Humanitarian Activity in the Context of the Balkan Wars

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Abstract

This article examines humanitarian activity and its multi-dimensional aspects with a case study of the Balkan Wars (1912-13). The article presents that while it is difficult to find neutral humanitarian aid, the humanitarian aid of the Red Crescent during the Balkan Wars was a rare example of neutrality.

Key Words: Humanitarian, Aid, Balkan Wars, Red Crescent

Introduction

As we move on with our daily lives, we often hear on the news or read in the newspapers about humanitarian aid being sent to some area in need to help a country that has faced a natural disaster. And even more often, we hear about a so called humanitarian intervention that aims to tackle an unfortunate political or social crisis in a remote corner of the world. In fact, we are often so disconnected that hearing about another place where humanitarian aid has been sent is just a routine and it feels like we hear it every day and we have nothing in common with the event or the circumstances. But when we think that life and destiny can one day bring us into the position where we are the one in need for humanitarian aid, how would that change our perspective?
This paper examines this complex multi-layered facet of humanitarian activity by using the Balkan Wars as a case study. The research aims to address a main research question: is humanitarian intervention undertaken for a genuine will to help the people in need, or does it hide within its various procedures any unspoken external interests in the covered area? Some may look at this paper and observe the subtle lines drawn towards all the topics that define our world and us today: identity, culture, religion, conflict, peace, diplomacy, security, international relations, environment, help, and crisis.

The main substance of humanitarian aid is the human soul and the genuine human will to help others in need. Whatever we call it humanitarian activity is a reality of our world today and it is used as a double-edged sword: while it comes as a tourniquet to the wounds of the people and country in need, it leaves deep scars on the identity and culture of the place.

What is “Humanitarian”?

There are many definitions of the word “humanitarian,” both academic and informal. There are also many definitions of the humanitarian related terms: humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance, humanitarian intervention, and humanitarian action. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word “humanitarian” as a situation concerned with or seeking to promote human welfare, a description that matches the idealist assumption expressed at the beginning of this paper.¹ The second meaning develops from the first and it explains the word “humanitarian” as an event or situation which causes or involves widespread human suffering, especially one that requires the large-scale provision of aid.² While the first meaning

²Ibid.
comes on behalf of the provider of aid, the second one represents the beneficiary, the one in need. We can see from the beginning that “humanitarian” is a double-sided arrow, affecting both the provider and the beneficiary. In other words, humanitarian is a noun indicating an actor, and, at the same time, it is an adjective indicating the qualifier of a goal, a principle, a situation, an action, and an event. Therefore, the meaning depends on the perspective from which we are defining the word. This is the reason why the term “humanitarian” can be considered as “self-defined and self-referential.”

 Adding the suffix “ism” brings even more complexity to the word humanitarian and it designates the notion of “an ideology, a profession, a movement, a set of institutions, and a business and industry.” Across the nineteenth century, there was a general shift from moral philanthropy or the “good of humanity” as an abstract term or an ideology, to an imperative of transformation, and to social and political change. This was the turning point that represented a transition from humanitarianism as a concept, or as the cultivation of affection for humanity, to a humanitarianism that was operational, whereby ideas and ideals were given concrete form and transformed everything into a set of institutions and, as some might assume, into a wealthy business. In support for this argument and in contradiction to the idealist assumption stated earlier, Stanley Hauerwas thinks that “no one knows what humanitarian intervention means. If I were a

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person who was non-American, I would think humanitarian intervention is just another name for United States imperialism.”

Hauerwas might be right as humanitarian aid, like any other general topic, has different meanings to everyone who tries to define it. The most basic definitions of humanitarian aid, quite different in perspective, may come, as proven above, from both sides: the beneficiary and the provider. This is why Hauerwas might be tempted to divide the whole world into two main actors: America and the rest. But does the rest of the world who benefits, or not, from America’s humanitarian campaigns see it as a nicely packed form of imperialism? This is, in other words, the main question of this paper. In order to answer it, I consider it necessary to tackle the subject of humanitarian intervention in relation to the concepts of identity and culture. Any external involvement in one’s country, being it even for a good purpose, has a direct implication for the identity and culture of that place. And history has proved so far that there is no humanitarian intervention that has left a place without scars on the identity, culture and on the mentality of the people that were helped.

