A CRITICAL READING OF THE HISTORY OF HUMANITARIAN AID: GOVERNMENTALITY, COMPASSION, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF POWER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

BÜŞRA EFE DEMİRÖREN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

APRIL 2025

Approval of the thesis:

A CRITICAL READING OF THE HISTORY OF HUMANITARIAN AID: GOVERNMENTALITY, COMPASSION, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF POWER

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ABSTRACT

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April 2025, 228 pages

This dissertation aims to provide a critical reading of humanitarian aid from its modern inception to the present, examining it through the lens of Foucauldian governmentality and framing it as "government of humanity." The thesis explores how humanitarianism has influenced the definition of crises as humanitarian crises, determined the recipients of aid, and shaped response mechanisms, all within the context of power relations. It examines distinct historical periods from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, highlighting both transformations and continuities in humanitarianism. Each chapter outlines the key characteristics of its respective period and critiques specific examples of humanitarian aid. This includes but not limited to missionary activities in the nineteenth century, the Red Cross's responses in Europe during the interwar period, African famines during the Cold War, and the twenty-first-century refugee crisis, all reflecting the prevailing power dynamics of their times. The discourse of compassion in humanitarian aid remains a consistent theme, however, the expression of compassion and the forms of power it utilizes evolve over time, including pastoral power, biopolitics, and neoliberalism. Despite these variations, power relations have always been a fundamental and consistent aspect of humanitarianism throughout its history.

Keywords: Humanitarian aid, governmentality, compassion, power relations, Foucault

ÖZ

İNSANİ YARDIMIN TARİHİNİN ELEŞTİREL BİR OKUMASI:
YÖNETİMSELLİK, MERHAMET VE İKTİDARIN SÜREKLİLİĞİ

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Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ömür BİRLER

Nisan 2025, 228 sayfa

Bu tez, insani yardımın modern anlamda ortaya çıkışından günümüze kadar uzanan sürecini eleştirel bir yaklaşımla değerlendirerek, onu Foucault'nun yönetimsellik kavramı çerçevesinde "insanlığın yönetimselliği" olarak ele almaktadır. Çalışma, insani yardımın krizleri nasıl insani kriz olarak tanımladığı, kime yardım edileceğini nasıl belirlediği ve bu krizlere yönelik müdahale mekanizmalarını nasıl şekillendirdiği sorularına, iktidar ilişkileri bağlamında yanıt aramaktadır. Tez, on sekizinci yüzyıldan yirmi birinci yüzyıla kadar insani yardımın geçirdiği dönüşümleri ve süreklilik gösteren yönlerini farklı tarihsel dönemler üzerinden ele almaktadır. Her bölüm, ele alınan dönemin temel özelliklerini ortaya koyarak o dönemin insani yardım pratiklerini eleştirel bir şekilde incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda, on dokuzuncu yüzyıldaki misyoner faaliyetleri, iki savaş arası dönemde Kızılhaç'ın Avrupa'daki müdahaleleri, Soğuk Savaş sırasında Afrika'daki kıtlıklar ve yirmi birinci yüzyıldaki mülteci krizi gibi örnekler üzerinden her dönemin baskın iktidar dinamikleri analiz edilmektedir. İnsani yardım söyleminde merhamet kavramı tüm dönemlerde varlığını korusa da merhametin nasıl ifade edildiği ve hangi iktidar mekanizmalarıyla iç içe geçtiği zamanla değişmektedir. Pastoral iktidar, biyopolitika ve neoliberalizm gibi

farklı iktidar biçimleri, insani yardımın işleyişinde belirleyici olmuştur. Ancak tüm bu değişimlere rağmen, insani yardım tarih boyunca iktidar ilişkileriyle şekillenen ve süreklilik gösteren bir alan olmaya devam etmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İnsani yardım, yönetimsellik, merhamet, iktidar ilişkileri, Foucault

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation has been one of the longest and most challenging chapters of my life. It coincided with a period marked by some of the most significant turning points I have ever experienced. Therefore, this acknowledgements page is inevitably a long one.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dear advisor, Ömür Birler, who stood by me through every step of this process. During moments when I stumbled, fell, or even believed I could not go on, she never withdrew her support. I am sincerely thankful for her guidance and encouragement, for her intellectual and material contributions, for her feedback and efforts to help this work grow, and most of all, for the personal and motivational support she provided during this long and difficult way.

I am also deeply thankful to Hakan Övünç Ongur, who has been a constant source of intellectual inspiration since the very beginning of my academic journey, even as far back as my undergraduate years. His guidance has helped shape my thinking in countless ways. As a member of my dissertation committee, he played a vital role in pushing this work toward its best possible version. I would also like to thank Başak Alpan for her insightful comments and ongoing support throughout the writing process. Additionally, I am grateful to Cem Deveci and Nazlı Şenses Özcan for their valuable feedback as members of my dissertation defense jury. Their contributions and insights helped me refined my arguments and strengthened the overall quality of this work.

I would also like to thank TÜBİTAK for supporting this research through a doctoral scholarship provided under the TÜBİTAK Scientist Support Programs Presidency (BİDEB) 2211. Their generous financial support made it possible for me to dedicate the necessary time and focus to carrying out this study.

My experiences in Antakya with the Danish Refugee Council affected the intellectual foundations of this dissertation. Being involved in the humanitarian aid sector, and witnessing firsthand the experiences of refugees, not only inspired the core ideas behind this research but also profoundly expanded my capacity for empathy and critical observation. I am thankful for the strength and perspective these experiences offered, and for the people whose resilience in the face of unimaginable adversity became a quiet but powerful source of inspiration for me.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this has been a long and difficult journey—not only in terms of completing this dissertation, but also in reaching this point in my life more broadly. During this time, on February 6th, the devastating earthquake struck the region where I was living. Its aftermath, the question was no longer about how to continue this dissertation, but how to continue—at all. That is why I want to thank the people who helped me keep going—not just with this dissertation, but with life in general.

First, to my dearest friends Munise and Sinem—my soul sisters, thank you for your unwavering support, which still brings tears to my eyes when I think about it. Your presence in my life has brought so much light, strength, and love. I am endlessly thankful for everything you have given me, and for simply being there.

To my beloved mother and father, I feel incredibly lucky to be your daughter. Since my early childhood, through elementary school, university, and all the way to today, you have never stopped believing in me. You have stood by every decision I have made with unwavering support and endless love. I am grateful not only for your trust and understanding, but also for the deep friendship and comfort I have always found in both of you.

To my one and only sister, Hilal—thank you for holding my hand through everything, both literally and emotionally, whether near or far. You have celebrated my successes as if they were your own, felt my sadness as if it were yours, and made countless sacrifices for me. I know you will always be by my side, and I hope you know how deeply I love you—more than words can express.

And finally, though certainly not least, to my beloved partner in life, İrfan. Though the legal definition of your role in my life may have changed over time, the place you hold in my heart has only grown since 2011. Thank you for walking with me through this long and uneven path, for always lifting me up, for believing in me with such certainty, and for enriching my life in countless ways. I have learned so much from you, and I feel endlessly lucky to be able to say, "İrfan will figure it out." Your unconditional emotional and material support has meant everything, and I know that I will continue to feel that support as we walk through life together. Without you, this dissertation might never have been completed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3RP:	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ARC:	American Red Cross
ECHO:	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ESSN:	Emergency Social Safety Net
EU:	European Union
FRIT:	Facility for Refugees in Turkey
HCR:	High Commissioners for Refugees
ICRC:	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC:	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO:	International Labor Organization
INGOs:	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LFIP:	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
LRCS:	League of Red Cross Societies
MSF:	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA:	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
POW:	Prisoners of War
SCIU:	Save the Children International Union
STC:	Save the Children
TRC:	Turkish Red Crescent
UN:	United Nations
UNBRO:	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRRA:	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
VAF:	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
WFP:	World Food Program
WWI:	World War I
WWII:	World War II

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian aid has traditionally been framed as a set of actions carried out by persons or organizations to provide assistance to people and communities affected by crises, conflicts, or disasters. It is intended to save lives, reduce suffering, and maintain respect for human dignity during and in the aftermath of such crises and disasters, alongside preventing them and preparing for future ones (Paulmann, 2013). At its core, humanitarian aid is about having compassion toward the suffering of individuals and communities affected by crises, disasters, and conflicts and alleviating this suffering (Ferris, 2011, p.608). Compassion, in the scope of concern for the suffering of others and the desire to alleviate that suffering, has deep roots in various religious and cultural traditions that long predate the emergence of modern humanitarianism. Later, compassion was partially inspired by the Enlightenment rationality, with its theories and principles of rights, new concepts of the social role of individuals and citizens, and the breaking of religious dominance in people's understanding of their own fate (Reid Henry, 2014). Even though the origins of compassion and its manifestation in humanitarian aid have evolved throughout time, it has remained central to the discourse of humanitarian aid. This thesis has built the argument that compassion serves as the foundational discourse of humanitarianism; however, the methods in which compassion has materialized and embedded within humanitarian aid mechanisms have transformed significantly from its emergence to the present day.

As will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, humanitarianism has consistently mobilized compassion as its legitimating discourse, adapting its forms to the requirements of the historical, political, and economic conditions it navigates. Compassion in the sense of humanitarianism and throughout this thesis is not treated

solely as a personal virtue but as a discursive mechanism that legitimates power relations in humanitarian aid. It indicates a focused concern for others' suffering coupled with the impulse to alleviate it. The nature of the relationship constituted through humanitarian aid between the aid provider and receiver—whether paternalistic, strategic, conditional, or algorithmic—has transformed over centuries under the influence of forms of power relations. Early humanitarian aid efforts were often motivated by moral obligations, in which religiously based groups were active participants as aid providers. The nineteenth century saw a move toward formalized humanitarian aid, and compassion took on a more institutionalized form: the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1863, and this era saw a formalization of humanitarian principles such as neutrality and impartiality. Much was changed in the twentieth century with the establishment of international bodies such as the League of Nations and then the United Nations (UN). These organizations formalized humanitarian aid processes during and after World War II. During the Cold War, aid became intertwined with geopolitical interests. Western nations often used humanitarian aid to gain influence in developing countries. More recently, globalization and advances in technology have enabled the rapid mobilization of resources to provide humanitarian response.

As humanitarian aid has evolved, so too has the concept of humanitarianism, which provides a broader framework for understanding the diverse range of practices aimed at relieving human suffering. Humanitarianism is a very flexible concept (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Ticktin, 2011). It embraces a wide range of activities, from emergency aid given to people affected by natural or man-made disasters to longer-term programs working to reduce the suffering caused by hunger, disease, or poverty. These include international adoption, specific campaigns against human rights abuses, and humanitarian military interventions.

This thesis focuses on the concept of humanitarian aid as a central element within the broader framework of humanitarianism. While humanitarianism encompasses a wide range of ethical, political, and operational practices aimed at relieving human suffering, this thesis narrows the research scope to humanitarian aid and assistance. Humanitarian aid is understood here as involving tangible resources and logistical

support in response to urgent situations such as natural disasters, conflicts, or other crises, along with protracted aid initiatives promoting recovery and enhancing resilience. Throughout this thesis, the term “humanitarianism” will specifically refer to “humanitarian aid.”

While this may seem to blur the line between the two, it highlights the fluid boundaries and overlaps that exist between the concepts, as humanitarian aid often serves as the most prominent and practical manifestation of humanitarianism. This aligns with the interchangeable use of terms and relates to the critical, historical, and analytical framework employed in this research, which examines the operational mechanisms involved in the aid allocation process and the ethical, political, and power dynamics that shape the logic of humanitarianism overall. Humanitarian aid is prioritized in this broader context, with the aim of analyzing the evolving characteristics of crises, aid delivery, and the complex hierarchies within the humanitarian field.

In generic discourse, humanitarianism concerns compassion and, accordingly, an attempt to alleviate the suffering of distant strangers. Norman Fiering (1976.p.195); traces modern humanitarianism to late eighteenth-century notions of humanity and defines humanitarianism as the “widespread inclination to protest against obvious and pointless suffering” (see also Barnett, 2008). However, a detailed look would reveal a complex constellation of terms and concepts rather than clear-cut definitions of humanitarian aid (Paulmann, 2013, p.215). So far, there have been only a few historical studies on evolution and multiple meanings of the term. In this thesis, I argue that any thorough examination of the historical path that humanitarian aid has taken must necessarily include an examination of the strategic use of language inherent in humanitarianism. This is because calls for and claims of humanitarianism have, from the very beginning, served and continued to serve different purposes in various situations. The actors in this rhetoric have been those whose impact has been shaped by their resources and degrees of influence. Additionally, the way situations have been framed and articulated has had a direct impact on the type of humanitarian policies that could be enacted at any one point in time.

Humanitarianism, particularly in the field of humanitarian aid, inherently produces a discourse that diffuses every aspect of its presence. In this thesis, humanitarian

discourse is understood as an ensemble of ideas, categories, and representations. This discourse frames the selection of cases, defines who should be helped, how this aid can be delivered, and the dynamics between the provider and the recipient of the aid. In essence, humanitarianism shapes its practices through this discourse, incorporating it into the very core of its operations.

