

HCRI, University of Manchester

- Islamic charities, the “religious field” and the international aid system
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Summary

- Islamic charities
 - The Islamic tradition of humanitarianism
 - The rise of Islamic charities since 1970s
 - “Families” of Islamic charities
 - The crisis since 9/11
- Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and the “religious field”
- Connections to the international aid system

The Islamic tradition of humanitarianism

- *zakat* – 8 categories of beneficiary – and *sadaqa*
- *waqf* or *hubs*
- the religious calendar and life-cycle
- references to Quran and the *hadiths*
- special concern for:
 - orphans
 - refugees and the displaced
 - medicine and health
 - schools and bursaries
- visual motifs (crescent, minaret, grain of corn, Dome of the Rock etc.)

The rise of Islamic charities since the 1970s

- Confluence of two historical tendencies:
 - The rise of NGOs
 - rapid growth in conjunction with the international aid system
 - The Islamic resurgence
 - successor to revolutionary socialism and pan-Arabism post-1967
- Islamic charities as sub-set of Faith Based Organizations
 - but till recently excluded from analyses of international aid flows

“Families” of Islamic charities

- Excluding the “one-offs”, usually with charismatic founders:
 - Aga Khan Foundation
 - Edhi Foundation, Pakistan
- and the Red Crescent National Societies
 - red crescent used by 32 countries
 - officially non-confessional
 - in practice often take on an Islamic colouring
- Iranian *bonyads*
- Other, non-Arab countries e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan
- Turkey
 - e.g. IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi) – formally secular but with strong Islamic overtones

“Families...”

1. Petrodollar based

- Kuwait, Qatar, Dubai...
- But especially Saudi-Arabia
 - International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO)
 - Was specially active in ex-Communist states in the early 1990s.
 - World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)
 - Unfulfilled pledge by Saudi govt. to set up committee to coordinate all its overseas aid charities
 - These charities now much reduced owing to the Saudi regime's desire not to offend the USA
- Some mixture of aims especially during 1980s in Afghanistan, with support of US government
 - USAID supported *mujahideen* by means of the USA charity system
 - Later in Bosnia

“Families...” 2. links with Middle East opposition movements?

- Muslim Brothers of Egypt (founded 1928)
 - Combined political, religious and welfarist goals
 - Algeria
 - Palestinian Territories
 - Zakat committees thought by Israeli and US governments to be merely fronts for Hamas – research suggests the contrary
- Are charitable activities a mere front for politics?
 - Evidence suggests great popular trust and support, and religious as well as political motivation
- But in the case of Hizbullah (Lebanon)...
 - Clear integration between welfare programmes and political organization

“Families...”

3. UK based

- Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid and others strongly influenced by British charity environment
 - Precedent of Christian Aid and CAFOD
 - divorcing aid from proselytism
 - accepting principle of non-discrimination
 - Transparency, accountability, professionalization, partnerships
 - Based on Islamic values
 - ‘humanitarian reading’ of *jihad*
 - Using Islamic tradition for effective fund-raising
 - Islamic Relief Worldwide now largest Islamic charity
- The movement as an example of practical (rather than merely rhetorical) “integration”

Islamic Relief's work in Aceh, Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami

- Includes
 - Orphan programmes
 - Rebuilding schools and clinics
 - Housing
 - Rebuilding markets













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17 MEULABOH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SEKOLAH DASAR NEGERI 17 MEULABOH

Des. Bang. Beurandang Kec. Johan Pahlawan
Kab. Aceh Barat

10 Juli 2006

DEC - CAFOD 2006
CV. GRAMITA



CAFOD
JUSTICE AND FAITH

lukuan Bangsa



SERAMBI / HERIANTO

SEBELAH kiri adalah rumah bantuan untuk korban bencana tsunami yang dibangun oleh BRR di Desa Kajhu, Aceh Besar. Sebelah kanan rumah bantuan korban tsunami yang dibangun Islamic Relief, di lokasi yang sama. Kualitas rumah BRR itu, jauh dibawah kualitas rumah Islamic Relief. Padahal, rumah BRR itu sudah direhab dengan pagu Rp 15 juta/unit.

NEUBOK KUYUN

1 Empat orang penduduk menemukan sebuah mortir aktif diantara

Insiden Brutal di Juli Lima Korban Masih Dirawat

■ Berakresi Lewat Itu Berseliweran





The crisis since 9/11

- Extensive black-listing - an over-reaction?
- Need to distinguish?
- between
 - International terrorism of the Al-Qaida type
 - Nationalist movements
- Muslim civil society as a potential **protection against terrorism...**
- ...rather than always a fomenter of terrorism?

