specific regulation on the whole school; just adheres to the principle of *ahlusunnah*.

The education sector is a long-term activity, where it does not produce results in a short time. Quite the contrary, the results may be felt concretely over the next 10 or 20 years. There are indeed some students who take secondary education, and after they graduate, they become religious, moderate students, and avoid the teachings of radicalism. Most of their graduates enter the education sector, namely by becoming teachers and teaching in official or unofficial schools. In addition, some enter the trade sector where some students have become donors to IDDEF schools.

Students who graduate often see that all the activities carried out by IDDEF are representations of Turkish society, which is in line with what Bülent Turan said; "they don't see the logo, but the flag on the logo is more meaningful".³¹⁹ Thus, the graduates feel grateful because the education they get for free is the result of the help of the Turkish people.

Each school has a signboard that says the school's name and lists the IDDEF logo and the Turkish flag. Indirectly, in every school even if it is in any corner, the community

³¹⁹ Bülent Turan, interview.
Logoyu görmüyorlar, ancak logodaki bayrak daha anlamlı

will recognize the flag. Strategically, it may not have a direct impact on the creation of a country's foreign policy in the short term. However, this serves as a formation of the perception that the Turkish state has a relationship with the development of human resources and its people. Therefore, in addition to IDDEF carrying out its main mission as a facilitator for people in need of education, it also contributes promoting the country in all corners of the region.

Mehmet Turan adds that:

We automatically strengthen the country's diplomacy to form a strong image by flying the flag in the place we travel. ³²⁰

Bülent Turan agrees and mentions that:

The biggest contribution of NGOs to Turkey is their advertising... People abroad describe Turkey as a country that extends a helping hand when they hear about it... Soft power here is something that will benefit both countries. ³²¹

IDDEF carries out activities following its religious worldview, which mostly includes activities in the field of humanitarian assistance and education. This activity then influences the realm of international politics, especially the establishment of soft power for Turkey. In general, the activities carried out by IDDEF function to tackle humanitarian crises such as the need for water, food, and shelter. However, in doing so IDDEF focuses more on the Muslim community in the country. In terms of education, the madrasa built by IDDEF helps the intended country in the formation of human resources. The third is the issue of state security, where the spread of radicalism thinking turns into a threat to state security. With the madrasa built, IDDEF seeks to suppress radicalism with moderate teachings.

In general, IDDEF distributes free education services with the understanding of *ahlusunnah*. Donations collected from Turkish donors are distributed through the management of each school. Each school signboard beside the NGO logo also bears a

³²⁰ Mehmet Turan, interview.

Seyahat ettiğimiz yerde bayrağı dalgalandırarak güçlü bir imaj oluşturmak için ülke diplomasisini otomatik olarak güçlendiriyoruz.

³²¹ Bülent Turan, interview.

STKlar Türkiye'ye en büyük katkıları reklam yapmalarıdır... Yurtdışındaki insanlar Türkiye duyduğunda bir yardım elini uzatan bir ülke olarak anlatıyorlar... Buradaki yumuşak güç aslında her iki ülkenin yararına dokunacak olan bir şeydir.

Turkish flag. Thus, no matter how far the ideology that IDDEF wants to convey, the history of religious communities is still related to the national interest, namely the promotion of the state by forming a positive perception.

The activities of IDDEF, historically have a relation with the Sufi lodge's activities in the Ottoman era. Ömer Lütfi Barkan argues that in the Ottoman period, the Sufi movement had very high authority because one of its main tasks was security. They have a win-win solution relationship with the government, especially in land management, for economic progress. And at the same time, when a Sufi lodge was built in a predominantly non-Muslim area, then it became the centre of the spread of Islam.³²² In the modern context, IDDEF as a Sufi movement, conducts social activities introducing Turkey to the people and creates a harmonious atmosphere for the Turkish government and businessmen to further their economic and political activities.

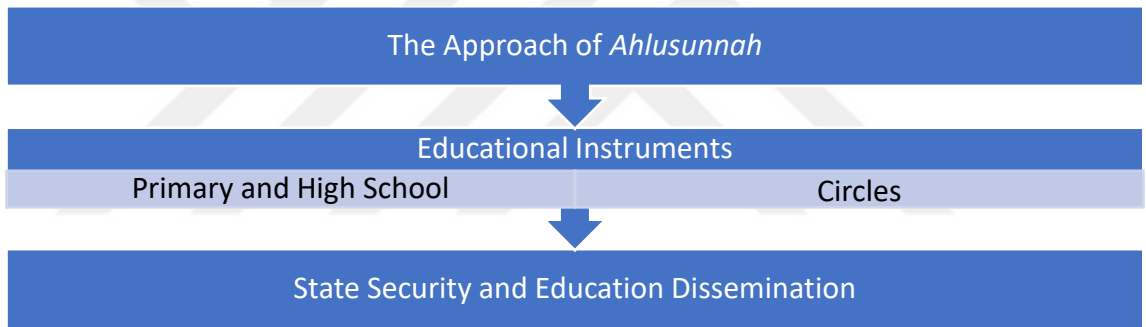


Figure 5.3. The Effect of Ahlunnah Through Education

5.5.3. Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is one of the biggest activities conducted by IDDEF. Muslim society, as part of ritual customs, performs acts of kindness for people in need. IDDEF is an instrument to perform such acts of kindness abroad, particularly in Africa.