Despite efforts to theorize humanitarianism through various approaches, as previously mentioned, no approach has treated it as a coherent, singular phenomenon. In the academic literature, there is a clear distinction between emergency aid, aimed at meeting immediate needs, and aid intended to create a lasting impact, a differentiation that Barnett (2011, p.18) refers to as "alchemical humanitarianism." However, this distinction is not applied in my analysis because I argue that both types of aid function within the same broader discourse. The primary aim of this study is to outline the historical trajectory of this discourse, irrespective of emergency response or alchemical humanitarianism, while emphasizing its development and impact over various periods.

Most of the literature on humanitarian aid suggests that its character changed after the Cold War (e.g., Duffield, 2001; Rieff, 2003; Mills, 2005; Hoffman & Weiss, 2006). This new form of humanitarianism is an approach frequently referred to as a conceptual transition, an imperative based on principles of saving lives when and where necessary, to an integrated, politically bound paradigm. This shift has entailed extensive academic debate on politics and practices that underpin humanitarianism during the post-Cold War period. (e.g., Duffield, 2001 onwards; Hoffman & Weiss, 2006; Barnett, 2011).

While these works provide significant insight into the changing nature of humanitarian aid during the post-Cold War period, this thesis differs from the dominant trend in that it underlines the resilience of the power relations that arise within humanitarianism throughout various historical junctures. Rather than seeing such an evolution as a radical rupture, I will demonstrate that the same power relations have always formed the core of humanitarianism under different forms depending on the particular sociopolitical and economic circumstances. The following thesis, therefore, calls for a

broad-based historical account that traces not only the changes in the practices of humanitarianism but also critically examines continuities and shifts in the structures of power that underpin them.

When examined through the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, humanitarianism is revealed—not merely as a compassionate response to suffering—but as a complex mechanism for creating and sustaining specific regimes of truth. Here, also the concept of suffering is not only envisioned as a physical fact but as a socially constructed and governed experience. Humanitarian narratives portray suffering as a unifying force that brings humanity together, and it is often stated that extreme suffering reveals and confirms our shared humanity (Ticktin, 2011; Redfield, 2012). Suffering is the empirical ground in this paradigm that demands moral action, and which delineates the content of "humanity." Central to this inquiry is the idea that humanitarianism does not simply respond to crises as objective facts; rather, it plays an active role in forming what constitutes a "humanitarian crisis" within a given historical, political, and social context. This involves a three-step process: defining the crisis, identifying the target group at the center of the crisis, and determining the intervention methods—all of which are interconnected with power-knowledge relations.

Humanitarian aid operates within the context of crises and disasters that affect human communities. Therefore, the first step is to recognize and label a situation as a "crisis," a process deeply tied to the creation of knowledge that brings certain conditions to the forefront while relegating others to insignificance or, at the very least, to a lesser status. While there is no single, universally accepted definition for a crisis, the United Nations Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction defines disasters as sudden disruptions to societal functioning that result in widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses exceeding the ability of the affected community to cope with its own resources (Kelman, 2011, 9.4-12). More importantly, these events cannot be described solely as natural processes; their effects overwhelmingly stem from societal factors such as socioeconomic vulnerabilities, geographic exposure to hazards, and inadequate preparedness. Consequently, the determination of what constitutes a crisis—whether it is famine, war, disaster, or displacement—does not rest merely on measurable

indices of suffering but also on narratively constructed descriptions that are institutional, political, and cultural in origin. Such discourses create a hierarchy among crises, ranking them in ways that influence how the world allocates its attention and resources.

The next step relates to differentiating aid beneficiaries—those deemed "worthy" of humanitarian assistance. This process is heavily influenced by moral and knowledge-based judgments that assess individuals or groups based on their perceived vulnerability, innocence, or need. Such categorizations are not neutral; rather, they stem from deep ideological and geopolitical motivations that often reinforce existing social hierarchies and exclusions. A current example is demonstrated by the ongoing refugee crisis. Refugee resettlement programs frequently determine "deservingness" in the distribution of aid based on factors like age, gender, or occupation. Typically, women, children, and the elderly are prioritized, representing symbols of vulnerability. In contrast, single adult males—especially those arriving from countries known for their involvement in armed conflicts—are often viewed with suspicion and, in many cases, denied certain types of assistance. This intentional categorization reflects not only ethical but also broader geopolitical considerations, such as framing assistance as altruistic while ignoring politically controversial groups that could undermine the narrative of humanitarian neutrality. Such exclusions reinforce stereotypes and widen the gaps between displaced populations. As Didier Fassin notes in his book on *Humanitarian Reason*, humanitarianism tends to build a "scale of innocence and vulnerability" that works to privilege some sufferings (Fassin, 2011, p.67). Thus, while humanitarianism imports to serve and protect a universal suffering humanity, with the conceptual help of innocence, it nevertheless ratifies hierarchies on the ground (Ticktin, 2016).

The third stage consists of developing and deploying specific intervention methods and mechanisms. These techniques, besides appearing to alleviate suffering, are, in fact, meant for governance tools that administer and regulate populations. The establishment of refugee camps, aid through tracking, and health and sanitation rules will be typical examples in that respect. Many of these interventions often go beyond

pure aid, which integrates the humanitarian agents into permanent structures of supervision, regulation, and biopolitical administration of human life.

These dynamics raise a set of crucial questions that aim to unpack the discursive and practical foundations of humanitarianism. In order to critically examine how humanitarianism operates not only as a response to suffering but also as being in close contact with power relations, the following research questions will guide the thesis:

i) Throughout its history which discourses are used to produce humanitarianism?
ii) How does humanitarianism identify a crisis as a humanitarian crisis?
iii) How does humanitarianism select its subjects, namely aid receivers, and how are they positioned within these discourses?
iv) What kind of mechanisms or practices does humanitarian aid use in response to a crisis?

Foucault's theoretical framework will be essential in the analysis of these dynamics, as it offers the mechanisms through which power operates via the production of knowledge and the creation of normative truths (Rose, 1993, p.290-292). Humanitarianism—far from being an utterly altruistic and compassionate enterprise—has to be considered one of the most deeply institutionalized structures of power contiguous with larger political, economic, and social systems; its interventions, while appearing to reduce suffering, simultaneously reinforce these very systems, in the name of compassion, thus preserving certain relations of power. Compassion, in the Foucauldian understanding, can be considered a regime of truth—encompassing a discourse of accepted sentiments and narratives that legitimize aid in the name of humanity. Rather than being devoid of political content, compassion here is laden with power: defining who will qualify for it and whose suffering is deserving of a response.

By contextualizing humanitarianism within this broad framework of power and knowledge, a critical reading of its function in creating both the "truth" surrounding crises and the very governance methods and mechanisms of control that arise from its practice becomes possible.

Humanitarian aid has always been deeply embedded in power relations, a reality that continues to this day. While much of the current scholarship suggests that contemporary humanitarianism—characterized by its depoliticized emotional appeals, selective interventions, and technocratic governance—emerged primarily as a product of the Cold War and its aftermath, this thesis challenges that view. It is argued that such features are not peculiar to contemporary humanitarianism but rather display a historical continuity under the same impulse of different forms of power through various historical periods. What is not different is the existence of power relations but how these power relations materialize. Humanitarianism has always operated under a justification mechanism of compassion and, in so doing, has almost always masked the structures of power upon which it is dependent. It is in this regard that Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality* (1979)—that power has undergone significant transformations since classical times—provides a brilliant tool through which these shifts in the manifestation of power vis-à-vis humanitarianism can be understood (Rose, 1993).

By such historical contextualization, this thesis argues that the definition of crisis, the groups identified as worthy of assistance, and how assistance has been provided have all changed over time in ways that reflect broader socio-political and economic shifts. In the context of this thesis, a crisis is conceived not as something self-evident in itself, but rather as a label that is discursively constructed and invested with power and knowledge. Humanitarian aid by its nature inhabits the realm of crises; however, one of the main contentions of this thesis is that crises are not so much found as they are constructed. Before a crisis can be addressed under humanitarianism, it must first be narratively and politically construed as such.

However, compassion discourse has been a constant feature as the legitimating discourse for humanitarian assistance, operating as a means of exercising power. This continuity aligns with Foucault's conceptual frameworks of pastoral power, biopower, and neoliberal governmentality. The progression from the early modern era's religiously motivated "shepherding" of at-risk populations to the biopolitical oversight of bodies and populations during the 19th and 20th centuries, culminating in the contemporary humanitarian focus on neoliberal principles of efficiency and self-

regulation/self-reliance, illustrates an evolution of compassionate practices that are fundamentally connected to governance and control. This dissertation takes up a historical analysis of progressive manifestations of compassion, ongoing as mechanisms of authority masked in benevolence. Before turning to the historical development of various forms of power relations, it should be noted that this does not mean that one form of power has disappeared only to be replaced by another. Rather, these forms of power co-exist, even if they do so with varying degrees of importance and influence over time. Finally, the intention is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of Foucault's theoretical framework. Instead, the aim is to employ relevant Foucauldian concepts as analytical tools to uncover and examine the characteristics of humanitarian aid.

A threefold contribution of this study can be noted. First, it makes an important contribution to the existing literature on humanitarian aid by challenging the commonly held presumption that humanitarianism has historically been characterized by its neutrality and apolitical nature, which then became politicized at specific junctures in history, such as the post-Cold War era. As far as early scholars like Michael Barnett (2011) have recognized, the interfaces of political imperatives and humanitarian aid, a prevalent presumption still exists that humanitarianism has progressively developed into heightened politicization throughout the trajectory of history. My research challenges this notion by demonstrating that from its very inception, humanitarianism was always deeply intertwined with power and political dynamics. By presenting a historical analysis that spans multiple centuries, I show that what may appear as distinct and isolated political challenges in different periods are, in fact, part of a continuous historical pattern of how aid and governance have co-evolved.

Second, the theoretical contribution of the research is in the usage of Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality in examining how humanitarianism evolved historically. Although Foucauldian analysis has been used in areas ranging from development policy to public health, its explicit extension to the whole history of humanitarianism is novel. I introduce the idea that humanitarianism itself can be seen as a form of governmentality that spans across time. This model allows me to analyze seemingly

unrelated events—a missionary providing for the poor during the 1850s, a UN refugee camp in the 1980s, and a cash-aid program in the 2020s—using a single analytical framework. They are all techniques in the "art of governing" human lives under the justification of compassion. By doing so, I offer a conceptual tool – thinking of humanitarian governance or "government of humanity" – that future researchers can use to analyze specific instances of aid with an eye for underlying power relations

Last but not least, in empirical terms, the present study fills the significant gap in the literature by providing a general historical overview of humanitarianism from the Enlightenment period to the present. Earlier research has provided a detailed examination of specific cases in the history of humanitarian aid—such as the founding of the Red Cross or the Biafran War—without a single study systematically integrating these into an overall historical account. However, we lacked a single work that brought the entire timeline together through a critical perspective. By providing an extensive historical account from the Enlightenment era to the present, I create a bridge between historians and theorists. This comprehensive scope enables us to identify patterns that might be overlooked in narrower studies. This synthesis allows for a deeper understanding of humanitarianism as a practice at once historically contingent and politically embedded.

In this regard, Chapter 2 sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis by drawing on Michel Foucault's analytics of governmentality and his methodological approach to genealogy. This chapter frames humanitarian aid not as a neutral or technical response to human suffering but as a historically contingent apparatus of governmentality—one that operates through compassion, constructs knowledge about crises, and legitimizes the management of suffering populations. Governmentality provides the lens through which aid is conceptualized as a form of power that seeks to conduct the conduct of others under moral imperatives, while genealogy offers the methodological tool for tracing the historical ruptures and reconfigurations of aid practices. Within this framework, the chapter defines and critically unpacks key concepts such as compassion, humanitarian crisis, and governmentality. It highlights how different historical moments of rupture—moments when compassion becomes materialized in new humanitarian practices—correspond with distinct modalities of

power: pastoral, biopolitical, and neoliberal forms, each producing new subjectivities and rationalities of humanitarian response. These modes of power are theorized not in isolation but as historically layered strategies that shape the logic and operation of humanitarian aid across time.

Crucially, Chapter 2 also establishes the conceptual grounding for the thesis's research questions, which interrogate how humanitarianism constructs and governs "humanity" through shifting but persistent power relations. By articulating this framework, the chapter lays the foundation for the historical analyses in the subsequent chapters, providing the tools to critically read the development of humanitarian aid. Thus, the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 not only offers a Foucauldian reading of aid itself but also guides the thesis's genealogical engagement with the institutional ruptures, discursive shifts, and evolving configurations of humanitarian governmentality.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth analysis of the origin of modern humanitarianism presenting it as a complex interplay between religious, philosophical, and political forces. At the center of this analysis is the role of Christianity, which laid both the moral and organizational groundwork for the earliest humanitarian efforts. Drawing on Foucault's concept of pastoral power, this chapter explores the idea that Christian charity went beyond mere acts of compassion and operated as a technique of governmentality in the shaping of individual behavior and community life within the moral jurisdiction of the Church. Pastoral power was wielded in a two-fold manner: care for the physical and spiritual well-being of people was taken alongside the contemporaneous exertion of power over their lives. This governance was evident in missionary activities and church-led initiatives that intertwined the moral imperative to help the "needy" with the broader agenda of discipline and conformity. The chapter contends that this dynamic fostered hierarchical relationships between those providing aid and the recipients, instilling concepts of dependency and cultural superiority within the framework of humanitarianism.

