



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Invisible Humanitarians – The Role of the Syrian Diaspora in
Germany in the Humanitarian Response in Syria since the Start
of the Civil War in 2011

verfasst von | submitted by
Salome Schmid

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Cengiz Günay

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Invisible Humanitarians – The Role of the Syrian Diaspora in Germany in the Humanitarian Response in Syria since the Start of the Civil War in 2011“

verfasst von / submitted by

Salome Schmid

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, 2024 / Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Cengiz Günay

Abstract (DE)

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Rolle von Diaspora-Organisationen (DOs) in der humanitären Hilfe im Kontext der Syrienkrise. Es wird untersucht, wie sich ihre Ansätze und Herausforderungen von denen traditioneller humanitärer Akteure unterscheiden, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Prinzipien, die ihre Arbeit leiten. Trotz der großen Aufmerksamkeit, die Mitgliedern der Diaspora als Entwicklungsakteur:innen zuteilwird, ist ihre Rolle in der humanitären Hilfe nach wie vor wenig erforscht, was zu einem fehlenden Verständnis und Vertrauen zwischen Diaspora-Organisationen und dem formalen humanitären System führt. Durch den Vergleich beider Formen der humanitären Hilfe soll die Studie die Stärken und den Beitrag der humanitären Hilfe der Diaspora aufzeigen.

Abstract (ENG)

This thesis examines the role of diaspora organizations (DOs) in the humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria. It examines how their approaches and challenges differ from those of traditional humanitarian actors, particularly in terms of the factors and principles that guide their work. Despite the great attention given to members of the diaspora as development actors, their role in humanitarian action remains understudied, leading to a lack of understanding and trust between diaspora organizations and the formal humanitarian system. By comparing both forms of humanitarianism, the study aims to highlight the strengths and contribution of diasporas to the humanitarian response in Syria.

List of Abbreviations	1
List of tables	3
1. Introduction: Understanding the Conflict in Syria	4
1.1 Syria's Humanitarian Crisis	5
1.2 Displacement and Engagement: The Syrian diaspora	7
1.3 Research Question and Relevance	8
2. Theoretical Framework	9
2.1 Migration-Development Nexus within Migration Theory	9
2.2 Diaspora in the Transnational Context	11
2.2.1 Defining "Diaspora"	11
2.2.2 Engaging Diaspora	12
2.2.2.1 Transnational Perspective.....	12
2.2.2.2 Home Country and Diaspora	13
2.2.2.3 Host Country and Diaspora	16
2.2.2.4 International Agencies and Diasporas	17
3. Literature Review: Humanitarianism(s)	18
3.1 Traditional Humanitarianism	20
3.1.1 Origin	21
3.1.2 Humanitarian Principles	22
3.1.3 Three Stages of humanitarianism.....	26
3.1.3.1 Imperial Humanitarianism.....	26
3.1.3.2 Neo-Humanitarianism	27
3.1.3.2 Liberal Humanitarianism	29
3.2 Diaspora Humanitarianism	33
3.2.1 Actors.....	34
3.2.2 Humanitarian Practices	35
3.2.2.1 Remittances.....	35
3.2.2.2 Philanthropy	37
3.2.2.3 Migrant professionalism.....	39
3.2.2.4 Humanitarian Assistance led by Diaspora Organizations	39
3.2.3 Influential Factors.....	42
4. Methodology	46
4.1 Case Study: The Humanitarian Crisis in Syria	47
4.1.1 Literature Review: International Response	48
4.1.1.1 Selection Criteria	48

4.1.1.2 Limitations	49
4.1.2 Content Analysis: Diaspora Response	49
4.1.2.1 Selection Units.....	50
4.1.2.2 Analysis Units	51
4.1.2.3 Quality Criteria	51
4.1.2.4 Limitations	52
5. Analysis	52
5.1 Syrian Diaspora (Organizations) in Germany.....	53
5.1.1 Micro Level	53
5.1.2 Meso Level.....	55
5.2 International vs. Diaspora Response	58
5.2.1 Access	58
5.2.1.1 Fragmentation: a Barrier to Aid Delivery.....	58
5.2.1.2 Access Restrictions and Aid Diversion	61
5.2.2 Agility and Adaptability	66
5.2.3 Commitment to Humanitarian Principles.....	67
5.2.3.1 Neutrality.....	67
5.2.3.2 Impartiality	69
5.2.3.3 Independence.....	70
6. Discussion of Findings	71
7. Conclusion	73
Bibliography	75

List of Abbreviations

AANES	Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
AfD	Alternative für Deutschland
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CBO	Community-based organizations
DEMAC	Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination
DO	Diaspora Organizations
DFA	De facto authority
DfID	Department for International Development
DSF	Deutsch-Syrisches Forum e.V.
DSV	Deutsch-Syrischer Verein e.V
DSÄ	Deutsch-Syrische Ärzte für humanitäre Hilfe e.V.
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FHO	Foreign Humanitarian Organizations
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
HAWG	Humanitarian Access Working Groups
HHC	Human Help Community
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa

MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PMSCs	Private Military and Security Companies
RCRC	Red Cross and Red Crescent
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SCPR	Syrian Center for Policy Research
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SSG	Syrian Salvation Government
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals
THA	Traditional Humanitarian Actors
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDSH	Verband Deutsch-Syrischer Hilfsvereine e.V
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

List of tables

Figure 1. Map of military control across Syria at the beginning of 2023 5

Figure 2. Public Donor Funding in 2022 33

Figure 3. Map of operations in Syria 64

1. Introduction: Understanding the Conflict in Syria

"The rhythm of revolt synchronized across the entire region, with each Friday's "day of rage" seeming to bring the region closer to fundamental transformation. At that moment, anything seemed possible and every Arab population could hope for immediate, peaceful change"

- Marc Lynch (2013, p. 8)

In 2011, a transformative chapter began in the history of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with successful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt resulting in the overthrow of both countries' presidents. The events that became known as the Arab Spring inspired and gave hope to various countries across the MENA region in their own aspirations for political transformation, social justice, and democratic governance. In Syria, which had been under authoritarian rule by the Assad family for four decades, pro-democratic activists went on the streets calling for political reforms. The uprisings, which for the most part happened peacefully, were violently suppressed by the Syrian government leading to the emergence of various opposition militias and massive defections from the Syrian Army (Ford, 2019). What began with fifteen boys spray-painting 'The people want the fall of the regime' on a school in the city of Deraa in Southwestern Syria, had gradually transformed into an armed rebellion and later into a protracted civil war (Laub, 2019). While the reasons for the protests were initially domestic in nature, the regime's use of violence against protestors and civilians drew the attention of the international community, resulting in widespread condemnation and deep concern. By the summer of 2011, Syria's neighboring countries and global powers had started to align themselves in opposing camps, with some supporting Assad and others taking an anti-regime stance. The United States and the European Union grew increasingly critical of Assad while Syria's long-standing allies Russia and Iran continued their support. These divisions only became more complex over the years with a multitude of local and international forces getting involved in the conflict (Kahl et al., 2017). Since 2011, Syria's territory has fragmented into several zones that are controlled by different local players and are influenced by external powers. Following Russia's intervention in 2015, the Syrian regime gained the upper hand in the military conflict. As of 2023, the Syrian government, backed by Russia and Iran, controls most of the country, including the major cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama (Jusoor, 2023). The territory held by opposition groups, consisting of two umbrellas - those brigades affiliating themselves under the wider umbrella of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (previously: Free Syrian Army (FSA)) and the umbrella of the jihadist, makes up approximately one tenth of the overall territory (Khaddour, 2018). Around one fourth of Syria's territory is under control of the Syrian Democratic Force (SDF), a multi-ethnic coalition of Kurdish, Arabic, and Christian fighters created with US support (Jusoor, 2023). The map below illustrates the military control across Syria at the beginning of 2023.

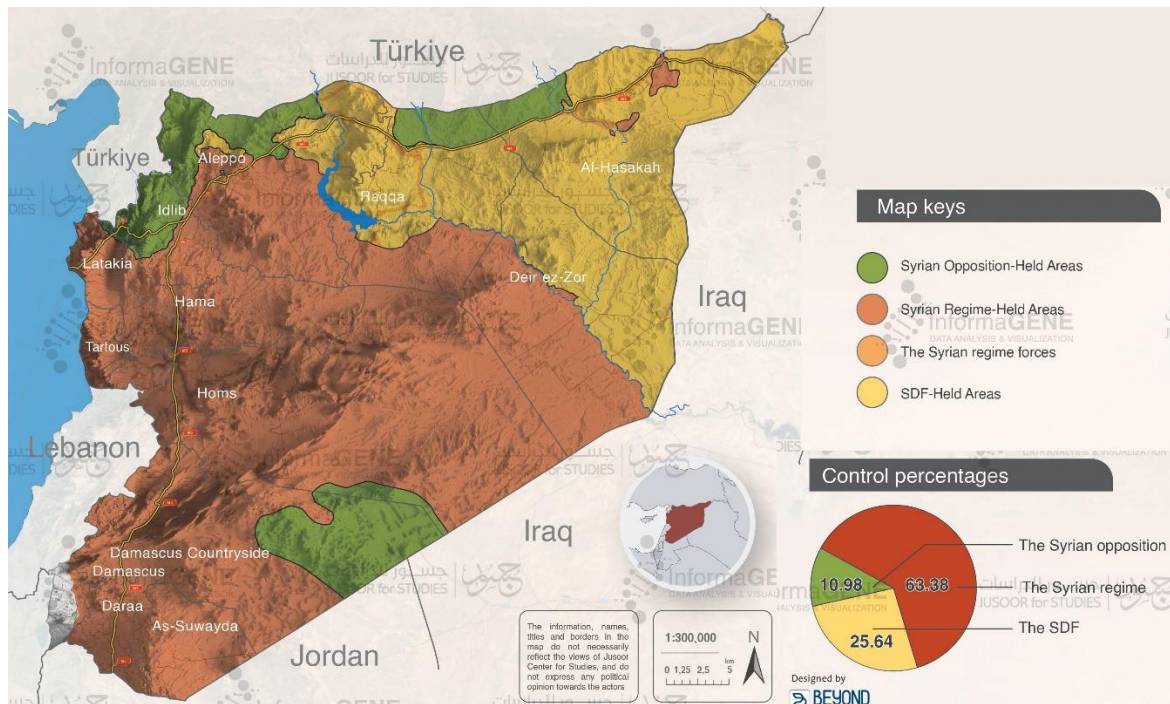


Figure 1. Map of military control across Syria at the beginning of 2023. Adapted from: Jusoor, 2023. Modifications made by the author.

In regions beyond the regime's control, entities such as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) in the northwest have emerged as de facto authorities, either replacing or taking control of state institutions (Mehchy et al., 2020). The conflict remains ongoing, and following the resurgence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there has been a notable rise in the number and scale of attacks, even as large-scale fighting has subsided in the last years.

1.1 Syria's Humanitarian Crisis

The thirteen years of enduring conflict have resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. In 2013, two years after the outbreak, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, described the situation in Syria as “the great tragedy of this century -- a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history” (NBC News, 2013). In 2024, more than a decade later, the conflict is still ongoing and has left the country in ruins, destroying infrastructure, disrupting critical systems, shattering communities, and causing immeasurable and enduring suffering among the Syrian population. In 2024, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates the number of people needing humanitarian assistance at 16,7 million, having steadily increased since 2012. In fact, in 2023 the impacts of the crisis have for

the first time since its beginning reached every corner of Syria, resulting in individuals throughout the entire nation grappling with its effects. More than half of the population of Syria have been forced to flee their homes. In 2024, there are approximately 6.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Syria (UNHCR, 2024). The majority of IDPs are women and children. Many stay in informal shelters, unfinished buildings, or unofficial camps, exposing them to multiple intersecting vulnerabilities. One example showcasing the tremendous living conditions is the Al Hol camp in northeastern Syria. Hosting about 60.000 people, more than 90% of which are women and children, the camp is overcrowded and fails to provide access to even basic healthcare and water and sanitation. For the rest of the Syrian population, the situation has worsened significantly throughout the conflict, as well. One of the main drivers of humanitarian need remains Syria's economic crisis. In early 2023, Syria's economy is believed to have hit its lowest point since the start of the civil war. The high inflation, currency depreciation and increases in the prices of commodities, have severely affected many families and worsened food security (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2023). The economic collapse has been accompanied with the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including healthcare facilities and water supply and sanitation systems. The resulting limited access to clean water and the lack of health institutions exposes many persons in Syria, especially those in already vulnerable situations, to higher risk of disease transmission. This became evident when in September 2022, a cholera outbreak was declared in Syria, and, due to the failure of Syria's health system responding to it, infection cases have been rapidly increasing (Eneh et al., 2023). The combination of these conditions and factors has escalated the situation into one of the largest and most severe humanitarian crises on a global level.

Already confronted with the impact of conflict, epidemics and displacement, the dire situation was further exacerbated by magnitude 7.8 and 7.5 earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023 (IFRC, 2023). The earthquakes severely affected northwest Syria, an area where many already depend on humanitarian assistance. The Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR) estimates that the earthquake led to at least 6000 deaths in Syria and has displaced over 170,000 individuals (SCPR, 2023). Damaging and destroying homes, schools, clinics in a backdrop of a longstanding national infrastructure crisis, the earthquakes can be described a "catastrophe on top of a crisis" pushing Syria to the brink (UNFPA, 2023). The political fragmentation of Syria became evident once again in the humanitarian response to the earthquakes, with a significant disparity in the distribution of material aid between northwest Syria and government-controlled areas. Overall, the emergency efforts, particularly those led by the United Nations, faced criticism for being delayed and insufficient to meet humanitarian needs on the ground (SCPR, 2023).

1.2 Displacement and Engagement: The Syrian diaspora

The Syrian crisis has extended its reach far beyond the borders of the country, impacting various nations, regions, and individuals worldwide. Next to causing political unrest and instability in the wider Middle East region, the crisis has also produced a mass displacement, within the country and abroad. Millions of Syrians have been forced to flee their homes, seeking safety in neighboring countries and beyond (Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015). In Europe, Germany has emerged as a key destination for Syrian refugees, with hundreds of thousands arriving in the country since 2015 (Ragab, 2021). After initially positive sentiment, also referred to as the "Welcome Culture", Syrian refugees soon found their identity as victims of conflict and natural disasters quickly overshadowed by perceptions of them as potential threats to security, the welfare system, and social cohesion (Bieling & Huke, 2020).

While policymakers were still debating integration measures, Syrian individuals in Germany had independently organized themselves into networks and associations over the years, forming a vibrant civil society actively engaged in political, cultural, and social matters (Ragab, 2021). This development challenges narratives that try to fit refugees into the binary categories of 'victims' or 'threats'. Instead, the engagement of Syrians with humanitarian and development efforts of their home country highlights a new narrative within the Syrian community: diasporans as proactive agents.

The diasporans' active participation underscores their role in addressing the multifaceted challenges stemming from the Syrian crisis, both within Germany and Syria, as well as its neighboring countries. Through financial remittances, charitable giving, and crisis-response initiatives, they emerge as important resources and actors, not only to their own communities but to broader humanitarian and development efforts (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). This became evident following the earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023. Within hours, the umbrella diaspora network 'Association of German-Syrian Aid Associations' (orig.: Verband Deutsch-Syrischer Hilfsvereine e.V, VDSH) coordinated and communicated response efforts among its 35 members. These members raised funds, supported relief efforts, and dispatched convoys to Syria (DEMAC, 2023). They contributed significantly to the emergency relief efforts, complementing the international response led by the United Nations and its partners. Nonetheless, the contributions of diasporas and diaspora organizations (DO) largely remain unseen on two fronts: firstly, within the framework of German civil society, and secondly, within the humanitarian system (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015).

1.3 Research Question and Relevance

This thesis addresses this issue. The starting premise is that diasporas, both individually and collectively, possess a variety of forms of capital—whether social, cultural, or financial—and utilize it to alleviate the suffering of people in Syria. While there has been enthusiasm in academia and practice over the past few decades regarding diasporas as 'heroes of development,' their role in humanitarianism remains understudied. With a few exceptions, such as the works of Dijkzeul and Sezgin (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015; Sezgin, 2011; Sezgin, 2020; Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020), there has been little systematic research on how diaspora organizations operate and differ from traditional humanitarian actors (THA). This contributes to a lack of understanding and trust between diaspora organizations and the formal humanitarian system. As a result, diasporas are often excluded from coordination mechanisms and fora, and face challenges in accessing funding structures. This thesis aims to contribute to bridging the gap in research and understanding by providing insights into the ways diaspora humanitarians operate and how their approaches may differ from those of traditional humanitarian actors. The research question guiding this work is as follows:

Q: "How does humanitarian assistance led by diasporas differ from humanitarian assistance provided by traditional humanitarian actors?"

The question touches upon different disciplines and thematic fields. Therefore, Chapter 2 initially establishes the theoretical framework, situating diasporas as actors within the discourse of recent decades, particularly in migration studies, and explains how diasporas interact and engage with other stakeholders. Chapter 3 focuses on a specific type of engagement, humanitarianism, and introduces both traditional humanitarianism and diaspora humanitarianism. Subsequently, the methodology adopted for the analysis will be presented. This analysis seeks to address the research question by conducting a qualitative case study that compares the response led by diasporas with the international response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, beginning from the onset of the civil war in 2011. In Chapter 5, the international and diaspora responses to the Syrian crisis will be examined, emphasizing their challenges, including access, the adaptability of both humanitarian approaches to changing conditions, and their adherence to the four humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Their strengths and weaknesses will be assessed through analysis. Afterwards, the findings will be discussed in the context of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, before the thesis concludes in Chapter 7.

By comparing both forms of humanitarianism, I hope to highlight the mutual strengths of both humanitarian approaches. As Svoboda describes the relationship of international organizations and local and diaspora organizations in a panel hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI):

“It’s not a question of who is better [...]. Each has a role to play. The question is how can they both use their comparative advantages in enhancing the humanitarian response and help Syrians in this conflict” (2015).

This thesis aims to shed light on the humanitarian assistance provided by diasporas and their importance within the humanitarian system. It hopes to contribute to mutual understanding and collaboration between both forms of humanitarianism and, by combining their forces, amplify impact.

2. Theoretical Framework

The next two chapters lay the theoretical and conceptual foundation upon which the analysis of Chapter 5 is built.

The topic of diaspora engagement and humanitarianism addressed in this thesis intersects with various thematic areas and disciplines, notably migration studies, humanitarian and development studies, and international relations. The aim of this chapter is to contextualize the topic within existing theoretical debates and literature. Firstly, the Migration-Development Nexus as a framework within the broader migration debate is introduced. It is important to note that, while some scholars argue for bridging the gap between humanitarian and development assistance, they represent two separate discursive and institutional sectors within the international system with distinct rules and goals (Lie, 2020). However, within the context of migration, humanitarian issues often become overshadowed by developmental issues or are sometimes implicated when discussing development. The Migration-Development Nexus, bridging migration and development, has been a starting point for the linkage between migration and humanitarianism, and is therefore relevant in discussing diaspora humanitarianism. The subsequent section of this chapter will conceptualize 'diaspora' and explore diaspora engagement from a transnational standpoint.

2.1 Migration-Development Nexus within Migration Theory

In 2020, international migration reached a record high of 281 million, constituting approximately 3.5 percent of the global population (IOM, 2021). This figure has exhibited a consistent upward trend over the years, reflecting a diverse array of individual migration experiences and pathways. As the circumstances, patterns, and contexts of migration have evolved and expanded, so too have

the perceptions and conceptualizations of international migration in both public discourse and scholarly arenas. Over the past seven decades of the post-war era in Europe, the phenomenon of international migration and its impact on development has undergone significant paradigm shifts. To illustrate this shift, De Haas (2012) categorizes views on migration into two broad, contrasting groups: developmentalist pessimism and optimism. In the early stages of migration research, up until the 1970s, optimistic views rooted in Neo-Classical and Developmentalist Theory dominated the discourse. The developmentalist theory, which gained prominence during the decolonization wave after World War II, suggested that freshly decolonized countries could achieve industrialization through large-scale capital transfers, such as aid, loans, and remittances. In this context, remittances received increased attention, and their positive effects on the sending country's economy, communities, households, and individuals became increasingly acknowledged. Remittances were not only seen as a vital source of foreign currency but were also expected to enhance income distribution and the quality of life for the recipients (Havolli, 2009). Similarly, in neoclassical theory, migration was viewed as a redistributive and equalizing force. This perspective argued that through the efficient allocation of labor resources, migration would lead to "balanced growth." The underlying premise was that individuals, acting as rational-choice actors, migrated from areas with labor surpluses to areas with labor shortages, both within and across borders, to maximize their wages and economic prospects (De Haas, 2012). The success and prominence of neo-classical theory in the 1950s and 1960s can be attributed to the fact that many of the theory's assumptions were validated in the context of Northwestern Europe. The region greatly benefited from labor migrants and guest workers during its reconstruction and industrial expansion. While these migrants helped offset labor deficits and rebuild and modernize European economies, they also improved living standards in the sending regions through rising wages, capital transfers, and the return of individuals with enhanced skills (King & Collyer, 2016).

However, developmentalist optimism began to wane in the 1970s, as empirical studies revealed that the long-term impacts on the development of sending regions fell short of the initially assumed success. In fact, critical voices challenged the arguments presented by neo-classical and developmentalist theory, suggesting that instead of stimulating development, migration might actually increase spatial differences and lead to underdevelopment by depriving poor countries of their scarce skilled and professional labor resources—a phenomenon often referred to as "brain drain" (Docquier & Veljanoska, 2022).

During the 1980s and 1990s, academic scholarship increasingly adopted a pluralistic approach that recognized the varied and non-deterministic nature of migration's impacts on development, encompassing both negative and positive effects (Afsal & Reshmi, 2023). In the course of this paradigm shift, The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) approach gained prominence,

emphasizing the multifaceted nature of migration decisions and their outcomes. In contrast to neo-classical theory's focus on individuals, NELM considers households as the central decision-making unit. According to NELM, households may choose to send family members to work in other regions or countries as a means to diversify their sources of income. Thus, migration and the remittances it generates serve as a self-insurance strategy for households against risks and economic uncertainties (De Haas, 2021). The NELM approach sparked enthusiasm for remittances as a key driver of economic development and poverty reduction. Beyond academic scholarship, governments and international organizations swiftly recognized the positive impacts of remittances. A testament to this recognition is the World Bank's Global Development Finance Report of 2003, which declared that migrant remittances to their countries of origin far exceeded global development aid payments (Stielike, 2017).