There is some humanitarian aid closely related to religious obligations, and the most popular is sacrifice. Sacrifices are divided into two: some are conducted once a year, and the second is implemented throughout the year such as the *adak* and *akika*. The

³²² Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2020), p.148-149.

second kind of sacrifice is usually allocated to the school of IDDEF that specifically has dormitories. It supports the logistic management of the school in terms of food. The sacrifices of the first kind, which are implemented once a year, are carried out in several points of the country. Most of the activities are carried out in African countries, and some of them are carried out in Asia and Europe. These sacrifices are usually distributed directly to the local community. Muhammed Teye Awidi, a teacher at the Ghana branch of the school, said:

The people are very happy with the location in front of this madrasa, particularly during the sacrificial period when the people happily gathered and waited directly for the aid to be distributed.³²³

The madrasa becomes a melting pot for the community to take help. Parallel with the IDDEF's 30-year strategy, it can be understood that with the beginning of people remembering this as a positive memory. This is very much in line with the target of the first 10 years, namely the introduction. Within the first ten years, IDDEF created a sense of brotherhood and solidarity between the two societies. This will be the foundation for future introductions to teachings or values.

There is a sharp difference between Turkish NGOs, including IDDEF, and NGOs coming from other countries such as Saudi Arabia in terms of the way of maintaining the aid. According to Abdulmannan, an IDDEF worker from Ghana:

IDDEF maintains the memory with local people with an effort to always carry out assistance even though it is not in large quantities at once. Then it sets up and controls what has been built. However, Saudi Arabi NGOs are famous for providing large amounts of simultaneous assistance and then there is no control and guarantee to carry out aid to the area. This is a positive value for Turkish NGOs in the view of the local population.³²⁴

In addition to sacrifices, IDDEF serves the construction of water well assistance. Regarding Islamic teaching, the construction of a water well is considered a priority due to the daily worship requirements. Humanitarian aid is needed because of the lack of government services, and water is the main need. African peoples, sometimes need to travel many kilometres to get clean water. Some regions, due to the absence of clean water estuaries, the people are forced to use turbid water. This is often a social problem

³²³ M. Teye Awidi, interview by author, Accra, April 05, 2022.

³²⁴ Abdul Mannan, Interview by Author, Kumasi,

that influences health. Therefore, it takes water well at some point in society. The lack of water well facilitation is due to the relatively high price.



Figure 5.4. One of the Water Wells in Mali

IDDEF maintains the signboard that bears the IDDEF logo and the Turkish flag. Thus, the promotion that Turkey stands with the local community, trying to overcome human security in the crisis area, is an approach that leads to grassroots, not to the elite directly, but at the same time, it will have an impact on public space and social discourse in society.

Seeing these conditions, in the construction of a water well in a village, things like this are very important, where prioritizing clan leaders means prioritizing the community because they are also trying to facilitate the main needs of the community. Looking at the existing structure and network in the traditional system and taking steps according to the structure will usher in conditions where the community will be more accepting.

In each visit such as water well control protocols, IDDEF staff usually bring gifts to children such as balloons patterned with a Turkish flag and the IDDEF logo, which are usually given to children who are in the place they are visiting. Ahmet Tandoğan, one of the staff who once went to Ethiopia, said that:

For every child I give gifts of balloons and sweets, they are usually very happy. At that time, they will be remembered throughout their lives. There is a positive memory regarding the envoys who have come from Turkey. This memory alone is enough to form a positive image of the Turkish state.³²⁵

Some countries have forgotten some of the practicalities of Islam that are classified as crucial such as circumcise (*sunnet*). It can be found in Balkan countries such as Albania. Considering that Albania was under the influence of the communist regime, which had tried to abolish Islamic identity, particularly in the period of Enwer Hodja. This assistance is in the form of medical assistance by sending several doctors to carry out the surgery. Thus, in addition to health factors, this activity is useful for maintaining the identity of the Muslim community in the country.

Especially in the month of Ramadan, there are many activities related to the month, such as the distribution of Iftar and zakat. Iftar, which is the distribution of food to the public for breaking fast, strengthens solidarity between people in the region, in addition to food provision. Differences, opinions, and quarrels can be resolved when all elements of society come together. Although they do not provide concrete solutions, at least they can alleviate the problem.

The research was conducted in the field of Ghana and Mali during the month of Ramadan. Ghanaians, who are Muslim minorities within the country, do not have the habit of doing iftar simultaneously. However, with the iftar activities carried out together, it made them get together and enjoy the atmosphere of togetherness. However, this seems to be an application of an event that is not from their custom but is classified as a positive activity.