Furthermore, Chapter 4 will examine how Enlightenment principles transformed humanitarian discourse by redirecting its emphasis from divine intervention to secular rationality, alongside an appreciation of universal human dignity. The 1755 Lisbon

Earthquake serves as an essential case study that shows how empirical reasoning and government-led relief efforts began to replace religious explanations of such disasters. This chapter also critically analyzes the broader socio-economic transformations that shaped modern humanitarianism. Key events, such as the abolishment of slavery and the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross, are assessed not merely as moral triumphs but also as events integrally connected to the development of capitalist and colonial systems. These movements, while encouraging compassion, simultaneously worked to legitimize control and selectivity in the distribution of aid. Chapter 2 explains these histories in detail, showing how humanitarianism has constantly evolved in the context of power relations and socio-political settings. In this way, it lays the foundation for the succeeding chapters, which will more deeply examine the international institutionalization of humanitarian aid and its effects on contemporary governance.

The historical path of humanitarianism has significantly challenged the simplistic conflation of the Red Cross's establishment with the birth of modern humanitarianism. The establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, however, marked a turning point that fundamentally altered the nature of relief efforts. From its inception, humanitarianism has been increasingly shaped by broader socio-political forces, particularly those originating from Europe. The Eurocentric gaze not only reflected but also reinforced the geopolitical changes and power dynamics in the continent for the next century.

Chapter 5 examines how humanitarianism, from this context, was institutionalized on the level of national as well as supranational bodies like the League of Nations and the later United Nations agencies, which, in tandem, witnessed the growth of non-governmental organizations like the Save the Children Fund. The interaction among state actors, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society has contributed to contemporary humanitarian aid, a history that was not linear or uncontested. Inherent in these interactions are revelations of how power, expertise, and responsibility have been co-constructed in aid operations, a refrain somewhat akin to Michel Foucault's work, where he figured power/knowledge as networked and relational.

Chapter 4 also traces the development of humanitarian aid as it responded to the specific needs arising from the First and Second World Wars, including the impoverishment and displacement of civilian populations. Crucially, how those receiving assistance were categorized—infants as innocent victims of war, refugees as displaced communities, and civilians as victims of war—was deeply overlapped with the moral and political discourses of the time. The focus on rehabilitation rather than simply providing aid indicates humanitarianism to be a domain of governance—that compassion and control always go hand in hand.

Chapter 5 transitions into the Cold War era, where humanitarianism became deeply entangled with ideological rivalries between the East and West. The emergence of complex humanitarian emergencies during this time such as protracted conflicts, famine, and displacement—will be discussed. The chapter analyzes particularly the civil conflict in Nigeria, often referred to as the Biafran War, which represented a significant turning point in the evolution of humanitarian aid. Initiated in 1967, the war's catastrophic effects on non-combatant groups catalyzed one of the earliest transnational movements advocating for humanitarian aid in the postcolonial period. Media coverage went a long way in bringing the conflict to global attention, transforming what had been a neglected event into a leading issue of international humanitarian concern. This war marked a significant shift in the geographical and ideological focus of humanitarian action, as aid work gradually moved out of Europe to engage with the challenges facing decolonized regions trapped in the complexities of Cold War geopolitics. It was during this era that the development agenda of the United Nations expanded, while private humanitarian organizations, missionary societies, and philanthropic bodies deepened their activities to combat poverty, hunger, and disease in the so-called "Third World." These activities converged with the exponential growth of NGOs, which, by the 1980s, became core actors in humanitarian initiatives globally. While these campaigns succeeded in mobilizing global support, they also perpetuated simplified and passive representations of aid recipients, reinforcing a narrative of dependency on "wealthy and advanced" societies. This chapter further interrogates the relationship between humanitarianism, media, and power by highlighting how crises such as the Ethiopian Famine were framed and understood within a global context. It explores how the mediatization and

institutionalization of humanitarian action served as mechanisms of governance. The generation and distribution of knowledge in relation to crises, along with the representation of aid recipients as dependent and marginalized people, exemplify the ways in which power operates in humanitarian settings. As the focus shifted to refugee crises in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, these themes took on new dimensions, particularly in the context of mass displacement and complex geopolitical entanglements.

Chapter 6 discusses the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a period marked by the increasing intersection of humanitarian aid, securitization, and militarization, fundamentally reshaping the politics of global interventions. The cases of Kosovo, the Balkan Wars, Rwanda, and post-2001 Afghanistan illustrate how humanitarian action has been entangled with military strategies, often serving as both a justification for intervention and a tool shaped by security concerns. These instances reflect a broader shift in which humanitarianism has been instrumentalized within political and military agendas, challenging the traditional, depoliticized narrative of aid. This chapter critically examines whether humanitarian responses in conflict zones have become extensions of geopolitical strategies rather than neutral acts of relief, questioning the ways in which aid has been weaponized or co-opted to serve broader international security objectives.

Additionally, this period that has been marked by a significant shift in international humanitarian concerns increasingly focused on refugee crises, with the Syrian refugee crisis becoming one of the most pressing humanitarian concerns of today. The mass displacement due to the Syrian Civil War has not only reshaped the scale and scope of humanitarian action but has also highlighted enduring power dynamics that have shaped humanitarianism since its inception. This chapter provides a critical review of Turkey's response to the Syrian refugee crisis as a prominent case study of neoliberal governmentality. Here, power is exercised through the framing of refugees as the subjects of humanitarianism conjunction with the implementation of programs aimed at creating self-sufficient subjects. The focus on livelihood programs, integration into local economies, and capacity building demonstrates how neoliberal discourses of resilience and self-sufficiency have become central to humanitarian responses.

The analysis discusses the discursive practices that have long typified humanitarianism, including the categorization of beneficiaries of aid, the production of self-reliant subjects, and the ethical and political discourses underpinning such mechanisms. Each of these methodologies demonstrates that humanitarianism, instead of being a totally impartial or purely benevolent exercise, has always been a field where power is both created and challenged. The Syrian refugee crisis, with particular attention to the role of Turkey, represents the active evolution of historic patterns of dependency, control, and governance in contemporary contexts.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID

2.1. Foucault's Governmentality and Humanitarianism as a Mode of Governing Humanity

Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge elaborates on the close relationship between power structures and knowledge systems. Power does not function solely through repression; it plays a productive role, generating knowledge that, in turn, reinforces its reality. Rose's works particularly illustrate how this reciprocity has impacted on modern governance methods (Rose, 2001, p.1-2). Rose highlights the eighteenth century as a crucial period in history, marking the transformation from regulation by sovereign power to discursive and biopolitical forms of administration, describing the emergence of what Foucault refers to as "governmentality." Foucault's brief definition of governmentality is the "conduct of conducts" (*conducte de conduits*) (Foucault, 2008). That is, the art of governing beyond mere state rule, through myriad techniques that shape how individuals and populations behave and understand themselves. Governmentality, according to Foucault, was an "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power" (Foucault 1979, p. 20).

Foucault's concept of governmentality is strongly relevant to the research questions of this thesis because it demonstrates humanitarian aid as both compassionate and controlling. Governmentality also emphasizes that power operates in productive manners – through shaping norms, knowledge, and subjectivities – rather than through overt domination (Rose, N., O'malley, P., and Valverde, M. 2006, p.98). This

is vital for the examination of humanitarianism, which declares that it saves lives but, concurrently, governs and controls individuals and collects data about them. Humanitarian organizations can be understood as deeply institutionalized structures of power that perpetuate political and social structures in the name of compassion. For example, humanitarian aid creates its "regimes of truth" about crises: they define what counts as a "humanitarian crisis," identify who the victims are and create response mechanisms– processes suffused with power and knowledge biases. A Foucauldian analysis reveals that such definitions are not neutral reflections of suffering but are ingrained with normative judgments and geopolitical interests. This perspective is in direct alignment with the thesis objective of questioning how compassion can mask power continuities. As Foucault argues, governmentality works by establishing normative truths and authoritative knowledge. Humanitarianism, through its reports, categories, and field practices, establishes the "truth" of who needs to be saved and on what terms, thereby exerting power over life in a benevolent form. Foucault's approach that governmentality works by creating subjects who can be governed is applied here to show how humanitarian aid has historically constituted the category of a governable humanity.

Government functions by creating subjects that can be governed; no naturally united "people" exist. The character of the governed guides government practice, and such factors are co-constructed. The humanitarian government takes "humanity" as its focal subject in such a theoretical frame. It is a distinctly new concept in contrast with "the government of the social" that also emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and whose development Foucault criticized in his theory of governmentality (Rose, 1999). The concept of caring plays an important role in both humanitarian government and the government of the social. However, in the latter, care relies on measurement techniques such as statistical analysis, social work, and psychology amongst its disciplines for defining and acting upon society's requirements. It constructed an epistemology of society regarding a population in social intervention, creating social sympathy to counteract alienation produced under capitalism and providing a basis for social welfare (Ticktin, 2014, p.280-282). Humanitarian government, in contrast, creates and sustains a universal form of "humanity" located in and through the individual human body. Humanitarian organizations have struggled to produce and maintain a universal

moral entity— “humanity”—as both an object of care and a site of concern (Feldman and Ticktin, 2010). In contrast with “the government of the social” and its inbuilt relation with national populations and welfare regimes, the humanitarian government is transnational, allowing interventions to occur over borders under a principle of universal humanity.

In this regard, humanitarian actors sometimes act around, and with nations states, and whenever possible, they act by passing nation-states; they bargain with governments in an attempt to gain access to persons in peril, but in practice, act in cases in which the nation-state fails, or refuses, to protect its citizens. Humanitarians and networks with whom they work move in and out of specific crises, deploying to specific parts of the world where intervention is considered morally imperative and compassionate. In many cases, such activity reflects long-standing trends and approaches of intervention under colonialism, intentionally or not, in that colonial regimes likewise took a moral prerogative to help or save others. They move in and out of such locations for a finite period—never permanently, even when interventions become long-term (Feldman, 2018; McKay, 2012)—leaving when they believe it is best to in terms of security concerns, increased danger, or when a specific region, or a specific conflict, no longer constitutes a high-priority case for humanitarian aid.

Humanity, when regarded as a population, is best understood and united during times of crisis, particularly in moments of extreme suffering. In these critical periods, humanity is perceived as a united entity, with suffering serving as its defining characteristic. In such scenarios, suffering is often recognized as a common thread that reveals and affirms our shared humanity (Ticktin, 2011; Redfield, 2012). Consequently, humanitarianism operates on the premise that this widespread suffering can be observed, measured, and comprehended—this premise confirms its reality and establishes a moral obligation to act. In this regard, an experience of suffering forms an empirical basis for a shared, collective humanity and a worldwide moral imperative prioritized in humanitarianism. Suffering is imagined here as a discourse-structured category and instrumentalized by humanitarian governance to bring together humanity and to justify humanitarian aid. Yet, such a model often necessitates depicting suffering subjects in terms of passive victimhood, in contrast to an acceptance of the agency that

such subjects exercise in challenging and overcoming their environments (Boltanski, 1999, p. 190). What is more, while humanitarianism claims that it acts based on suffering as an objectively measured and observed category, the history of humanitarianism reveals that decisions about which suffering is framed as a humanitarian crisis, when it is labeled as such, and which crises are prioritized far from being a neutral decision. These are shaped by political, economic, and ideological factors and their selective engagement with suffering. Thus, crisis in the context of humanitarian aid is a fluid concept that has changed over time. However, it is always an exercise of power: labeling a situation a crisis precipitates intense attention and mobilization of resources, typically in ways that advance the geopolitical or moral agendas of those doing the categorization. This thesis puts the concept of crisis at the core of interrogation, inquiring into how humanitarian discourse has persistently played an active role in shaping what a "humanitarian crisis" is in terms of defining emergencies, identifying those deserving help, and adjudicating suitable humanitarian responses. Through interrogating crisis construction, it is evident how humanitarianism translates disorderly events into governable phenomena.

Here, the ways in which humanitarianism constructs suffering, prioritizes emergencies, and makes specific forms of suffering visible are not informed only by acts of compassion but rather by broader structures of knowledge and power relations. The concept of governmentality, distinct from governance, encompasses a specific level of discourses and practices surrounding knowledge and power (Rose, 1999, p. 19). It emphasizes the development of specific "regimes of truth" by examining how various forms of discourse are constructed. Truths are established, authorized individuals are designated to express these truths, and specific contexts regarding who articulates truths and which statements, discourses, and practices arise from them are outlined.