According to the 2008 Glossary of Humanitarian terms, “humanitarian action” designates the assistance, protection, and advocacy actions that are initiated on an impartial ground in order to provide a solution for the human needs caused by complex political emergencies, like wars and natural hazards. In the same manner, “humanitarian assistance” represents the support that aims to save lives and lighten the suffering of a population affected by crisis. But

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9Ibid.
humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, and neutrality, as stated in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182. Moreover, bearing in mind the two key concepts of this paper—identity and culture—it is important to mention that the United Nations (the biggest actor on the humanitarian scene) undertakes the task of humanitarian assistance with full respect for the sovereignty of the states that are helped. In this case, humanitarian assistance can be divided into three main categories: direct assistance, indirect assistance, and infrastructure support—which have diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population.

While one could notice the importance of state sovereignty when it comes to humanitarian assistance, this concept is somehow left aside when we try to define the notion of “humanitarian intervention.” There is no general agreement regarding the definition of “humanitarian intervention”. However, it can be explained as “a doctrine generally understood to mean coercive action by States involving the use of armed force in another State without the consent of its government, with or without authorization from the UN Security Council, for the purpose of preventing or putting to a halt gross and massive violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.” For instance, one can look at the operations undertaken by the United Nations in Northern Iraq and Somalia, and by NATO in Kosovo as examples of humanitarian interventions.

12Glossary of Humanitarian Terms, ReliefWeb Project (Accessed June 1, 2015).
Such actions that completely ignore the sovereignty of the target state under the name of humanitarian intervention are real threat to the identity and culture of the people who are supposedly “saved.” It is quite hard to tell when the intervention for humanitarian purposes passes the thin line between genuine help and, as expressed by Hauerwas, “United States imperialism.” And in order to understand how this thin line can be protected, I discuss the main principles of humanitarianism a little more.

**Humanitarian Principles**

According to UN General Assembly Resolution 46/18, humanitarian assistance must respect the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality. General Assembly Resolution 58/114 added independence as the fourth key principle underlying humanitarian action. In fact, the accountability of the humanitarian community is proven by its adherence to these four principles that act as foundations for humanitarian action.

These principles are actually derived from the core principles guiding the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. According to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, proclaimed in Vienna in 1965 by the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the humanitarian principles are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.

**a. Humanity**

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16 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, *Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross, 1965, 1.
Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.\textsuperscript{17}

b. Neutrality

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.\textsuperscript{18}

c. Impartiality

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.\textsuperscript{19}

d. Independence

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.\textsuperscript{20}

In theory, those principles sound reasonable, but is it really possible to stick by them? For the two principles of neutrality and independence, it is hard to defend the thin line that separates a neutral position from a non-neutral one and an independent position from an interest-related one. It should be accepted as a precondition that we are all human and fallible, whether we are on the side of the provider or of the beneficiary. It is not conceivable that someone can be completely neutral and impartial towards such sensitive issues as natural disasters and political crises. Others support my


\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.
aforementioned assumption as well. For instance, Nicholas Morris argues that humanitarian aid has probably often been less neutral in effect than was assumed and it is facing even more obstacles recently. He presents some cases where authority and the rule of law and order has collapsed and it makes it even more difficult for a humanitarian operation to fully respect any of the four principles, and especially the one of neutrality. This situation does not change even when authority and some rule of law exists. According to Morris, neutrality can no longer be assumed. Furthermore, in regards to the