The crisis since 9/11

- Distinguish between
 - intelligence- and police-based building up of associative networks (emails, wiretaps etc.), use of press reports, US and Israeli intelligence websites etc. - necessary for the suppression of terrorism
 - but dangers of ‘guilt by association’ and injustice
 - **and**
 - Serious social research studying charities and charity actors in widest possible context
- **Unintended consequence – to drive money underground**
 - As well as depriving beneficiaries of aid
 - And damaging the lives of trustees and charity staff

Dilemmas for humanitarian ethics

- Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Pakistan generally agreed to a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba, both designated as terrorist entities
- However, Jamaat-ud-Dawa was the most effective charitable organization bring relief after the Kashmir earthquake in October 2005.
- Many international organizations cooperated with it to gain access to and assist earthquake victims.
- Similar issues have arisen in Nigerian civil war, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Sudan, today in Sri Lanka...

Towards removing unjustified barriers for Islamic charities

- “Humanitarian Forum” launched by Islamic Relief
- “Montreux Initiative”
 - Swiss Government
 - Move towards self-assessment after prior stage of capacity building
 - Withdrawal of FCO ‘Engaging with the Islamic World’
- Charity and Security Network (USA)

Present situation

- Major UK Islamic aid agencies earn high reputation and government support
 - Interpal (UK Islamic charity for Palestinian aid) allowed to continue after three investigations by the Charity Commission
- Increasingly complex political situation involving many Islamic charities overseas

Islamic charities: the future

- Current concerns about terrorist finance likely to be temporary
- Growing acceptance probable of regulation and international charity standards
- European Islamic charities a powerful force for integration within Europe
- Eventual emergence of a few genuinely transnational Islamic NGOs probable
- And large private philanthropic foundations
- Continuing problems over such flashpoints as gender and (in some regions) religious freedom.
- Generational tensions among Muslims working two opposite ways: towards integration and towards radicalism

Solutions to current problems...

- Solutions likely to come from confidence-building among people of different views, on the common ground of humanitarian values...
- ...not from organized dialogue among people who already agree with one another!

The 'religious field'

- Towards clarity in thinking about religion
- Instead of thinking about religions as **blocs of believers**
- The '**religious field**' interacts with other fields (politics, law, media etc. – also the **humanitarian field**)
- These fields are all essentially mobile and have **contested boundaries**

Strong and medium-strong religious fields

- Strong religious field:
 - FBOs, e.g. Christian Aid, Islamic Relief
- Medium-strong religious field
 - ‘faith-inspired NGOs’, e.g. Oxfam, Save the Children
- ? Ostensibly wholly secular NGOs still occupying the medium-strong religious field since inspired by ‘religioid’ values
 - E.g. ICRC, MSF, Amnesty International

FBOs and the international aid system: two alternative models

- 1. FBOs in *longue durée* (Terje Tvedt)
- 2. FBOs as manifestations of “individuo-globalism” (Raphaël Liogier)

1. FBOs in *longue durée*

- Modern aid system began in 1960s when OECD members began to fund NGOs
- Social integration through exchange of personnel between NGOs and public donor agencies
- World religions are much older and are using the aid system for their traditional purposes, i.e. proselytism and spreading influence

2. FBOs as manifestations of “individuo-globalism”

- FBOs as surface manifestations of a structure of convergence
- New Age cult of spirituality or ‘personal growth’ as **not in opposition** to a concern for Nature and the cosmos, but **the two as mutually reinforcing**
 - Correlation with Western affluence as opposed to ‘survival values’

2. FBOs as manifestations of “individuo-globalism”

- Individuo-globalist sensibility as challenging
 - I) established religious hierarchies
 - II) national boundaries
- FBOs can bypass both the above
 - Substituting new transnational bureaucracies
- Examples: World Vision, Islamic Relief – but also Soka Gakkei, Baha’i and many others

“Civil society”

- A contested term, much co-opted by governments
- Should be redefined as:
 - “a space for voluntary collective actions that can be a source of autonomy” (Benoît Challand)
 - “civil society *as it is*” as opposed to “window-dressing civil society *based on abstract models of what it ought to be*” (Olivier Roy)
- Recognition of this essential for effective humanitarian aid

The “religious field” and humanitarianism

- The religious field can provide a bridge between
 - Locally trusted networks
- And
 - Transnational non-profit organizations that can act as a counterbalance to governments and multinational corporations.