From late antiquity, through Stoic philosophy, Christian "pastoralism," and modern "disciplinary" systems, the means of self-formation and various modifications and controls create an ongoing self-care practice. What is distinctive about these "techniques of the self," and what makes them governmental rather than merely moral, religious, or philosophical, is their inherently technical nature. This justifies the

effectiveness of self-government through the enduring relationship between concepts and principles on one hand and mechanisms, along with physical, psychological, social, and cultural processes, on the other. The idea of "care for the self and for others" becomes manifest in everyday life through journal writing, meditation, nursing, confessionals, monitoring the poor, accounting, and bookkeeping practices (Foucault, 2008). The self-care practices outlined above, with their technical and governmental aspects, offer a foundation for understanding the broader study of governmentality. Governmentality examines how knowledge and power interact in creating specific regimes of truth that influence social and political life.

When considering that governmentality works through constructing spaces and shaping persons, a key question arises: Through which mechanism is it accomplished? As a political rationality, it must be actualized through concrete practice ordering spaces and governing conduct and, therefore, must involve its integration with technology. According to Nikolas Rose (1999, p. 52), governmental technology is "an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgment," and a range of additional factors, all designed to secure specific ends in governing persons.

In a similar model, humanitarianism employs a specific tool—compassion—that operates as a mechanism of governmentality. However, its forms vary based on shifting historical contexts and changes in power dynamics. Governmentality signifies a specific form of power that emerged in Europe at a particular historical moment and subsequently shaped the state's nature and its relationship with its subjects (Walters and Haahr, 2005). This perspective also implies that each historical epoch is defined by its distinct mode of governmentality (Nadesan, 2010, p. 1). In his genealogical analysis, Foucault identified various governmentalities, including the Christian pastorate, liberalism, and neoliberalism. Similarly, humanitarianism positions itself within these evolving power relations. Essentially, it relies on regimes of truth that delineate suffering, identify appropriate beneficiaries for intervention, and clarify the nature of intervention. In doing so, it positions compassion not merely as an ethical obligation but as a structured modality of government.

In short, the application of Foucault's governmentality concept enables the study to situate humanitarian aid in a context where power and compassion intersect. This is in line with the thesis's theoretical interests at several key points:

> Humanitarianism as a mode of governmentality: This approach recasts humanitarian aid as a system of governance that produces its subject population (suffering humanity) and controls it by both moral and technical means. This is consistent with the thesis's claim that humanitarianism can be viewed as a "government of humanity" beyond charitable and benevolent purposes.
>
> Power/Knowledge Dynamics: It highlights how humanitarian discourse constructs knowledge of crises and victims, establishing hierarchies of suffering and deserving recipients. This helps address the research question by showing that there are power-informed narratives and classifications underlying decisions about whom to help and how.
>
> Compassion as a Mechanism of Power: This concept explains how compassion and care can function as mechanisms of power, influencing both individual and collective behaviors. The humanitarian norm of care as a tool to justify interventions and influence the behaviors of aid recipients and givers is employed. For example, as humanitarian agencies relieve suffering, they also establish behavioral norms and policies that individuals are required to follow – thus administering and regulating populations in the name of humanity.

This thesis presents a Foucauldian reading of humanitarian aid, considering aid as both a legitimization and an instrument of power, rather than focusing on specific humanitarian actors, agencies, or policy effects. The emphasis, in essence, is on the governing rationalities and discursive structures that have historically shaped the meanings and functions of humanitarian aid as part of modern power. Examining humanitarian aid as an apparatus necessitates an examination of the interpenetrating network of knowledge, norms, institutions, and practices that constitute the field of aid. It also demands an understanding of how this network generates its practices and effects through a particular discourse. In addition, given the expansive historical timespan that this thesis covers, having a genealogical approach is essential to be able to discuss the development of compassion as it has emerged with different modes of power—namely pastoral, biopolitical, and neoliberal—and how their corresponding subjects changed over time. While governmentality provides the theoretic groundwork necessary to understand the governance performed through humanitarianism, genealogy gives the methodologic tools to be able to track the contingent, non-linear,

and power-endowed histories behind its development. In this model, a return to Foucault's genealogical method makes possible a more nuanced examination of the breaks, openings, and transformations that have characterized humanitarian aid over various periods, without suggesting a linear or morally cumulative process.

2.2. Genealogy and History of Humanitarian Aid

Foucault's concept of genealogy, what he called his "greatest epistemological import" (Prado, 2018), emphasizes a detailed and evidence-based approach to dealing with the past, working with "entangled and confused parchments" (Foucault, 1991, p. 76). This counterpoints traditional historical narratives, contesting grand narratives and teleological interpretations of progress (Downing, 2008). Rather than causes, genealogy examines the accidental conditions of events and places the present as conditioned by fights and power relations instead of a deterministic development (Mahon, 1992; Smart, 1985).

Foucault's intellectual trajectory took a notable turn from an earlier archaeological methodology, akin to structuralism, to a later genealogical methodology. It is this methodological change that is required in the investigation of disruptions and historical transformations in humanitarianism (Wilson, 1995, p.157-159). During the initial period of his career, Foucault's writings, such as *The Order of Things and The Archaeology of Knowledge*, examined the deep structures of knowledge (epistemes) that characterized whole ages in history. This archaeological methodology understood history in terms of comparatively integrated discursive systems, offering a stabilized image of the norms of knowledge in an era. However, it had a reduced sensitivity to power relations or abrupt changes. During the 1970s, Foucault turned to the genealogical method inspired by Nietzsche (Shiner, 1982, p.382-385). This approach emphasizes the historical surroundings of contemporary phenomena and highlights the discontinuities, contingencies, and power struggles involved in the development of concepts and institutions. Rather than following a linear trajectory or an integrated system, genealogy "examines the contingent conditions of events" and discloses how present phenomena have arisen out of specific power struggles and unexpected events. This shift is extremely useful for the examination of humanitarian aid, which has

evolved through different eras and paradigms more than via a single, unbroken development.

The genealogical approach, unlike traditional historiography which presumes rational progress and continuity, traces power relations that shape knowledge and institutions (Wilson, 1995, p.158). In this regard, genealogy is not solely about the past, rather it is a tool for diagnosing to critique the present. Genealogical analysis concentrates on contemporary issues through the selection of problems to be analyzed rather than the targeting of specific historical periods (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). It problematizes what appears "normal or true" by uncovering its origins in power and contingency (Vucetic, 2011). By mapping dominant narratives and revealing their marginal, excluded alternatives (Howarth, 2002), genealogy critiques the present and seeks to uncover possible alternatives that transcend current conditions of existence and thought (Mahon, 1992). In this sense, truth is not a timeless phenomenon; it is a historical product that serves certain political endeavor (Wilson, 1985). This framework, rooted in uncovering "regimes of truth," aligns closely with the critical examination of humanitarianism in this thesis, as both seek to uncover how power operates through discourse and practice.

Michel Foucault's genealogical approach offers a "history of the present" that maps how present phenomena evolved through contingent power relations instead of along a linear progression of advancement. By following the genealogical approach, the thesis can then more easily demonstrate how humanitarianism transformed at each point in history – for example, religious charity to Red Cross neutralism, Cold War relief, or contemporary NGO and UN regimes – and also account for what stayed in place. Genealogy enables us to view the changes as ruptures that emerged in particular contexts of conflict and contestations, rather than as natural progressions. Effectively, Foucault's genealogical approach considers history not as a progressive trajectory of moral advancement, but rather as a series of deliberate transformations whereby power and knowledge reconceptualize humanitarian aid.

This perspective perfectly fit with the analysis of humanitarian history. It helps to look for breaks in thinking such as new definitions of "humanity" as humanitarian subject

in each historical period or new ways of delivering aid and to ask how those breaks were made possible by changes in power relations. For example, the founding of the Red Cross in the 1860s can be seen as a rupture that introduced formal humanitarian law and neutrality; a genealogical analysis would examine how that "turning point" was enabled by shifts in morality, state interests, and warfare, rather than assuming it as a natural moral progression. Likewise, the post-Cold War era's new vocabulary of "complex emergencies" and humanitarian interventions represents a rupture in discourse that can be traced to the end of bipolar geopolitics and the rise of liberal global governance.

Foucault's genealogical approach allows us to look at these transitions in both power relations and a contingency framework. Characteristically, genealogical approach enables tracking continuities through change. Foucault's own historical research, for instance, on punishment or sex, demonstrates that even when a prevailing mode of power is transformed – such as from sovereign power to biopower – its earlier forms do not disappear but persist in new forms.By adopting Foucault's genealogical method, the thesis can explore historical ruptures without losing sight of underlying continuities. It facilitates an examination of how each historical period of humanitarian aid – Enlightenment philanthropy, Red Cross-era, Cold War relief, neoliberal humanitarianism – introduced novel practices and how each drew on or recombined earlier power techniques. This method thus perfectly suits a study concerned with both transformations and the persistent core of power in humanitarian aid. In this regard, genealogy rejects the characterization of humanitarianism as a timeless moral enterprise and instead reveals how concepts like "humanity" and "compassion" were constituted over time through power relations, rather than given once and for all. Throughout the historical cases that will be examined in the following chapters compassion emerges as a persistent discourse of legitimation, continually adapted to new contexts even as the techniques of aid transform. In sum, Foucault's genealogy provides analytical tools to study the complex history of humanitarian aid by identifying key breaks in its discourse and practice, while detecting how each break still operates within an overarching power relations. This means recognizing that even as humanitarian aid undertakes significant ruptures, underlying power relations remain persistent.

The existence of historical breaks – new ideas, new discourses, new organizations, or "paradigm shifts" in aid – does not contradict the continuity of power. Genealogy plays a function akin to what Foucault refers to as "eventalization" (Foucault, 1994, p.76 as cited in Keskin, 2002). The term has two simple senses in Foucault's usage. First, it is to question what is taken to be natural—uncovering sites of singularity where historical given or universal truths are commonly believed to be observed and demonstrating that other options were available. So, for instance, it was not required that madness must be understood as mental illness or that so-called criminals must be incarcerated (Keskin, 2002, p. 112).

Second, eventalization entails the revelation of the contingent encounters—forces, strategies, and obstacles—that make what then seems natural or inevitable. In this regard, eventalization deconstructs universal truths by situating them in particular historical contexts. Consequently, it performs an equally critical role to genealogy: revealing the contingent and constructed character of knowledge, institutions, and practices (Keskin, 2002, p. 113).

As a replacement for, what often happens is institutionalization and "eventalization" of those ruptures, which eventually incorporate new developments into an ongoing structure of power. For example, Henry Dunant's initiative created a lasting institution and legal framework namely Geneva Conventions, which professionalized compassion but also set frontiers on who could be helped and under what conditions and in which way.

In this way, the process of institutionalization has given humanitarianism a resilience of its own new aid forms are integrated into the current power relations, thereby creating the appearance of continuity and stability in the enterprise, despite the alteration of its discourses or approach. "Eventalization" in the sense of the framing of specific crises or innovations as discrete events contributes to this continuity as well. The history of humanitarianism is often narrated in terms of a sequence of emergencies (Solferino, Biafra, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Syria, etc.) or as a sequence of successive transformations (the rise of NGOs, the advent of "celebrity humanitarianism"). Each

is understandable as a shock or rupture that leads to change. However, humanitarian aid has a tendency to integrate such events into its continuous storyline. Emergencies are considered as challenges that facilitate development, rather than as watershed moments that redefine the paradigm set. For instance, the Biafra War (1967–70) as will be discussed in the fifth chapter was a significant debacle for the Red Cross – a disruption that resulted with the founding of Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) as an alternative and vocal approach to humanitarian aid.

Dissent or novelty is eventilazed as a bounded problem to be resolved and then integrated into reigning paradigms. Foucault's concept dictates that power generates resistances that are then cleverly managed and integrated, as in the following case: no critique such as MSF's moral protest can elude the pervasive workings of humanitarian governmentality. Such critiques are absorbed into the system rather than disrupted thereby guaranteeing the persistence of deeper power relations, even as methodologies evolve.

In sum, the historical discontinuities and ruptures in humanitarianism—though actual and frequently substantial—do not signify a break in power relations. Instead, through the processes of institutionalization and the deliberate construction of narratives around events, the structure of humanitarianism constructs an "illusion of continuity." New actors or approaches are embraced by the system (or at least tolerated on the margins), changes are made to rectify previous critiques, and the discourse of humanitarianism endlessly rewrites its own history as a consistent march of compassionate concern. However, through close Foucauldian examination, it is shown that despite these shifts, some dynamics of power persist. Humanitarianism always operates within a system that Foucault has called a regime of truth, which legitimizes certain sorts of suffering and particular intervention as necessary. As it will be discussed through historical cases in the following chapters in each period, humanitarianism carries forward core assumptions about who can save and who needs saving, even as it adopts new slogans or methods. Put differently, there is no contradiction between the existence of ruptures and the persistence of power; rather, power simply takes new forms. It is precisely by analyzing those forms that we understand how humanitarianism can continually survive itself. This insight is central

to the thesis's argument. It explains why, for example, the compassionate discourse remains a constant even while the practices change – compassion serves as the moral continuity that obscures power's continuity.