Since then, the enthusiasm has not waned, leading to a research boom in the links between migration and development. This convergence of policy fields, which had long existed separately, culminated in the development of the migration-development framework, gradually gaining recognition among all stakeholders since the beginning of the new millennium. Within the Migration-Development Nexus, a new actor has emerged that has since garnered considerable attention from governments, international organizations, and academia: the diaspora.

2.2 Diaspora in the Transnational Context

This section aims to conceptualize diaspora by first providing a definition and subsequently situating diasporas within a transnational framework. This involves exploring the various relationships and modes of engagement through which diasporas interact with and are influenced by their transnational contexts.

2.2.1 Defining “Diaspora”

The word ‘diaspora’ has its origin in Ancient Greece and translates to ‘a scattering’ or ‘dispersion.’ In its original use, it referred to the dispersion of Jewish people from their homeland. Over time, the term has been applied to similar experiences of other peoples who have been forced to leave their homelands and were unable to return (Nieswand, 2021). Today, as the term gains greater popularity, it has given rise to many competing definitions and a stretching of the concept, with “diaspora” being used as a metaphor for immigrant populations, ethnic minorities or transnational

social formations (Brubaker, 2005). Most definitions no longer conceptualize diaspora based on specific peoples, ethnicities, or the circumstances of migration. Typically, the term describes a „group of migrants and their descendants who maintain transnational ties and a sense of belonging to a real or imagined homeland” (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020, p. 5). Definitions of 'diasporas' encompass not only first-generation emigrants but also foreign-born descendants of these individuals, provided they maintain some connection to their parent’s home country. These connections, be they cultural, linguistic, historical, religious, or emotional, are what differentiate diaspora groups from other communities (Cohen, 2022).

2.2.2 Engaging Diaspora

With the recognition of the skills and resources of diaspora, different stakeholder began developing programs and policies to effectively harness their potential. Tölölyan (2012), along with other scholars in the field of diaspora studies, critiques what they term as the ‘politicization of diasporas’ (p. 12) and the instrumentalization of diasporans by different actors to serve their own agendas. According to Cohen (2022), diasporas establish relationships that extend in diverse directions, involving interactions with home governments, host governments, and international agencies. Within this framework, diasporas engage with stakeholders in a transnational context. This section will introduce theoretical concepts of transnationalism and subsequently explore the various modes of diaspora engagement.

2.2.2.1 Transnational Perspective

While scholars have used the term ‘transnationalism’ already in the first half of the 20th century (Bourne, 1916), it was only in the 1990s that it became a popular concept (Quayson & Daswani, 2013). The popularity of the transnational perspective can be primarily attributed to the rapid increase in globalization processes, with transnationalism regarded as an integral component of this global interconnectedness. According to Schiller et al. (1992b, 1-2), "Transnationalism, in general, has to do with change, movement, and flows. It involves the dissolution of conventional territorial boundaries and the construction of new social, political, and economic practices." Therefore, the transnational perspective focuses on transnational activities and their theoretical implications. Schiller et al. (1992) whose work has been described as a manifesto in transnationalism, concentrate on transmigration as one key transnational process. Kearney (1991) and Rouse (1991) also

highlighted that migration is one of the important means through which borders and boundaries are challenged and crossed. By introducing the notion of ‘transmigrants,’ referring to immigrants whose lives are characterized by interconnections across international borders, and whose identities are constructed with reference to more than one nation-state, they challenge prevailing assumptions about immigrants made by scholars, experts, the media and the general public (Schiller et al., 1992).

Traditional research perspectives in the field of migration studies that transnationalism prompts to reconsider and revise include assimilationist models of migrant integration, as well as the modernist political constructs of the nation-state and citizenship, which will be discussed in the context of the relationship between host country and diaspora. Another assumption that the transnational perspective challenges is the simplistic model of linear migration. While migrant trajectories are often assumed as one-way mobilities that end with the settlement in the country of destination, most cross-border migrations are cyclical and involve return. The concept of the refugee cycle, for example, suggests that there are three stages of mobility – pre-flight, flight, temporary settlement and resettlement. This means that individuals may frequently return or relocate. Hammond (2015) terms those returnees, who come and go, as “part-time diaspora” or “revolving returnees” (p. 46). The reality of migrants returning to their home country has been neglected in brain drain theories.

2.2.2.2 Home Country and Diaspora

Ideas of transnational theory have significantly changed the attitudes of governments towards their populations abroad. For a long time, home countries have not shown support or interest in their populations abroad. This stance is in line with interpretations of social contract theory which stress that governments have a contractual obligation to protect the rights and interests of their citizens within their territorial boundaries. From this perspective, governments have limited to no responsibility of their populations abroad. As they did not perceive it as their obligation, nor did they anticipate any returns or benefits, many governments were unwilling to invest resources in their diasporas. For instance, upon India's independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared that India would not maintain an interest in the fate of overseas Indians and suggested that they should obtain citizenship in their host countries (Cohen, 2022). Beginning in the 1960s, as India witnessed the departure of its skilled workforce, commonly referred to as the ‘brain drain’, the initial stance of indifference gave way to growing resentment (Chatterjee, 2022). Emigrants were increasingly perceived as disloyal for what was seen as abandoning their home country. This sentiment was not solely driven by economic considerations but was also influenced by political

factors. Particularly during the Cold War, those who left were labeled as defectors, and authoritarian states sought to restrict cross-border mobility and prevent emigration at any cost (Tsourapas, 2020). The erection of the Berlin Wall serves as a prominent example as it did not only demonstrate the ideological divide between East and West but also made clear which measures governments were willing to take in order to prevent emigration. In many countries, the attitude toward the diaspora and the ways of interaction underwent almost a 180-degree change towards the end of the century. With the 'remittance boom' in the 1990s, governments began recognizing the role that diasporas played in the economic development of their home country. Due to the paradigm shift, referred to as 'transnational turn', governments moved from a stance of indifference and resentment to suddenly declaring an interest in the fate of their diasporas. They recognized the multifaceted contributions of diasporas as remittance-senders, investors in critical industries and key supporters of tourism and philanthropic initiatives (Agunias & Newland, 2015).

Gamlen (2014, p. 181) described this shift in discourse and perception as follows:

“Émigré groups once spurned by their homeland governments as defectors are now honored as national heroes, bestowed with awards, and celebrated in national congresses and holidays. These and other government initiatives to engage diasporas are becoming a regular feature of twenty-first century political life.”

Seeking to benefit from the resources in capital, knowledge, and networks of their diaspora communities overseas, governments began establishing formal diaspora units, sub-departments or departments of state to engage with 'their' populations abroad (Cohen, 2022). Such departments have existed long before, but the increase in their numbers and institutionalization beginning in the 1990s marks a significant milestone in the engagement between home governments and diasporas, despite variations in the levels and types of diaspora units. In 2012, a survey conducted among states involved in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) identified 400 institutions in 56 nations directly involved in engaging diasporas through diverse programs and policies (Agunias & Newland, 2015). Gamlen (2019, p. 9–15) identified two common explanations for the emergence of diaspora institutions which he names 'tapping', referring to states' pursuit of material resources and 'embracing' which describes the efforts of re-incorporating 'lost' members of the nation. When 'tapping' diaspora resources, home governments aim to capitalize on the social and economic capital held by their diasporas, to secure and direct remittance income, investment funds, philanthropic donations, and tourist income. The involvement of diasporas in the national development of their countries of origin is a key facet of diaspora engagement, giving rise to the perception of diasporas as the 'champions of development.' Gamlen's concept of embracing constitutes another significant aspect of diaspora engagement. It involves the act of claiming or

reclaiming co-ethnics abroad as integral parts of the extended nation. A prime example of where this notion is expressed is the statement of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi who said that Mother India would embrace her population abroad as long-lost children. Unlike tapping, embracing is driven and characterized rather by ideas and identities than by material interests. States seek to foster friendly cross-border networks and strengthen cultural ties and national identity of their populations abroad. One way of encouraging a continuing sense of belonging or also referred to as 'long-distance nationalism' (Skrbiš, 2017), is to offer dual citizenship or special voting rights for expatriates. Citizenship is seen as more than just a legal status, it is also regarded as a cultural classification (Quayson & Daswani, 2013). For instance, India's prime minister Modi introduced the Overseas Indian Card in 2014 which establishes a new category of belonging while not providing any political rights (Raj, 2015). With embracing its emigrants, states may pursue different objectives. Firstly, fostering friendly relations with diasporas can aid to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, language, and traditions (Liu, 2015). Secondly, states may seek to mobilize their diasporas for political purposes, either by rallying support for elections - in the case of voting rights of the diaspora - or by using diasporas as a tool to further foreign policy objectives abroad. For instance, Chinese diaspora members are seen as cultural and educational ambassadors which can help reshape public perceptions at the grassroots level. In order for overseas citizens to disseminate and reinforce Beijing's narrative, officials, especially from the Qiaoban (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office), are visiting Chinese communities abroad emphasizing the Taiwan issue and the overarching theme of national unification. This mobilization aligns with broader overseas propaganda campaigns orchestrated by the Chinese government, aiming to reclaim dominance in global narratives, defend policies, and counteract critics (Liu, 2015).

It should be noted, however, that governments' attempts to co-opt certain groups and individuals to act in their interests, will not necessarily be successful. In certain cases, diasporas may have evaded the regime. Instead of supporting it from abroad, they may aspire to replace it. Governments should, therefore, not assume unquestioning loyalty from diasporas (Cohen, 2022). Similarly, it is not always the case that home governments seek to establish friendly relations with populations abroad. Instead, origin state may attempt to maintain control and exert oppression over emigre communities. According to Tsourapas (2020), this is particularly the case for authoritarian emigration states as there is a correlation between authoritarian emigration states' diaspora policies and repressive policies within the borders of the nation state. Authoritarian states may, for instance, monitor diaspora communities and exert violence on dissenters abroad through their embassy and consular staff. These entities are therefore sometimes referred to as the 'extended arm of the state'. Tsourapas notes that it is widely acknowledged that members of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate (orig.: Idarat al-Mukhabarat al-Jawiyya) are stationed in every Syrian embassy or

consulate to conduct surveillance on citizens abroad. In the past, several cases have occurred in which violence was exerted on dissidents living abroad which demonstrate Tsourapas' claim that repressive policies do not stop at the country's borders. Arguably, one of the most prominent cases is that of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian journalist and Washington Post columnist, who was murdered inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018 (BBC News, 2021). Another example is the story of the wife of exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Banan al-Tantawi, who was assassinated, allegedly mandated by the Syrian government, in her home in Aachen, Germany (Tsourapas, 2020). As for the Syrian diaspora community, the number of reports of intimidation and harassment have increased since the civil war started.

2.2.2.3 Host Country and Diaspora

The emergence and growth of self-identified and acknowledged diasporas in host countries during the 1980s and 1990s led to apprehension among Western scholars and commentators. This stance became evident across different regions, despite differences in size and backgrounds of diaspora communities. In the United States, the anti-immigration movement drew upon numerous arguments articulated by political scientist Samuel Huntington. In his book "The Clash of Civilizations" (1996) he posits that cultural differences between civilizations would serve as a significant source of conflict in the post-Cold War era. According to Huntington, this clash may occur internationally as well as within nations, particularly concerning diasporas whose religious and cultural identities will ultimately create tension with the host society. Diasporas were therefore seen as agents of conflict.

Huntington specifically foresaw conflicts with the Islamic civilization, which he saw as fundamentally different from Western culture. Following the events of 9/11, his thesis gained prominence as scholars and policymakers deliberated on the relationship between Islam and the West. There was concern that discontented and isolated segments within Muslim communities in the West might lean towards adopting radical forms of political Islam (Cohen, 2022). Despite widespread islamophobia and xenophobia, optimism emerged in some liberal democracies regarding the possibility of constructing a functional and just multicultural society while still acknowledging and respecting heritage identities. Even though the contributions of diasporas to the host society were perceived as limited - within this context, they were still predominantly regarded as passive recipients of aid - diasporic agency and the impact on the development in home countries was increasingly recognized (Olliff, 2022). Initially, the role of host governments in this diaspora-driven development was overlooked as the diaspora-development nexus is commonly framed as a dyadic

relationship between developing countries and their diaspora. Over time, host countries started to perceive themselves as significant stakeholders in the institutional landscape capable of shaping conditions to maximize the impact of diaspora-driven development (Agunias & Newland, 2015). They increasingly harnessed the skills, capacity, and commitment of diasporas to their countries of origin, usually as part of their foreign policy strategy. The UK's Department for International Development (DfID), for example, made a commitment in 1997 to "build on the skills and talents of migrants and other ethnic minorities within the UK to promote the development of their countries of origin" (DfID, 1997, p. 68). In report in 2002, the US development agency USAID attributed the then estimated \$18 billion of remittances to US foreign assistance (Brinkerhoff, 2011). In doing so, the United States were the first country of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) officially claiming diasporic activities as foreign assistance. By now, it has become a common practice for governments in the Global North to include diasporas in their national development strategies. Commissioned by the German ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German development agency GIZ is currently running two programmes, "Migration & Diapora" and "Shaping migration for development" (org.: Migration entwicklungspolitisch gestalten). These programs are designed to encourage individuals with migration backgrounds in Germany to actively participate in sustainable social and economic development efforts in various partner countries. BMZ and GIZ have also established the website Diaspora2030, where information is provided for individuals with migration backgrounds who wish to engage. Although the engagement of the diaspora implies a positive development in the relationship between host countries and diasporas, it should be noted that xenophobic sentiments persist in countries hosting diasporas. For example, in Germany in 2024, the investigative outlet The Correctiv reported that politicians from the far-right AfD and neo-Nazis met plan deportations of people with a non-German ethnic background, including citizens (Vock, 2024).

2.2.2.4 International Agencies and Diasporas

Besides governments, international agencies also began launching diverse initiatives and strategies to mobilize social, financial, and cultural resources of diasporas. As one of the first international organizations to do so, the IOM implemented a Diaspora Engagement strategy with the aim of enabling, engaging, and empowering transnational communities. In 2019, the European Union's Directorate-General for International Partnerships established the European Union Global Diaspora Facility, aimed at connecting potential funders with diaspora organizations across numerous countries. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs), predominantly those dedicated to refugee protection, have also begun implementing diaspora programs. In 2010, the

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) initiated a Diaspora Programme, aimed at engaging and supporting diaspora communities as civil society actors. The DRC also hosts the Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination (DEMAC) initiative, established in 2015 and funded by USAID. DEMAC (n.d.) states that its mission is to ““increase engagement, visibility, and recognition for diaspora organizations within the humanitarian system””.

3. Literature Review: Humanitarianism(s)

Humanitarianism is a broad concept which has been evolving over time rather than being a fixed entity. Olliff (2018) describes humanitarianism as an ethos or ‘cluster of sentiments’ that places value on human beings and compels action in response to human suffering. The suffix ‘ism’ embodies a whole set of beliefs, practices, categories, discourses, and procedures that, although flexible and apt to change quickly, are recognizable as ‘humanitarian’ (De Lauri & Lauri, 2020). Some authors stress the distinction between humanitarianism and humanitarian aid, the former representing a belief in the equal value of every human life, while the latter describes the formalized system involving governments, agencies, and organizations (Aloudat and Khan, 2021). Nevertheless, both terms are frequently used interchangeably. Humanitarian assistance, action or aid is generally referring to activities guided by beliefs of humanitarianism. However, a comprehensive and generally accepted legal definition of ‘humanitarian action’ has never been formulated (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). One approach to define humanitarian action is in operational terms focusing on the types of activities carried out - mainly assistance and protection in times of natural and man-made disasters, such as conflict, epidemics or famines. It normally encompasses food, shelter, medicine and occasionally clothing. Additionally, an integral component of humanitarian action includes interventions related to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), which aim to ensure access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene promotion to prevent the spread of diseases and uphold public health in crisis-stricken regions. Nowadays, cash transfers are partially supplementing or replacing these traditional aid commodities (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015).

The physical and metaphorical space in which humanitarian actors operate and provide assistance without hindrance is referred to as ‘humanitarian space’. This concept refers to geographical areas, including refugee camps or humanitarian corridors, as well as the social, political and legal environments for humanitarian actors to operate safely (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010). While the existence of such room of maneuver for humanitarians is crucial for accessing and assisting populations in need, the humanitarian space is subject to many challenges, including restrictions

imposed by state authorities, security threats, and the presence of other non-state actors (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010). Consequently, it is not a static space but a fragile entity that needs to be constantly re-negotiated. Due to the constant renegotiation, humanitarian spaces appear increasingly localized and fragmented. Kool et al. (2021) therefore suggest that the humanitarian space is reconfigured into humanitarian micro-spaces which they describe as “fluid, dynamic and overlapping arenas of relief, constantly challenged, and morphed by different actors” (p. 1489). The reality shows that the effectiveness of humanitarian spaces is very limited, with safe havens frequently becoming militarized and imposed restrictions. Nevertheless, the existence of a humanitarian space where principled aid occurs remains an aspiration of humanitarian assistance (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010).

However, interpretations of what humanitarian action is have broadened and moved beyond the provision of emergency relief in case of war and natural or technical disasters. The scope has expanded from merely saving lives to improving the quality of life for individuals.

In this wider sense, humanitarian action becomes part of the domain of social welfare, such as development in general, the environment, peace and human rights (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). The wide range of humanitarian organizations, each with their own distinct focuses and operational domains, poses challenges in categorizing and delineating humanitarian work, thereby making it difficult to define solely based on their activities. Beyond this approach, humanitarian action can also be characterized by the regulatory framework and normative principles within which it operates. Belloni (2007) emphasizes the importance of understanding humanitarianism not just as actions, but also as a manifestation of the norms and values embraced by humanitarians.

The rule-book of humanitarian action includes the four core humanitarian principles humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality, which will be explained in more detail in section 3.1.2. Derived from international humanitarian law, they were developed by the ICRC and are argued to provide the foundation for humanitarian action. Combining both approaches, the ICRC defines humanitarian actions as “involving both assistance and protection in times of man-made and natural disasters and governed by the aspirational four core humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence” (DEMAC, 2016, p. 10)

However, both approaches to defining humanitarian actions encounter limitations and are increasingly contested. While they may have been applicable during their emergence, the practice, principles, and actors involved in humanitarianism have undergone significant changes over the past decades. New challenges, such as population growth, climate change, environmental deterioration, economic inequality have created new emergencies, conflicts and disasters (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). In order to address these, the humanitarian system needed to transform and adapt. Not only has humanitarian action increased in scale and scope, the humanitarian field itself has changed as well

with increasing levels of institutionalization and professionalizing as well as new humanitarian actors entering the field (Barnett, 2011). These emerging actors may have different motivations, aims, activities and levels of commitment to the traditional humanitarian principles. With this new diversity of actors who follow their own approaches, the humanitarian system is fragmenting (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). Barnett (2011) goes further saying "We live in a world of humanitarianisms, not humanitarianism"(p. 10). There is 'traditional humanitarianism' as Sezgin and Dijkzeul (2015) call it, which involves few, large and mainly well-financed institutional actors headquartered in Europe and North America. These organizations which share a very similar history and genealogy constitute the visible face of humanitarianism (Olliff, 2022). They dominate international fora and discussions, coordination efforts, advocacy initiatives, fundraising appeals, and media coverage (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). In the shadow of traditional humanitarianism, there is a new group of humanitarian actors evolving, often referred to as 'non-traditional', 'new' or 'emergent' humanitarians. These actors include Faith-based organizations, diaspora organizations, private military and security companies (PMSCs) and multi-mandate organizations. While playing a crucial role in humanitarian crises, the work of these actors often goes unnoticed in statistics and they are not being perceived as equal parts of the humanitarian system. The position and perception of non-traditional humanitarian actors are, among other factors, influenced by a lack of systematic analysis, research and hence, a lack of understanding of the aims and activities of these new actors.

The next chapter seeks to shed light on this. It will introduce both humanitarianisms, traditional humanitarianism on the one hand and diaspora humanitarianism, as one form of non-traditional humanitarianism on the other hand. It will examine the key actors involved, their origins, development, and operational methods of both forms of humanitarianism. While the chapter's structure may imply a binary opposition between these two groups, it is important to acknowledge that there are differences, as well as there are similarities between both groups. The same holds true for the homogeneity within each group. To sum it up in Barnett's words: "all humanitarians share a desire to relieve unnecessary suffering, but agreement ends there" (2011, p. 221).

3.1 Traditional Humanitarianism

Traditional or classical humanitarianism has long been regarded as the standard form of humanitarian action, often synonymous with the concept of humanitarianism itself. However, in recent years, the landscape of humanitarian action has evolved, giving rise to alternative and new forms of humanitarianism. As a result, the terms 'classical' and 'traditional' have emerged to distinguish this original approach from newer paradigms. Traditional humanitarianism is

characterized, on one hand, by the foundational ideas and paradigms that have shaped the early stages of humanitarian action and have remained pivotal and central throughout various transformations. On the other hand, it refers to the institutions and humanitarian actors that form the (traditional) humanitarian system. This section will provide a historical overview of the origins, fundamental principles, and evolution of (traditional) humanitarianism. Then, the institutional landscape will be presented, delineating the organizations that comprise the traditional system.

3.1.1 Origin

There is no simple history of humanitarianism but many strands that woven together form the broader picture of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism, in its broader sense encompassing charitable imperatives and actions rooted in major religions and cultures, has a longstanding history. However, the institutionalization of humanitarian action is typically pinpointed to the 19th century with the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 and the first Geneva Convention in 1864 (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015).

Both establishments were inspired, driven, and partially realized by the Swiss businessman Jean-Henri Dunant, who is therefore regarded as one of the founders of humanitarianism. After witnessing the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in 1859 during the French-Austrian conflict, Dunant wrote a book titled 'A Memory of Solferino'. In this book, he recounts his observations on the battlefield, including the suffering of wounded soldiers left without medical care, the chaos and devastation of war, and the urgent need for humanitarian assistance. Drawing from these experiences, Dunant advocated for two major changes. Firstly, he proposed the creation of national organizations to provide care for the wounded, supported by an international relief society. Furthermore, he advocated for the establishment of international treaties to ensure the neutrality and safeguarding of wounded individuals on the battlefield, as well as for medics and field hospitals (Barnett, 2011). In order to convince European governments to adopt Dunant's proposal, the Geneva Society for Public Welfare formed a five-member committee, with Dunant himself among its members. Initially, some governments expressed resistance and distrust towards the suggestion of establishing national relief societies. For instance, the British argued that their armies were already providing sufficient care for the wounded, the French questioned the competence and reliability of volunteers, and the Prussians followed a different tradition rooted in the Knights Hospitallers. Finally, a consensus was reached and the International Committee of the Red Cross was established in 1863 (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). On the ICRC's initiative, the first of four Geneva Conventions was adopted by initially 12 European governments one year later. This treaty

obliged armies to care for wounded soldiers, whatever side they were on, and introduced a unified emblem for the medical services: a red cross on a white background. Directly following the establishment of the Geneva Convention, the first national societies were founded in Belgium, Denmark, France, Oldenburg, Prussia, Spain, and Württemberg (Walker & Maxwell, 2014).