In Mali, after the graduation ceremony, iftar is carried out together by collecting many elements from different communities. The venue of the event is filled with Turkish flag decorations, thus symbolizing that the happiness in the event was accompanied by the presence of Turkey around. This does not seem to disturb the community but makes

³²⁵ Ahmet Tandoğan, interview by author, Istanbul, May 30, 2022

Her çocuğa balon ve tatlı hediyeler veriyorum genellikle çok mutlu oluyorlar. O zaman, yaşamları boyunca hatırlanacaklar. Türkiye'den gelen elçilerle ilgili olumlu bir hafıza var. Tek başına bu hatıra, Türk devletinin olumlu bir imajını oluşturmak için yeterlidir.

them proud because they are affiliated with an outside country that once had an Islamic history that seems to unite Muslims of different backgrounds.

In Mali, in addition to humanitarian activities, to see how the acting state responded, I visited the city judge of Segou. Mali, which has just hit the coup d'etat, employs many of the governing elites of the military class.

The judge, who has a military background, said:

I was happy for the arrival of the Turkish people to carry out their activities in their country. Without any doubt, I want to assist in the organization of activities in the city of Segou. The Turkish state is very positive and sees the Turkish president now as a firm and strong figure in international world politics.³²⁶

All activities carried out are related to global humanitarian issues. Therefore, as Nye said, solving global issues can shape the attractiveness of the intended country. The following points are the general overview articulating the results of activities that create soft power.³²⁷

5.5.4. Carrying the Flag in Every Activity

IDDEF structurally does not represent the state directly due to its status as an NGO of the religious group of Ismailaga. However, the activities carried out are international, in which each IDDEF represents the people of Turkey by bringing the flag at the same time. Consequently, every activity carried out by the Turkish people in other countries has an impact on the country both in the realm of social and government. Soft power emerges when the NGO can create persuasiveness and attractiveness to the other state, and build a positive perception that leads to strengthened diplomatic relations derived from

For example, banners, and tables installed in every place where the project is carried out, such as water wells, mosques, and madrasas, are listed with the Turkish flag, which spreads a positive perception of Turkey's humanitarian aid.

³²⁶ Konta, interview by author, April 18 2022. Segou City Judge translated from French to Arabic. كنت سعيدا بوصول الشعب التركي للقيام بأنشطته في بلده. وبدون أدنى شك، أريد أن أساعد في تنظيم الأنشطة في مدينة سيغو. الدولة التركية إيجابية للغاية وترى الرئيس التركي الآن كشخصية حازمة وقوية في السياسة العالمية الدولية

³²⁷ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*. p. 55

African countries are considered the place for other countries to proceed with humanitarian aid. Therefore, the flags of other countries, mostly Western and Gulf countries, are shown on the banners and walls. The condition shows that if the region is the target of foreign countries to invest and their interest towards the countries. For instance, Ghana as a Christian-majority state, has some regions populated by the Muslim community. Tamale as a Muslim-populated region in the state becomes the most attractive region for Christian-oriented NGOs to provide humanitarian aid. Therefore, the existence of IDDEF in the region functions to protect their socio-religious identity to counter the foreign influences of Christianization.

5.5.5. NGOs Move Faster Than Governments

Following the approach of liberalism, the initiation of individuals causes to create fast action compared to the government with a more sophisticated bureaucracy. In this context, the role of government with the NGO is to provide a space for activities. For instance, the government-backed company of Turkish Airlines, with the policy of opening new routes to several countries, provides an opportunity for NGOs to build relations with these countries.

The activities of humanitarian aid and education are creating a positive image of Turkey. Turkish government created the GONGO of the Turkish Red Crescent and the Foundation of Maarif to strengthen diplomacy. IDDEF supports the state and GONGO to have similar activities in religious motivation. The credit of the state regarding the action of IDDEF expressed by Sina while having a conversation with the minister:

While interacting with Suleyman Soylu, the Turkish internal affairs minister, he expressed his positive impression when IDDEF was able to enter a space that had not been explored by the government.³²⁸

The condition of rapid movement of NGOs can be very difficult for the government to control. When an NGO has a vision and mission that supports the government, as does the IDDEF, then Turkey has the advantage in terms of being promoted in various

³²⁸ Sina Aktaş, interview by author, İstanbul, May 30, 2022.

Türkiye İçişleri Bakanı Süleyman Soylu ile temasa geçerken, IDDEF'in hükümet tarafından keşfedilmemiş boş bir alana girebildiği zaman olumlu izlenimini dile getirdi.

geography. In addition, each flag attached to every humanitarian work supports the position of the embassy in the country.

5.5.6. Strategic Communication: A Mean to Enter Into a Conservative Population State

Turkey has a neighboring country with an ethnic Arab background, where it tends to have a more conservative and religious population. Showing a similar face is a strategy to provide positive communication. For instance, the communications fostered with Libya, in addition to its economic and military missions, Turkey also approached society by providing humanitarian aid. IDDEF, in this context, takes on the role of a religious NGO that is suspected of being able to carry out social relations with the local community. Salih Eser reveals the following:

Turkey played an active role in Libya. Society is a community committed to religion. Turkey, which carries out political and military activities, can carry out religious activities through the IDDEF. It is also true in African countries. How? What will happen outside their institutions? For example, they have schools, under the roof of education or officially through the Yunus Emre Institute. IDDEF, which is unofficially based in African countries, is coming. Because the children who receive education in the madrasah here get to know Turkey through IDDEF in the African continent, which starts with 200 people and reaches 2,000, 20,000 communities, they learn about Turkey. They become aware of Turkey's approach there as a state or its approach to the institution. IDDEF can bring people there and here and organize various programs quickly.³²⁹

5.5.7. Gaining the Trust of the Government

Several projects established in the country create a positive impression on the local government. The positive impression or the attractiveness of the government leads to the trust of the government in the NGO. The local government would give the permission to widen the projects, which shows trust towards the NGO.