In short, the Foucauldian analysis uncovers that the historical trajectory of humanitarianism is one of the spectacular transformations that ultimately reinstates a persistent structure of power relations. New labels and players appear; however, they are folded into a broad "governmentality" of aid that still manages human life in the name of humanity and compassion. Significantly, governmentality encompasses various rationalities across various eras – from the pastoral rule of missionaries who perceived the afflicted as souls to be led, to biopolitical interventions that view populations as bodies to be managed, to neoliberal principles that promote self-sufficiency among aid receivers. What ties these together is that humanitarian aid is a means of conducting the conduct of populations under a moral mandate, making "humanity" itself an object of government.

2.3. Different Modes of Power: Pastoral Power, Biopolitics and Neoliberalism

2.3.1. Pastoral Power

Pastoral power mainly focuses on the salvation of individuals and inherently embodies power relations between the "pastor" (leader) and the "flock" population (Bolder, 2009). It was rooted in Christian tradition and attended to both the individual and collective well-being of the population (Martin and Waring, 2018, p. 2). To put it in a comprehensive framework, pastoral power has moved within some specific practices. First, it translates and adjusts governmental discourse for a particular community. Second, it legitimizes and normalizes its discourse with some techniques. Then, it nests discourse through reinforcement. Lastly, it employs disciplinary mechanisms to monitor their allegiances (Martin and Waring, 2018). What makes pastoral power unique is that it is not territorial but targets individuals and collectives, namely the flock. It offered compassion and guidance toward salvation but also demanded devotion and obedience. Pastoral power was institutionalized through the Church and

blended spiritual care with detailed regulation of conduct. Furthermore, it paid individual attention to each member of the flock. (Carette, 2013, p.375).

Foucault views pastoral power as a precursor to the concept of governmentality, which he was developing around the same time. He describes this relationship as "a prelude to what I have called governmentality through the constitution of a specific subject, of a subject whose merits are analytically identified, who is subjected in continuous networks of obedience, and who is subjectified through the compulsory extraction of truth" (Foucault, 2007, p. 184–185). In discussing the constitution of a subject, he highlights the process of creating a specific "subject." Here, "subject" has two meanings: it refers both to a conscious individual and to an entity molded by power relations into a particular role. According to Foucault, individuals are not merely physical beings; they are also subjects defined by social norms and power mechanisms. The phrase "of a subject whose merits are analytically identified" suggests that an individual's traits or values (such as moral, intellectual, or economic qualities) are systematically analyzed and categorized. This analytical process serves to determine the individual's role and position in society. Consequently, individuals find themselves continually enmeshed in a network of obedience. In essence, individuals are subjected to a specific order dictated by social norms, laws, and institutions. This obedience permeates every aspect of an individual's life, tying them on mechanisms of social control. Furthermore, there exists a process by which individuals are subjectified by being compelled to express truths about themselves. This compulsory extraction of truth not only allows individuals to articulate their identities but also enhances the control exerted over them by power systems (Foucault, 2007, p.184 as cited in Martin and Waring, 2018).

While the institutional aspect of pastoral power has lessened since the eighteenth century, its function has not; instead, it has been scattered outside this initial institutional framework (Foucault, 2000). In his lectures delivered between 1977 and 1978, Foucault (2007) describes the Church's pastoral power as an early form of governmental authority that anticipates the concurrent emphasis on the individual and the population, a hallmark of neoliberal governmentality.

Specifically, humanitarianism can link up with pastoral power: it is exercised on "a multiplicity," that is, the "flock"; it is "fundamentally beneficent" in the sense that "it is only raison d'être is doing good" (Foucault 2007, p.126); and it is "an individualizing power" (Foucault 2007, p.127); in that "the shepherd directs the whole flock, but he can only really direct it insofar as not a single sheep escapes him, and the shepherd owes everything to his flock to the extent of agreeing to sacrifice himself for its salvation" (Foucault 2007,p. 130- 132). Humanitarianism presents itself as altruistic, residing on the welfare of communities and the elevation or rescue of its individual beneficiaries. This double emphasis exemplifies the individualizing and collectivizing dimensions of pastoral power: not only do humanitarian actors support and nurture groups, but they also survey and regulate individuals—i.e., under the guise of compassion and salvation. While aiming at collectiveness, pastoral power is at the same time directed to the individual: as it were, in Foucault's metaphor, the "shepherd" does not preside over only the whole of the flock, but rather he makes sure that every singular component is in its scope.

A pertinent example of pastoral power is evident in missionary activities. The Church acted as both a moral and organizational authority, framing crises and aid provision through a theological lens. It could distribute aid across national borders because of its pervasive reach, thus legitimating itself through moral and spiritual claims. Yet, this process went far beyond the simple satisfaction of material needs; it imposed upon the recipients of assistance an ethical and spiritual model that represented them as not only needy but also deficient in ways that needed correction or uplift. This ethical framework corresponds with Foucault's concept of the "compulsory extraction of truth" (Foucault, 2007, p.184 as cited in Martin and Waring, 2018) While aid recipients were given physical assistance, they were required to adopt Christian norms and values through practices such as confession, moral guidance, and religious conversion—thereby subjecting them to a web of obedience (Barker, 1998, p. 2-6).

Pastoral power is, by nature, hierarchical and grounded in the shepherd's relationship with the flock. In early humanitarian practices, there was a clear and distinct hierarchical distinction between those extending aid and those receiving it. Aid extended from a position of "civilized" and powerful to one that was vulnerable and

needy. This asymmetry not only reinforced the authority of aid providers but also contributed to the subjectivization of recipients, who were expected to embody the values and norms of the dominant actors. This hierarchy was obviously visible in the aid activities undertaken by Western humanitarian actors among colonial communities. Such endeavors were frequently characterized as initiatives aimed at "civilizing" or "saving" the colonized populations, merging tangible aid with ethical and cultural subjugation. By means of these actions, humanitarianism evolved into an instrument of dominance, concurrently providing support while reinforcing compliance with the power relations it upheld.

The founding of the Red Cross exemplifies the establishment of pastoral power outside its traditional bases in the Church. Henry Dunant's efforts to institutionalize humanitarian aid transformed ad hoc moral reactions into a structured and controlled system. The Red Cross did more than just provide relief; it built norms, including the Geneva Conventions, which spelled out the conditions under which aid might be given and who was entitled to protection (Hutchinson, 1989, p. 557-558). This was a massive shift in which pastoral power was transferred from religious institutions to a global humanitarian organization that organized and administered relief through a uniform and universal system. It also represents a major evolution in the exercise of power, shifting from individual-focused governance to control at the population level. While pastoral power seeks to guide and protect individuals, it now expands this framework to regulate and optimize the lives of entire populations.

2.3.2. Biopower

Historically, sovereign power focused primarily on the authority to take or preserve life. Biopower has emerged as a form of governance that emphasizes promoting life while simultaneously allowing for the possibility of "letting die." This evolution marks a transition from regulating death to enhancing life and populations through control technologies.

Foucault speaks about his idea of biopower in the *History of Sexuality* (1976), describing it as a form of governance that focuses on managing life through systems

of knowledge, intervention strategies, and individual practices shaped in relation to collective health and vitality. Expanding on this, Rose and Rabinow (2006) identify three core dimensions of biopower: truth discourses, intervention strategies, and modes of subjectification. Truth discourses mean knowledge systems about life, such as biological and demographic truths. Intervention strategies include policies and practices aimed at populations in the name of health. Lastly, modes of subjectification are about how individuals internalize authority and act on themselves to align with broader societal goals for health and vitality (Rainbow and Rose, 2006). Biopower develops the ethics of pastoral power directed toward individuals by expanding them to the population as a whole through more comprehensive and systematic means, such as health, demographics, and disciplinary measures. The effect of this shift is a model of governance that seeks not only control and manage individual actions but also the dynamics of entire populations.

Fundamentally, biopower has a bipolar structure (Rainbow and Rose, 2006): anatomy-politics (focuses on individuals) and biopolitics (addresses populations). According to Foucault, these two were necessarily intertwined (Taylor, 2014) on the theme of sexuality, and by the nineteenth century, biopower had been institutionalized across multiple domains. Thus, biopolitics is about all specific strategies and controversies over problematizations at collective human vitality over the forms of knowledge, regimes of authority, and practices of intervention that are legitimized (Rainbow and Rose, 2006, p.197).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nation-states became more involved in mobilizing internal forces within their territories. By the late nineteenth century, governmentalized states relied on expanding systems of knowledge collection and problem-solving. These systems sometimes emerged with and sometimes conflicted with state mechanisms. Those systems, including philanthropic organizations, have played important roles in biopolitical strategies and struggles, shaping the landscape of biopower (Rainbow and Rose, 2006, p. 203; Lawlor, L., & Nale, J., 2014, p.47).

There are alternative frameworks to biopolitics that build on some critiques of Foucault's work; however, a close analysis of these is beyond the scope of this research

since they do not directly serve its main argument. That said, I want to present a brief sketch of such views in order to bring to light their divergence and show why Foucault's theoretical framework is the most fitting choice for my discussion. The critique of Foucault's limited analysis of the relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics has led theorists like Agamben (1998) and Esposito (2008) to build upon his ideas. Agamben especially emphasizes aspects that Foucault overlooked, particularly the role of sovereign power in its persistent ability to "manage death." Unlike Foucault, who separates sovereign power from biopower, Agamben sees these two concepts as interconnected, claiming that creating a biopolitical body is one of the main tasks of sovereign power. For Agamben, on the other hand, politics is intrinsically biopolitical, where sovereignty suspends laws and creates a "zone of indistinction" that produces expendable "bare life." (Agamben, 1998). The difference contests Foucault's conception of biopolitics as a historical transformation.

Like Agamben, Esposito (2008) analyzes the biopolitics paradox and how it has changed into thanatopolitics, the shift in biopolitics from managing and preserving life to a logic centered on death and destruction, which Foucault, in his view, did not explain. He re-interprets the relationship of biopolitics with sovereignty to handle what he identifies as "the missing link of Foucault's argumentation" (Esposito, 2008, p. 9). For Esposito, biopolitics discloses its modern origins when correlated with immunity and immunity mechanisms. Sovereignty does not simply precede or succeed in biopolitics; it is intensely lodged within the entire fabric, dealing with the contemporary question of self-preservation (Esposito, 2008, p. 57). For Esposito, the origin of sovereignty is strictly biopolitical, and in the immunity paradigm, the relation between life and politics is intertwined in such a way that immunity becomes the instrument for preserving life as politics becomes the mechanism for its conservation (Esposito, 2008, p. 46). The concept of immunization contains both the protective and dangerous sides of biopolitics.

Foucault particularly highlights the transgressive impact of biopower, especially within the broader framework of governmentality. In *The History of Sexuality*, he (1998, p. 138) asserts that a profound transformation in the nature of power occurred in the aftermath of the classical era. Traditional sovereign power, characterized by its

ability to “take life or let live,” is replaced by a form of power aimed at “encouraging life or withholding it to a level of death.” This transition illustrates how sovereign power over death is supplanted by a new kind of power focused on the administration and care of life, with death positioned as its most extreme boundary. He emphasizes the new direction of power toward care, contrasting it with earlier theories; death represents an invisible boundary, while actions that threaten life can be justified in the name of protecting or enhancing life (Foucault, 2003, p. 247). The explanation clarifies that sovereignty was not replaced with biopower, nor did a right to take life no longer apply; it was replaced with a right to produce life. Biopower took two dominant forms: discipline, focused on individual bodies and linked with the creation of such institutions as medical care, school systems, and penalty; and control, focused on the population through consideration of such factors as birth and disease, epidemics, deaths, general vigor, and life expectancy (Foucault, 1990). It is important to note that “in contrast with discipline, addressed to bodies, new non-disciplinary power is exercised … to man-as-living-being; [and] in a final analysis, … to man-as-species” (Foucault, 2003, p. 242). Unlike discipline or anatomy-politics of the individual body, which tend towards individualization, biopolitics works collectively (Foucault, 2003, p. 243) at a population level.

The concept of population is integral to understanding biopolitics as a specific kind of power technology. As defined by Dean (1999), such a concept involves three key dimensions. First, it involves a rethinking of the subjects over whom governance takes place—not “subjects annexed to a territorial location who owe a relation of obedience to a sovereign” but “members of a population” (Dean, 1999, p. 107). In addition, a population is characterized by its relation to countable events, including natality, life duration, and deaths (Foucault, 2008). Second, according to Blencowe (2012), the prefix -bio in biopolitics signifies “trans-organic sequential events at a level of a population”. Information about populations is produced through observational techniques, such as statistical calculation, utilized by a range of institutions to exercise power over such populations. In terms of its function, biopolitics works through calculative techniques that make apparent, at a population level alone, routines and trends that occur distinctly at such a level.