3.1.2 Humanitarian Principles

The founding members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recognized the importance of adhering to several principles. The fundamental concept, conceived on the battlefield, was “impartial assistance to anyone who is suffering, whether friend or foe” (Blondel, 1991, p. 349). This concept, which formed the ethos of the movement and from which further principles were derived, was expressed in Article 6 of the Geneva Convention of 22 August 1864, mandating the collection and care of wounded or sick combatants regardless of nationality. While these guiding principles were not formally documented, certain ideas were universally acknowledged as integral to the Red Cross ideology (Blondel, 1991). In 1875, Gustave Moynier, the first president of the ICRC, outlined the core principles that he believed should govern the organization's actions. These principles included centralization, foresight, mutuality, and solidarity (Walker & Maxwell, 2014). Centralization, as articulated by Moynier, meant that there could only be one Red Cross Society per country, and its activities must encompass the entire nation. The principle of foresight required societies to be perpetually prepared and make provisions during peacetime for humanitarian efforts in times of war. Mutuality emphasized the readiness to aid all wounded and sick individuals, regardless of nationality, while solidarity mandated cooperation among societies to support one another. These principles, which were rather practical and organic in nature, underwent significant changes over the years. In 1921, when the ICRC revised its Statutes, it set forth a set of Fundamental Principles, namely “impartiality, action independent of any political, religious or economic consideration, the universality of the Red Cross and the equality of its constituent members” (Blondel, 1991, p. 351). The next significant revision was initiated by Jean Pictet, Director of General Affairs at the ICRC, when he outlined 17 principles summarizing the basic reasons that motivate the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Those 17 principles, he divided into two categories, namely fundamental principles and organic principles. Under Fundamental Principles, Pictet identified Humanity, Equality, Due Proportion, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, and Universality. Under Organic Principles, he included Selflessness, Free Service, Voluntary Service, Auxiliarity, Autonomy, Multitudinism, Equality of the National Societies, Unity, Solidarity, and Foresight. Subsequently, the ICRC appointed a small delegation, including Jean Pictet, to draft a proposal of the principles, which

was then discussed with the national organizations of the Red Crosses. Agreement was reached on seven principles, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality, which were finally adopted at the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross in 1965. It's worth noting that although these principles were formally adopted around a century after the movement's inception, they have consistently defined the core of the ICRC's work and have guided its actions throughout this time.

Out of these seven principles, voluntary service, unity and universality are specific to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, whereas the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence have a broader application across the humanitarian sector as a whole. In the next section, these four principles will be explained in more detail.

Humanity

Humanity, also referred to as the "humanitarian imperative," represents the ethical foundation from which other principles are derived. Essentially, it asserts that "Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found" (ICRC, 2020). This principle embodies several meanings. Drawing from Max Huber's reflections, who reinvigorated doctrinal discussions within the Red Cross, his definition of humanity emphasizes the necessity for compassion and sensitivity towards the suffering of others. Humanity entails that suffering must not be met with indifference. Instead, it should be addressed with compassion and assistance should be provided.

Alongside the imperative to address suffering with compassion and provide assistance, it is equally important that such assistance is provided without discrimination. Ultimately, the concept of humanity encapsulates what Dunant observed and criticized on the battlefield of Solferino – namely, that assistance for the wounded should not be contingent on their affiliation with a particular conflict party. The principle of humanity demands universal solidarity and necessitates attention to all of humankind (Blondel, 1991).

Impartiality

The principle of impartiality stresses that humanitarian aid should be driven solely by necessity, free from any form of discrimination or favoritism. According to the ICRC (2020), this principle encompasses three interlinked concepts: non-discrimination, proportionality, and impartiality. Non-discrimination involves providing assistance to those in need irrespective of their nationality, race, religion, social status, political views, or any other factor. Particularly in conflict situations, this can

be challenging as it requires refraining from distinguishing between victims or victimizers. Humanitarian agencies may end up strengthening the oppressors through aid, consequently increasing the suffering of victims (HS Unit, 2001). Proportionality dictates that humanitarian efforts prioritize those with the most urgent needs, while impartiality demands that decisions be based solely on assessing needs, free from personal biases or emotions.

Neutrality

The principle of neutrality is particularly relevant in conflict contexts. It dictates that humanitarian actors should refrain from taking sides in hostilities or becoming involved in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature (Barnett, 2011). This applies to advocacy work and public speeches and statements, too. Humanitarian organizations must maintain a neutral stance in conflicts, even when one party may have strong claims, including legal ones, to international sympathy and support (HS Unit, 2001). Neutrality, closely linked to impartiality, facilitates dialogue with all parties and groups, preventing humanitarian actors from becoming entangled in armed conflict or other forms of violence. Many humanitarian organizations operating in conflict zones recognize the importance of upholding a reputation for neutrality and impartiality, as it fosters trust among all stakeholders and enables more effective intervention during armed conflict or other violent scenarios (ICRC, 2020).

Independence

The principle of independence demands that humanitarian organizations maintain autonomy and freedom to operate without interference from external actors, including governments, political entities, or other organizations (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). This autonomy allows organizations to prioritize humanitarian imperatives and respond based on the most urgent needs of affected populations in accordance with the organization's principles, free from external pressures or influences. Collaborating with armed groups or receiving funds from parties directly involved in conflicts or who have a stake in the outcome, including governments or political groups, can severely compromise the autonomy or integrity of humanitarian actors. However, independence does not imply that organizations must operate in isolation. Instead, it entails upholding transparency and accountability to the affected populations, donors, and other stakeholders (HS Unit, 2001).

These four humanitarian principles are seen as the foundation of humanitarian action and have been almost synonymous with a universal set of humanitarian values (Gordon & Donini, 2015). They carry a normative aspect, serving as an ethical guideline and reflecting shared values of dignity,

integrity, and solidarity. At the same time, they fulfill a pragmatic function. Adherence to the four principles is intended to ensure both the safety of humanitarian staff and access to affected populations, whether in the context of a natural disaster or a complex emergency, such as armed conflict. According to Hilhorst and Jansen (2010), compliance with these principles is essential for establishing and preserving the humanitarian space. The commitment to the principles distinguishes humanitarian action from its politicized surroundings and aims to shield relief efforts from becoming entangled in conflicts. If aid organizations are seen as favoring one side, aligned with the opposing faction, or having a stake in the conflict's outcome, gaining access becomes challenging, and they risk becoming targets (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Lastly, they are seen as central for establishing credibility, gaining acceptance from local populations and building trust (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015).

While originally developed by the ICRC, the humanitarian principles are widely recognized by organizations within the humanitarian system and serve as the common ground for action within this system. Acknowledging its dynamic and complex nature, in a report by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) the formal humanitarian system is broadly defined as "the network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian action is undertaken when local and national resources are, on their own, insufficient to meet the needs of a population in crisis" (2022, p. 26). The entities within this network are operationally or financially linked and share common overarching goals, norms, and principles. As of 2021, this network comprised approximately 5,000 organizations categorized by Walker and Maxwell (2014) into four main groups. The first category subsets of the aid structures of individual countries. For instance, USAID represents the United States government entity responsible for financing and executing international development and humanitarian initiatives. The second classification consists of multilateral organizations, often agencies of the United Nations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) or UNICEF. The third category comprises organizations affiliated with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which includes, as of 2023, 191 national Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, along with a Federation that unites them, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The fourth category encompasses structured groups of private citizens, either community-based organizations (CBOs), typically originating from crisis-affected communities, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which frequently operate externally but aim to aid those impacted by crises. Expanding on Barnett's (2011) concept of the "humanitarian order" (p. 21), Fassin (2011) introduces the idea of a "hierarchy of humanity," which implies inequalities within the humanitarian system. Fassin distinguishes between two groups: those whose expatriate status safeguards the sanctity of their lives, and those who lack this protection,

specifically local and national staff, aligning with the fourth category outlined by Walker and Maxwell (2014).

While many actors within the formal humanitarian system are well-established organizations, the system itself has been dynamic and volatile. Over the past century, the humanitarian order, its actors and the principles guiding their work have been constantly evolving, adapting and responding to challenges.

3.1.3 Three Stages of humanitarianism

The following section gives an overview of the emergence and evolution of the institutional landscape. The structure will follow Barnett's division of the evolution of humanitarian action into three phases. These "three ages of humanitarianism" (Barnett, 2011, p. 9) present distinctive environments in which humanitarians have operated, show different trends, tensions and ethics. Due to the limited scope, the relevant actors within the humanitarian field will not be presented in detail.

3.1.3.1 *Imperial Humanitarianism*

Barnett (2011) dates the phase of imperial humanitarianism from the late eighteenth century, starting with the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Conventions, to World War II. While the discourse around humanitarianism emphasized humane values, such as compassion, equality and solidarity, it also embraced paternalistic ideologies intertwined with Christianity, colonialism, and commerce. Based on an assumed superiority, the "civilized" populations saw it as their moral obligation to intervene and alleviate suffering. Missionaries spearheaded numerous humanitarian initiatives, including the promotion of education, healthcare, and disaster relief efforts (Stamatov, 2020). Although not formally affiliated with any religious institution, the ICRC's humanitarian efforts were guided by the belief that Christianity and Western values defined the core principles of the international community. Embracing a Eurocentric view of the world, the ICRC initially restricted membership to European states, assuming that only they could fully understand and adhere to the laws of war (Barnett, 2011).

Prior to the outbreak of World War I, the ICRC and Red Cross societies had dominated the field of humanitarian action in war (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). The unprecedented scale of destruction in World War I led to an increased workload for the ICRC, as it expanded its activities to provide

medical relief and aid to prisoners of war. This substantial relief effort highlighted the urgent need for a formalized philanthropic and aid sector. Private voluntary agencies began to in size and evolve into permanent organizations, complete with staff, regulations, procedures, and central headquarters, and new organizations, including Save the Children, were established. World War I also marked a transition of monopoly from private to public entities. Until this point, the majority of humanitarian efforts took place beyond formal governance structures, including the work of the ICRC which falls in the space between a private relief agency and a public international organization. However, the commitment of state-affiliated agencies to humanitarian principles, specifically impartiality was questioned. For example, relief organizations based in the United Kingdom and the United States primarily focused on aiding their allies. Allegedly, the American Relief Administration deliberately neglected Germans, despite being aware that a significant percentage of German children suffered from malnutrition. In this context, Save the Children's insistence that postwar British relief should extend to all children, including Germans, was both controversial and courageous (Barnett, 2011). In addition to state-affiliated agencies, the First World War also saw the emergence of multilateral initiatives such as the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR), the International Relief Union (IRU), and the League of Red Cross Societies, which later renamed itself the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1991. Many developments that began during World War I continued into World War II, marking the onset of a new era in humanitarianism.

3.1.3.2 Neo-Humanitarianism

Following the Second World War, significant changes took place in the humanitarian sector; it grew significantly and evolved into a more planning-oriented, global network organized around principles of humanity.

Partly due to the war's duration and protracted nature, aid agencies began to professionalize (Barnett, 2011). Prior to World War II, these agencies operated on an ad-hoc basis, improvising and experimenting to address emergencies. However, during and after the war, they adopted a more permanent, quasi-bureaucratic structure. New organizations emerged during this period, with the UN system asserting itself as a key player in humanitarian work (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). This involvement began before the formal establishment of the United Nations, notably with the creation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) by the Allied powers in 1943. The UNRRA's main goal was to provide assistance to civilians from Allied nations and displaced persons in liberated states. Despite the dissolution of the UNRRA, it paved the way

for the establishment of various UN agencies engaged in humanitarian activities, including UNICEF in 1946, the World Health Organization in 1948, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950. Additionally, the post-World War II era witnessed a rapid increase in the involvement of non-governmental organizations across various policy areas. Examples include CARE, originally the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, founded in 1945, which provided emergency relief to war-torn Europe after World War II. Similarly, Oxfam, initially the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, established in 1942, offered aid to famine-stricken Greece during the war. In addition to professionalizing, organizations also broadened the scope of their work as they extended relief to newly decolonized populations. The intersection of the Cold War and decolonization gave rise to new conflict dynamics in the Global South, leading to a surge in conflicts, crises, and humanitarian needs. As humanitarian efforts globalized, aid agencies increasingly adopted the language of impartiality and prioritized aid based on need rather than giving to one's own. Organizations that previously engaged in identity-based politics and selective assistance now adhered to a policy of impartiality. The shift towards importance of principled aid is also illustrated by the fact that the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality became formal and integral aspects of international humanitarian law in 1949. A distinction was drawn between politics and humanitarianism, with numerous relief agencies highlighting their efforts as apolitical. Aid organizations also steered clear of engaging in human rights issues to avoid potential backlash and maintain their reputation for neutrality.

For those involved in emergency relief work, it was more feasible to remain detached from political affairs compared to organizations aiming to address the root causes of suffering, which Barnett (2011) identifies as "alchemical agencies" (p. 10). The latter often found themselves entangled in political affairs, prompting many to evolve into development organizations. As development agencies, they were no longer bound by the strict principles of impartiality and neutrality.

While this phase witnessed an increasing commitment to humanitarian principles, both in speech and intent, the actual implementation of the humanitarian principles remained questionable. Many aid agencies, supported financially by governments, were viewed by affected populations not as impartial entities but rather as representatives advancing the foreign policy interests of those governments. During the Cold War, this trend became more pronounced as countries either aligned themselves with one bloc or were courted by the superpowers. Consequently, aid agencies backed by national governments found it difficult to operate without being drawn into the ongoing geopolitical rivalry.

While these circumstances had already raised doubts about the full implementation of principled aid, Hoffman and Weiss (2017) identified the Nigerian Civil War from 1967–1970 as the turning

point for a new type of humanitarian response. The Civil War led to the secession of the Biafra region, where the central government denied access to aid organizations, resulting in a famine. The challenging decision—whether to maintain neutrality and respect sovereignty or to assist the victims in Biafra—created a division within the humanitarian community. While some UN agencies, such as the UNHCR, avoided involvement in the conflict, others, like Oxfam, went beyond neutrality and provided assistance to those oppressed in Biafra. After extensive debates within the Red Cross, the French Red Cross made the decision to deploy fifty doctors. Among them was Bernard Kouchner, who, due to his disagreement with the Red Cross's principle of neutrality, later left the organization and founded the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 1971. In contrast to the ICRC and longstanding practices, MSF explicitly takes sides, advocating on behalf of the victims. Later, Kouchner wrote: " By keeping silent, we doctors were accomplices in the systematic massacre of the population" (Leebaw, 2007, p. 227) and argued for an interpretation of humanitarian principles that is context-specific rather than universally dogmatic. In a short period of time, MSF's approach gained considerable attention and exposed tensions, leading to divisions within humanitarian culture and contributing to the 'identity crisis of humanitarianism' in the 1990s.

3.1.3.2 Liberal Humanitarianism

The post-cold war era saw a series of "new wars" with different characteristics than those that had initially shaped the humanitarian system and that the system was designed to address. The conflicts in northern Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo diverged from traditional patterns, challenging established principles and demanding a transformation of the system (Hoffman & Weiss, 2017). The debate surrounding the universality of humanitarian principles, reignited by events such as Biafra and the establishment of MSF, was revisited. Within the post-Cold War context, strict adherence to these principles presented operational and ethical dilemmas for humanitarian organizations. In those conflicts which were characterized by dynamic and complex interplay of political, military and legal actors, the humanitarian guidelines no longer guaranteed access and safety (Kool et al., 2021). While the ICRC's emblem traditionally offered protection, by the 1990s it often made aid workers targets. In response, various rules prohibiting violence against humanitarian personnel were adopted, along with Security Council resolutions advocating for their safety, and the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. However, their effectiveness was minimal, as aid workers were frequently subjected to attacks (Hoffman & Weiss, 2017). Furthermore, the customary approach of neutrality, impartiality, and independence fell short in gaining access to affected populations in many situations. The methods used for delivering aid

were perceived as provocative or intrusive by belligerents, intermediaries, and occasionally local communities. In order to maintain operational capacity and reach those in need, it was deemed necessary to engage in political negotiations with specific local actors on the ground, thus compromising the principle of neutrality (Kool et al., 2021). This was especially crucial in situations characterized by rapidly shifting power dynamics or where the government lacked sovereign control or denied access to its territory.

However, there was another method to establish humanitarian space: the use of military force. While collaborating with militarized actors could facilitate relief efforts and enhance safety, it came with its own challenges often leading to heightened security risks and casualties. Furthermore, it compromised the principles of independence and neutrality, as humanitarian actors risk becoming entangled with military agendas and may be perceived as aligning with conflicting parties. Despite these trade-offs, military means were increasingly integrated in humanitarian activities from the 1990s onwards. This was further encouraged by the establishment of numerous war crime tribunals and other transitional justice mechanisms. Humanitarian interventions, too, became much more common in the post-Cold War era. Hoffman and Weiss (2017) argue that the growing securitization of humanitarian affairs stems from the legacy of the Cold War. With the decline of Cold War tensions, a new era of international collaboration emerged. This period facilitated political agreements, strengthened the United Nations, particularly its Security Council, and reaffirmed its role in maintaining global peace and security. The integration of security and military involvement with humanitarian actions was further deepened by the events of 9/11 and subsequent counterterrorism measures.

Apart from the operational challenges associated with a strict interpretation rather than a pragmatic approach to the principles, many agencies faced ethical dilemmas. It was argued that in the context of genocides, civil wars, and other atrocities, the principles no longer guaranteed ethical conduct but rather hindered it. To explicitly refrain from remaining neutral in the face of human rights violations and to address the causes of suffering by denouncing and changing these structures became increasingly recognized as a moral requirement (HS Unit, 2001). Neutrality as a humanitarian value remained central, yet the discourse surrounding its practical implementation and the extent to which it can and should be universally applied evolved. For instance, the ICRC was criticized for when it refrained from speaking out during the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany, and accused of misinterpreting neutrality and legitimizing the Nazi regime (Hoffman & Weiss, 2017). Furthermore, neutrality has faced criticism for allowing humanitarian organizations to evade accountability, thereby enabling them to ignore the political implications of their actions. The varying perspectives on the importance and enforceability of humanitarian principles created a cultural and ethical divide, which had already begun with the foundation of MSF, between

classicists—those supporting neutrality, impartiality, independence, and consent—and solidarists—those aligning with the victims. In general, the post-Cold War period saw aid and aid agencies becoming increasingly politicized. However, Barnett (2011) argues that aid agencies had not pledged to be apolitical before the 1990s, as they had always been entangled with politics in some form or another.

One issue that intensified during the Cold War, presenting both operational and ethical dilemmas, is what Lichtenheld (2014) defines as the aid diversion dilemma. This involves the restriction or diversion of humanitarian aid by government officials, rebel groups, and other political actors hindering aid from reaching affected populations. The refusal of access can manifest in various ways, ranging from routine bureaucratic hindrances to appalling assaults targeting civilians seeking refuge and aid workers. In Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban has prohibited the World Health Organization and International Committee of the Red Cross from operating in vital regions, despite millions of people requiring humanitarian aid. Governments and non-state actors in Syria, South Sudan, and Myanmar employ siege, starvation, and obstruction as military and political tactics. While the act of denying access is not a recent development, it has transformed from an unintended outcome of conflict to a deliberate tactic employed as a tool of warfare for political or military advantage (Kurtzer, 2019). Additionally, aid can be directly used to finance and strengthen political actors, potentially prolonging the war (HS Unit, 2001). These risks pose difficult decisions for humanitarian organizations.

Another characteristic of the "new wars" was that they primarily resulted in civilian victims, accounting for nearly 90 percent of the total casualties on the battlefield (Hoffman & Weiss, 2017). To effectively address this unprecedented number of victims and the resulting suffering, the humanitarian system needed to expand in both scale and scope. On one hand, these developments were quantitative. Especially non-governmental organizations providing relief grew in number, effectively breaking the ICRC's and UN's monopoly on humanitarian action. Additionally, both the UN system and regional organizations became more deeply involved in various humanitarian activities. In 1992, the UN adopted Resolution 46/182, committing to strengthening its humanitarian capabilities by establishing a Department of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and reaffirming the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality, with independence added in 2004. International organizations that previously focused solely on development, such as the UNDP and the World Bank, also joined the humanitarian cause. Regional entities emerged as significant players as well, for instance the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) which was established in 1992 (Barnett, 2011).

Given the diverse backgrounds of humanitarian agencies, encompassing factors such as age, size, mandate, national origin, and religious or secular affiliation, there existed a range of perspectives on the fundamental essence of humanitarianism, its primary objectives, its guiding principles, and its interaction with politics. However, in 1994, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement introduced its Code of Conduct outlining the principles of humanitarian action, which has since been subscribed to by over 520 organizations (Eberwein & Reinalda, 2015). The commitment to the principles has served as a common ground between the diverse actors within the humanitarian system.

In addition to quantitative changes, there have been numerous humanitarian restructuring initiatives aimed at qualitative improvements. The 1994 Rwanda genocide and its aftermath represented a significant turning point—its profound failure across various aspects prompted extensive introspection within the humanitarian sphere. Reforms seeking to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the humanitarian response include the Sphere Project in 1997, the Transformative Agenda in 2011, and the Grand Bargain in 2016. The Sphere Project aimed to establish standardized minimum humanitarian response standards, ensuring a more consistent and effective approach to humanitarian assistance worldwide and specifically improve coordination and accountability of agencies to the recipients of assistance. The launch of the Transformative Agenda followed the significant shortcomings in the responses to the 2010 Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods. It built upon previous reforms, with a particular focus on preparedness for large-scale emergencies (Saez et al., 2021). Once again, a new series of reforms was introduced in 2016 in response to the fragmented handling of the Syria crisis and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. A set of commitments, known as the Grand Bargain, was adopted during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. More than 60 stakeholders, including governments, United Nations agencies, NGOs, and donors committed to improve humanitarian financing by increasing direct support to local and national responders, reducing earmarking, and involving aid recipients in decisions that affect them (Saez et al., 2021). These pledges are a fundamental aspect of the broader localization agenda, which is a key component of the Grand Bargain. It emphasizes the importance of local leadership in humanitarian action, fostering partnerships between international and local organizations, and improving coordination efforts.