³²⁹ Salih Eser, interview by author, June 06, 2022.

Türkiye Libya'da aktif bir şekilde rol oynadı. Toplum dine bağlı bir topluluk. Siyasi ve askeri faaliyet yapan Türkiye İDDEF aracılığıyla dini bir faaliyette bulunabiliyor. Afrika ülkelerinde de geçerli. Nasıl? Kendi kurumlarının dışında ne olacak mesela okulları var, maarif çatısı altında ya da Yunus Emre Enstitüsü aracılığıyla resmi olarak. Resmi olmadan Afrika ülkelerinde bulunan İDDEF geliyor. Çünkü oradaki buraya gelen medresede eğitim alan çocuklar tamamı 200 kişi ile başlayıp 2000, 20000 topluluğu bulan Afrika kıtasında İDDEF aracılığıyla Türkiye'yi tanımış oluyor. Türkiye bilmiş oluyor. Türkiye'nin devlet olarak oraya yaklaşımını ya da kurumdan olan yaklaşımından haberdar olmuş oluyor. İDDEF oradakileri buraya getirip kısa süreli çeşitli programları düzenleyebiliyor.

The government official in Guinea attended the graduation ceremony of the IDDEF madrasa and in his speech mentioned that "we have seen what is done, and we will continue to support every activity and project that you will carry out".

According to the explanation given by Ali Ganame, the IDDEF representative from Burkina Faso, after explaining the activities conducted by IDDEF to the local government, which are relatively critical, mentioned;

In the Burkina Faso government, there is a special approach to Turkey, and to get to know Turkey further, I was asked to give a view. I showed what activities have been carried out by IDDEF. All the activities carried out made the foundation of trust in Turkey, especially in the military field. Seeing Burkina Faso is dealing with domestic terrorism. Therefore, IDDEF in this context, serves as a support for the creation of state trust in strengthening diplomatic and security relations.³³⁰

5.5.8. Establishment of Good Relations with the Statesmen

The socio-religious activities aim to solve the global crisis, not only influencing the local society economically and socially but also indirectly, by leading to the improvement of diplomatic relations. The diplomatic relation emerges when the NGO directly works in the interest of the state or by approaching the state staff. The relationship constructed with the local government increases the NGO's credibility.

In Burkina Faso, IDDEF after having communicated with the Internal Affairs of the local government, decided to take action of contributing to the hometown of the minister in Sabece by constructing the complex. In this respect, Ali Ganame mentions that:

In the city of Sabece, the hometown of the Minister of internal affairs, with his request, IDDEF built the Ismailaga complex consisting of water wells, a madrasa, a mosque, and a workshop. Although Sabece is well known for its Christian population, the contributions made are welcomed positively.³³¹

³³⁰ Ali Ganame, Interview by Author.

Burkina Faso hükümetinde Türkiye'ye özel bir yaklaşım var ve Türkiye'yi daha yakından tanımak için benden bir görüş belirtmem istendi ve IDDEF'in hangi faaliyetleri yürüttüğünü gösterdim. Yürütülen faaliyetler Türkiye'de özellikle askeri alanda güvenin temelini oluşturdu. Burkina Faso'yu görmek, iç terörizmle uğraşmaktır. Bu nedenle, IDDEF bu bağlamda diplomatik ve güvenlik ilişkilerinin güçlendirilmesinde devlet güveninin yaratılmasına destek olarak hizmet etmektedir.

³³¹ Ali Ganame, Interview by Author.

İçişleri Bakanı'nın memleketi Sabece şehrinde, onun isteği üzerine IDDEF, su kuyuları, medrese, cami ve atölyeden oluşan İsmailağa kompleksini inşa etti. Sabece, Hıristiyan nüfusu ile tanınsa da yapılan katkılar olumlu karşılanmaktadır.

The second can be seen in the communication with Guinea-Bissau.³³² IDDEF communicated directly with the president to build a complex in the capital city. This request was immediately expressed by the president by supporting such facilitations as security and land. This condition is a non-ordinary condition because the communication is built directly with the government. In other words, the relationship is constructed between the public and the government. In this condition, IDDEF initiates the creation of diplomatic communication in the aspect of humanitarian aid functioning to introduce the Turkish state to the country.

5.5.9. Contribution to Government Infrastructure Development

One of the duties of local government is to create the infrastructure to meet the basic needs of society. Due to several problems, the local government might face obstacles to completing the issue. In this case, an international NGO takes the role of assisting the government to complete the case. One of the main social needs is the supply of clean water in this regard, as constructed in several countries. However, in Nigeria, IDDEF water well construction in the villages contributed to the development of regional infrastructure on a small scale. Following the information presented by Askiya in Nigeria:

The need for clean water, especially in public places, is crucial. IDDEF in Nigeria prioritizes the construction of water sources in every school. First boarding schools require water day and night.³³³

This contribution became so well known that the Kano region government in Nigeria often offered cooperation to solve the small-scale clean water crisis in every school. In this context, the IDDEF, which represents the people of Turkey, took part in completing the main infrastructure of the city by promoting religious values.