History of modern humanitarianism is intimately bound up with Foucault's conception of biopolitics, both theoretically and historically. Modern humanitarianism emerged in the same historical period that Foucault describes as the one in which biopower first emerged. While concepts of aid and compassion have a long history in many societies, they did not take on the coordinated, institutional forms that define humanitarianism today. Yet, even in earlier historical periods, relationships of power were present in these practices—most often in the form of pastoral power. This type of authority was directed at the care of unique persons of communities toward moral and spiritual health, wielding power through compassion and salvation. However, compassion does not necessarily need to be directed toward an individual as a unique person; instead, it can be extended to the idea of a person whose bodily integrity has been violated—whether through physical injury, malnutrition, or other forms of harm. Suffering is often conveyed through forensic information, medical reports, or observable trauma, and an immediate reaction in terms of humanitarian government follows. That is, biological factors stimulate compassion, and subsequently, humanitarian aid acknowledges legitimacy in terms of the bodily state. Thus, both compassion and biological factors contribute to shaping humanitarian aid (Ticktin, 2023, p.311).

The rise of biopower represented an important change in humanitarianism. For instance, in the early twentieth century, the Red Cross did not try to stop wars or prevent death but worked to improve soldiers' conditions and bring compassion to the battlefield (Bugnion, 2004, p.192). This change marks biopower's focus on controlling and maintaining life as humanitarianism came to align its work with larger biopolitical structures of care and population management. Indeed, here, there is a transition from moral authority to expert authority.

The "introduction of life into history" coincides with the rise of capitalism, where power relations increasingly command and transform processes of life, including health, reproduction, and productivity (Lazzarato, 2002, p.4-5). Biopower emerges as a necessary means of controlling the productivity of individual bodies coupled with the vigor of populations, hence guaranteeing their ability to sustain economic systems. By the application of statistical analysis, regulation, and monitoring, biopower is imposed on the human body both as an individual and as a collective resource, molding

and shaping it into something that is both productive and governable within the larger setup of social management (Lazzarato, 2002, p.6).

Foucault linked biopolitics to capitalism by highlighting how bodies were regulated for economic efficiency. Capitalism regarded the proletarian body not only as a laboring body but also as a biological resource to be optimized for productivity. Capitalism requires the socialization of the body, that is, the transformation of the body into an object of continuous social monitoring and control (Lawlor, L., & Nale, J., 2014, p.38-39). The development of capitalism required disciplinary institutions such as schools, hospitals, and barracks to become spaces where bodies were trained, normalized, and surveilled. On the other hand, it also entailed political anatomy: Techniques have evolved to reinforce domination while minimizing the cost of the exercise of power, reflecting a "political economy of health." (Lawlor, L., & Nale, J., 2014, p.37-43).

Both biopower and biopolitics highlight the paradoxical relationship that life and death sustain within modern governance. While these forms of power aim at the advancement and management of life, they integrate mechanisms that decide who is to be let die or be excluded. In the literature, racism is widely discussed as a tool of biopower, distinguishing which lives are worth cultivating and which are disposable (Taylor, 2014). Racism becomes one of the basic tools in the ability of biopower to distinguish and control populations, legitimizing exclusion or violence against some groups based on the protection of the lives of others. This double nature—facilitating life for some and either ignoring or annihilating others—brings out the different aspects of biopolitical government. Indeed, this is exactly what humanitarianism does. While delivering aid, humanitarian actors not only respond to immediate needs but also create perceptions about who is in need, what forms of aid are appropriate, and the expected responses of those receiving it. Designating an event as a humanitarian crisis and identifying specific populations as recipients of aid all emerge from discourses and frameworks shaped by cultural, political, and institutional interests. These stories, usually told as compassionate reactions to suffering, are powerful in legitimizing aid projects while reinforcing power relations. Particularly during its institutionalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, humanitarianism

obviously reflected biopolitical concerns. The focus shifted to governing bodies (providing medical aid, food, and shelter) and populations under the discourse of improving "life".

There have been various attempts in the literature to analyze humanitarianism through the lens of biopower, yet scholars have approached this with considerable caution. For example, Redfield articulately clarifies the notion by illustrating Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) practices as a "fragmentary and uncertain form of biopower." He further explains this situation as a "temporary and restricted form of modestly productive power", which he later refers to as minimalist biopolitics (Redfield 2005, p. 344, 361). In a related manner, Fassin largely avoids using the term biopower, acknowledging its importance while offering a different concept he calls a "politics of life." He insists that this concept is not intended to oppose or replace biopower but rather to complement it by focusing on different dimensions of power (Fassin 2007, p 500, 2012, p. 226). Duffield, by contrast, insists on an important distinction between development and humanitarian aid, suggesting that development is more in line with the characteristics of biopower. He also suggests that both forms deviate significantly from the original historical situations in which biopower was established (Duffield, 2006, p. 73). Unlike the hesitations often present in academic literature, there is no need to avoid viewing humanitarian aid as a form of biopolitics. Additionally, it is not necessary to restrict this perspective to particular historical periods of humanitarianism. Humanitarian aid, by its very nature, operates within structures of governance that manage life and populations, which lie at the heart of the idea of biopolitics. The focus goes further than merely dealing with the crises; it includes decision-making procedures—choosing recipients for aid, modalities in its distribution, and setting priorities in different forms of suffering. Such decisions would basically exemplify principles that underlie biopolitical governance, whereby the maintenance of life is intrinsically linked to methods of regulation and exclusion.

One example of biopolitical governance can be observed in the management of famine as a specific humanitarian crisis. This establishes a rational framework for understanding and addressing famine as a measurable, objective reality. The disaster becomes "knowable" and manageable through the use of social technologies that

concentrate on the physical aspects of famine without necessarily tackling the specific socio-political conditions that caused it (Hendrie, 1997, p.63). This shift removes famine from the realm of everyday social interaction and places it within institutional actions and control. The capacity to "measure" famine is also crucial for simplifying its complex and troubling realities, not merely to facilitate action. As a tool, it reduces famine to quantitative terms by narrowing the scope of interpretation and acceptable evidence. This emphasis on numbers allows for engagement in the crisis from an assumed sanitized and detached perspective, circumventing the complications of broader social and political implications associated with extreme human suffering.

In his later work, Foucault identifies biopolitics with the rise of neoliberalism, that is, an era characterized by the increasing coupling between government and market mechanisms. This is a major shift in the exercise of power, where government is no longer about direct regulation or intervention but now operates under the principles of economic reason. Under the premises of neoliberalism, biopolitics becomes a governing rationale informed by economic theory, where life is modulated as an ensemble of quantifiable and optimizable processes. This is a sharp decrease in government functions for managing life, focusing on augmenting productivity, efficiency, and market-driven personal responsibility. In this regard, governmentalization within the state represents a fundamental turning point where, for the first time, the traditional political questions are subsumed by the need to regulate populations through economic rationales and to reconfigure governance as an activity orientated toward the improvement of individual and collective life (Lawlor and Nale, 2014, p.42). This neoliberal turn to governmentality brings into relief the way in which power increasingly operates through self-regulation, where individuals and populations are exhorted to align their behaviors with market-driven goals.

It further highlights a deeper continuity between pastoral power, biopower, and the neoliberal turn: each is concerned with governing and optimizing life, but they mobilize different modalities and tools. Neoliberalism, however, amplifies this focus by adopting economic rationality as the dominant paradigm for governmentality. Thus, it transforms how aid, crises, and populations are understood and managed in humanitarian practices.

2.3.3. Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has often been interpreted as an ideological term and used in a reductionist manner in political and academic discourse. Foucault diverges from these ideological interpretations by devoting attention to the concept of governmentality. Regarding neoliberalism from the perspective of governmentality, he unravels its functioning as a tool for rationalizing the government and people's behaviors rather than just an economic theory or political ideology.

Scholars such as David Harvey (2005) define neoliberalism as a political and economic project aimed at the centralization of wealth and power through privatization, deregulation, and the internationalization of national economies (Harvey, 2005, p.2). Harvey characterizes neoliberalism as a solution to the crises that occurred from the application of Fordism and Keynesianism, where its features, such as flexible accumulation and globalization, are economic. Unlike this, for Foucault, neoliberalism is not just a new reactive economic model but a change in governmentality based on practices and discourses that transcend the economic basis (Rose, 1993, p.94). Foucault's methodology centers on the changes in governance and the mechanisms through which power functions via truth regimes, providing a more nuanced comprehension of the dynamics of neoliberalism.

He viewed neoliberalism as an evolutionary stage of liberalism, focusing on the dynamics of government in relation to the interplay between freedom, markets, and state power. Classical liberalism emerged as a reaction to the absolutist state (*raison d'État*), advocating limited government grounded in economic doctrines (Flew, 2012, p. 50). The eighteenth-century market became a "site of truth" (veridiction), where the reasonableness of government practices was assessed (Flew, 2012, p. 51). Neoliberalism differs from classical liberalism in its emphasis on competition rather than merely market exchange. This is not a return to laissez-faire economics; instead, it is an active measure with the view of introducing competition in all aspects of society (Flew, 2012, p. 50-53).

Neoliberal governmentality is distinct from the more extended concept of governance. Governance refers to flexible strategies for controlling people and institutions, especially in non-state apparatuses; neoliberal governmentality, on the other hand, focuses on the historical processes that define the limits between state, market, and civil society. According to Foucault, governmentality deconstructs the binary oppositions of public/private and state/market by demonstrating that power works through diffuse networks of actors, systems of knowledge, and practices. Neoliberal governmentality is characterized by a significant level of intervention while maintaining minimal direct oversight, as it regulates through market logic instead of overt state controls. Within this paradigm, the market operates as a "regime of truth," shaping governance by defining utility and interests as foundational elements for decision-making (Cotoi, 2011, p.110-111).

Neoliberalism aims to strategically bring about the conditions for the emergence of "*homo economicus*," a rational actor driven by market principles who acts in line with self-interest and analyses of costs and benefits. Unlike earlier forms of subjectivity related to sovereign or disciplinary power, the neoliberal individual treats every decision as entrepreneurial, thus accepting full moral responsibility for personal successes and failures (Hamann, 2009, p.38). Neoliberalism inherently fosters the development of specific subjectivities through individual entrepreneurship, prompting a reconsideration of workers as engaged in continuous and complex processes (Piotukh, 2015, p. 24). This perspective further extends to workers' private lives and their relationships with themselves and others. Foucault (2008, p. 148) articulates it as "the proliferation of the enterprise out and through the social body is at issue in neoliberal policy." In short, neoliberalism moves away from governing through population/society to governing through individuals' regulated freedoms (Rose, 1993). However, this does not mean that the previous forms of power have absolutely vanished. Rather, Foucault's genealogical approach emphasizes the coexistence of sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental power structures within neoliberalism. In this regard, neoliberal power acts in a "triangle" of governance: sovereignty, discipline, and economic rationality (Hamann, 2009, p.53-54).

Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism goes beyond description. It also has a prescriptive dimension, calling for a thorough inquiry into how truth, power, and subjectivity are constituted. Dilts (2011) points out the tension between neoliberalism's conception of individuals as autonomous economic actors and Foucault's conception of ethical subjects capable of critical self-constitution. Neoliberalism impacts individuals by leveraging their incentives, effectively converting them into economic subjects who can then be regulated (Burchell, 1993). Underpinned at its heart is an ideology focused on a human capital theory, arguing that improvements in human capital through education, medical care, and even gene manipulation form a paramount biopolitical objective (Hamann, 2009). By promoting an enterprise culture, neoliberalism shifts responsibilities from government agencies to individuals and groups, fostering a new form of "responsibilization" (Burchell, 1993, p. 29). This shift encourages individuals to perceive their social conditions as outcomes of personal choices and investments, effectively obscuring structural inequalities such as exploitation and domination (Hamann, 2009, p. 43). Consequently, those who cannot adapt to the neoliberal model become increasingly regarded as unnecessary and suffer various forms of disempowerment and punishments (Giroux, 2008; Hamann, 2009). In conclusion, neoliberal rationality extends into biopolitical governance by segmenting populations and identifying those deemed detrimental to societal well-being.

A number of Foucauldian critiques of humanitarianism exist in the literature, offering more nuanced understandings of the relationship between power and knowledge that highlights humanitarian practice. For example, Barbara Hendrie's (1997) work on the Tigrayan refugee relief program during the 1984–85 famine shows how the dominant narratives privileged technical and biological responses to the exclusion of the socio-economic and political contexts of refugees. This not only occluded local realities but also reproduced existing hierarchical structures of power while not addressing the causes or creating sustainable livelihood strategies.

Similarly, Mark Duffield (2019) criticizes how humanitarianism has transformed into a post-humanitarian paradigm, whereby instead of being reduced, precarity is further managed and reproduced. He presumes that by advocating for adaptive design, behavioral economics, and advanced technologies, humanitarian interventions

strengthen informal economies, professional derogation, and decreased political agency—all in line with neoliberalism. Julian Reid (2010) further develops this critical perspective by exploring the biopolitical dimensions of humanitarianism in the neoliberal era. He points out a shift from simply saving "bare life" to transforming populations into "bio-human" forms through tactics of resilience and adaptation in line with global governance frameworks. Crises are reconceptualized as opportunities for change in society, often reinforcing the same inequalities and subtracting the political from humanitarian action.

Thus, humanitarianism operates as a "diagnostic" that not only identifies suffering but frames it as a problem and prescribes solutions that align with neoliberal governance, ultimately perpetuating the very power structures it seeks to challenge. This model, as part of humanitarianism, has considerably influenced the creation and delivery of aid programs, more so through strategies such as microfinance, vocational training, and the privatization of humanitarian action. In discourse, these strategies bring about empowerment, but they often reinforce systemic inequalities, marketize aid, and reproduce the power dynamics that they purport to end.