Despite the multitude of normative commitments, skepticism remains regarding the achievement of the participation "revolution" (Saez et al., 2021, p. 3) promised by the Grand Bargain. Saez et al. (2021) argue that although there have been reforms within the humanitarian system, the fundamental architecture remains unchanged, with power dynamics, incentives, and resource allocation structures largely unaffected. Consequently, global institutions continue to dominate the system, while local organizations are marginalized. This disparity and power imbalance in funding structures highlight the divide between the two actor groups. According to the Global Humanitarian

Assistance Report of 2023, public donor funding patterns have remained consistent over the past decade, with the majority of funds directed towards multilateral institutions and international NGOs. In fact, in 2022, there was an increase in funding allocated to multilaterals, accounting for 61% of total public international humanitarian assistance. INGOs received the second largest share, comprising around 17% of total direct funding, followed by Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) organizations with 6.6%, and pooled funds with 6.3%. Notably, almost all of the funding to NGOs went to INGOs, with only 0.2% directly allocated to local and national NGOs (Development Initiatives, 2023). The allocation of public donor funding is depicted in the chart below.

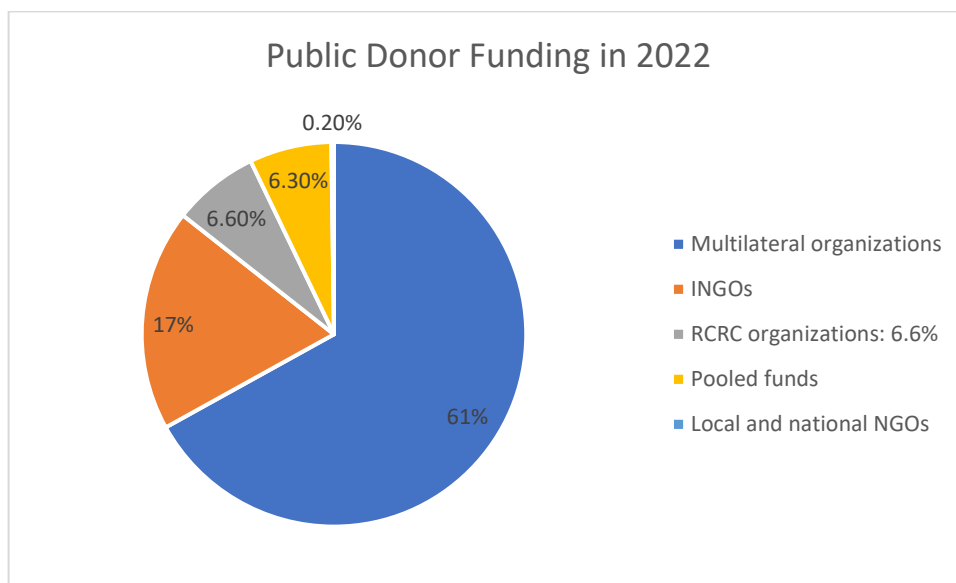


Figure 2. Public Donor Funding in 2022 (Development Initiatives, 2023). Chart created by author.

Aloudat and Khan (2022) assert that transforming the structure of the top-down, global North-dominated system is only possible when well-funded and established humanitarian actors are willing to relinquish some of their power. Furthermore, the existing structure is criticized for being too centralized and bureaucratic to deliver aid efficiently and in a timely manner. Spiegel (2017) posits that the coordination system is burdensome, prioritizing procedures over outcomes. Humanitarian organizations are bound by strict mandates and find it difficult to adapt to the changing circumstances and needs of those affected.

3.2 Diaspora Humanitarianism

Diaspora humanitarianism is conceptualized as a non-traditional form of humanitarianism. Taking a philosophical perspective, particularly influenced by Hegelian Dialectics, one can argue that the

meaning of diaspora humanitarianism is derived from its relationship with traditional humanitarianism as an opposing or divergent concept. Consequently, the definition of diaspora humanitarianism is inherently relational and necessarily involves comparisons with traditional humanitarianism (Brun & Horst, 2023). It is important to clarify that this chapter does not intend to explore the differences between both forms; a detailed analysis thereof will be provided in Chapter 5 when studying the case of Syria.

In order to define and grasp diaspora humanitarianism, three key questions are central:

1. **Who** are the providers and recipients of humanitarian assistance?
2. **What** are the main humanitarian practices?
3. **How** is humanitarian assistance delivered, and **Why**?

3.2.1 Actors

The first question involves delineating both the providers and recipients of humanitarian assistance. As the term diaspora humanitarianism implies, those carrying out humanitarian activities are diasporans. When the diaspora mainly consists of refugees, one speaks of refugee diaspora humanitarianism. Incorporating both 'refugee' and 'humanitarian' in the term may seem discordant or even paradoxical to some (Olliff, 2018). Particularly in Western media representation, the term 'refugee' evokes symbolic associations of vulnerability, pathologization, suffering, and loss, whereas 'humanitarian' signifies someone engaged in helping others. Typically, refugees are perceived as individuals in need of assistance and support, rather than as individuals alleviating the suffering of others. The international aid industry, too, often sees refugees as subjects of their interventions and as by-products of political events and processes, rather than recognizing them as humanitarian agents who can significantly shape socio-economic and political landscapes (Szegin & Djikeul, 2015). The term 'refugee diaspora humanitarianism' corrects this bias as it acknowledges the agency of refugees and diasporas in shaping their communities' futures and destinies. Diaspora Humanitarian actors include individuals, networks or organizations that provide humanitarian assistance (WHAF, 2023).

The other crucial aspect of the question is who such humanitarian efforts are directed towards. Typically, diasporas engage in humanitarian crises in countries of origin or those with whom they share cultural or familial ties. This can mean that assistance is provided to transnational communities, including those with the same ethnicity or religion, regardless of nationality.

Humanitarian aid is frequently channeled through family networks and broader kinship relations, such as tribes and clans, but often extends to encompass wider communities affected by crises (Brun, Carl).

3.2.2 Humanitarian Practices

Diaspora humanitarianism involves a wide range of humanitarian practices, typically transfers of financial resources, expertise, and human capital. Sezgin and Dijkzeul (2015) identify monetary contributions, including remittances and donations, and professional engagements by migrants, which occur at the individual level, as well as humanitarian assistance led by diaspora organizations, operating at a meso-level, as the main forms of diaspora humanitarianism. Due to its broad spectrum, humanitarian practices within diaspora humanitarianism are associated with various umbrella terms and have different positions, recognition, and visibility. For instance, monetary contributions are categorized by Brun and Carl (2023) under the label 'civic humanitarianism'. This is because they operate alongside the humanitarian system without formal institutionalization, and they are not always officially recognized or described as humanitarian acts. Humanitarian assistance provided by diaspora organizations, on the other hand, is rather regarded as humanitarian, while still struggling to be seen as equal to traditional humanitarian actors.

The next section will explore the various practices in more detail. It is divided into individual contributions, including remittances, philanthropy and migrant professionalism, and organized assistance referring to humanitarian efforts by diaspora organizations. These practices don't always have clear boundaries but can intersect with each other. For instance, diaspora organizations, especially those focused on providing medical aid, might involve migrant professionals.

3.2.2.1 Remittances

Remittances are money transfers from individuals residing abroad. For many developing countries, they represent the largest source of foreign income and a significant portion of the Gross Domestic Product. The scale of these financial flows has significantly expanded over the last two decades (Bryant, 2019). In 2023, global remittance flows were estimated at \$860 billion, as reported in the Migration Development Brief by the World Bank, with a 3% growth recorded during that year (Ratha et al., 2023). However, the reliability of these statistics is questionable due to difficulties in tracking and measuring remittance flows. Bryant (2019) suggests that a significant portion of the recent

increase in recorded remittances could be due to changes in measurement methods rather than actual shifts in financial flows. However, it is probable that the actual number of remittances is higher because many remittances go through informal channels and are thus not captured in the statistics. There are various reasons why many remittance-senders resort to informal channels, such as the 'Hawala system', which relies on a network of agents or brokers known as Hawaladars, facilitating fund transfers based on trust and mutual agreements. On one hand, formal financial services, such as Western Union, are not always accessible for recipients. According to a study by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) on remittance sending to Syria, only 20% of respondents noted the availability of such services everywhere. Additionally, respondents reported that in areas where the Syrian government has ceded control, authorities have confiscated people's ID cards, significantly hindering the collection of remittances from formal financial services (Dean, 2015). Other reasons are the high costs, lengthy processing times, and administrative burdens associated with formal services (Dean, 2015). Furthermore, tighter restrictions were imposed on many remittance channels post-9/11 due to concerns regarding funding terrorism through transnational transactions (Ragab, 2021). These factors contribute to the preference for informal channels, with over 35% of remittance transfers in many African countries estimated to be conducted through informal means such as the hawala system, making the quantification of remittances nearly impossible (Bryant, 2019). While the influence, scale and importance of remittances are undeniable, there are differing interpretations regarding remittances and how to contextualize and categorize them.

Within the migration-development discourse, remittances have been framed as a source of humanitarian funding, similar to humanitarian aid, as they represent a lifeline to many families. This perspective adopts a teleological approach, focusing on the practical functions that remittances fulfill in communities affected by natural and man-made disasters. Remittances play a crucial role in meeting basic needs such as purchasing food, medical supplies, and materials for shelter, as well as funding recovery and reconstruction efforts. Therefore, it can be argued that remittances achieve similar objectives to humanitarian agencies providing relief goods and operate similarly to direct cash-transfer programs. Kpodar and Le Goff (2012) suggest that remittances not only complement official humanitarian assistance from international donors but may also occasionally substitute it. In fact, remittances can address various limitations of conventional humanitarian aid. Considering that the humanitarian aid system is consistently evaluated as lacking resources, Bryant (2019) suggests that remittances could fill this gap. Remittances are countercyclical, meaning they typically rise during economic downturns in recipient countries, unlike Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and are less affected by the absence or disruption of institutions, investment opportunities, and functional government structures (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). In fact, Bettin et al. (2014) found that remittances

increase by 4.7% when affected countries experience humanitarian crises. Another reason why remittances may be better suited to the realities and circumstances of affected communities is their flexibility. Unlike conventional humanitarian assistance, which is often tied to specific locations, remittances offer more adaptability. They can be redirected to a new destination if recipients choose to relocate, allowing for better responsiveness to changing needs (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). There is ongoing debate regarding the extent to which remittances achieve broader development goals beyond short-term disaster relief. Although remittances may rise during short-term emergencies, they usually do not sustain the same level over longer periods. Furthermore, they appear to be primarily used for immediate necessities like food and consumer goods, rather than for long-term investments such as education fees or business ventures (Ahmed, 2000). Scholars argue that the allocation of remittances towards what they term as "non-productive investment" (Bryant, 2019, p. 5) limits their contribution to development, with some concluding that remittances have a minimal effect on alleviating poverty (Ahmed, 2000; Versluis, 2014)

Contrary to the interpretation of remittances as humanitarian aid, Bryant (2019) claims that remittances should be regarded independently from the formal humanitarian system as they don't work by the same principles as humanitarian aid and are also generated by different means. Despite their beneficial effects on the wider community, remittances are not equitable nor impartially distributed. Instead, they primarily benefit families who can afford to send someone abroad, therefore reinforcing existing inequalities within communities. Unlike humanitarian aid, which is provided based on assessments of need, remittances are driven by familial connections. It should also be noted that remittances constitute private capital and are frequently framed as household income. They typically stem from the earnings of migrant workers rather than from governmental or organizational aid budget and are driven by different motivations. Researching the motivational factors of remittances, Mahmud (2020) makes a distinction between altruistic remittances, which are used to fulfill families' basic needs, and self-interested remittances, such as those aimed at securing inheritance. Havolli (2009) notes that other reasons exist that do not fit neatly into either the altruistic or self-interested categories, such as repaying loans taken for education.

3.2.2.2 Philanthropy

Next to remittances, (diaspora) philanthropic contributions constitutes an important form of private financial flow. Afsal and Reshmi (2023) define diaspora philanthropy as "the charitable giving of people who live outside their country of origin to support causes that benefit their homeland" (p. 1). Although diasporic giving is a high-promising means of channeling funds from wealthier nations

to economically disadvantaged ones and is likely to grow with diaspora communities becoming better organized, its potential remains largely unexplored. The so-far limited research is partly due to diaspora philanthropy frequently being overshadowed by remittances or perceived as a subset thereof (Hilber, 2008). Both remittances and diaspora philanthropy are founded on the principle of voluntarily giving personal resources to improve the welfare of individuals. Both forms of giving are often driven by sentiments of cultural or religious identity, and often a sense of community (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, 2019). However, diasporic philanthropy differs from remittances in several aspects, such as the channels it flows through, its target recipients, its utilization, and its impacts. Diasporic contributions, predominantly monetary but occasionally including in-kind donations, are typically routed through diasporic organizations, community social networks, local, state, and federal governments, as well as NGOs and foundations that oversee the funds. They typically address a wide range of issues, including health, education, social welfare, human services, international relief, development, and the environment (Afsal & Reshmi, 2023). In general, the funds are used to provide public goods that benefit the entire community. Direct assistance to recipients is also possible, but in such cases, the recipients are selected based on their needs rather than relationships. While 'diasporic philanthropy' may constitute a small portion relative to individual remittances, its potential for sustainable development is seen as notably higher. This is due to its dual role: providing rapid relief following natural disasters and investing in long-term development initiatives, especially in education and healthcare sectors. Additionally, philanthropic contributions are believed to have a higher potential for promoting equity, as they are directed towards addressing systemic issues and enhancing the overall well-being of communities, contrasting with the direct person-to-person money transfers typical of remittances (Hilber, 2008).

Corruption, and the perceived trustworthiness of organization constitutes a major factor in limiting the effectiveness of worldwide diaspora philanthropy, affecting individuals' willingness to donate. This is especially crucial as many non-profit and civil society organizations, particularly those in the Global South, rely heavily on donations for their operations. A study conducted by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (2019) revealed that organizations based in Pakistan are viewed as lacking trustworthiness by the UK-based diaspora, leading many to prefer donating directly to individuals rather than to organizations. In such cases, it's important to distinguish between donating to individuals in need and remittances, which are intended to support family members and friends and do not fall under the category of philanthropy. In a study on the Ghanaian diaspora, Hilber (2008) discovered that Ghanaians engage in organized collective remittances alongside sending money to their immediate family members, indicating that one practice does not necessarily replace the other.

3.2.2.3 Migrant professionalism

In the context of diaspora humanitarianism, migrant professionalism refers to the expertise and skills of diaspora members who engage in humanitarian activities and initiatives aimed at assisting their countries of origin. As diasporas predominantly consist of individuals with the socioeconomic means to migrate, they often comprise the most educated and professionally qualified segments of their home countries' populations (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). Moreover, while conflict-ridden countries frequently face significant challenges in providing education, those who migrate to countries of the Global North often access new educational and professional opportunities. Consequently, the human capital within the diaspora is highly valuable during humanitarian disasters and for broader development initiatives in the countries of origin. Over the past decade, organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have devised frameworks for programs like the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN). These initiatives aim to empower diaspora professionals from Africa to contribute to the development of their countries of origin through short-term, circular, or permanent return migration (Horst et al., 2015). For instance, the IOM Regional Office in Helsinki launched a pilot project to enhance the capabilities of local healthcare professionals in northern Somalia by leveraging expertise from highly qualified health professionals in the Finnish-based Somali diaspora. Health professionals of Somali descent demonstrated a strong interest in temporarily returning to Somalia to alleviate pressures on the country's healthcare sector and to mentor local staff in their respective fields of expertise (Weiss, 2009). In the context of Somalia, diaspora professionals hold significant influence across diverse sectors, including governance, the state bureaucracy, business ventures, and civil society. Notably, the three Somali state entities of Somaliland, Puntland and the Federal Parliament of Somalia are significantly populated by diaspora members, with at least 50% of top positions held by individuals possessing foreign passports (Horst et al., 2015).

3.2.2.4 Humanitarian Assistance led by Diaspora Organizations

Diaspora organizations are homogenous but vary widely in terms of their size, members, activities and goals, and affiliations and ideologies. According to Dijkzeul and Fauser (2020), they are characterized by three main aspects. Firstly, DOs typically are founded by international migrants or their descendants. They often emerge informally as social clubs, religious groups, or mutual support networks and become more institutionalized over time. Secondly, a central defining feature of DOs

is the shared identity embraced by members, often manifested through community-building efforts to strengthen feelings of belonging. Some diaspora organizations may align with a particular religious or ethnic identity, while others have no such affiliation (Olliff, 2022). Lastly, the issues addressed by diaspora organizations are diverse, spanning from social support and political advocacy to humanitarian aid. Due to the wide range of activities, they engage in, there are multiple conceptions of DOs. Many diaspora organizations, established by politically active emigrants, are viewed as transnational political parties or lobby groups seeking to influence policies in their countries of origin. These organizations are often considered emancipatory forces advocating for grassroots causes and providing a platform for migrants and their descendants to voice their concerns. Other scholars argue that diaspora organizations serve as alternatives for delivering services in areas where governments, international NGOs, and UN agencies are too bureaucratic and inefficient. This can occur either within host countries, where they offer aid to refugees, or within countries of origin through initiatives such as advocacy, development projects, and humanitarian aid.

Given the activities they engage in, DOs are frequently misunderstood and regarded as either NGOs, domestic interest groups, or ethnic lobbying organizations, but are rarely recognized as separate entities in their own right. However, as transnational organizations, DOs differentiate themselves from other actors in several ways. Members' commitment to DOs usually stems from their national, ethnic, or religious affiliations. Furthermore, the engagement of DOs involves multiple stakeholders and extends across at least two states: their country of residence and their country of origin (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020).

While the number of DOs has increased and expanded into new regions over the past four decades, they continue to be rather neglected in development and humanitarian studies. Some scholars and practitioner express reservations about stretching the concept of humanitarianism to encompass non-traditional and diverse actors like DOs. For instance, a senior executive at MSF believed that applying the humanitarian label liberally to NGOs from the Global South, the private sector, and diaspora groups is unhelpful and potentially problematic because it blurs the humanitarian principles. Admitting everyone to the "humanitarian club" could reduce the cohesion of emergency responses and principled assistance (Olliff, 2022). Concerns about adherence to codes of conduct and respect for humanitarian principles in their operations, which will be discussed in greater detail in X, are one reason why DOs are often situated outside of the formal humanitarian system and why willingness of traditional humanitarian actors to collaborate with DOs is limited.

Another factor contributing to the perceived lack of professionalism relates to the scales, scopes, and levels of institutionalization within which DOs operate. Often, DOs are perceived as

representing small-scale, personally inspired charitable organizations, contrasting with the professional humanitarianism of international organizations (Sinatti & Horst, 2015). In general, there is significant variation in the level of formality among DOs, with certain organizations resembling volunteer groups operating without registration, while others have developed staff and governance structures. In a study by DEMAC (2022) mapping 108 diaspora organizations across Ukraine, Tunisia, Somalia, Pakistan, and Timor-Leste, it was found that the majority of these organizations (79%) either have a less formal structure (44%) or operate as loose networks of volunteers (15%). This suggests that a significant portion of these organizations may rely on informal arrangements and volunteer-driven initiatives for their operations. Additionally, 35% had a formal structure and were officially registered in their country of residence, employing volunteers, staff, and governance structures. Only a smaller proportion (6%) were organizations officially registered in their countries of origin, with affiliate offices or representatives in the countries of residence, employing volunteers, staff, and governance structures. In certain instances, informal structures are deliberately chosen, as was the case with the Nicaraguan diaspora during the political crisis of 2018, who maintained informality and a low profile due to the government's often hostile attitude and policies (Shabaka, 2021). However, more commonly, the main challenge in scaling up and professionalizing stems from resource limitations, particularly in securing stable, long-term funding (Carpi & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020). Many organizations rely primarily on membership fees or donations, which allow for ad hoc activities but are not financially sustainable nor sufficient for long-term projects. The limited resources available to diaspora organizations create a vicious cycle. Often, staff in diaspora organizations are volunteers who lack familiarity with the concepts, technical language, and funding procedures of traditional humanitarianism, which presents a barrier for applying for funds from donors. However, without such funds, organizations are unable to invest in capacity building and skill development (WHAf, 2023). The lesser degree of bureaucratization within diaspora organizations can have positive effects, too, particularly relating to their flexibility, adaptability, and efficiency. Their decentralized structures and decision-making processes allow them to react promptly to crises and adjust to the conditions on the ground and needs of those they assist. Whereas formal humanitarian organizations may be constrained by funds tied to specific projects and mandates, leaving little room for flexibility, diaspora organizations can, when necessary, easily shift between a development and humanitarian focus or vice versa. This way, their activities can span the entire humanitarian-development spectrum, encompassing preparedness, response, and recovery (Shabaka, 2021).

Another characteristic of DOs is the cultural and linguistic expertise that members contribute to their work. DOs can build on their member's knowledge and ability to navigate complex local contexts. According to a report by WHAF (2023), diasporans are less likely to display judgement and

preconceptions when dealing with crises and assisting those in need. Depending on when they migrated, there may be some level of disconnection and cultural disparity. However, diasporans often have essential cultural capital, such as proficiency in the same language as local organizations and affected populations, along with social capital in the form of networks that typically span both countries. These on-the-ground contacts are crucial for delivering services to populations that are hard to reach, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Leveraging their social connections, DOs frequently establish partnerships with local actors. Participants of a case study by ICMPD on *Diaspora Engagement in Times of Crisis* (2021) view partnerships as longer-lasting due to the unique commitment factor by diasporas. Furthermore, Brinkerhoff (2011) describes diaspora-domestic collaboration as a relationship of mutual dependence, with respective rights and responsibilities, a shared commitment to partnership objectives, shared decision-making and horizontal accountability. While she highlights that diasporans should not be given priority over community members, they are adept at acting as intermediaries between international and local actors. They can advocate for these interests at higher levels of development agenda setting, while also raising funds for local partners. This is particularly important as donors often overlook small-scale efforts due to their limited economies of scale. By engaging in partnerships with domestic counterparts and providing direct support to locally initiated and managed projects, DOs drive forward the "localization agenda" as a crucial component of the Grand Bargain (Shabaka, 2021). Additionally, this effort can be viewed as part of a broader initiative to "decolonize" humanitarian aid, questioning the hegemony of the Global North and fostering appreciation for diaspora-domestic collaboration (Aloudat & Khan, 2022).

3.2.3 Influential Factors

The question of how aid is delivered involves understanding what factors, rules and codes guide the work of humanitarian diasporans. As this concerns the organized form of humanitarian assistance, the section will only consider diaspora organizations rather than individual contributions. According to a report from DEMAC (2016), there is limited equitable partnership and collaboration between traditional humanitarian actors and diaspora organizations, with the latter often viewed primarily as service providers instead of members of the 'humanitarian club'. This lack of trust in DOs stems from ongoing questions about whether they embody or aspire to embody the humanitarian principles, a debate that has persisted since the emergence of diaspora humanitarianism within the humanitarian sphere. This section aims to assess the degree to which DOs adhere to humanitarian principles and to identify the factors that explain their level of commitment.