5.5.10. Creating Humanitarian Diplomacy Between Clans

³³² One of the countries that the Turkish government had not started the diplomatic relation yet. However, in this regard, IDDEF started introducing Turkey with the action of humanitarian aid.

³³³ Askiya, Interview by Author, Kano, July 14, 2022.

In general, the African country is plagued by tribalism issue, which affects the political and social equilibrium in society. Clans compete for the highest positions in government and commerce. Unhealthy competition creates social friction between clans.

In the context of Guinea, the enmity between the three clans is very large. It is greatly influenced by the political conditions of the country. Three clans; Soso, Mandinka, and Fulani compete in the arena of political power. IDDEF's complex is in Coloma, the region where Fulani often protest the government. IDDEF built a large complex to mediate the three clans to be together in the same place. The Friday sermon was chanted in three languages to tolerate the differences between the three groups. Thus, the existence of the complex issue, with educational services and a water well, becomes a strategic action in suppressing social tension in the country.

As Ahmed Diallo mentions:

In the context of the Guinean state, three clans often seize political power, namely Mandinka, Soso, and Fulani. There are disharmonious relationships that permeate the social layers of the state. IDDEF acknowledges the negative competition and tries to mediate to reduce the tensions between groups by facilitating a grand mosque which functions as the centre of the gathering of the three groups. Each clan is given a proportional portion of authority encouraging mutual respect between the clans. The mosque becomes a gathering place for clans regardless of clan background, thus stimulating the balance between people at the social level.³³⁴

This was acknowledged by the vice president who took office when attending the graduation ceremony held 8-17th December 2021, saying that we view the presence of the Turkish people and IDDEF in Guinea as very contributive and they are very supportive of all activities carried out and will be carried out. In this context, humanitarian diplomacy is applied due to socio-political conditions. IDDEF offered an understanding of Islamic brotherhood, which does not look at ethnic differences that are obstacles in the formation of unity. In Islamic culture unity and fraternity are

³³⁴ Ahmed Diallo, Interview by Author, December 11 2021.

في سياق الدولة الغينية، هناك ثلاث عشائر غالبا ما تستولي على السلطة السياسية، وهي ماندينكا وسوسو وفولاني. هناك علاقات غير متناغمة تتخلل الطبقات الاجتماعية للدولة. يعترف IDDEF بالمنافسة السلبية ويحاول التوسط للحد من التوترات بين المجموعات من خلال تسهيل المسجد الكبير الذي يعمل كمركز لتجمع المجموعات الثلاث. وتعطى كل عشيرة جزءا نسبيا من السلطة يشكل الاحترام المتبادل بين العشائر. يصبح المسجد مكانا لتجمع العشائر بغض النظر عن الخلفية العشائرية، وبالتالي تحفيز التوازن بين الناس على المستوى الاجتماعي.

understood in a transnational context, but in the context of the Guinean government, it is useful in uniting different elements of society for the formation of nationalism.³³⁵

5.5.11. Becoming an Actor for Balancing Power Within Muslim Minority

Ethiopia has a different context, according to the explanation by Abdussalam, where different Muslim communities were treated by the government equally in terms of power to not leave a group stronger than another. Before the arrival of support from institutions with a Sufism background, the local Sufism group did not have the strength and international support compared to other Islamic groups, such as Wahabism, which was supported by Saudi Arabia. The Wahabism group became stronger which led to the need for a counterweight, and the arrival of the IDDEF by supporting the Qadiriyya Sufi group was considered as able to balance the political power of Wahhabism in the country.

5.5.12. Creating an Attractive Religious Approach in Modern Context

As stated in the second chapter, one of the elements of soft power is the cultural approach. A culture that includes values, including religious values, is carried out with a certain approach to give birth to a certain attractiveness. IDDEF adopts the value of Sufism which is far from extremism and radicalism, instead inviting togetherness and unity of purity with the spirit of livelihood of local wisdom and values that already exist in the location.

Such a religious approach sees the existence of common values between countries and does not position other traditions as "the other" but seeks to find common ground and focus on strengthening the relationships of those intersections. This has resulted in the strengthening of social relations between communities that are authentic and original in style, and in the national interest is that IDDEF indirectly cooperates with the government in spreading moderate religious understanding, which does not place the state as an antagonist.

³³⁵ The ceremony of graduation participated by researcher between 8-17th December 2021 in Guinea, Conakry.

Officially, Turkey is different from Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have a particular religious ideology. Despite this, religion is considered a value, and teaching is adopted by society. However, IDDEF, on behalf of the public, shows religious traditions with the pattern of Sufism and *ahlusunnah*. This is an attraction for the Islamic world with a Sufi background like Western Africa region. It can give the model of Turkish religious application in government structures.