To exemplify this in one of the most striking "humanitarian crises" of the twenty-first century, refugee response will be enlightening to see neoliberal governance. Neoliberalism focuses on personal responsibility, market-based solutions, and minimal government intervention, all of which profoundly shape the concept of refugee "self-reliance". Within this framework, refugees are increasingly framed as "entrepreneurial subjects" rather than vulnerable people in need of support. Humanitarian agencies have often, therefore, scaled back direct assistance and instead offer vocational training or small-scale enterprise programs (Welsh, 2014, p.16). However, such policies often overlook the structural barriers—constrained labor rights and limited access to markets that largely undermine the potential of refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency. This approach focuses more on cost-cutting strategies by donors and not on genuine empowerment for the refugees, hence placing self-reliance more in the realm of a theoretical concept than an actual solution (Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018, 1463-1464). Vocational training programs have also become a centerpiece of humanitarian efforts, particularly in refugee and post-conflict settings. The person receiving aid from

such programs will mostly receive skill development considered valuable in local and global labor markets. The idea of such neoliberal goals is increased efficiency and productivity.

As a discourse, such interventions appear to promote self-reliance but are often designed without taking into account the socio-political contexts that limit refugee labor market access. Most refugees face numerous legal and institutional barriers to using their skills meaningfully, such as restrictions to work permits and discriminatory practices. Kaiser (2016) notes that training often reduces individuals to economic utility, framing people as "productive assets" rather than recognizing broader human rights and needs. Doing so, such commodification of recipients furthers the naturalization of the neoliberal prioritization of economic outcomes over social justice.

Another mark of neoliberal governmentality is the privatization of humanitarian aid. Increasingly, private corporations and public-private partnerships assume responsibility for the delivery of aid previously undertaken by states and international organizations (Duffield, 2019, pp. 119-121). Privatization brings technological innovation but raises important ethical and political questions. More often than not, private engagement prioritizes profit motives over the welfare of aid recipients, giving way to business practices that commodify human suffering. For instance, the gathering of biometric data is common and rapidly implemented, chastised for enabling the implementation of surveillance systems that inflict severe harm on the displaced population's privacy and self-determination (Latonero and Kift, 2018). What is more, privatization shifts accountability away from public institutions onto entities driven by profit, which further complicates the prospects for the application of humanitarian principles like neutrality and impartiality. Collectively, these mechanisms illustrate how neoliberal governmentality reconfigures humanitarian aid into a market-driven enterprise.

2.4. Continuities and Ruptures in Humanitarian Aid History

Historically, the authority to identify and address humanitarian crises has shifted dramatically, a function of broader transformations in relations of power. In its early

years, especially before the development of a formal institutional identity for humanitarianism, the identification of crises and the dispensation of aid were generally determined by the Church under the guise of pastoral authority. The Church was an institution, both spiritual and social, that defined what actually constituted a crisis and spearheaded relief efforts, incorporating the activities within the parameters of its moral and theological agendas. By the twentieth century, that locus of power had shifted to nation-states and state-sponsored organizations, reflecting a focus on sovereignty and state-centric governance for the era. The second half of the century saw the rise of supranational actors, including international organizations and coalitions, playing an ever more visible role in identifying and responding to crises. By the twenty-first century, that burden has been shifted away from the direct control of nation-states or religious institutions toward a looser structure in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational actors have become dominant. It follows from this, in a wholly Foucauldian manner, that the critical attention lies not with who holds the power but in how this power diffuses through means and practices. One of those means by which it does so is under the discourse of compassion in which humanitarian aid performed as a form of governmentality. Presented as a compassionate response to crises, humanitarian aid serves as one of those mechanisms through which certain power relationships get performed and legitimized, shaping in the process this dynamic: who gets to define a crisis and how interventions are designed.

The characterization of aid recipients also has undergone a significant metamorphosis in the historical development of humanitarianism, from a focus on individual entities to collective groups and finally to a hybrid approach that combines both. In its early stages, humanitarianism primarily engaged with beneficiaries at an individual level. This approach was grounded in the ethical and spiritual paradigms associated with missionary activities, through which those “uncivilized” were viewed not as an undifferentiated mass but as unique individuals who required personal salvation and transformation. Recipients of aid were thus conceptualized as objects to be changed, and their value as human beings is inextricably tied to and defined by their potential and capability for moral and behavioral change. The dynamic established between the benefactor and the beneficiary was essentially an interpersonal dynamic- a type of compassion operating on an individual level yet within a paradigm of power.

As humanitarianism evolved, particularly with institutionalization, the focus shifted from individual aid recipients to collective populations. Aid began to address groups as cohesive units defined by shared vulnerabilities—be it war, displacement, or famine. Recipients came no longer to be seen as isolated individuals but rather as members of a population susceptible to manipulation, improvement, and protection through standardized interventions. At this level, the group became the central object of interest, while the justification for intervening was based on considerations of efficiency, scalability, and statistical generalizability. Aid recipients were redefined as parts of a collective entity in need of care for its overall well-being rather than as individuals in need of moral salvation.

In contemporary humanitarian discourse, beneficiary is constructed from a composite view that combines both the individual and collective dimensions under the influence of tenets of neoliberal governance. At first glance, this paradigm reverts to an emphasis on the individual, highlighting autonomy, entrepreneurial spirit, and individual accountability. Those in need of help are invited to perceive themselves as active actors who may improve their situation through market opportunities and principles of self-government. All the same, this apparently individualistic explanation is then linked to collective outcomes in that the behavior of beneficiaries is framed within wider social results-in this instance, economic stability and reduced dependence on external aid support. In this paradigm, the individual surpasses the isolated function of an ethical subject for development or a statistical unit in a population; they are, instead, imagined as a separate entity- simultaneously operating as an independent agent and a collaborator in collective development.

Last but not least, across the evolving manifestations of compassion—whether through pastoral power, biopolitics, or neoliberal governmentality—a consistent historical trajectory can be traced: the intertwined legacies of colonialism and post-colonialism. Humanitarianism, as a governance mechanism, has historically reflected and reinforced the hierarchies established during the colonial era. In colonialism, pastoral power functioned through humanitarian modalities to construct “truths” about colonized populations, construing them as dependent subjects in need of moral and

cultural salvation. It is through such constructs that imperial authority was legitimized as a compassionate intervention. In the post-colonial setting, such logic persisted through biopolitical modes of governance in which humanitarianism shifted toward the management of populations through health, education, and development programming; this again reflected and reinstated colonial hierarchies. These mechanisms of power persist in the neoliberal context, though in converted forms, re-presenting beneficiaries of humanitarian practice as self-governing entrepreneurial subjects while masking structural inequalities. It has been argued that "humanitarianism was often part of the civilization that colonial powers sought to bring to the peoples they conquered" (Calhoun, 2010, p. 39). As with humanitarianism, colonialism developed its policies and practices in terms of biopolitical frameworks (Kelly, 2010); therefore, it can be argued that such a parallel played a significant role in inserting humanitarianism into an emerging neoliberal system of biopolitical governance. This trajectory underlines how humanitarianism as a modality of governance works within-and indeed is constitutive of a framework plugged into colonial legacies, a theme that will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

Examining humanitarian aid through the lens of governmentality means focusing on the level of practice and discourse, rather than the level of policy efficacy or individual intention, as the subject of analysis. Governmentality, as Foucault envisioned it, directs us to the rationalities of actions and institutions – the thought that renders particular acts sensible and required. In this thesis, humanitarian aid is deconstructed to reveal its governing rationalities during different periods: e.g., how colonial-era nineteenth-century relief was founded upon a civilizing rationality, or how late Cold War-era famine relief was governed through a biopolitical rationality of saving lives in order to stabilize populations. In each of these instances, there are the same patterns of discursive constitution of aid. Humanitarian discourse ever designates a space of "humanity" in peril, identifies the rightful agents who can act and speak in the name of that humanity (missionaries, NGOs, or international institutions), and employs strategic knowledge to authorize its responses. By making those patterns the subject matter, the thesis demonstrates continuity amidst change: despite migrations from religious charity to secular NGO governance, humanitarian aid has always been framed by an underlying impulse to control suffering populations and a culture of care

entangled with control. This perspective is in line with Foucault's argument that power not only operates in a repressive manner but also as a productive power; humanitarian power creates specific types of subjects (e.g., the refugee, the malnourished child) and specific types of truths (e.g., that of a momentary crisis requiring intervention) that in turn make governing through compassion possible.

The aim of this thesis is not to engage in a debate about the essential nature of humanitarianism as a "good" or "bad" thing. Instead, it seeks to examine how humanitarianism, through its rhetoric and masked in compassion, creates frameworks of truth and establishes power relations. Drawing on a genealogical approach, this thesis will analyze how humanitarian practices have evolved over time, with a particular focus on the truth regimes that have shaped their legitimacy and authority.

The thesis employs a historical-critical analysis to understand the historical transformation of humanitarianism through power relations. It employs a periodization strategy of humanitarianism, based on discursive and practical shifts, rather than a linear historical narrative. The selected historical periods were mainly identified by the forms of power relations in that specific period. Through a genealogical approach and critical analysis of the discourses produced by humanitarianism, this study questions how humanitarianism has been shaped by regimes of power, knowledge, and governmentality. The historical approach helps to reveal the changing and constant nature of humanitarianism while making distinctions based on the conditions of each period. In essence, the thesis builds the historical narrative based on secondary sources and literature, yet it discusses these narratives in line with power relations and conducts a rereading of the history of humanitarianism in the Foucauldian sense.

While the research will explore humanitarianism through multiple historical periods, it does not intend to provide a chronological narrative. Rather, it will investigate how the different truth regimes of each era have produced power within humanitarian assistance practices. In this way, the aim is not to present a sequential history of humanitarian aid but rather its overlapping problematizations of humanitarian aid-questions about what should be governed, who should be governed, and how- in different historical contexts. To highlight the transformations and continuities in

humanitarianism, the study will examine distinct historical periods from the emergence of modern humanitarianism to the twenty-first century. Each chapter will map out key characteristics relevant to its specific period and critique key examples of humanitarian aid indicative of dominant forms of governance and intervention specific to each period examined. Using case studies enables a thorough and in-depth analysis of such complexities (Gerring, 2004). Because case studies are inherently contextual and enable holistic analysis and thick descriptions (Gerring, 2009, p. 49), case studies become handy tools for mapping continuities and disjunctions in governance about humanitarianism. The thesis's overall narrative is built upon extensive literature analysis. The analysis builds on and connects various areas of scholarship, including the ever-expanding body of work on humanitarianism and the increasing number of studies informed by Foucault's theories on biopower, biopolitics, neoliberalism, and governmentality. This methodological framework offers the analytical tools to critically review how humanitarianism has legitimized its actions and claimed authority, thus bringing into light the complicated relationships among discourse, power, and compassion.

CHAPTER 3

COMPASSION AND POWER: THE HISTORICAL GENESIS OF MODERN HUMANITARIANISM

The historical foundations of humanitarian aid, understood in its contemporary context, highlight a complex relationship between power and compassion. Since its inception, humanitarianism has served as an instrument of power, covered in the language of compassion. While the modalities and narratives through which this power is articulated have changed across different historical periods, the fact of power operating within humanitarian aid remained constant. This chapter sets out to discover these historical roots, showing that humanitarianism, even in its very early forms, has always acted within power relations. Principally, this chapter will serve to create a base to discuss the questions that inquire answers for the different periods of humanitarianism. To be more specific, this chapter will provide a foundation for understanding how humanitarianism constructs an event as a humanitarian crisis, selects aid receivers, and determines the practices of humanitarian response. Revealing the origins of humanitarianism will help to better understand the narratives of the following decades of humanitarianism.

To uncover these origins, it is necessary to explore the intellectual and cultural streams that have shaped humanitarianism. Two major sources of influence are identified: Christianity, which provided core values and practices for humanitarian aid, and the Enlightenment, which framed the discourse of human progress, reason, and universal morality. These two influences are crucial to understanding the Western roots of contemporary humanitarian aid because this thesis holds that the modern concept of humanitarianism is deeply rooted in Western intellectual traditions. Throughout history, many cultures, religions, and geographical contexts have developed unique modalities of human aid; however, the most dominant model

of humanitarian aid that persists into the twenty-first century is fundamentally rooted in Western traditions.

This chapter will also explore the fundamental concepts, but it will equally engage with major events and formative forces identified within the academic literature as central to the development of humanitarian aid. By considering specific cases, those that demonstrate structural or functional analogies with contemporary humanitarian practices in particular, this chapter seeks to establish a historical lineage that can relate past forms of aid to contemporary humanitarianism. In doing so, it acknowledges that historical events, discourses, and narratives have influenced the systems through which humanitarian aid operates today, constantly reproducing its power dynamics under the guise of compassion.