Various scholars see the very nature of diaspora humanitarianism which is characterized by personal engagement and explicit connections to the particular - a homeland, a people – as opposing to the universal values of traditional humanitarians (Olliff, 2022). Rather than following the deontological ethic centered on the intentions of humanitarian actors, as embodied by the principles, DOs are perceived as adhering to a consequentialist ethic that prioritizes the outcomes of actions. In essence, significant factors for the commitment to the humanitarian values of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence can be classified into two overlapping categories: the operational category, which includes organizational structures, and the essentialist category, encompassing the identity of the organizations, including mission, values and ideology.

From an operational perspective, one aspect involves funding structures, which may lead Diaspora organizations to neglect the code of conduct of formal humanitarianism. Many organizations receive little to no public funding, thereby relying on legitimacy and support from their members for survival. This confronts DOs with the dilemma of balancing the 'logic of members' against the 'logic of influence'. In a study on Turkish migrant organizations after the 2011 Van earthquake, Sezgin (2011) found that both organizations would abandon or adjust their adherence to humanitarian principles whenever there was a conflict between the interests of their members and these principles. In cases where member interests influence the commitment to humanitarian principles, the principle of independence tends to be compromised.

Another aspect relating to the ways DOs operate is that they expand their mandates and activities in a context-specific manner. Hilhorst and Pereboom (2015) discuss how for multi-mandate organizations, it can be challenging to fully adhere to the humanitarian principles because certain activities, for example human rights advocacy, may become conflictive and contradictory in practice, particularly with the principle of neutrality. When the work of DOs includes additional activities such as peace-building, advocacy, post-conflict recovery, human rights, and development, these can influence the practical implementation of the principles. Sezgin and Dijkzeul (2015) suggest that the humanitarian principles are most effective when organizations can enter, save lives, and leave, operating for only a relatively short period of time. As DOs frequently establish long-term partnerships and demonstrate commitment to working with specific communities, they remain present for longer periods, increasing the likelihood of becoming involved in conflicts.

In addition to operational factors, the organization's identity, including its mission, values, and ideology, plays a crucial role in determining the degree of commitment to humanitarian principles. In essence, organizations are shaped by their founders and members, their individual identities and motivations. The decision of diasporans to engage within diaspora organizations or in humanitarian activities in general is often multifaceted, driven by an interplay of personal, cultural, and socio-

political factors. As in other forms of humanitarianism, solidarity serves as a primary driving force for involvement. Olliff (2018) identifies a sense of responsibility as one of the main motivations for diasporans to engage in humanitarian activities in their home countries. Helping as fulfilling one's duty to serve "their community" can be a cultural obligation, particularly in collectivist societies where community members are encouraged and expected to contribute to the overall welfare. There may exist socialized roles of responsibility that regulate expectations and responsibilities for how to take care of each other (Brun & Horst, 2023). Rather than an individual choice, helping is a collective responsibility that persists even when one migrates abroad. Given that this obligation is tied to particular groups of people and communities, it is often assumed that DOs primarily offer assistance to those communities with which they have previous connections, rather basing the assistance solely on need. This stands in contrast to the concept of universal values and helping strangers. In addition to being influenced by social and cultural norms, the sense of responsibility felt by diasporas can also be rooted in faith. According to Sezgin (2011), diasporic Muslims view humanitarian aid as a religious obligation and a way to show solidarity with the Muslim community. The concept of compassion and aiding those in need is deeply rooted in Islam through practices like Zakat, one of the five pillars of the faith, which mandates almsgiving for Muslims who meet certain wealth criteria (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, 2019). Similarly, in other religious traditions, helping those in need is an integral aspect of spiritual and religious practice and a moral duty. For instance, Judaism emphasizes the concept of tzedakah, or charitable giving, stressing the duty to help those in need. Likewise, in Buddhism, the virtue of compassion (karuna) urges followers to alleviate the suffering of others (Ferris, 2011).

In secular circles and beyond, there is concern that faith-based organizations may primarily or exclusively assist individuals who belong to the same faith, thereby discriminating based on religious affiliation. Particularly, the Islamic aid culture is criticized in this regard because the obligation to help others is often directed towards the Muslim community. For instance, Zakat is exclusively allocated to fellow Muslims. A Muslim organization included in Sezgin's study (2011) claimed to provide aid without discriminating based on ethnic origin, religious affiliation, or political beliefs. However, it framed humanitarian assistance as a demonstration of solidarity with the Muslim community, which was deemed exclusionary.

For many diasporans, who can draw on their own experiences and have lived through the reality of poverty, conflict, or other crises, their compassion and ability to "feel the pain" drive their decision to assist those in need. Levitt (2009) suggests that even diasporans who seldom visit their ancestral homes or are not fluent in its language are often brought up in environments that reference the homeland ideologically, materially, and emotionally on a daily basis. They can identify with the collective trauma and sense of victimhood. It is assumed that the stronger the connection to the

homeland, the greater the commitment to helping. In a study on Pakistani diaspora humanitarianism in the UK, the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (2019) found that those who grew up in Pakistan, are much more likely to contribute to Pakistan since they are more attuned to the challenges and circumstances on the ground.

The emotional attachment to the cause and crisis raises questions about the ability of DOs and its members to function as impartial outsiders, as it is closely linked with their position as helpers and their relationship to aid recipients. Due to their past experiences and emotional ties, diasporans are seldomly detached outsiders to the humanitarian crisis but socially embedded and emotionally invested. Despite being physically distant, they stay informed about current events through family members or social media platforms, enabling them to understand the realities on the ground more intimately than mass media allows. Witnessing the struggles of their family members, they tend to feel a strong personal connection to the cause. To many, humanitarian action is not solely a professional mandate. The empathy with their families and communities and their own experience of dispossession and displacement motivates them to assist others facing similar situations, creating a dynamic of "victims giving to victims" (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020). This often leads them to perceive themselves as part of the affected group and to be perceived as such by them. For instance, one of the diasporans interviewed by Olliff (2018) consistently used the collective "we" to describe the suffering of refugees in Iraq, even though he had been living in Australia for 15 years. Olliff also noted that many interviewees used the term "my people" when referring to the individuals they were advocating for. This demonstrates the blurriness in the distinction between helper and helped, not only because both groups often share the same national, ethnic and religious background but also because they are part of the same social fabric. In this social system, the roles of helper and helped are often fluid, and the relationships reciprocal. The position of helpers within the community, rather than as neutral outsiders, is well expressed in Brković's (2016, 2017) concept of 'vernacular humanitarianism' as a 'humanitarianism from within'.

Due to their close proximity to the events and the affected populations, neutrality is often compromised. Furthermore, refugee diasporans from conflict settings may have affiliations or prior associations with conflict parties and political groups, which can undermine their independence and impartiality as humanitarians. Furthermore, the position of diasporans as helpers significantly influences the relationship to those they're helping. Unlike assisting strangers, diaspora humanitarians often share strong connections with the people they support, making the relationship more personal rather than purely professional (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). This lack of distance and professionalism between providers and recipients of assistance may lead to favoritism, sometimes by means of corruption, lack of professional boundaries and conflicts of interest.

While acknowledging that positionality of diasporans delivering aid certainly matters, Sweis (2019) critiques the hierarchy created by the distinction between "foreign" and "native" aid workers, positioning diaspora humanitarians somewhere between both categories. She argues that the “white western doctor who stands apart as the cultural prototype or universal figure through which global aid is delivered to vulnerable groups” (p. 587) is perceived as neutral, universal and culture-free. In contrast, local staff and diaspora groups are discursively constructed as “attached to place, closed-off, and partial—and therefore inferior, inadequate, or unable to achieve universality” (Sweis, 2019, p. 599).

When diasporans fall short in delivering principled aid, the tendency is to attribute the failure to their background, rather than considering whether adherence to the principles would have been feasible for any humanitarian organization, given the complex reality of conflict. A report by DEMAC (2016) points out that the principles guiding humanitarian assistance are meant to serve as a tool, not a dogma, and frequently, they cannot be implemented in their ideal form, forcing actors to make extremely challenging decisions. In this context, all actors, including diaspora organizations, must prioritize transparency and honesty in their application of these principles.

4. Methodology

The previous chapters laid out the theoretical and conceptual framework for analysis. Three hypotheses can be derived from this framework:

1. Diaspora organizations have better humanitarian access to affected populations, especially hard-to-reach areas, than traditional humanitarian actors.
2. Diaspora organizations show greater adaptability and agility when responding to crises than traditional humanitarian actors.
3. Diaspora organizations deliver aid according to a different set of rules than traditional humanitarian organizations.

This chapter outlines the methodology used to test these three hypotheses derived from the research question and theoretical framework. It explains the rationale behind the chosen research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques.

4.1 Case Study: The Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

To test the hypotheses, this thesis adopts a qualitative case study methodology, examining the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The study will compare the humanitarian response by the diaspora with the international response. According to Stake (1995), case studies allow researchers to delve deeply into the complexities of a particular case, providing a comprehensive examination of context, processes, and outcomes. Given the complexity of the Syrian crisis and the diverse array of actors involved, a case study approach offers the flexibility and depth needed to explore the various dimensions of humanitarian response. Since theoretical concepts can be identified within case studies, they can offer high levels of conceptual validity (Gerring, 2004).

The selection of the Syrian crisis as a case study is based on several factors. The humanitarian crisis, enduring and ongoing, represents one of the most intricate and protracted humanitarian emergencies of the 21st century. Due to its scope, scale, complexity, and immediacy, it is crucial to understand the effectiveness and limitations of the humanitarian response, especially its shortcomings. The Syrian humanitarian crisis is often pointed to as an example of the humanitarian system's failure to adequately address the needs of those affected. Recognizing the strengths of alternative forms of humanitarian assistance can be valuable for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian response. Besides the Syrian crisis itself, it is also the distinctive features of the Syrian diaspora that justify the selection of this specific case study. I am focusing on the diaspora based in Germany, consisting of many individuals who have left Syria within the last decade and have strong emotional and social ties to their homeland. The Syrian diaspora is characterized as highly active, engaged, and widely dispersed (Rabat, 2021). The engagement of the Syrian diaspora in the humanitarian crisis not only provided a high number of diaspora organizations for analysis but also sparked a strong motivation to showcase the significant contributions made by diaspora groups. In the end, practical considerations also influenced the decision to choose Syria as a case study. Given the widespread media coverage and academic research on the Syrian crisis, there exists a wealth of data for analysis, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the humanitarian response. Furthermore, the context of the Syrian crisis is conducive to testing theoretical concepts, making it an ideal case for analysis. It encompasses most of the challenges emphasized by humanitarian actors, including those related to accessing and providing principled aid.

Within the case study, which serves as the meta-methodology, the Syrian diaspora in Germany will first be mapped out, primarily relying on statistical data and reports. In the second step, I will examine the diaspora response and the international response to the Syrian crisis, utilizing two methods: a literature review for analyzing the former and a content analysis for the latter. However,

scholarly research papers will be used to complement my own findings relating to the diaspora response.

4.1.1 Literature Review: International Response

Considering the extensive literature available on the humanitarian response from international organizations, including UN agencies, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and international NGOs, I concluded that conducting my own data collection might not provide substantial additional insights. Therefore, I chose to utilize secondary data sources, including articles and reports.

4.1.1.1 Selection Criteria

When selecting relevant contributions for the literature review, several factors were taken into account. Firstly, to minimize biases, it is crucial that the literature encompasses diverse perspectives and viewpoints on the international response to the Syrian crisis. This involves reviewing contributions from various stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, NGOs, scholars, and affected communities. It is crucial that the assessment of the international response does not rely solely on reports from actors within the formal humanitarian system but also encompasses insights from individuals or organizations not associated with the system. This is not to suggest that humanitarian agencies are oblivious to their mistakes, but rather that their close association with the organization and its operations may hinder their ability to take an objective look at it. Arguably, for a complete and balanced understanding of the humanitarian crisis, different political positions, particularly those supporting the Assad Regime, should not be excluded. Assad supporters may offer critiques of international humanitarian interventions in Syria. In addition to ensuring a diversity of views, it is important to prioritize recent sources. The situation in Syria is constantly evolving, with new developments, challenges, and dynamics emerging regularly. For example, the earthquakes of February 2023 fundamentally altered the humanitarian needs in Syria. Moreover, regulations concerning UN cross-border operations changed multiple times throughout the conflict. Therefore, to ensure that the literature accurately reflects the current context, up-to-date data and reports are crucial. While literature from earlier years of the conflict and crisis can be valuable for understanding the development, it must be kept in mind that the information they provide may have become outdated.

4.1.1.2 Limitations

The main challenge in conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the international response, which should include diverse perspectives, is accessibility. Within English-language sources addressing the humanitarian crisis, the discussion is largely dominated by individuals and organizations connected to the formal humanitarian system, marginalizing other viewpoints. Unfortunately, due to language barriers, I was unable to review materials in Arabic, Russian or other languages. There's a high chance that this linguistic bias also extends to biased opinions. The information and narratives presented in Arabic media outlets may differ significantly from those found in Western sources.

4.1.2 Content Analysis: Diaspora Response

The method used for analyzing the diaspora response in the humanitarian crisis in Syria is qualitative data analysis according to Mayring (1994). This involves identifying and categorizing themes, patterns, and relationships within the data through a process of coding. The data collection instrument is thus a codebook, also known as a category scheme. The categorization was done deductively, meaning it was based on the literature of the theoretical part and the hypotheses formulated to answer the research question. Primarily, the aim was to operationalize the individual humanitarian principles and make them measurable using the codebook. For example, aid recipients in the text are captured to determine whether aid was solely based on need. The codebook itself, which is attached to the thesis (see Appendix A), contains detailed descriptions of how the individual humanitarian principles are operationalized and made measurable.

Content analysis was chosen as a method because it allows for the systematic identification of common themes, sentiments, and strategies employed by diaspora organizations in their response efforts. This includes explicit statements and commitments to humanitarian principles, but as content analysis is also qualitative and interpretative, it allows for the capture of latent meanings. This is crucial because organizations are unlikely to explicitly oppose humanitarian principles, but violations can be revealed through interpretation and reading between the lines. At the same time, diaspora organizations may not necessarily articulate a direct reference to the principles, but they may still adhere to them. Qualitative content analysis enables the examination of language that may convey subtle messages, which could be overlooked or not captured in quantitative research with large sample sizes. In the Syrian conflict, many words carry implicit messages and reveal political

stances. For example, supporters of the opposition often refer to armed groups fighting against the Assad regime as "rebels," emphasizing their struggle for freedom and democracy. Conversely, the Syrian government and its allies often label these groups as "terrorists," portraying them as extremists and justifying military action against them. Similarly, the term "revolution" is predominantly used by opposition groups to describe a popular uprising against an oppressive regime and the desire for political change and democratic reform. The qualitative-interpretative approach also allows for capturing underlying motivations, values, and beliefs that shape the actions and decisions of diaspora actors involved in humanitarian efforts. Moreover, content analysis facilitates the identification of patterns and trends over time within the diaspora response. By examining changes in messaging, priorities, and strategies across different phases of the crisis, we can gain insights into the evolution of the diaspora response and its adaptation to shifting circumstances and needs on the ground.

4.1.2.1 Selection Units

The subject of my analysis of the diaspora response in Syria comprises 8 diaspora organizations. In the selection process, I followed the following criteria. Firstly, I limited my focus to diaspora organizations based in Germany.

Even though there are several efforts to systematically compile all Syrian associations in Germany, such as the list by IMPACT Civil Society Research and Development, these lists often contain many organizations that either do not have a website or are no longer active. Therefore, I decided to select organizations that are part of VDSH. From all members of VDSH, I chose those dedicated to humanitarian assistance. Another criterion was that the organizations have a website in German or English. These selection criteria resulted in 8 organizations, which are presented in the table below to provide a general overview.

Table 1. Diaspora organizations of study

Name	Year of Establishment	Fields of Work	Operational Regions
Barada Syrienhilfe e.V.	2012	Education, humanitarian and medical emergency aid, psychosocial projects	Syria, Türkiye
Deutsch-Syrisches Forum e.V. (DSF)	2012	Emergency aid, orphan care, education	Lebanon, Syria

Deutsch-Syrischer Verein e.V. (DSV)	2011	Medical assistance, education, orphan care	Syria, Türkiye, Germany
Deutsch-Syrische Ärzte für humanitäre Hilfe e.V. (DSÄ)	2013	Medical assistance	Syria
Homs League Abroad e.V.	N/A	Family support, education, humanitarian aid	Syria
Human Help Community	2015	Humanitarian aid, education	Syria, Türkiye
Manzoul e.V.	2019	Humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, psychosocial support, and awareness	Germany, Syria, neighbouring countries of Syria,
MEHAD Germany e.V.	2012	medical and humanitarian assistance	Germany, Syria

4.1.2.2 Analysis Units

The 8 organizations will be analyzed based on their websites. All textual elements of their websites will be taken into account, including statutes, annual reports, blog posts, press releases, event information, among others. Sections of the website about the organization, its mission and objectives, principles, approaches, projects, etc., will be included in the analysis. Projects located outside of Syria, such as those involved in refugee assistance in Germany or Syria's neighboring countries, will be excluded from the analysis. Internal organizational matters, such as membership assemblies, job postings, and similar administrative topics, will also be excluded from the analysis. Additionally, there will be no time constraints applied to the analysis.

4.1.2.3 Quality Criteria

To ensure reliability of the codebook, a pilot coding of about 10% of the data material was conducted prior to the analysis (Rössler, 2010). This pilot coding aimed to identify any gaps, inconsistencies, or errors in the codebook. Subsequently, the codebook was revised based on the findings from the pilot coding. Additionally, an intra-code reliability was conducted to evaluate the consistency of coding within individual codes. This involved coding the same data using the established codebook at different times. If there is a high degree of overlap in the assigned codes,

it suggests that the code is well-defined and easily understood. However, the lack of clear delineation and mutual exclusivity among the humanitarian principles, as categories of the codebook, presented a challenge and led to discrepancies between coding at different times. As a result, the coding instructions were revised and further specified.

4.1.2.4 Limitations

There are several limitations arising from the data collection instrument and the data source. The websites of organizations serve as self-portrayals, where organizations selectively disclose information. Ultimately, there is limited certainty regarding whether this information accurately reflects the work of the organizations. While organizations may express a strong commitment to humanitarian principles on their websites, the actual implementation of these principles in the field may vary. Furthermore, websites often lack contextual information about the challenges and constraints faced by organizations in their humanitarian operations. Unlike interviews, with secondary data, there is no opportunity to interact with the subject and ask questions. For these reasons, interviews with organizations were initially planned instead of website analysis. However, given that many organizations are run by volunteers, none of the organizations had the capacity to conduct an interview. Regarding the selection, it must be noted that the analyzed organizations may not represent the landscape in Germany. The fact that all the organizations examined are members of the VDSH also constitutes an unintended selection, as less institutionalized organizations or those displaying extremist positions and affiliations, may not be admitted to the VDSH. Consequently, there may be a positive correlation between membership in the VDSH and commitment to humanitarian principles. A primary limitation of qualitative content analysis as the research method is that it requires a significant amount of interpretation and is susceptible to subjectivity. There is the possibility that my own biases and potentially limited knowledge have led to a misinterpretation of the text.

5. Analysis

The first part of the analysis involves a mapping out of the Syrian diaspora (organizations) in Germany. Subsequently, the response of diaspora organizations and formal humanitarian actors to Syria's crisis will be analyzed and compared.

5.1 Syrian Diaspora (Organizations) in Germany

For a better understanding of the dynamics, potentials and characteristics of diaspora humanitarianism, it is crucial to gain a clearer picture of the Syrian diaspora in Germany. Due to its heterogeneity, conceptualizing the Syrian diaspora as a whole and a macro unit is misleading. In this chapter, I will therefore conceptualize and analyze the diaspora on two levels - the micro and meso level while acknowledging that the boundaries between different levels can be blurry. On the micro level, I will outline the sociodemographic profile of the individuals that collectively form the Syrian community. This descriptive analysis will be based on data from statistics and reports.

Characteristics that appear relevant when studying diaspora engagement include but are not limited to diasporans' educational and professional background, ethnicity, religious and political affiliations as well as migration context and legal status. It should be noted that the purpose hereof is merely to delineate the profile of the Syrian diaspora in Germany and not to make actual statements about humanitarian engagements of diaspora members. Aspects, such as educational and professional background, for example, may not necessarily reflect the actual contributions of Syrian diaspora members. However, they can provide insights into their resources, potential and capacity to engage in humanitarian activities, such as donating or sending remittances. The migration context and the (sense of) belonging to specific groups can play a relevant role as well as it may determine the type of activities diasporans engage in and, more importantly, whose needs these activities address.

On the meso level, I will look at how Syrian diaspora members organize themselves into associations, clubs and networks that provide support and services, foster exchange and maintain connections to Syria. While mosques and churches are a common place for Syrians to come together and while such religious institutions may also engage in humanitarian activities, mainly philanthropy, the focus lies on registered civil society organizations that have been created, at least partly, by Syrian diasporans. The landscape of Syrian civil society organizations in Germany represents the organizational and collective modes of action of the Syrian community. Defining factors are the overall number of organizations, their scale, fields of engagement, and potential affiliations.

5.1.1 Micro Level

Following the United States, Germany is now the second most prominent destination for migrants with nearly 16 million international migrants (IOM, 2019). Since the beginning of the Federal Republic of Germany, there have been periods marked by various migration contexts. The 1950s and 1960s were primarily characterized by labor migration. In the 21st century, the predominant

motivations for migration have shifted to flight and asylum (Hanewinkel & Oltmer, 2021). Prior to the arrival of millions of Ukrainians who were forced to leave their country due to the Russian invasion in 2022, Syrians constituted the largest immigrant group over the past decade. In fact, during the years 2015 and 2016, more than a third of all asylum applications were submitted by Syrian nationals (Worbs et al. 2019).

In 2023 as well, Syrian nationals accounted for the highest number of asylum applications, totaling 28,499 (bpb, 2023). It should be noted that refugees from Ukraine are not required to go through the asylum process, and thus, they are not represented in this statistic. Even though there existed a Syrian community in Germany before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, primarily established through educational migration, as well as flight-related migration and family reunification, it was a quantitatively small group. After 2011, there has been an almost explosive growth and the Syrian community encompasses, as of 2022, more than 920.000 individuals (Statista, 2024). The arrival of high numbers of Syrians fleeing from the war also means that the Syrian community in Germany has undergone significant transformation since 2011 and, unlike the Polish or Turkish diaspora, is by now primarily composed of refugees.