5.5.13. Approaching Through the Local Social System

Every society has a different social system. When an NGO from outside comes and approaches them, it must indirectly adjust and adapt to local norms. In the context of Ghana, clan conflict is not found, seeing Muslim clans are a minority in the country. So, in general, they have relatively strong solidarity. However, to act in society, the ability to see social construction through the traditional structure is needed. Because this is the way to create strong communication which focuses on that aspect of understanding.

The traditional structure of society in Ghana is the existence of classical clan semi-government which co-exists with the official government. At the level of the village, the status of the traditional structure is more important due to its active role within society. Therefore, to make a strategic step toward the local government, IDDEF investigates the structure and makes the relationship not only with the government but also with the traditional structure. To see the structure Abdallah explains that:

The state is still very dependent on traditional structures because their status is still very important in society. In the context of the Muslim clan in Ghana, besides the leader, there is an imam who is appointed leader as the person in charge of religious affairs including marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other matters related to social affairs. Therefore, the mediation legal system is still very thick and powerful, and it is applied by the elite of the clan.³³⁶

³³⁶ Abdallah, Interview by Author, Kumasi, April 10, 2022



Figure 5.5. Visit of One Clan Leader in Ghana

5.5.14. Stimulating Islamic History as a Capital to Strengthen Modern Diplomatic Relations

Turkey, with the Ottoman legacy, is known in Islamic history as the last caliphate in the early 20th century. The historical record is still relatively fresh and remembered by Muslim societies around the world. The arrival of Turkey in another Muslim country refreshes the old memory. Turkey, even modernly classified as a newly formed country, historically and politically, has had relationships that have been built for a long time. This has a positive impact on modern Turkey because the previous status potentially strengthens diplomatic relations even today.³³⁷

Sultanates in Africa, such as Timbuktu, Sokoto, Kano, and Habeshi, had independent power before colonialism, and they had diplomatic relations with the Ottomans. They even used to pay the tax to the central caliphate. The relationships are established to create security, social interactions, and economic transactions. During the observation in Nigeria, it is found that the emirate of Kano in Nigeria still carries out traditions in symbolic form. The Emir still exists, and the historical record is still owned due to the continuity of the emirate. The arrival of IDDEF to a country that still has a traditional structure in government will be easily aroused by the bonds of the past that had been built. This will create an advantage for the Turkish Republic as the heir to the Ottoman Empire. By what was conveyed by Davutoglu regarding the deep strategy, which argued that relations between countries surpassed modern times, the relations that had

³³⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, p. 7-8

been built in the Ottoman period could be a big capital in the dynamics of Modern Turkish diplomacy.³³⁸

In South Africa, in Bo-Kaap, there is an Ottoman alim who was sent from Istanbul and settled there. Social activities are carried out in the form of giving iftar during the month of Ramadan to as many as 30 people per day. The event was also attended by the Turkish Embassy in Cape Town. Targeting an important figure in the Ottoman period which moved to South Africa, although symbolic in shape, the action refreshed the memory of the local people with the existence of the Turkish figure.³³⁹

5.5.15. The Attractiveness of Being Tolerant

Unlike the NGOs that mainly come from Saudi Arabia and Iran, IDDEF does not impose any value on the local people. IDDEF only chooses partners who are not from Shia and Wahhabi groups, and when knitting relationships, IDDEF does not impose its religious views, by giving freedom to partners who embrace different tariqa such as Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, etc. In this regard, Abdussalam, the representative from Ethiopia mentions that:

This is an attraction for them because, groups such as Shia and Wahabi are notoriously stricter where it is necessary to dress and think according to the framework they offer, while IDDEF, only assumes they are not the other. Here is the formation of an identity that transcends tariqa and includes *ahlusunnah*.³⁴⁰

5.5.16. Strengthening Sufi-Ahlussunah Communities

In the Islamic world, there are still very few Sufi groups who have become active in the Muslim world and develop a network. IDDEF is a forum for Muslim communities in the world who have received an education with a Sufi background. Saudi Arabia, with its highly influential educational institutions in Medina, provides opportunities for graduating students to carry out their activities by supporting them financially.

³³⁸ Serhat Orakci, *Türkiye Afrika İlişkileri Tarihi Süreç, Yaklaşımlar ve Beklentiler*, (İstanbul: İNSAMER, 2018), p.55.

³³⁹ <https://www.iddef.org/iddefthen-guney-afrikada-osmanli-iftari> Reached at 28.07.2022 16:54

³⁴⁰ Abdussalam, interview.

ومنالجدير بالذكر أن جماعات مثل الشيعة والوهابيين أكثر صرامة حيث يكون من الضروري ارتداء الملابس والتفكير وفقاً للإطار الذي يقدمونه، في حين أن IDDEF تفترض فقط أنها ليست الأخرى. هنا تشكيل هوية تسمى فوق الطريقة وتشمل أهل السنة

However, NGOs with ties to Sufism that support international activities are relatively fewer in number than Wahabism. Turkey with institutions like IDDEF is a hope for those who do not receive education in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, job opportunities are created, and social activities are supported, and this strengthens the local Islamic identity which is an original part of the society.

5.6. Conclusion

IDDEF is an NGO that has a religious background that is part of the Ismailaga community that represents Turkey in its international actions. Religious ideas become the goal and the motivation in carrying out all its activities. In general, it is found that the activities conducted by IDDEF are intertwined with the interests of Turkish foreign policy, particularly in showing the Sufistic religious face of the society towards the Muslim communities in the world.