21Nicholas Morris has been a staff member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since 1973, and has been Director of the Division of Operational Support at UNHCR Headquarters since 1995. Between 1973 and 1980, he had field assignments in Asia, Europe and Africa (as UNHCR Chief of Mission in Southern Rhodesia for the implementation of the Lancaster House agreement), and served at UNHCR Headquarters. From 1980 until late 1983 he was Chief of the UNHCR Emergency Unit, then UNHCR Representative in the Sudan until 1986, and thereafter Deputy Head of the Africa Bureau at UNHCR Headquarters until the end of 1990. From April to July 1991 he was the Special Envoy of the High Commissioner for the Gulf emergency, then UNHCR Chief of Mission in Pakistan and Special Envoy for the repatriation of Afghan refugees until May 1993. From June 1993 until the end of 1994, he was the UNHCR Special Envoy for the former Yugoslavia.


23Morris, “Humanitarian Aid and Neutrality...” (Accessed June 1, 2015). The reasons for the obstruction of humanitarian aid in Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrate problems encountered and to be expected elsewhere. All sides have seen the humanitarian operation led by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as directly helping their enemy. With nearly every able-bodied male mobilized, the distinction between civilians and combatants was largely meaningless. Until the Bosniac/Croat peace agreement in February 1994, Croat and Serb forces surrounded the Bosniacs in central Bosnia, as the Serbs still do elsewhere. For them, the
principle of impartiality, another question emerges: how it could be determined which case is more urgent than another case. Creation of some criteria to evaluate the emergency of a case would be helpful, but a detailed research revealed no such criteria.

The ACF (Action Contre la Faim/Action Against Hunger) International makes public an assessment of the way these principles are respected within its humanitarian activity. For example, ACF ensures its commitment to the principles of neutrality and impartiality by being “needs based”. This means that ACF can choose the areas of intervention solely on the basis of its own assessment of humanitarian needs, and no distinction is made among the victims on any criteria other than their vulnerability. At the same time, the assessment underlines the importance of the security of the staff undertaking the humanitarian action and the fact that decisions about providing aid in a certain area are made considering the security situation. For instance, the assessment gives the example

humanitarian operation was demonstrably not neutral: it was undermining their military efforts by breaking the siege and prolonging the war. Political pressures and the presence of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) could extract grudging consent from those who controlled access, but did not change this perception. All sides in such conflicts use humanitarian food aid for political ends and to feed their military forces. For the Bosnian government forces in the enclaves and Sarajevo, other sources were too limited to give them a choice. The provision of fuel for humanitarian purposes gives rise to even greater challenges to humanitarian aid's neutrality. The fact that UNHCR supervised delivery and ensured proper use was irrelevant in former Yugoslavia, because while this fuel met priority humanitarian needs, for example, heated hospitals, it released other fuel for the military. Thus the Bosnian government accused UNHCR of fueling Serb offensives on Gorazde and Bihac, and its opponents blocked access for UNHCR fuel, maintaining that it would be used against them.

25 Dyukova and Chetcut, (accessed June 1, 2015).
of the ACF humanitarian programme in Somalia, in November 2011, where the organization was expelled from areas controlled by the Al-Shabaab opposition group and since then could only assist populations in government-controlled regions. ACF has asserted its desire to provide assistance to all victims without discrimination by maintaining negotiations with the rebels in view of re-entering areas under their control if this becomes possible.\textsuperscript{26}

Further on, the same assessment undertaken by ACF International emphasizes the risk for humanitarian NGOs to be used as an instrument by political or economic agendas of donors.\textsuperscript{27} When programmes are funded by external donors, donors may try to impose their own interests in the area or to show support for one side of the conflict. This may create the impression that the organization, by accepting the external funds coming from such a donor, has a questionable understanding of independence and impartiality. For instance, the assessment goes on by stating that, when external funding is needed, the ACF ensures its independence by choosing donors only after careful analysis of the political context and by preventing any donor-driven interference at the programme level. It is worth mentioning that, all ACF projects are set based on the needs assessments carried out by its field teams. Moreover, ACF is said to take into account the local perception of any potential donor before considering the funding. For instance, in Afghanistan, ACF has made the decision not to accept humanitarian funding from the United States government, which is considered a belligerent in the conflict.\textsuperscript{28}