Both before and after 2011, the diaspora is with an average age of 22,4 years, as of 2020, relatively young and male-dominated. The current gender ratio, approximately 60/40, may however change and balance out in the coming years due to family reunification (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023). In terms of ethnic and religious composition, the Syrian community in Germany is relatively heterogeneous compared to other diasporic groups, such as the Turkish or Polish diaspora. To some extent, it mirrors the heterogeneity within the Syrian society.

As data on ethnic and religious affiliations are primarily collected in the context of asylum statistics, statements can only be made about asylum applicants and not the entire Syrian population in Germany. Since asylum seekers make up the majority of the Syrian community, this data remains informative. It should, however, be kept in mind that this leads to an overrepresentation of the group of individuals who have arrived after 2011. Prior to and immediately at the onset of the war, primarily ethnic and religious minorities from Syria sought refuge in Germany. For example, in the years 2010 to 2012, the religious minority of the Yezidis constituted close to 40% of the applicants. Until 2012, the ethnic group submitting the majority of applications was Kurdish. However, starting in 2014, with the expansion of the conflict throughout Syria, the Arab-Muslim population became the dominant group of applicants (Worbs et al., 2019). As the consequences of the conflict affected individuals supporting all sides involved, it is wrong to assume that only opponents of the Assad regime fled the country. While there is no official data on the division into political camps, it can be assumed that there is a range of different political beliefs among the diaspora. A study by Ragab and

Katbeh (2017) which mapped out Syrian Diaspora Groups in six European countries showed that the escalation of conflict and fragmentation reproduced itself in Syrian communities outside the country. According to their findings, conflict dynamics were reproduced and led to fragmentation based on ethnic, religious and political divisions among the Syrian community in the United Kingdom as well as in France where there is little to no interaction between members of the diaspora who support and those who oppose the regime. These fragmentations and divisions appear to be less pronounced in Germany. However, Ragab and Katbeh argue that the most distinct division within Syrian civil society exists between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime.

The educational profile of the Syrian immigrant population in Germany is rather polarized. On one hand, a larger proportion, 39 percent, of Syrians lack any formal education, as opposed to 15 percent of the overall population in Germany. However, among those with educational qualifications, a greater proportion holds an academic degree compared to the general population. In a study of 2021 Kristen and Seuring found that Syrians, generally, possess a higher level of education compared to other refugees. The economic situation of the Syrian population, too, differs significantly from that of the general population. As of 2020, 28% of Syrians in comparison to 4% of the overall population were unemployed. Ragab (2021) attributes this to challenges in labor market integration, as individuals may still be in the asylum process and therefore do not have work permits or may lack sufficient language skills and qualifications. Bernhard and Röhrer (2022) argue in their study on the arrival processes of Syrian refugees in Germany that forced migration often causes a significant disruption in the biographies of the individuals involved, leading to loss in resources, status and the devaluation of educational qualifications. It can be expected that the employment numbers among Syrians will increase over time as they learn the language and build social networks.

In summary, it can be said that the profile of the Syrian community in Germany is diverse, much like the population in Syria, in terms of its ethnic, political, and religious composition. The majority of its members have left the country recently and have lived experiences as well as family in Syria and, hence, the ties to their homeland are rather strong.

5.1.2 Meso Level

The year 2011 has significantly transformed the makeup of Syrian diaspora and the dynamics within it. The outbreak of the civil war politicized many Syrians abroad igniting within them a desire to advocate for peace and reconstruction in their home country. Across several countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom and Germany, the conflict became a unifying factor that created a Syrian national identity among the diaspora where there wasn't one prior to 2011 (Ragab & Katbeh,

2017). While pre-conflict diaspora mobilization in Germany, as well as in other European countries, was mostly focused on the socio-cultural sphere, engagements became increasingly political. The impact that the civil war and this new political dimension had on the Syrian civil society in Germany has been ambivalent. On one hand, the desire for justice, democracy, and freedom brought together numerous Syrian organizations in Germany, regardless of their ethnic or religious identity. The Syrian community in Schleswig-Holstein (orig.: Syrische Gemeinde Schleswig-Holstein e.V.), for example, has included in their statutes that "Debates about political systems, governments, political parties, and minority issues in Syria and the world are not part of the community's purview" (orig.: Auseinandersetzungen über politische Systeme, Regierungen, politische Parteien und Minderheitsfragen in Syrien und der Welt gehören nicht zum Aufgabengebiet der Gemeinde) (Helberg, 2021). However, there was also polarization among Syrian organizations in Germany between the opposition and supporters of the Assad regime and conflicting visions on how peace can be achieved. Some organizations were solely founded on the premise of supporting the uprisings and took clear anti-regime stances. A prominent example is the initiative "Adopt a Revolution," which was created in 2011 by Syrian and German activists to support "civil self-organization against the Assad dictatorship and religious fanaticism" (Adopt a revolution, 2019). Statements and publications on its website and the name of the initiative itself leave no doubt about its political affiliation. On the other hand, several organizations appeared intertwined with the regime. Officially, most of these organizations distanced themselves from political or religious agendas but were perceived as the long arm of the Syrian state aiming to control Syrians abroad. In a study by Rabat (2021), many Syrians reported fearing for their families in Syria when engaging in civil society or activism due to a perceived presence of the Syrian intelligence services. One of the most prominent cases is that of the wife of exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Banan al-Tantawi, who was assassinated, allegedly mandated by the Syrian government, in her home in Aachen, Germany (Tsourapas, 2020). It can be argued that the intricate and conflict-laden relationship between the Syrian community and its home country also extends to civil society organizations. At the same time, the Syrian diaspora in Germany as well as worldwide, is known and praised for being socially and politically engaged, committed and active in the host countries as well as the country of origin (Kodmani & Jaber, 2018). In contrast to the Syrian community in Denmark, which, according to the findings of the study by Ragab and Katbeh (2017), is still in the process of defining and organizing itself, a vibrant and steadily expanding Syrian civil society has emerged in Germany in recent years. Indeed, Ragab (2021) identified a growth from 30 associations and initiatives in 2010 to 177 in the year 2021. Her report, commissioned by the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (orig.: Sachverständigenrats für Inegration und Migration), in which she maps the Syrian civil society in Germany, stands out as one of the few comprehensive publications

on this topic. Being the most recent, it will serve as the foundation for outlining the profile of the civil society. As of 2021, out of the 177 identified associations and initiatives, 84 of them have a website or some form of online presence, allowing for additional information to be gathered about them. Rabat classifies these 84 organizations based on their fields of engagement into the categories of 'development cooperation', 'humanitarian aid', 'culture/integration', 'human rights', and 'civil society and political education'. However, a clear allocation along these categories is challenging. This is partly due to organizations taking on different activities over the years. Ragab & Katbeh (2017) note that many diaspora organizations started at the kitchen table and have over time expanded their scope of work into new areas. Especially initiatives founded after the uprisings to exert political influence have, over the years, begun to offer services to support Syrian refugees arriving in Germany. In terms of the field of engagement Diaspora organizations can generally be characterized as highly volatile and dynamic, adapting to where help is currently needed. Furthermore, almost half of the organizations (44%) are active in multiple fields, making it difficult to distinctly assign them to one of the categories. More than half of the organizations (58%) are involved in promoting integration and culture, and around 37 percent are engaged in humanitarian assistance by collecting donations for individuals in Syria and neighboring countries or sending essential supplies such as clothing, baby food, medicines, and medical devices. Information regarding the organizational structures of associations and initiatives is primarily provided by a quantitative survey conducted by Impact in 2016. Since the study is not very recent, it can be assumed that the numbers are no longer accurate. However, the study undoubtedly adds value by indicating tendencies and trends. According to the findings, the majority of organizations, over 90 percent, relied heavily on volunteer work and funded their activities through membership fees and donations. The lack of human and financial resources makes it challenging for Syrian civil society organizations to professionalize their operations (Ragab & Katbeh, 2017). This situation can quickly become a vicious circle, as the difficulty in generating funding from public donors is worsened by the absence of institutionalization and professionalization in their work. Another aspect contributing to these challenges is the limited infrastructure and a lack of information on funding opportunities, along with high bureaucratic burdens. In response to this challenge, the Association of German-Syrian Aid Organizations (orig.: Verband Deutsch-Syrischer Hilfsvereine, VDHS) was established in 2013 as the recognized umbrella organization for Syrian associations in Germany. Currently encompassing 35 associations, the *VDSH* and its member organizations claim to be politically independent, aligning themselves with a broad secular-democratic movement that is open to all, regardless of gender or ethnic and religious background. The thematic focuses of the *VDSH* include 'Political Education & Participation', 'Transcultural Society', 'Social Cohesion & Welfare', 'Antiracism & Anti-discrimination', 'Humanitarian Aid', 'Development Cooperation', 'Identity/Diaspora/Syria'.

5.2 International vs. Diaspora Response

This section will analyze the humanitarian assistance led by traditional humanitarian actors on one hand and diaspora organizations on the other, particularly regarding its challenges. It should be noted that neither diaspora organizations nor international organizations are homogeneous groups. Instead, actors within the same group may employ different approaches and methods. For example, while both belong to the international response, some INGOs do not operate across lines at all, whereas the UN does. For the sake of clarity, these two broad categories will be compared, but it will be acknowledged that nuances exist within them.

5.2.1 Access

The humanitarian obligation necessitates providing assistance wherever it is required is crucial for fulfilling that responsibility (Shah & Dalton, 2019). Yet, the dilemma of reaching the most vulnerable has remained the primary challenge in humanitarian operations within Syria. There are two main factors hindering that aid reaches where it is needed: firstly, the Syrian conflict's fragmented nature, characterized by shifting frontlines and volatility, and secondly, restrictions on access and diversion of aid. This section will examine both aspects and their role in shaping the operational context for THAs and DOs in aid delivery. Based on my analysis of eight diaspora organizations, I suggest that diaspora organizations have both inherent and cultivated advantages in navigating and managing these challenges.

5.2.1.1 Fragmentation: a Barrier to Aid Delivery

Due to years of conflict, Syria's terrain has become highly fragmented, with divisions not only between government-controlled and opposition-held areas but also within the opposition. Over the past decade, the frontlines have undergone constant shifts. In fact, at least 56% of Syrian communities, including neighborhoods in major cities, have transitioned control at least once throughout the conflict. These changes in territory often come with escalations of violence, leading to casualties, infrastructure destruction, and the creation of new grievances. Understanding which communities have experienced frontline movements is crucial for comprehending the movement of internally displaced persons and for guiding aid relief efforts as well as devising appropriate strategies for aid delivery (The Carter Center, 2020).

The fragmentation and unpredictability of territorial control have posed significant challenges to the delivery of aid, making it both difficult and dangerous. Aid organizations often struggle with determining whom to negotiate access with and whether any agreements reached will be upheld. (Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015). Access agreements extended to them are typically viewed as provisional measures since the entities in control of areas can change over time. The notion by Kool at al. (2021) regarding humanitarian micro-spaces as fluid, dynamic, and overlapping relief arenas is highly accurate, as these spaces constantly shift and overlap, requiring continuous negotiation and renegotiation. This also increases the risk for aid organizations to become embroiled in the politics and internal conflicts of armed actors.

In a panel discussion hosted by ODI (2015), Svoboda reports that in 2014, it once took approximately 16 days to travel from the Turkish border to Homs, a distance of 300km, due to numerous checkpoints that needed to be negotiated. Certainly, these challenges are difficult for both international and diaspora organizations. For instance, DSV reported that during a delivery to Homs and Damascus, they encountered a delay of three days at the Turkish-Syrian border because the authorities did not allow passage. However, diaspora groups often possess local knowledge of power dynamics and terrain, which enables them to navigate the complex landscape of actors more effectively. As checkpoints and frontlines can change, and many members of the diaspora have not been in the country for years, they depend on their local networks to provide information on which routes to avoid. For the same purpose, the UN has established humanitarian access working groups (HAWG) to serve as a forum for sharing information about access challenges and discussing the experiences of the UN and NGOs in addressing them. However, the HAWG in Syria has faced criticism for its exclusive membership.

Furthermore, Members of DOs often come from the same communities as armed actors and are therefore in a privileged position to negotiate access. Despite the negative public perception of armed groups in Syria, many allow humanitarian aid into their controlled areas, especially those with connections to the local population rather than foreign fighters. An exception was ISIS, which allegedly showed no interest in any form of negotiation, regardless of the character of humanitarian organizations. Nevertheless, the presence of ISIS in Syria has since diminished significantly.

In opposition-held territories, access is primarily determined by two factors: firstly, an organization's ability to gain acceptance by establishing networks and demonstrating trustworthiness, and secondly, negotiations with local authorities (Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015). The linguistic, cultural, bureaucratic familiarity, along with extensive personal networks, provide advantages in both aspects for DO members in comparison to international organizations. By showing respect for cultural traditions and practices, diaspora organizations are better positioned

to negotiate with local leaders. In many instances, they collaborate with local councils and decision-makers. For example, the diaspora organization HHC reports that it, in partnership with a local counterpart, negotiated a land use agreement with the local self-government to construct shelters for internally displaced persons. Similarly, the diaspora organization DSV collaborated with the local municipal council of the city of Al Bab for a project (Appendix B, p. 52). Additionally, MEHAD initiated a rehabilitation project in coordination with local authorities. While Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and de-facto authorities (DFAs) hold considerable sway over humanitarian access, traditional humanitarian actors may be unwilling to cooperate or negotiate with them to protect the humanitarian principle of neutrality. For instance, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), among the numerous NSAGs operating in Idlib and northern Aleppo, has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United Nations and several countries (Holtz, 2023). Furthermore, engaging with local authorities in opposition-held territories could be perceived as a violation of Syria's sovereignty. In fact, in 2015, the government expelled two foreign UN workers for engaging in negotiations to secure humanitarian access with rebel groups in Aleppo labeled as 'terrorists' in Aleppo (Wieland, 2021).

In addition to obtaining approval from local authorities, gaining acceptance from the affected population is crucial. In many communities, DOs can rely on long-lasting and trustworthy relationships. Moreover, they often find it easier to establish new contacts and build relationships for several reasons. Besides sharing a linguistic and cultural background, most of the investigated DOs began their activities immediately after the outbreak of the civil war. The networks they have since developed have been strengthened by their commitment and on-the-ground presence. For example, the organization MEHAD states: "Our dedication to the lives and future of the civilian population allows us to establish trusting relationships with local and international actors, as well as with the population" (orig.: unsere Hingabe für das Leben und die Zukunft der zivilen Bevölkerung erlauben es uns, vertrauensvolle Beziehungen mit lokalen und internationalen Akteuren, sowie mit der Bevölkerung aufzubauen und zu erhalten, Appendix B, p. 131). Another factor contributing to the acceptance of DOs is their active engagement and collaboration with the local community on equal terms. For instance, both the chairman and individual members of DSV have visited the area multiple times in recent years, engaging in personal conversations with those in need, as well as with doctors and hospital staff (Appendix B, p. 68). Similarly, MEHAD lists addressing the needs of the local population as one of its goals. This not only helps build trust and acceptance within the communities but also facilitates information exchange. DSV highlights that through strong contacts and regular information exchange between association members and Syrians living in the war zone and border region, the demand for humanitarian aid measures can be accurately determined (Appendix B, p. 53).

It should be noted that the Syrian background of DO members can both open and close doors. Due to hostilities along the dimensions of ethnicity and religion, as well as the increasing demonization of other groups, diasporans may become targets because of their own identity. In theory, international staff may not be as affected by such hostilities as they are generally perceived as foreign outsiders. In practice, however, INGOs in Syria, particularly in North Syria, apply a remote management modality due to access restrictions and security concerns for international staff (Howe & Stites, 2019). Effectively, this means that risks are transferred to local NGOs. This often results in implementing partners feeling a lack of trust towards INGOs and being hesitant to report information about their work on the ground, fearing potential repercussions. In particular, there is a risk that regime forces or their affiliates may perceive collaboration with international organizations, without government permits, as a form of disloyalty and retaliate against local staff and partners (Tateyama, 2018). While remote management practices are often tied to the localization agenda, it can be argued that it hinders local empowerment more than it supports it. Generally, decision-making and control remain within IOs, while risks are being transferred to local partners. Often, local organizations don't feel like partners on equal footing but service-providers. As Svoboda and Pantuliano (2015) point out "the formal humanitarian sector finds it extremely difficult to establish genuine, inclusive partnerships" (iii). DOs, in contrast, implement projects in collaboration with partners on the ground. For example, MEHAD declares that it "follows an approach of collaboration, co-creation, and joint endeavor with local actors" (orig.: "MEHAD verfolgt einen Ansatz der Zusammenarbeit, der Mitgestaltung und der gemeinsamen Schaffung mit lokalen Akteuren, Appendix, p. 151).

5.2.1.2 Access Restrictions and Aid Diversion

Access to affected populations is crucial for delivering humanitarian aid in Syria, yet this process has been politicized and manipulated by both state and non-state actors since the conflict began (Shah & Dalton, 2019). There are two ways of delivering aid to Syria, either through cross-line operations, which involve delivering aid from Damascus to different areas of control, or through cross-border operations (Hall, 2021). International humanitarian actors and diaspora groups differ significantly in their approaches to aid delivery, as the former initially channeled their efforts through Damascus, while the latter has been consistently and exclusively operating cross-border. The following section will provide context and explore the different approaches and their implications. I argue that, due to both political and legal rules that the UN subjects to, the UN-led response is, in contrast to the

diaspora response, more vulnerable to external actors diverting, obstructing and restricting its aid, ultimately reducing its effectivity.

In spring 2012, as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) commenced efforts to provide aid to Syria, the Syrian government required OCHA to centralize all operations in Damascus. Additionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mandated that all humanitarian agencies operate under either the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) or the Syria Trust for Development. Both organizations had longstanding affiliations with the Syrian state apparatus, with the latter being run by Bashar al-Assad's wife, and were required to stay within the regime's red lines. However, given OCHA's mandate, which stipulates that "humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country" (OCHA, 2012) and its need for access, it agreed to Assad's terms. By agreeing to this arrangement, OCHA effectively granted the Syrian regime – a party to the Syrian conflict – to control who receives relief, where, and when. Consequently, between 2012 and 2013, all UN aid, totaling \$1.2 billion, was directed exclusively to Damascus, enabling the regime to systematically divert significant portions of aid while withholding assistance from areas under opposition control. The regime employed various tactics to hinder aid efforts, such as refusing visas for relief personnel or confiscating items from authorized convoys. For instance, vegetable seeds intended for besieged areas where people faced starvation were seized, citing their potential for dual use, along with essential items like baby formula, surgical kits, insulin, and dialysis equipment. However, the regime didn't merely obstruct aid, it also exploited it for profit. Effectively, the Assad regime turned humanitarian assistance into a lucrative business model by imposing taxes on relief workers' salaries, mandating the use of services provided by regime-linked businessmen, and imposing arbitrary fees. Estimates suggest that in the initial years of the conflict, UN humanitarian spending in Syria amounted to approximately 35 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Wieland, 2021). In 2013, following the belated realization by the UN that the Assad regime would keep obstructing access to besieged areas, efforts were made to secure authorization for cross-border deliveries by the Security Council, thus circumventing the need for consent from Damascus. In 2014, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2165, enabling the passage of aid through four specified border crossings from Jordan, Türkiye and Iraq to reach people in need in the northwest and beyond. However, starting from January 2020, Russia has utilized veto threats to shorten the renewal period to six months and confine cross-border deliveries to a single point, claiming that the Syrian government is capable of managing deliveries (Sparrow, 2023).

The devastating earthquakes that struck Northwestern Syria, a region already grappling with significant humanitarian needs, in February 2023, revealed the shortcomings of the international response. With the only crossing authorized for humanitarian assistance blocked by earthquake damage, it took several days for international aid to reach those affected. In response, Assad agreed

to open two additional border crossing points to allow for a greater volume of emergency aid. The head of a Syrian opposition-run rescue group, the "White Helmets," criticized the United Nations for seeking authorization from Assad, calling the UN response "catastrophic" and said the body should "apologise to the Syrian people for the lack of help it provided" (Reuters, 2023).

The emergency response was primarily driven by local and diaspora organizations until UN aid arrived. Within hours after the first earthquakes, all of the analyzed diaspora groups initiated fundraising campaigns. Many activated and supported their local partners and networks on-site while also mobilizing relief supplies themselves. DSÄ and its local partner organization dispatched emergency teams to the affected areas to assist in rescue operations and the distribution of aid. Similarly, DSV promptly provided immediate on-the-ground emergency assistance through prepared teams (Appendix B, p. 28). The UN's inability to access those requiring assistance had once again proven to be detrimental. Throughout the conflict, the UN-led response has consistently fallen short in meeting humanitarian needs across the country, with funds often inadvertently supporting Assad's war efforts, leaving many Syrians unable to access essential assistance (Sparrow, 2023). The gap left by the limited international presence was almost immediately filled by both local and diaspora groups (Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015).

Especially from the onset of the conflict until Resolution 2165, affected populations in rebel-held areas were largely isolated from international aid, with limited presence of international aid agencies in those regions. Svoboda and Pantuliano (2015) emphasize that diaspora and local Syrian groups played a crucial role in the response, particularly in a context where access for international actors is significantly circumscribed. Similar to grassroots organizations, diaspora organizations often concentrate their efforts on opposition-held areas. Even prior to the earthquake, the examined organizations were primarily active in the northern regions of the country, particularly in Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, and Homs. Some argue that is because they are affiliated, albeit unofficially, with the opposition or are originally from those regions. However, the operational focus on northern Syria may also be justified by the vacuum of international aid despite significant needs, making the situation most critical in the country. Some diaspora organizations recognize the importance of locally organized assistance and their own responsibility in providing it. For instance, Barada states "One of our main focuses in our aid deliveries is the refugee camps in northern Syria, such as the Atmeh refugee camp. [...] International aid organizations are unable to reach these refugees because Atmeh is located within Syrian territory" (orig.: Die internationalen Hilfsorganisationen haben keinen Zugang zu diesen Flüchtlingen, denn Athme liegt auf syrischen Boden, Appendix B, p. 9). MEHAD and DFÄ also acknowledge that many regions in northern Syria are hard to reach due to political factors as well as widespread destruction. To access affected populations in those areas, they have established mobile clinics (Appendix B, p. 139, p. 80). It should be noted that despite

their focus on Northern Syria, diaspora organizations operate across various regions throughout the country. Except for Manzoul, which states that it has exclusively carried out relief efforts and projects in northern Syria, all organizations have also extended assistance to government-controlled areas, including those near Damascus.

The map displays all the locations where the eight examined diaspora organizations have delivered aid, including earthquake relief efforts.