IDDEF carries out humanitarian assistance actions in around forty-six countries and has educational activities in twenty-three countries starting from 2009. The foundation of religion is the main motivation for all these activities. Religion becomes the main basis for the development of relations between different ethnic societies which creates an identity in the social realm. The identity is created by the Sufism network that comes from different tariqas.

IDDEF's activities create the soft power of Turkey. The NGO attempts to tackle global crises with a special approach to socio-religious activities. At the same time, IDDEF uses religious discourse in dealing with humanitarian crises and security issues. The activities intertwine with Turkish foreign policy and the interest of the local governments, which affect the socio-politic aspect between Turkey and other states. Turkey, by being active in tackling global issues makes the image of the state in the international arena gain attractiveness and credibility which is termed as the soft power.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the Ismailaga community in terms of its general identity and its NGO, (IDDEF) through its international actions. The actions are assumed to be intertwined and related to Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the case of soft power creation. The study is based on participant observation and interviews conducted in six countries. Those countries are Turkey, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria. Twenty-three interviewees were interviewed. The study also uses a literature review to obtain comparative data and information through related studies.

The first issue handled in this thesis is the dynamism of the Ismailaga community, its identity, and the structure of NGOs within the community. The sociological investigation of Ismailaga is aimed to discover and analyze the internal dynamism and mentality of IDDEF. The second issue, which is the main aim of the study is analyzing the structure of IDDEF and its international activities, particularly, in the Western African countries impacting the Turkish foreign policy through the perspective of soft power.

The study analyzes the identity of Ismailaga to shed light on its social action, religious worldview, and political behaviour. The Ismailaga can be defined as a religious community having the form of tariqa under the Naqshbandi-Khalidi tradition, based in Çarşamba, Istanbul. Mahmud Efendi, one of the key figures in the genealogy of the tariqa, formed a community focusing on religious education and morals, and the implementation of religious-social activities. The emphasis on the application of *ahlusunnah* includes the spiritual aspect and appearance level. The social activities of Ismailaga exist in the Turkish public sphere as an act of anti over secularization, westernization, and globalization movements.

Ismailaga, with their teachings and actions, succeeded in forming a community with an identity to create the concept of "us" and define "the other," as Zygmunt Bauman articulated.³⁴¹ The identity includes repetitive actions such as *hatmehacegan zikir*, as a collective ritual and appearances such as clothing. This forms a space for community members to feel secure and united. These actions help realize the goals such as applying authentic Islamic values and transmitting these values to new generations.

Ismailaga has a political approach of pragmatism, prioritizing the existence of the community. Ismailaga lacks a comprehensive ideology regarding the imagination of a political system. However, it is very active in social action in the public space because it promotes explicitly embraced values with certain discourses such as emphasizing the importance of religion.

The importance of religious standing has also been found since the Ottoman period, as explained by Barkan. The spread of Sufi tariqas to unconquered and conquered areas, especially in the 14th century, is considered a strategic step for the state to create socio-political relations. Zawiyahs served as a security centre, agricultural developer, and a place to spread Islam to non-Muslims. The relationship between the government and the tariqa was mutually beneficial, where the tariqa moved to realize religious goals. At the same time, the government benefited from representativeness.³⁴² In this sense, Ismailaga, even in a different context, shows the continuation of the religious dissemination project, which was based on the Tariqa movement.

IDDEF (The Federation of Organizations that Value Humanity) is an NGO from Ismailaga engaged in education and humanitarian aid internationally. IDDEF moves with the Ismailaga spirit of "building madrasas in all corners of the world". It was built in 2009, expanded in 2016, and has been operating in a larger range since 2020. IDDEF serves as an instrument for Ismailaga to disseminate the influence of Ismailaga's thoughts on an international scale.

³⁴¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Cemaatler*, translated by Nurdan Soysal, (Istanbul: Say Publications, 2020), p. 7-12.

³⁴² Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler*, *İnsan ve İnsan* 2 (5), (2015), p.148-149

IDDEF tends to utilize technological means and professional staff which is not necessarily connected to the community of Ismailaga. The professionalism of IDDEF leads to ease in dealing with international communities having different cultural patterns. Based on the goals and visions, IDDEF attempts to realize the religious idealism of *ahlusunnah*, which is far from radicalism - the consciousness of the ummah union, and the creation of opportunities to do good deeds in terms of Islamic teachings. As an NGO, IDDEF does not have specific political and economic interests. The Ismailaga community doesn't have a specific political party or international company. Thus, religion has the potential to build a discourse that serves to form an attraction. The pattern of the religious approach used by IDDEF is Sufism.

IDDEF conducts the activities of education and humanitarian aid in forty-six countries from Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. However, in general, the focus of activities has been more on African countries, specifically on Muslim communities. Educational activities are conducted as an answer to overcome the global education crisis and security problems by disseminating the approach of “moderate Islam”. Education is a medium and long-term agenda due to the formation of generations taking time. IDDEF builds new schools and supports established schools with a total of fifty-seven madrasas in twenty-four countries. Schools became the capital to spread “moderate and tolerant” Sufism, which is different from radicalism that leads to terrorism.