To sum up, this short debate upon the importance of the humanitarian principles within humanitarian activity must be underlined that, as proven by the ACF assessment, regardless of the circumstances or the reasons, the principles themselves should not be compromised. It is important to note that humanitarian action can

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.}
never provide a true solution for problems that are political in nature. According to Morris, the problems that have political roots require the political will necessary to prevent suffering or remove its underlying causes. Where the required political will cannot be mobilized, the humanitarian operation will have a better chance of success when it is clearly separated from the international community's efforts at political containment.29

A Historical Perspective of Humanitarian Activity

Humanitarian intervention is orthodoxy and it’s taken for granted that if we [the U.S.] do it, it’s humanitarian. The reason is because our leaders say so. But you can check. For one thing, there’s a history of humanitarian intervention. You can look at it. And when you do, you discover that virtually every use of military force is described as humanitarian intervention.—Noam Chomsky 30

Chomsky’s words perfectly match the words of Hauerwas quoted earlier. There is a history of humanitarian activity, assistance, and intervention and a short inquiry onto this history can provide us with some answers in regards to the main question of the essay and to the relation between humanitarian activity and the concepts of identity and culture.

It is common knowledge that the humanitarian feeling expressed by the wish to lighten the suffering of others is centuries old and genuinely global, whereas the development of the international humanitarian system can be described in temporary and geographical terms. According to Davies, the origins of the humanitarian system can be found in the Western and especially European experience of

29Nicholas Morris, “Humanitarian Aid.”
30David Barsamian, “Liberating the Mind from Orthodoxies: An Interview with Noam Chomsky”
war and natural disaster. It can be observed that the efforts of the most prominent international actors—states, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), international agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement—have merged into a “system” that is roughly connected and works on the base of links at the level of finances, operations, personnel, and values.

One of the most debated historical perspectives on humanitarian activity is Michael Barnett’s three “ages of humanitarianism”: “an imperial humanitarianism,” from the early nineteenth century through World War II (1800–1945); a neo-humanitarianism from World War II through the end of the Cold War (1945–1989); and a liberal humanitarianism, from the end of the Cold War to the present” (1989–present). To Barnett, each age owned its own particular constellations of the “forces of destruction, production, and compassion” that helped shaping the purpose and activities of humanitarianism, which ultimately led to a global governance of humanity. Similarly, Peter Walker and Daniel Maxwell identify the world wars as markers of important changes in humanitarian history and they characterise the period of the Cold War as one of “mercy and manipulation” and the 1990s as the period of the “globalization of humanitarianism.” Randolph Kent points out the Second World War as a crucial moment, arguing that “it was only in the midst of World War II that governments began to fully appreciate the need for greater international intervention in the plight of disaster-stricken people.”

31 Davies, “Continuity, change...”.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Peter Walker and Daniel Maxwell, Shaping the Humanitarian World (London: Routledge, 2008), 104.
In the “age of imperial humanitarianism,” together with commerce, the main forces of destruction in colonized countries were the wars and colonialism carried on by the Great Powers, and humanitarians understood their actions as a “civilizing mission.” As a matter of fact, the initiative for relief activities was largely private, with states becoming more directly involved only after World War I.\(^{37}\) In relation to our case study—the Balkan Wars—the Ottoman Red Crescent was established in 1868 under the name “Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti” currently called Kızılay.\(^{38}\)

Moving on to the second period identified by Barnett, the “age of neo-humanitarianism”, the forces of destruction were World War II, the Cold War, and decolonization. According to Barnett, decolonization simultaneously left an institutional vacuum in the Third World, which was soon filled by international organizations and non-governmental agencies. During this period, the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality gained more and more importance as humanitarian activity moved towards the universal idea of humanity and the community of sovereign states in contrast to the previous imperial conceptions.\(^ {39}\)

Barnett’s interpretation of the period that lasts until present—the “age of liberal humanitarianism”—observes a search for liberal peace which is endangered by the human security issues of failed states.\(^ {40}\) The main factor identified by Barnett is economic globalization which created winners and losers and the fear of revolts. Humanitarian activity is now discussed in terms of human


\(^{40}\)Ibid.
rights and the most important change lies in the fact that the protection of civilians in complex emergencies gave rise to the call for military humanitarian intervention and a closer relationship between states and non-governmental organizations.