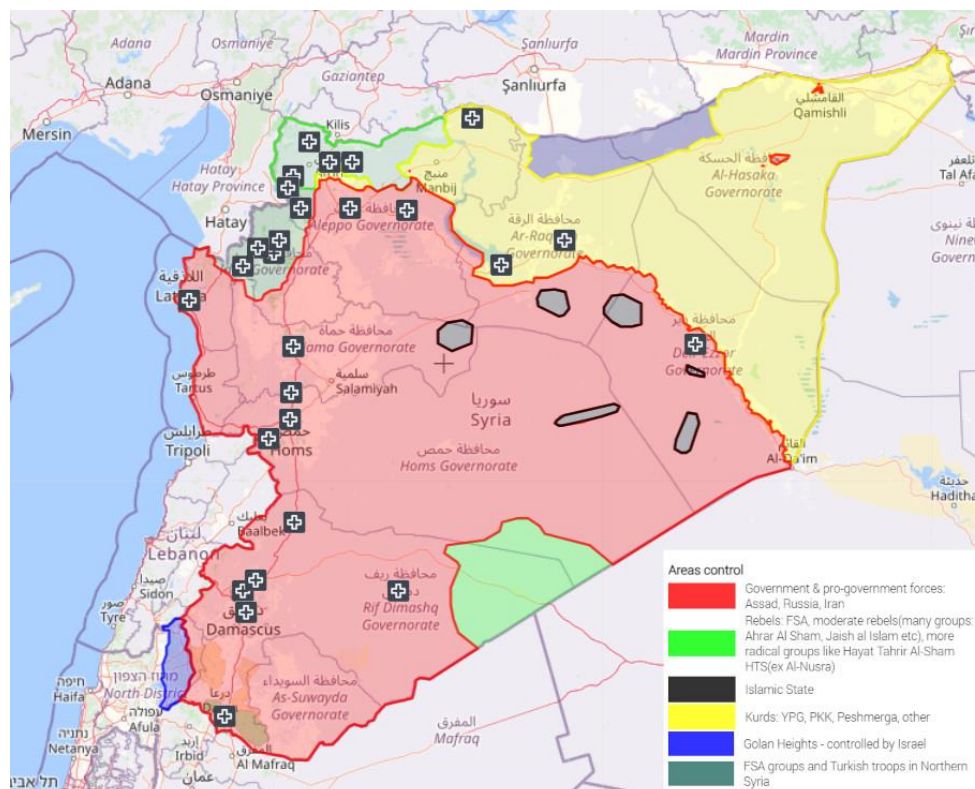


Figure 3. Map of operations¹ by Barada Syrienhilfe, DSF, DSV, DSÄ, Homs League Abroad, HHC, Manzoul in Syria. Adapted from: Live map. Locations added by the author.

In contrast to UN organizations and their partners, local organizations do not necessarily have to respect Syria's sovereignty, allowing them to deliver aid cross-border since the conflict's outset (Tateyama, 2018). However, the shortcomings of the international response cannot be solely attributed to Resolution 46/182 of 1991, which established the principle of sovereignty respect. Firstly, UN agencies on the ground have faced criticism from diplomats and NGOs alike for opting for the easier path of deploying their resources in areas where access was approved by the government. The UN has been accused of not negotiating vigorously enough to access hard-to-reach areas. Instead, it allows the regime to dictate terms for aid delivery. For example, in 2015,

¹ Locations include Afrin, Aleppo, Al-Rastan, Al Tabqah, Arihah, Azaz, Bab Al-Hawa, Binnish, Daraa, Deir Ezzour, Deir Hafer, Ein Shib, Ghouta, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Jindires, Jisr al-Shughur, Kobani, Latakia, Raqqa, Reef Damascus, Salqin, Sarmada, Talbisah, Yabroud.

nearly 75 percent of UN aid delivery requests were ignored by the government, with only half of the remaining requests successfully reaching their intended destinations (Wieland, 2021).

In many instances, international humanitarian actors have not adequately fulfilled their obligations as their mission would have required. Human Rights Watch (2019) concluded in its study that due to severe government restrictions and a lack of initiative from certain individuals or organizations, international humanitarians have lowered their standards of engagement (Wieland, 2021).

The UN's efforts have become entangled in a quandary, whether to comply with Assad's conditions or cease operations entirely. For access to government-controlled areas, maintaining at least some cooperation with the regime is crucial. However, when it comes to cross-border operations, the UN's ability to act is contingent upon authorization from the Security Council. Therefore, the decision on whether and how the UN can operate is influenced by entities engaged in the conflict, regardless of the modality it chooses.

While the UN maintains a clear stance against conducting cross-border operations without approval or consent from the government, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), among others, has argued that UN cross-border relief deliveries do not require permission from the Security Council. SNHR refers to international customary law, which mandates that all civilians have access to necessary assistance. Since the Syrian government has failed to ensure this access, the provision of aid by the UN is deemed lawful and does not constitute a violation of sovereignty (SNHR, 2023).

However, the context of aid delivery in Syria seems to go beyond legal regulations. It is also a matter of adhering to diplomatic protocol. The norms and regulations that guide but also hinder effective response by THA do not apply to diaspora organizations to the same extent. While often criticized for perceived lack of professionalism and transparency, diaspora groups collaborate with informal networks and partners, allowing them to operate without drawing significant attention from the government (DEMAC, 2016). Many diaspora organizations of the study mentioned their collaboration with local partners but refrained from providing specific names or further information. One reason for this discretion could be to safeguard these organizations and facilitate aid delivery with minimal external interference. However, this remains speculative. Due to their low-profile nature, diaspora organizations are less likely to face political consequences when bypassing formal protocols and official procedures. As diaspora organizations do not route aid through Damascus and many of their members still hold Syrian passports, they are immune to certain tactics employed by the regime. However, it is important to acknowledge that opposition actors have also been accused of manipulating aid (Shah & Dalton, 2019).

5.2.2 Agility and Adaptability

The preceding section explained how external actors and factors impeded the UN's ability to reach populations affected by the earthquakes, resulting in a delayed and insufficient response. This part will take a different perspective, focusing on internal procedures rather than external factors to explain the inadequate response. It will discuss the ability of both THA and DOs to adapt to changing circumstances, emerging threats and needs.

Besides the Syrian regime, which has been discussed in detail, Haid (2023) highlights the UN's bureaucracy as a factor slowing down rescue efforts in affected regions. This criticism is not new and applies to the overall response in Syria and other crisis contexts, too. The UN's struggle to promptly adapt to ground needs and modify strategies due to its bureaucratic processes, centralized decision-making, and donor accountability has been widely discussed (Spiegel, 2017). The UN bureaucracy faced particular criticism in the aftermath of the earthquake for hindering its ability to explore alternative solutions. For instance, UN agencies had the option to opt for smaller vehicles over large trucks which would have allowed for easier navigation of roads and faster aid delivery. Even when deliveries were resumed, UN agencies didn't adapt the supplies to address the evolving needs of the affected population but continued to dispatch the standardized supplies, including food and hygiene kits (Haid, 2023). The agility of the diaspora response notably contrasts with that of the UN, which was constrained by bureaucracy and centralized decision-making. Although DOs have significantly fewer resources compared to international actors, they strive to find innovative solutions and make use of the resources available to them. For instance, HHC coordinated with a local partner to arrange for warm meals to be cooked for earthquake victims at a restaurant provided for their use (Appendix B, p. 49). Additionally, the earthquake incident illustrates the dedication and support provided by DOs at every stage of disaster relief. After the initial emergency response, several diaspora organizations remained in the area to contribute to the reconstruction efforts. Just a few months after the earthquake, DSV initiated funding for repairing damaged residences and constructing new ones. MEHAD also committed to providing support for the reconstruction of damaged homes. It assembled an engineering committee to conduct a detailed assessment of the houses on-site, aiming to carry out the reconstruction process as efficiently as possible (Appendix B, p. 147). In doing so, the organization, which primarily provides healthcare assistance, expands its activities and adapts to meet the needs of the population.

Beyond earthquake relief efforts, DOs have responded quickly and effectively to emergencies. Following a chemical attack in 2013, a volunteer from DSV organized medications in Germany and flew with 250kg of medicine in twelve suitcases to Jordan. From there, they traveled to the Syrian

border and handed over the delivery to partners on the ground (Appendix B, p. 66). Overall, the DOs in the study have shown considerable flexibility and responsiveness to the needs and circumstances on the ground. This often required finding innovative solutions that are feasible within the context of the affected individuals and the security situation. For example, when one of the hospitals overseen by DSV came under attack, it was temporarily relocated to Idlib (Appendix B, p.51). In comparison to THAs, diaspora organizations have fewer resources, yet they are highly resourceful. HHC states that donations are directed entirely to crisis areas (Appendix B, p. 100), and Barada ensures that donations reach affected individuals directly through a personal network (Appendix B, p. 12). This is possible due to many organizations being largely run by volunteers.

5.2.3 Commitment to Humanitarian Principles

The ability to gain humanitarian access, as discussed in Chapter 3, is tied to the adherence to humanitarian principles. In theory, upholding the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence enables humanitarian actors to gain access and deliver aid effectively and safely. Diaspora organizations are frequently perceived as lacking neutrality, impartiality, and independence due to their close personal connections to the cause, the people, and the politics in the country. Formal humanitarian actors, too, have been accused of compromising on humanitarian principles in the context of the Syrian conflict. This section analyses the commitment of both diaspora actors and formal humanitarian actors to the three principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence, deriving from the principle of humanity, and the challenges they may encounter in delivering principled aid in Syria.

5.2.3.1 *Neutrality*

The principle of neutrality, requiring humanitarian actors to refrain from taking sides in both speech and action, has been the most contested of the humanitarian principles. Due to the complex nature of Syria's conflict, involving numerous conflict parties, including the regime, maintaining neutrality in practice is seen as impossible to achieve. In navigating the fragmented military and political landscape of Syria, humanitarian actors are required to make exclusive decisions regarding whom to collaborate with and whom not. As those military and political actors have their own political agendas, the practice of negotiating with them highlights the inherently political nature of humanitarian aid (Kool et al., 2021). The ICRC is one of the rare exceptions with enough bargaining

power to enforce conditions such as collaborating with multiple belligerents simultaneously. Despite its consistent efforts to engage with all parties, there are organizations unwilling to cooperate with the ICRC. In the Syrian context, the majority of traditional humanitarian actors are faced with what Wieland (2021) refers to as the 'neutrality trap'. It refers to the dilemma donors face regarding whether to fund humanitarian assistance if it is misused or manipulated on a large scale, effectively becoming a political and economic tool wielded by a government against its own people.

Although in theory, principled aid should grant access, many THAs in Syria deem it necessary to engage with the regime, thereby sacrificing neutrality and impartiality, in order to secure access (Meininghaus & Kühn, 2018). In accordance with Assad's conditions, organizations registered in Damascus must cooperate with SARC. However, given SARC's obligation to show absolute and unconditional loyalty to the regime during the war, it can be argued that SARC is anything but neutral in this conflict (Wieland, 2021). Effectively, this arrangement also restricts organizations' ability to interact with other parties in the conflict, whom Assad typically refers to as 'terrorists'. Humanitarian organizations operate in government-held territories under a memorandum of understanding with the Syrian government, which prohibits them from operating in opposition-held areas and vice versa. (Kool et al. 2021).

According to Wieland (2021), the neutrality trap snaps when interventions inadvertently prolong the war and exacerbate overall suffering. Given the asymmetry of this conflict, where the Syrian army is believed to be responsible for roughly 88% of all casualties as of 2020, it can be assumed that funds flowing through Damascus have substantiated Assad's rule and war efforts. Ironically, as Sparrow (2018) points out, the entities enforcing sanctions against the Syrian regime—the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom—while vehemently criticizing its actions, have also been the biggest funders of the humanitarian response. Diaspora organizations, on the other hand, have a reputation of being "amalgamated with the opposition, regardless of their stance" (Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015, p. 15). None of the organizations included in the study disclose engagement with political or military actors in Syria. Considering their cross-border operations, it can be assumed that they do not cooperate with the regime. While Barada and Manzoul refrain from making any statements regarding political affiliation, DSF (Appendix B, p. 16), DSV (Appendix B, p. 26), and Homs League Abroad (Appendix B, p. 96) assert that they are non-political and politically independent organizations. Furthermore, MEHAD emphasizes that it is committed to the principles of medical ethics and neutrality (Appendix B, p. 131). While HHC does not explicitly mention political affiliation, it specifies that aid is provided regardless of political affiliation (Appendix B, p. 100). This seems to be a common pattern among the analyzed organizations. While they may not consider the political affiliation of affected populations when providing assistance, they may still position themselves politically as many organizations adopt a clear anti-regime

stance. For instance, DSF, which self-proclaims to be politically independent, states on its website, "The dictatorial regime of President Bashar Al-Assad acts with utmost brutality and extreme ruthlessness against the peacefully protesting population (orig.: Das diktatorische Regime von Präsident Bashar Al-Assad geht mit größtmöglicher Brutalität und äußerst skrupellos gegen die friedlich demonstrierende Bevölkerung vor, Appendix B, p. 15). Similarly, DSÄ openly condemns the "brutal, murderous war [of the government against] the Syrian people fighting for freedom and dignity." (orig.: brutaler, mörderischer Krieg [der Regierung gegen] das für Freiheit und Würde kämpfende syrische Volk, Appendix B, p. 77). It also calls on the German government to exert pressure against the Syrian regime. DSÄ goes as far as labeling the war a "genocide" (Appendix B, p. 89). Through these advocacy engagements, both organizations clearly violate the principle of neutrality, rendering their claims of being non-political organizations empty words.

In the case of other organizations, assessing political neutrality becomes more challenging as they employ implicit and subtle criticism, particularly through the use of connotative terms. As an example, Barada mentions "bloody battles and bombardments" (orig.: blutige Kämpfen und Bombardements, Appendix B, p. 3) without directly referencing the regime. MEHAD stresses it as its obligation to condemn the unacceptable events in Syria, including the killings of doctors, nurses, midwives, and other medical professionals, without explicitly attributing responsibility for these murders (Appendix B, p. 142). Terms such as "revolution" or "siege" also imply an affiliation with the opposition, and many other statements fall into a gray area of neutrality. However, discussing the war itself should not necessarily constitute a violation of the principle, as long as no explicit judgments are made.

5.2.3.2 Impartiality

The Syrian government's interference in the international humanitarian response has often and significantly breached the principle of impartiality. Internal procedures for reviewing UN-OCHA aid convoy requests have enabled Damascus to exert influence over access and the types of aid provided (Albonni et al., 2021). Hence, especially during the initial three years of the conflict, aid distribution was primarily determined by political affiliation and geographical location rather than humanitarian need. Furthermore, The UN has accepted that it cannot independently assess humanitarian need in areas under regime control. Instead, these assessments and other monitoring activities are conducted by regime officials or affiliated individuals (Meininghaus & Kühn, 2018). These compromises have severely impacted the UN's ability to effectively assist those in need. Diaspora organizations, on the contrary, have been active across the country since the onset of the

conflict. Their assistance is thought to be shaped not by external influences, but rather by the organization's ideology and the interests and backgrounds of its members (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2015). With the exception of Manzoul and Homs League Abroad, all organizations declare their commitment to distributing aid solely based on need, without regard to religion, political affiliation, or ethnicity. Barada notes at this point that the association itself comprises Christians and Muslims, and this diversity serves as the guiding principle of their work, encompassing people of all religions (Appendix B, p. 3). As recipients of their aid, almost all organizations refer to the "suffering Syrian population," suggesting a universal rather than personal reference. DSÄ supports the statement of delivering aid based on needs by conducting assessments in the affected areas (Appendix B, p. 78). However, assessing religious impartiality is challenging in some instances. For example, DSV has been organizing Ramadan initiatives, supplying meals to families for breaking their fasts. It is unclear if affiliation with Islam is a requirement for receiving food. Moreover, the organization has collected Zakat donations, distributed to individuals and families, which raises questions about impartiality, as only Muslims are eligible to receive Zakat (Appendix B, p. 39). In terms of favoritism based on political affiliation, it is noteworthy that a project by DSF focused on orphaned children "whose parents have been killed or gone missing due to the brutal actions of the Syrian regime" (orig.: deren Eltern durch das brutale Vorgehen des syrischen Regimes ums Leben gekommen oder vermisst sind, Appendix B, p. 21). In summary, favoritism among the studied DOs, if it occurs, appears to be primarily driven by religious and political affiliations, rather than ethnicity.

Regarding the assistance provided by THAs, regional factors appeared to be more influential, primarily due the interference by the Syrian regime.

5.2.3.3 Independence

As discussed previously, the oversight and interference by the regime, along with the obligatory cooperation with the government-affiliated organization SARC, raise concerns about the independence of operations by THAs. In this context, the role of donors of humanitarian assistance is not as significant as the engagement with actors who have a stake in the outcome of the conflict, whether directly or indirectly, politically, economically, or militarily. These engagements make THAs vulnerable to instrumentalization (Wieland, 2021). Among the diaspora organizations studied, there are varying degrees of transparency regarding funders and partners. This information is notably absent in the case of Homs League Abroad. On their website, the organization has displayed logos of 18 partners without linking or providing names or details. Seven of these partners could not be identified through online searches. For others, there was minimal information available, insufficient

to rule out religious, political, and military connections. In stark contrast, HHC is part of the Initiative Transparent Civil Society (orig.: Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft), which mandates the public disclosure of funding sources. Similarly, DSV, which acknowledges its commitment to independence on its website, has published its annual financial reports (Appendix B, p. 53). Furthermore, it asserts, "We operate from a sense of social responsibility and interculturalism, remaining independent from political parties and religious communities" (orig.: Wir arbeiten aus sozialer Verantwortung und interkulturell und sind dabei von Parteien und Religionsgemeinschaften unabhängig, Appendix B, p. 73). None of the partners and funders of the other organizations, except for Homs League Abroad where clarity is lacking, were found to have connections to the conflict. Notably, DSV and MEHAD receive support from German organizations, including ministries

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the analysis demonstrate that both groups of humanitarian actors encounter various challenges, although not necessarily the same ones, when delivering aid. This chapter will assess whether the findings support the hypotheses and will discuss and contextualize the results within the theoretical and conceptual discussions presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

The findings indicate that, although access presents challenges for both groups, diaspora organizations generally enjoy better access. Thus, the first hypothesis can be confirmed. Their comparative advantage lies in their cultural and social capital, which enables them to establish trust and collaborate with various stakeholders and partners across the country. Consistent with the findings of ICMPD (2021) and Brinkerhoff (2011), as presented in section 3.2.2, diaspora organizations appear to foster enduring, equitable partnerships characterized by shared risks and decision-making. Conversely, the partnerships engaged in by THA through remote management modalities seem to involve risk transfer, with THA retaining decision-making control. Given these considerations, one could argue that diasporas are the true drivers of localization agenda, embodying the values of collaboration and local empowerment. These partnerships also challenge colonial practices inherent in hierarchical North-South cooperation, as briefly discussed in Chapter 3.2. Nevertheless, as professionalism and isomorphism gradually increase, there is a possibility that DOs may transition from being seen as 'us' to being perceived as 'them'. This shift could diminish their local credibility and expose them to resentment and jealousy from their origin communities due to increased authority and influence (Brinkerhoff, 2011).

Furthermore, the findings show that, in contrast to formal humanitarian organizations, diaspora organizations may diverge from established protocols and operate outside official structures. While

international organizations are typically required to register in Damascus to operate in government-held regions, DOs operate across the country without complying with Assad's requirement. As seen in the case of the Nicaraguan diaspora during the political crisis of 2018, who maintained informality and a low profile due to the government's often hostile attitude and policies, as discussed in Chapter X, DOs are significantly less vulnerable to government control or risk when operating rather informally. However, Sezgin and Dijkzeul (2015) note that the Syrian government's suspicion of DOs is also increasing. Therefore, it is uncertain whether DOs will be able to operate without attracting the attention of the regime in the future. While the decision to circumvent Assad's terms may seem like a political choice, I argue that complying with them is, in fact, the political decision. Diaspora organizations fulfill their mandate by providing aid solely based on need, without being bound by requirements regarding where, how, and to whom aid is delivered. On the contrary, the UN is criticized for transforming a humanitarian issue into a political one by seeking permission from the government or Security Council.

The analyzed organizations demonstrate significantly greater adaptability and agility compared to formal humanitarian actors. Therefore, the second hypothesis can also be confirmed. This contrast was evident in the response to the earthquake, where DOs promptly mobilized funds and supplies to the affected region, while UN convoys took days to arrive. Because DOs receive partial funding from membership fees, these funds are not strictly allocated to specific projects, granting them greater flexibility in redirecting funding as needed. The flexibility of DOs is largely possible because they operate on a smaller scale and are not highly institutionalized. If they were to scale up and professionalize, they could potentially lose this flexibility as processes become more bureaucratic. This is one reason why DOs may be hesitant to scale up and professionalize. In line with Shabaka's findings (2021) that diaspora activities often span the entire humanitarian-development spectrum, encompassing preparedness, response, and recovery, the studied DOs provided both emergency relief and support for reconstruction efforts.

The evaluation and comparison of the commitment to humanitarian principles by both groups has proven most difficult. While there is empirical evidence of occasions where international actors have violated these principles, the examination of DOs only provides insight into their commitment in rhetoric rather than their actual implementation and adherence to these principles. Therefore, determining whether diaspora organizations genuinely adhere to these principles is challenging. However, most organizations studied aspire to do so. Based on this premise, the hypothesis must be rejected. The study indicates that diaspora organizations endorse the principles, although it is unclear to what extent they implement them. The focus of diaspora organizations on vulnerable people, particularly within refugee shelters, suggests adherence to the humanitarian imperative. Moreover, their operation across the country implies that it is not solely targeted towards aid

delivery for a specific community. In any case, the findings refute the notion of FHOs as "neutral outsiders." By engaging with the Assad regime and abiding to its rules, international humanitarian actors have compromised on the humanitarian principles. Yet, it is crucial to differentiate between political intent, which should be avoided, and political impact, which at times is inevitable (Wieland, 2021). Traditional humanitarian actors do not deliberately choose to violate humanitarian principles, but rather, the interference of the Syrian regime in aid matters leads to compromises of these principles. They have accepted this trade-off. There are different possible takeaways from this. One way is to interpret this as a failure of principled aid. Alternatively, we recognize that in complex contexts like Syria, it may not be possible to strictly adhere to humanitarian principles in a dogmatic and universal manner. Consequently, this suggests that international organizations are being hypocritical in their accusations against diaspora humanitarians for their supposed lack of adherence. Regardless, transparency and taking responsibility for mistakes are crucial.