The social activities are based on the religious worldview, which creates a sense of solidarity, fraternity, and consciousness of Islamic ummah worldwide. Humanitarian aid, a short-term activity, aims to overcome the global humanitarian crisis, such as the shortage of clean water and healthy food. The humanitarian crisis is a global problem that must be addressed by the world. In this case, Turkey as a country that is concerned with these global problems shows interest in problem-solving. In these two activities, Turkey instrumentalizes NGOs in showing its interest. These two fields of education and humanitarian aid activities are considered the capital for constructing Turkish soft power.

The activities carried out by IDDEF were analyzed with the concept of soft power presented by Joseph Nye, that is, an analytical concept that prioritizes the approach to create attractiveness in other countries. Nye believes that NGOs are one of the most

influential instruments to create the accumulation of soft power.³⁴³ The study found that IDDEF, with the activities of tackling the global humanitarian crisis, strengthening diplomatic relations through a socio-religious approach, and creating a sense of Muslim unity (Ummah) based on Sufism creates Turkish soft power. In line with Turkish foreign policy, Turkey transformed historical capital and a strategic geopolitical advantage for its political interest. Religion which is part of culture, is one of the main capitals in conducting diplomacy because it succeeds in creating attractiveness. However, the creation of soft power is considered an unintended consequence (in the Weberian sense) of the community and NGO. Since the relationship between NGOs and the government does not have a direct relationship.

Tackling the global humanitarian crisis is a challenge for the world to solve. All states accept the issue and initiate tackling the problem to create a better world. In this case, IDDEF is considered an actor participating in tackling the problem by representing Turkey. IDDEF utilizes Turkish flags in every activity, shown on the banners of activities, schools, mosques, and water well. In the complex (*külliyeye*) buildings, the flag of Turkey and IDDEF is used in the front part. Regarding communication with the local government, IDDEF is an NGO whose small administration can create communication and act quickly with local governments to tackle certain problems. The condition assists the diplomatic communication between Turkey and the local government.

Regarding the socio-religious perspective, IDDEF approaches the countries with clans' conflict to utilize the mediation approach. Creating a dialogue between conflicting clans leads to positive communication, which benefits the local government. On the other hand, supporting a Sufi group to maintain the political balance of the Muslim minority creates a social equilibrium at the national level. The circumstance will prevent the non-Sufi group from becoming stronger which potentially affects national politics.

The religious values adopted and spread by IDDEF do not cause a formation of a political movement that threatens the local government. Instead, religious values

³⁴³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p.21.

support maintaining national security and forming a transnational religious identity functioning to unite the Muslim communities. The approach called *Sufistic-ahlussunah* provides a moderate Islam that can go hand in hand with the local government.

In a nutshell, the research focuses on the religious community of Ismailaga, a traditional community passing a transformation to give birth to an NGO whose activities are in the international arena. The activities intercept with Turkish political interest which constructs the soft power. In this regard, religion appeared as an effective factor in diplomacy. Therefore, the research shows the potential of religion, that even without the political setting, it can create an influence on the state's international politics. For further research, seeing the potential of traditional religious communities other than Ismailaga can be researched. Particularly, looking at different aspects of how Turkey cooperates with NGOs to realize diplomatic relations based on religious discourse.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Name*	Age	Sex	Place	Date of the Interview
M. Turan	57	Male	İstanbul	19/ 05/ 2022
B. Turan	29	Male	İstanbul	23/ 05/ 2022
M. Tandoğan	26	Male	İstanbul	30/ 05/ 2022
A. Morad	31	Male	İstanbul	15/ 06/ 2022
M. Abdussalam	50	Male	İstanbul	09/ 06/ 2022
A. Ganame	45	Male	İstanbul	27/ 05/ 2022
A. Gafur	28	Male	İstanbul	08/ 06/ 2022
S. Aktaş	42	Male	İstanbul	30/ 05/ 2022
B. Ceylan	29	Male	Online	03/ 06/ 2022
O. Hasçıçek	26	Male	İstanbul	01/ 06/ 2022
I. Yetimova	25	Male	İstanbul	21/ 06/ 2022
S. Eser	35	Male	İstanbul	20/ 06/ 2022
E.I. Yaren	26	Male	İstanbul	22/ 06/ 2022
Z. Türkyılmaz	27	Male	İstanbul	23/ 06/ 2022
C.A.R Salçado	35	Male	İstanbul	28/ 06/ 2022
Y. Aydın	29	Male	İstanbul	27/ 06/ 2022
S. Çelik	30	Male	İstanbul	39/ 06/ 2022
F. Hacıoğlu	27	Male	İstanbul	30/ 06/ 2022
Askiya	47	Male	Kano	14/ 07/ 2022
M. Teye Awidi	47	Male	Accra	05/ 05/ 2022
Abdallah	50	Male	Kumasi	10/ 04/ 2022
Abdul Mannan	26	Male	Kumasi	09/ 04/ 2022
Konta	40	Male	Segou	18/ 04/ 2022

*Some of the names of interviewees are changed to keep privacy.

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