The historical perspective presented by Barnett might be detailed and easy to digest, but some argue that it fails to account for essential continuities, important overlaps, and the contingencies of history.\(^{41}\) Still, there are some conclusions to be drawn from the historical description of humanitarian action. Firstly, humanitarianism does not necessarily mean improvement of the human condition, although this might be the aim. As Barnett’s narrative does not focus on conjunctures, it cannot point out the ambivalences, difficulties, and all too frequent failures of humanitarian activity. There is still no relevant information regarding one of the key concepts of this paper: the effects that moral, economic, political, military, or cultural interventions had on the resilience and the coping mechanisms of the societies struck by disaster. In this case, I agree with Johannes Paulmann that scholars should seek to approach the history of humanitarian aid in a polycentric, multi-layered way from the different viewpoints of Europe and the West, of the colonies, and the non-Western world, and from local/national and international perspectives.\(^{42}\) I would also add the need for an interdisciplinary perspective when the history of humanitarian aid is researched.

**Humanitarian Activity during the Balkan Wars**

The First Balkan War began in October 1912 and ended in May 1913. It can be described as a war of self-determination. The countries of the region took advantage of the weakness of the


\(^{42}\)Ibid.
Ottoman Empire, exposed by Italy’s seizure of what is now Libya, to push the Ottomans almost entirely out of the Balkan Peninsula. The fighting stopped at the gates of Constantinople. After a pause for breath, lasting not more than a month, the victors—Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro—began the Second Balkan War among themselves over the division of the territory captured.

The Second Balkan War was relatively shorter: it lasted only six weeks. While the First Balkan War was mostly a military-to-military affair, in the second war the civilian population was often the target. If one state could establish that a piece of territory was inhabited by their people—Serbs, Bulgarians or Greeks—then they could claim it as a part of their national territory. This was therefore a war about people as well as territory: to declare whether a village was Serb or Bulgarian might decide whether its inhabitants lived or died.

Since its foundation, the aforementioned Ottoman Red Crescent Association or “Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti” has conducted significant relief programmes in both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. This association and its activity represent the main manifestation of the humanitarian activity covered in this paper during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars. Even though at the beginning, the initial mission of the Red Crescent Association was to aid the injured soldiers during wars, its humanitarian activity expanded into areas by looking after migrants, poor, and homeless people of any disaster. It is important to underline that the association attracted a lot of attention because of its aid campaigns during the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish Independence War. The aid during these periods included soup kitchens, teahouses, and mobile and stable hospital services to the soldiers and civilians in need. During the Balkan Wars, it created hospitals and treatment centres for the injured soldiers, who were transported to Istanbul by rented ships.

43Currently Türkiye Kızılay Derneği.
44Sezer and Metin, 167.
Apart from the teahouses that were opened in all big stations for the tired and injured soldiers and for civilians, the association struggled against the infectious diseases of the time like cholera and typhus, and also showed great interest in the problems of refugees that resulted especially from the Second Balkan War.\(^{45}\)

A part of the aid programmes undertaken by Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti during the Balkan Wars were funded by the Muslims from Egypt and India.\(^{46}\) The hospitals and treatment places created and supported by Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti were located in various places: Darülfünun, Vefa, Demirkapı, Muhacirî, Ayestefanos, Ispartakule, Hadımköy Taşkışla, Bandırma, Kandilli, Sanayi-i Nefise, Şişli and, on the battle front at Lüleburgaz, Edirne, Üsküp, Yanya, and Alasonya. Because of the closed roads, the provision of needed health material became harder and in some cases impossible.\(^{47}\) This led to the creation of three more hospitals and treatment places in Çanakkale, Gelibolu, and Uzunköprü.