Chapter 3 discusses how the inclusion of non-traditional humanitarian actors in the humanitarian system poses challenges in maintaining coherence in guidelines and principled aid, given that these emerging actors may have divergent motivations and approaches. The study shows that the challenge of principled aid is not inherent to non-traditional actors but a challenge that traditional actors of the humanitarian system are struggling with, too. Indeed, the organizations under study demonstrate a willingness to adapt to traditional humanitarian actors and to adopt elements of their culture, principles, language, and practices.

7. Conclusion

The research question guiding this work focused on understanding how humanitarian assistance led by diasporas differs from that provided by formal humanitarian actors. Through a qualitative case study focused on responses to the Syrian crisis, valuable insights have been gained regarding the distinct approaches, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses inherent in both forms of humanitarian action.

The results indicate that traditional humanitarian actors encounter several challenges in the Syrian context, such as access restrictions and interference by the Syrian regime in aid distribution, which are comparatively less pronounced for diaspora groups. This does not imply that diaspora organizations are exempt from these challenges. Rather, their local knowledge and networks assist them in navigating and mitigating some of these obstacles. Adhering to humanitarian principles in a complex and fragmented context like Syria poses a challenge for both groups of actors. Traditional humanitarian assistance becomes politicized due to their engagement with the Assad regime, while

for diaspora humanitarians, it is their advocacy against his regime that raises questions about neutrality.

Nonetheless, both groups share the aspiration to uphold humanitarian principles and recognize their importance. The commitment to these principles serves as common ground and offers a foundation for collaboration between the two groups. Given their distinct strengths and challenges, combining forces and collaborating can enhance the overall humanitarian response in Syria. This collaboration is particularly crucial as the conflict shows no signs of resolution.

While the organizations examined in this study didn't display significant differences in their ethical conduct and adherence to traditional humanitarian guidelines, it's crucial to acknowledge that these eight organizations aren't fully representative of Syrian diaspora organizations overall, nor do they represent diaspora organizations in Germany. Affiliated with VDSH, they have access to a network of political representatives and donors, and to workshops and consultations focused on professionalization, funding applications, strategy development and communication. These workshops educate diaspora organizations on the language and practices of traditional humanitarianism (see section 4.1.2.4). Due to these limitations in representativeness, future research could encompass a larger sample of diaspora organizations, including those with diverse formal structures and institutionalizations. This could involve organizations mobilizing resources without formal registration or online presence, thus offering a more comprehensive understanding of diaspora-led humanitarian efforts.

Additional research could delve into other entities within the category of non-traditional humanitarian actors, such as private military and security companies or faith-based humanitarianism. It could be analyzed whether relief efforts and forms of assistance, e.g. cash-transfers, vary among these groups.

Bibliography

Afsal, K., & Reshmi, R. S. (2023). Diaspora Philanthropy: A Study of Diaspora-Funded Philanthropic Organizations' Activities in the Health Sector of Kerala, India. *Global Social Welfare*, 1-17.

Agunias, D. R., & Newland, K. (2012). Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva; Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Washington, DC.

Agunias, D. R., & Newland, K. (2015). Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development. In *IOM*. <https://publications.iom.int/books/developing-road-map-engaging-diasporas-development-handbook-policymakers-and-practitioners>

Ahmed, I. (2000) Remittances and their economic impact in post-war Somaliland. *Disasters*, 24(4), 380-389.

Albonni, M., Gardiner, M., & Jeffrey, J. F. (2021, July 8). *Damascus' Weaponization of Humanitarian Aid Should be the Focus of Upcoming UN Cross-Border Resolution Debate*. Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/damascus-weaponization-humanitarian-aid-should-be-focus-upcoming-un-cross-border-resolution>

ALNAP (2022) The State of the Humanitarian System. *ALNAP Study*. London: ALNAP/ODI.

Aloudat, T., & Khan, T. (2022). Decolonising humanitarianism or humanitarian aid?. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 2(4), e0000179.

Barnett, Michael (2009): Evolution Without Progress? Humanitarianism in a World of Hurt. In: *International Organization*, Volume 63, Issue 04, 621-663

Barnett, Michael (2011): Empire of humanity: A History of Humanitarianism. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

BBC News. (2021, February 24). Jamal Khashoggi: All you need to know about Saudi journalist's death. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45812399>

Bernhard, S., & Röhrer, S. (2022). Arbeitsintegrationsverläufe syrischer Geflüchteter in Deutschland—Eine Typologie der Bedingungen und Wechselwirkungen im Zeitverlauf. *Sozialer Fortschritt*, (2), 79-96.

Bettin, G., Presbitero, A. F., & Spatafora, N. L. (2017). Remittances and vulnerability in developing countries. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 31(1), 1-23.

Bevölkerungsgruppe. Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren, 61, 2-6. <https://doi.org/10.15464/isi.61.2019.2-6>

Bieling, H. J., & Huke, N. (2020). Nach dem „Sommer der Willkommenskultur“: Teilhabekonflikte in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft. *Migration und Teilhabe*, 108.

Blondel, J. L. (1991). The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent: Their Origin and Development. *International Review of the Red Cross* (1961-1997), 31(283), 349-357.

Bourne, R. (1916). Trans-National America. *Atlantic monthly*, 118(1), 86-97.

- bpb. (2023, May 12). *Länderprofil Migration - Deutschland*. bpb.de.
<https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/laenderprofile/deutschland/>
- Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2011). David and Goliath: Diaspora organizations as partners in the development industry. *Public Administration and Development*, 31(1), 37-49.
- Brković, Č. (2016). Scaling humanitarianism: Humanitarian actions in a Bosnian town. *Ethnos*, 81(1), 99-124.
- Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 28(1), 1-19.
- Brun, C., & Horst, C. (2023). Towards a Conceptualisation of Relational Humanitarianism. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, 5(1), 62-72.
- Bryant, J. (2019). Remittances in humanitarian crises.
- Carpi, E., & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2020). Keeping the faith? Examining the roles of faith and secularism in Syrian diaspora organizations in Lebanon. In *Diaspora organizations in international affairs*. Taylor & Francis.
- Center for Disaster Philanthropy. (2023, December 15). Syria Humanitarian Crisis. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/syria-humanitarian-crisis/#:~:text=The%20Syrian%20complex%20humanitarian%20emergency,violations%20of%20international%20humanitarian%20law>
- Chatterjee, R. (2022, August 1). A crisis in human capital: Understanding the Indian brain drain. *The BPR*. <https://www.bostonpoliticalreview.org/post/a-crisis-in-human-capital-understanding-the-indian-brain-drain>
- Cohen, R. (2022). *Global diasporas: An introduction*. Routledge.
- De Haas, H. (2012). The migration and development pendulum: A critical view on research and policy. *International migration*, 50(3), 8-25.
- De Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative migration studies*, 9(1), 8.
- De Lauri, A., & Lauri, A. D. (2020). *Humanitarianism : keywords* /. Leiden; Boston: BRILL.
- Dean, R. (2015). Remittances to Syria. *What Works, Where and How, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oslo*.
- DEMAC (2016). *Diaspora Humanitarianism: Transnational Ways of Working* (European Union, EU: DEMAC Consortium), 10.
- DEMAC. (2023). *Diaspora Humanitarian Engagement in North-West Syria: Real-Time Review*. In DEMAC. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/diaspora-humanitarian-engagement-north-west-syria-real-time-review-enar>
- DEMAC. (n.d.). *About DEMAC*. <https://www.demac.org/about-us>
- Development Initiatives. (2023). *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023*. Retrieved from <https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2023>
- Dijkzeul, D., & Fauser, M. (2020). Introduction: Studying diaspora organizations in international affairs. In *Diaspora organizations in international affairs* (pp. 1-24). Routledge.

- Docquier, F., & Veljanoska, S. (2022). Brain Drain or Gain. *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, 1-27.
- Docquier, F., Lohest, O., & Marfouk, A. (2007). Brain drain in developing countries. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 21(2), 193-218.
- Eberwein, W. D., & Reinalda, B. (2015). A brief history of humanitarian actors and principles. In *The New Humanitarians in International Practice* (pp. 25-42). Routledge.
- Egeland, J., Harmer, A., & Stoddard, A. (2011). To Stay and Deliver Good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments. Geneva: OCHA.
- Eneh, S. C., Admad, S., Nazir, A., Onukansi, F. O., & Oluwatobi, A. (2023). Cholera outbreak in Syria amid humanitarian crisis: the epidemic threat, future health implications, and response strategy—a review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, 1161936.
- Fassin, D. (2011). Humanitarian reason: A moral history of the present. Univ of California Press.
- Ferris, E. (2011). Faith and humanitarianism: It's complicated. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(3), 606-625.
- Ford, R. S. (2019). The syrian civil war. *POLICY*.
- Gamlen, A. (2014). Diaspora institutions and diaspora governance. *International Migration Review*, 48(September), S180–S217.
- Gamlen, A. (2019). *Human geopolitics: States, emigrants, and the rise of diaspora institutions*. Oxford University Press.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for?. *American political science review*, 98(2), 341-354.
- Gordon, S., & Donini, A. (2015). Romancing principles and human rights: Are humanitarian principles salvageable?. *International review of the red cross*, 97(897-898), 77-109.
- Haid, H. (2023, February 14). *Syrian rescue efforts slowed by bureaucracy and regime*. Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank.
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/02/syrian-rescue-efforts-slowed-bureaucracy-and-regime>
- Hall, N. (2021). Implications of the UN Cross-Border Vote in Syria.
- Hammond, L. (2015). Diaspora returnees to Somaliland: heroes of development or job-stealing scoundrels. *Africa's return migrants: the new developers*, 44-63.
- Hanewinkel, V., & Oltmer, J. (2022, January 5). *Geschichte der Migration nach und aus Deutschland*. bpb.de. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/laenderprofile/deutschland/341068/geschichte-der-migration-nach-und-aus-deutschland/>
- Harroff-Tavel, Marion, "Neutrality and Impartiality: The importance of these principles for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the difficulties involved in applying them", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 29, 273, (December 1989): 536-552.
- Havolli, S. (2009). Determinants of remittances: The case of Kosovo. *Available at SSRN 1478989*.

Helberg, K. (2021, April 18). *Syrer in Deutschland: Brücken bauen*. ZEIT ONLINE. <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2021-03/syrer-deutschland-integration-community-politik/seite-3>

Hilber, D. A. (2008). Diasporic philanthropy in the migration-development nexus: Exploring the case of a Ghanaian community.

Hilhorst, D., & Jansen, B. J. (2010). Humanitarian space as arena: A perspective on the everyday politics of aid. *Development and change*, 41(6), 1117-1139.

Hilhorst, D., & Pereboom, E. (2015). Multi-mandate organisations in humanitarian aid. In *The New Humanitarians in International Practice* (pp. 85-102). Routledge.

Hoffman, P. J., & Weiss, T. G. (2017). *Humanitarianism, war, and politics: Solferino to Syria and beyond*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Holtz, M. (2023, August 3). *Examining Extremism: Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) | CSIS*. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-hayat-tahrir-al-sham-hts>

Horst, C., Lubkemann, S., & Pailey, R. N. (2015). The invisibility of a third humanitarian domain. In *The New Humanitarians in International Practice* (pp. 213-231). Routledge.

Howe, K., & Stites, E. (2019). Partners under pressure: humanitarian action for the Syria crisis. *Disasters*, 43(1), 3-23.

HS Unit (2001). Reflections on humanitarian action: principles, ethics, and contradictions. Pluto Press. <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/humanitarian-principles/>

Huntington, S. P. (1996). The clash of civilizations?.

ICRC. (2020, June 11). The fundamental principles of the international Red Cross and red. International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4046-fundamental-principles-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement>

IFRC. (2023, December 3). Syria: Earthquakes | IFRC. <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/syria-earthquakes>

IOM. (2019). World Migration Report 2022. In *IOM UN Migration*. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/>

Jusoor. (2023, January). Map of military control across Syria at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. Jusoor for Studies. <https://jusoor.co/en/details/map-of-military-control-across-syria-at-the-end-of-2022-and-the-beginning-of-2023>

Kahl, C. H., Goldenberg, I., & Heras, N. A. (2017). A strategy for ending the Syrian civil war. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security.

Kearney, M. (1991). Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of Empire. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 4(1), 52-74.

Khaddour, K. (2018, November 5). *Syria's troublesome militias*. Carnegie Middle East Center. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/77635>

King, R., & Collyer, M. (2016). Migration and development framework and its links to integration. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors*, 167-188.

Kool, L. D., Pospisil, J., & van Voorst, R. (2021). Managing the humanitarian micro-space: the practices of relief access in Syria. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(7), 1489-1506.

Kristen, C., & Seuring, J. (2021). Destination-language acquisition of recently arrived immigrants: Do refugees differ from other immigrants? *Journal for Educational Research Online*, 13(1), 128-156. <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:22068>

Kumar, A. (2013, October). Aid as a Weapon of War in Sudan. The Enough Project. <https://enoughproject.org>

Kurtzer, J. D. (2019). *Denial, delay, diversion: Tackling access challenges in an evolving humanitarian landscape*. Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Labbé, Jérémie and Daudin, Pascal, "Applying the humanitarian principles: Reflecting on the experience of the International Committee of the Red Cross", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 97, 897/898, (February 2016): 183-210.

Laub, Z. (2019, October 15). Syria's civil war. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>

Leebaw, B. (2007). The Politics of Impartial Activism: Humanitarianism and Human Rights. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(2), 223–239. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20446421>

Levitt, P. (2009). Roots and routes: Understanding the lives of the second generation transnationally. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 35(7), 1225-1242.

Lichtenheld, A. (2014, July 22). The Aid diversion Dilemma - UN dispatch. UN Dispatch. <https://undispatch.com/aid-diversion-dilemma/>

Lie, J. H. S. (2020). The humanitarian-development nexus: humanitarian principles, practice, and pragmatics. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 5(1), 18.

Liu, H. (2005). New migrants and the revival of overseas Chinese nationalism. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 291-316.

Mahmud, H. (2020). From individual motivations to social determinants: Towards a sociology of migrants' remittances. *International Social Science Journal*, 70(237-238), 175-188.

Mattli, Karl, and Gasser, Jörg, "A neutral, impartial and independent approach: key to ICRC's acceptance in Iraq." *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 90, 869, (March 2008): 153–68.

Mayring, P. (1994). *Qualitative inhaltsanalyse* (Vol. 14, pp. 159-175). UVK Univ.-Verl. Konstanz.

Mehchy, Z., Haid, H., & Khatib, L. (2020, November 13). *Assessing Control and Power Dynamics in Syria*. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/11/assessing-control-and-power-dynamics-syria/01-introduction>

Meininghaus, E., & Kühn, M. (2018). Syria: Humanitarian Access Dilemmas. *Berlin/Bonn*, 4.

Mohamed, Abdulfatah Said and Ofteringer, Ronald, "Rahmatan lil-'alamin" (A mercy to all creation): Islamic voices in the debate on humanitarian principles", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 97, 897/898 (February 2016): 371-394.

NBC News. (2013, September 3). "The great tragedy of this century": More than 2 million refugees forced out of Syria. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/great-tragedy-century-more-2-million-refugees-forced-out-syria-flna8c11063522>

Nieswand, B. (2021, November 26). *Was ist eine Diaspora?* bpb.de. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/kurzdossiers/264009/was-ist-eine-diaspora/>

Nzima, D., Duma, V., & Moyo, P. (2017). Theorizing migration-development interactions: towards an integrated approach. *Migration and Development*, 6(2), 305-318.

ODI (2015, March 20). *Syria crisis: how aid is changing - Panel discussion* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNYFK2oz6-U&t=382s>

Olliff, L. (2018). From resettled refugees to humanitarian actors: refugee diaspora organizations and everyday humanitarianism. *New Political Science*, 40(4), 658-674.

Olliff, L. (2022). *Helping Familiar Strangers: Refugee Diaspora Organizations and Humanitarianism*. Indiana University Press.

Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy. (2019). *PAKISTANI DIASPORA PHILANTHROPY IN THE UK: TRENDS AND VARIATIONS*. British Council.

Quayson, A. and Daswani, G. (2013). Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism. In *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (eds A. Quayson and G. Daswani)

Ragab, N. J. (2021). Bericht zu "Transnationale Netzwerke und zivilgesellschaftliche Aktivitäten im Kontext der Fluchtmigration: Die syrische Community in Deutschland." Expertise im Auftrag des Sachverständigenrats für Integration und Migration für den SVR-Policy Brief 2022-1. Berlin.

Raj, D. S. (2015). The overseas citizen of India and emigrant infrastructure: Tracing the deterritorializations of diaspora strategies. *Geoforum*, 59, 159-168.

Ratha, D., Chandra, V., Kim, E. J., Plaza, S., & Shaw, W. (2023). *Migration and Development Brief 39: Leveraging Diaspora Finances for Private Capital Mobilization*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Reuters. (2023, February 10). Syrian White Helmets chief slams U.N. earthquake response. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrian-white-helmets-chief-slams-un-earthquake-response-2023-02-10/>

Rössler, P.(2010). *Inhaltsanalyse*. (3. Aufl.) UVK.

Rouse, R. (1992). Making sense of settlement: class transformation, cultural struggle, and transnationalism among Mexican migrants in the United States.

Saez, P., Konyndyk, J., & Worden, R. (2021). *Rethinking humanitarian reform: what will it take to truly change the system?*. Washington DC: Centre for Global Development ([www. cgdev. org/publication/rethinking-humanitarian-reform-what-will-it-take-truly-change-system](http://www.cgdev.org/publication/rethinking-humanitarian-reform-what-will-it-take-truly-change-system)).

Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York academy of sciences*, 645(1), 1-24.

SCPR. (2023). *The impact of the earthquake in Syria: The Missing Developmental perspective in the Shadow of conflict* [EN/AR] - Syrian Arab Republic. In *ReliefWeb*.h

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/impact-earthquake-syria-missing-developmental-perspective-shadow-conflict-enar>

Sezgin, Z. (2011). Turkish migrants' organizations in Germany and their role in the flow of remittances to Turkey. *Journal of international migration and integration*, 12, 231-251.

Sezgin, Z. (2020). Bringing international relations and organizational sociology to diaspora studies: Kurdish and Syrian diaspora organizations in Germany. In *Diaspora Organizations in International Affairs* (pp. 105-128). Routledge.

Sezgin, Z., & Dijkzeul, D. (Eds.). (2015). *The new humanitarians in international practice: Emerging actors and contested principles*. Routledge.

Shabaka (2021). Diaspora Engagement in Times of Crisis. EUDiF case study, Brussels: ICMPD.

Shah, H., & Dalton, M. (2022). *Access for what? Elevating civilian protection and quality access for humanitarian action in Syria*. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/access-what-elevating-civilian-protection-and-quality-access-humanitarian-action-syria>

Sinatti, G., & Horst, C. (2015). Migrants as agents of development: Diaspora engagement discourse and practice in Europe. *Ethnicities*, 15(1), 134-152.

Skrbiš, Z. (2017). *Long-distance nationalism: diasporas, homelands and identities*. Routledge.

SNHR. (2023, July). Russia's Veto Blocking the UN Cross-Border Relief Aid is Unlawful and its only Aim is to Seize UN Relief Aid.

Sparrow, A. (2018). How UN humanitarian aid has propped up Assad. *Foreign Affairs*, 20.

Spiegel, P. B. (2017). The humanitarian system is not just broke, but broken: recommendations for future humanitarian action. *The Lancet*.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. sage.

Stamatov, P. (2020). "Missionary". In Humanitarianism. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004431140_065

Statistisches Bundesamt. (2013, June 1). *Ausländische Bevölkerung nach Altersgruppen und ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten*. <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/auslaendische-bevoelkerung-altersgruppen.html>

Stielike, L. (2017). *Entwicklung durch Migration?: Eine postkoloniale Dispositivanalyse am Beispiel Kamerun-Deutschland*. transcript Verlag.

Svoboda, E., & Pantuliano, S. (2015). International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response. A diverging set of systems? Overseas Development Institute.

Sweis, R. K. (2019). DOCTORS WITH BORDERS: HIERARCHIES OF HUMANITARIANS AND THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 51(4), 587–601. doi:10.1017/S0020743819000643

Tanauan, B. L. (2014, June 25). Philippine typhoon survivors accuse officials of blocking aid. *ucanews.com*. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-typhoon-survivors-accuse-officials-of-blocking-aid/71260>

Tateyama, R. (2018). The Syrian Civil War: Politicization of the crisis and challenges and dilemmas for humanitarian response. In *Crisis Management Beyond the Humanitarian-Development Nexus* (pp. 101-124). Routledge.

The Carter Center. (2020, May 13). *Analyzing Shifts in Territorial Control within Syria Offers Glimpse of Future Challenges*. https://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/p/conflict_resolution/syria-mapping-shifts-in-territorial-control.html

Thürer, Daniel. "Dunant's pyramid: thoughts on the 'humanitarian space.'", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 89, 865, (March 2007): 48–61.

Tölölyan, K. (2012). Diaspora studies. *Past, present and promise*, 4.

Tsourapas, G. (2020). Theorizing state-diaspora relations in the Middle East: Authoritarian emigration states in comparative perspective. *Mediterranean Politics*, 25(2), 135-159.

UNFPA. (2023). After more than a decade of war, earthquakes are a catastrophe on top of a crisis for millions of people in Syria - Syrian Arab Republic. In *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/after-more-decade-war-earthquakes-are-catastrophe-top-crisis-millions-people-syria>

UNHCR. (2024). 2024 UNHCR Syria needs Overview (February 2024) - Syrian Arab Republic. In *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2024-unhcr-syria-needs-overview-february-2024>

Versluis, A. (2014) 'Formal and informal material aid following the 2010 Haiti earthquake as reported by camp dwellers'. *Disasters* 38(1): 94–109

Vock, I. (2024, January 11). German Far-right met to plan "mass deportations." *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67948861>

Walker, P., & Maxwell, D. (2014). *Shaping the humanitarian world*. Routledge.

Weiss, T. L. (2009). Migration for Development in the Horn of Africa. Health expertise from the Somali.

WHAF. (2023). Promoting Collaboration and Challenging Inequitable Systems : Exploring Partnerships Between Diaspora and Domestic Actors for Humanitarian Initiatives and Beyond. In *Reliefweb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/promoting-collaboration-and-challenging-inequitable-systems-exploring-partnerships-between-diaspora-and-domestic-actors-humanitarian-initiatives-and-beyond>

Wieland, C. (2022). Syria and the Neutrality Trap. *Insight Turkey/Winter 2022-Climate Change And Migration*, 271.

Worbs, S., Rother, N., & Kreienbrink, A. (2019). Syrische Migranten in Deutschland als bedeutsame neue