In order to provide the civilians with bread, soup, tea, coffee, yogurt, and biscuits, the Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti opened teahouses in Çerkezköy, Çorlu, Lüleburgaz, Kuleli, and Burgaz and Pavlu. Throughout the war many of these places had to close and only some, such as those at Hadımköy, Ispartakule, Ayestefanos and Sirkeci survived.\(^{48}\) At the same time, in order to provide immediate treatment to the injured soldiers, Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti turned the ship “Kembiric” into a hospital. In this way, they could transport and give the first aid at the same time to the injured soldiers.\(^{49}\) Moreover, the association distributed thousands of sacks with blankets, quilts,

\(^{45}\) Hilâl-i Ahmer Gazetesi, nr. 31, Sabah Nüshası, June 9, 1337.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) Sezer and Metin, 167.
\(^{48}\) Akgün-Uluğtekin, Kızılay, C. I, s. 120; Besim Ömer, Konferans, 116.
\(^{49}\) Sezer and Metin, 170.
vests, shirts, socks, underwear, and bedding, spoons, plates, pots, trays, bread, and other many goods to civilians and soldiers.\(^{50}\)

The documents prove the neutrality and impartiality of the Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti. The association provided help to both soldiers and civilians. It helped the civilian refugees of the Balkan Wars, provided them temporary housing in Istanbul in 89 mosques, 12 schools, and in many other places. It also supplied food and clothing and treated the injured and the sick.\(^{51}\) The few details provided in this part of the paper regarding humanitarian activity during the Balkan Wars serves to prove that, even during the “age of imperial humanitarianism,” aid was provided to the places where it was needed, funds were given from external donors, refugees were handled correctly, and many lives were saved.

**Humanitarian Activity versus Identity and Culture**

At the beginning of this paper I stated that the humanitarian concept is related to many of the other concepts that define us and our world. Therefore, it is easy to observe how the concepts of culture and identity have been widely used in the world of humanitarian endeavour. And the first examples that come to mind are: “cultural identity,” “identity-related conflict,” and “intercultural approach.” Indeed, there has been much debate about what the word “culture” means. Philosophers, ethnologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and more recently political scientists have published material on identity, on cultural malaise, and on changing fashions in—and even the “illusion “of—cultural identity.\(^{52}\)

\(^{50}\)Ibid., 169.
\(^{51}\)Sezer and Metin, 169.
It is often stated that the issue of culture and identity is generally perceived in terms of interaction and communication. This is also the case with humanitarian activity where different cultures and identities interact, communicate, and help each other. Whereas in theory the notion of the “otherness” is often understood as a barrier to be broken, humanitarian activity also provides a chance for the intercultural approach to become a way of understanding and being understood by “the others.” For Paul Grossrieder, the term “intercultural approach” represents the idea of possible exchanges between one culture and another, an idea that presupposes clearly defined demarcations between different cultures. Defining others in terms of culture and identity is also a constructive act, for any intercultural action, be it by an individual or a humanitarian organization, serves to foster respect for others. At the same time, international rules cannot be adapted to cultural specificities. Nevertheless, strategies to promote international law should consider regional, national, and local cultural contexts.

This paper shows the need for further research on the relationship between humanitarian standards and cultural differences. Both need to be maintained, but not to the detriment of one or the other: Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti is a good representation of this argument. Therefore, looking at the case study of this paper from the perspective of identity and culture, I consider that, unlike the humanitarian activity nowadays, the aid provided by Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti during the Balkan Wars did not damage the national identity and culture of the aided people. The association genuinely aimed to provide aid and there were no hidden agendas or interests within its campaigns and projects in the region.

To sum up, humanitarian activity has a history of both successes and failures. Humanitarian activity is a reality of our world today


and, unfortunately, it is used as a two-sided knife: while it comes as a tourniquet to the wounds of the people and the country in need, it leaves deep scars on the identity and culture of the place.
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