The idea of mitigating human suffering due to war and being concerned with the fate of all humanity has ancient roots in concepts of charity, honorable war conduct, and cosmopolitanism (Barnett, 2011, p.17). Yet the proposal of humanitarianism in its modern guise, bringing these elements together, is strikingly implicated with wider social, ethical, and cognitive changes originating from the late eighteenth century. The establishment of the Red Cross in 1863 marked, so it is assumed, the beginning of modern humanitarianism, but to a large degree, this represents merely one expression of a more general movement of humanitarianism that began considerably earlier, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Humanitarianism did not emerge as a reaction to the bloodshed of war or disasters alone but as a means to remake the world for humanity's good, under the impulse of industrialization, the creation of state systems, science, and technology (Barnett, 2011, p.33-37). These changes reinforced the possibility of changing conditions that had been previously seen as constant; they stressed the significance of the welfare of ordinary people, the interconnection of action, and the value of quotidian life. Humanitarianism becomes a mechanism through which discourses of reform, aid, and progress are able to create knowledge of and also control over the suffering population. This focus on changing the conditions of society and the value of everyday life coincides with the processes described by Foucault under the heading of normalization: social practice, ethics, and techniques of government come together in molding individuals and populations in specific ways

(Mcwhorter, 1999). Humanitarianism, in its modern manifestation, is definitely a means through which ways of power about who gets help, how suffering is being dealt with, and whose interest it really serves have been constructed and maintained.

3.1. Early Foundations: Compassion, Religion, and Humanitarianism

Historically, compassion has been one of the critical factors behind the passionate call for change from the status quo, injustice, and demand for rights. It has been a political tool in the hands of the powerful, who have used the deep sense of responsibility that compassion evokes to lift, to some extent, for social oppression and covering the unethical, violent, and manipulative aspects within the structures and dynamics of power in society (Fiering, 1976).

The roots of compassion may be found in ancient civilizations and in the fundamental teachings of major religions. However, the framework of modern humanitarianism, as it is known in contemporary times, is greatly shaped by European intellectual and cultural movements of the eighteenth century. During this period, moral philosophers began to define compassion not only as an innate human quality but also as one that was instinctive and approved by divine authority. Such a redefinition allowed for the deep development of a moral framework that led to a structure of society focused on the alleviation of suffering. This transformation in moral reasoning and emotional sensitivities has deeply impacted the development of Western humanitarian practices, weaving these principles into the ethical underpinnings of contemporary humanitarian efforts (Fiering, 1976, p. 195–218).

The most well-known forms of compassion are the ones associated with major world religions, particularly Buddhism and Christianity, as well as Islam and Judaism. These religions have all used the term compassion in one form or another throughout their history and tend to define themselves, in certain circumstances and with certain interpretations, as the religions of compassion (Lampert, 2005, vi). They also created large-scale institutions for the care of the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized, with compassion as the defining trait in their mission activities. These religious traditions believe that the principle of compassion has its roots in the teachings of their founders

or prophets and hold it as the final expression of the essential religious function (Ryrie, 2017, p.142-144). They have, in the end, widened the social expressions of compassion to include practices and institutions like acts of charity and self-sacrifice, thus shifting their location from the moral to the metaphysical sphere: in these religions, compassion is described as a path to salvation, identical with sanctity itself (Lampert, 2005, vi-vii).

As a result, the religiously grounded principles of compassion have had a considerable impact on the ethical and metaphysical dimensions of humanitarianism, while also laying the foundations for the institutional frameworks that continue to guide contemporary humanitarian efforts, thereby linking classical moral precepts with modern approaches. Religious groups were among the earliest organized providers of humanitarian aid, as illustrated by Christian leprosy missions and Islamic waqf (charitable endowments) (Stamatov, 2015, p. 285-286). Stories about the beginnings of Western humanitarianism often emphasize the significant role played by Christian doctrines and organizations. Indeed, leading historians of humanitarianism, Michael Barnett and Thomas Weiss (2011, p. 55), argue that Christianity and Christian faith-based organizations have had the most significant influence on contemporary humanitarianism. Beyond historical contexts, Ferris (2011) has emphasized the complexity of faith and humanitarianism by demonstrating how faith-based, and most importantly, Christian organizations have been the leading moral and operational agents of humanitarian assistance. In a related vein, Feldman and Ticktin (2010) suggest that much of the ethical imperatives framing humanitarian governance are underpinned by religious traditions, tracing how discrete values such as charity, compassion, and the sanctity of life as left from Christianity became embedded within humanitarianism. Further, as Ager and Ager (2015) note, even in today's world, faith-based organizations are actively involved in interfacing with host communities for refugees, often playing liaison roles with the more secular humanitarian agencies. The further range of intersection that captures the ways, through tradition and institution, Christianity remains formative to the ethos and praxis of global humanitarianism is highlighted.

While compassion has traditionally been one of the central ideas in religious ethics, understanding the importance of this virtue in contemporary society requires inquiry beyond its religious foundation. That shift can be traced to a combination of factors including internal changes within religion itself, as well as external secular philosophical worldviews that have emerged in the meantime. Further, social and economic upheavals have greatly increased the awareness of widespread human suffering, and that awareness has generally provoked compassionate responses. Knowing this evolution requires an exploration into the internal changes in religious traditions as well as external forces that pushed compassion into such a prominent place in modern ethical debate.

3.1.1. Christianity and Humanitarian Aid: The Role of Missionary Activities

While the word humanitarianism is not found in core Christian texts, related concepts like "philanthropy", "agape" (brotherly love for all humanity), and "charity" are deeply rooted in Christian theology and its tradition. The historical course of the Church reveals a long history of aid programs—both distinct and deeply connected with modern humanitarian endeavors—operationalized in the establishment of hospitals, refuges, hospices, and educational institutions from the fourth through to the fifteenth century (Prodromou and Symeonides, 2016, p. 2). More than this, the Church's approach to aid went beyond acts of charity; it included a deeply theological approach that aimed at transformation.

Fundamentally underlying this view is the idea of "sacramental communion," which places philanthropy firmly within a relational and communal context based on the understanding that every person bears the likeness of God. Such a theological position infuses humanitarian actions with a mutual moral duty and imagines an alternative social order composed of justice and equality (Prodromou and Symeonides, 2016, p. 2). As a supplier of material aid and a champion of social change, the Church created a paradigm that continues to influence contemporary humanitarian values (Prodromou and Symeonides, 2016, p.5-6).

The roots of humanitarian aid are deeply set within the significant contribution that Christian missionary activities have made in both inspiring and shaping the early

patterns of organized relief. The theology of Christianity has deeply rooted missionary work, having this dual important goal: the care for the body and salvation of the soul (Follet, 1986, p.5). This care for others combined with spiritual guidance places missionary activities at the very core of what Foucault has conceptualized as pastoral power. In this framework, pastoral power does not merely aim to dominate but seeks to guide and care for individuals and communities, reflecting a unique intersection of spiritual and material concerns. Pastoral power is contrasted with the more common forms of power exerted through domination or force by the fact that pastoral power seeks to exercise influence through care, guidance, and government, not only over individuals but also over the population as a whole.

Drawing on that theological base of compassion and the Church's function as a source of material provision and advocate of social transformation, there exists an understanding widespread in the academic literature about the high contribution of faith-based organizations to modern humanitarianism principles and practices (Stamatov, 2012). Evidence of this can be found, for example, in historic instances of sixteenth-century Dominican friars speaking out against the colonialist exploitation then rife in the Caribbean, nineteenth-century English Quakers lobbying for the cause of slavery abolition, and early-twenty-century evangelical missionaries protesting colonial atrocities perpetrated in the Congo Free State. Although these missionaries often utilized the networks and resources provided by colonial systems, their moral discourse often ran counter to the interests of colonial governments, particularly in their resistance to practices such as slavery, forced labor, and the exploitation of native peoples—practices that were part of the colonial economic structure (Porter, 2001). Since the sixteenth century, there have been prominent religious leaders and movements that have continually challenged social injustices that are against Christian teachings. During this period, the concept of compassion changed from a religious duty grounded in theological doctrine to a recognized public virtue that reflects broader social changes. This shift—from medieval charitable acts grounded in agape love to contemporary humanitarianism, which seeks to alleviate suffering and promote welfare—constitutes a major shift in moral values as well as institutional practices, greatly impacting the nature of contemporary humanitarian aid (Sznaider, 2012; Stamatov, 2012).

In terms of answering research questions of this thesis in line with the humanitarian aid activities in this period, we will thoroughly examine the narratives produced to shape humanitarianism, the selection and identification of receivers of the aid in this period, and responding practices to the defined humanitarian crisis.

In their narratives, missionaries frequently criticized colonial policies that they considered to be ethically or theologically indefensible, thereby positioning themselves as mediators between colonized communities and colonial frameworks. Nonetheless, these critiques were not wholly objective; missionary efforts typically encompassed a paternalistic approach that depicted indigenous populations as deficient in moral and spiritual qualities, thus making "civilization" through Christian instruction appear necessary (Porter, 2001, p.22). Establishing schools, health systems, and houses of prayer introduced new social and cultural norms that significantly changed indigenous societies (Porter, 2001, p.22-27). This proves that Christian mission work since the eighteenth century was more than the conversion of people to Western religious beliefs; it also meant the imposition of Western cultural and societal norms.

Although these measures were described as bringing aid by missionaries, the introduction of Western education and Christianity often caused the displacement of local practices, languages, and belief systems—thus creating a complex legacy of "empowerment" and cultural diminishment (Porter, 2001). This dual impact highlights the contradictions inherent in missionary humanitarianism, as acts of compassion often disrupt local traditions and identities. While these initiatives claimed to address local needs, they often achieved this through the imposition of external frameworks aligned with imperial ideas. In this respect, missionary work can be said to have been a form of cultural hegemony where local traditions, myths, and social structures were systematically demolished and replaced by those supporting the West. The identities of the indigenous people were not incidentally one of the most crucial objects of missionary work since these newly imposed "truths" served in a manner to normalize and give legitimacy to the greater colonial endeavor. The way in which aid was given, that is, as part of educational programs and health initiatives—was often a guise for these external systems to bring about their own influence, including Western norms

and values, in the name of humanitarian aid. The indigenous identities became prime targets, not as unintended consequences but as a direct focus of these efforts. The re-articulation of "truths" facilitated by missionary endeavors both normalized and legitimized colonial authority, thereby integrating the provision of humanitarian aid with the overarching objectives of colonialism. By portraying indigenous groups as lesser or uncivilized, missionaries established frameworks of dependency that further entrenched Western hegemony, prompting important inquiries regarding the power relations and moral considerations inherent in aid distribution within colonial settings.

In this regard, missionaries provided material assistance and did so in the guise of fulfilling a moral and religious obligation that logically entailed an assumption: the individuals they brought help were "uncivilized." That assumption was a fundamental premise of humanitarianism itself. Defining a specific group as "uncivilized" redescribed their situation as a humanitarian crisis and necessitated external intervention, namely humanitarian response. Humanitarianism is purported to work in the interests of human welfare. However, in its very initial formulations, the concept of welfare was always cast alongside a particular standard of civilization that relegated indigenous peoples to a state of incompleteness and deficiency requiring guidance. The work of missionaries was not simply an issue of providing aid; it was a matter of "improving" these people and guiding them toward what was represented as a higher moral and social condition. In this case, humanitarianism means the government of those uncivilized people. Uncivilized people, by definition, were people who could be managed, directed, and reshaped in the interests of humanitarian duty.

However, this process was not realized coercively but by a discourse of compassion. The aid provided by missionaries—education, health, and material aid—was provided with a specific perspective. It was suffused with the assumption that these populations were deficient, that their suffering went beyond material want to include existential suffering. In this paradigm, compassion became a tool of control. By offering aid as a compassionate act, missionaries established their own moral authority and put indigenous peoples in the role of passive recipients, powerless to define or control their own crises. At the core of this system was a specific form of power—what Foucault called pastoral power. This kind of power not only ruled over people but actually

created them as subjects who needed to be ruled over (Biebricher, 2011, p.403-405). The uncivilized populations were constituted as governable, specifically by becoming subjects of humanitarian aid (Honson, 2024, p.80-81). The civilizing mission was more than rhetoric; it was a programmatic intervention through which humanitarianism could present itself as a moral authority, legitimizing its presence and actions as vital to the improvement of the people it aimed at.

In this regard, missionary activities serve as a historical example of the convergence of Christianity, pastoral power, and the evolution of humanitarian aid. Since the early modern era, Christian missionaries initiated global missions aimed at disseminating the Gospel, frequently linking religious conversion with charitable acts and developmental initiatives. Such efforts were presented as humanitarian missions intended to elevate and civilize communities regarded as "pagan" or "savage." Missionary work was organized around the Christian ethic of compassion, which framed care for the needy as both a duty and a path to salvation. Missionaries operated as "shepherds" tasked with guiding not only the spiritual salvation of individuals but also their moral, social, and cultural lives. Missions went to other countries, bringing nourishment, medication, and education to the natives. This was not an uninterested gift, however. The humanitarian was inextricably linked with proselytization because, often enough, aid was given on condition of the recipient accepting conversion to Christianity (Prodromou and Symeonides, 2016, p.4-5). At this point, the link between pastoral power and missionary activities becomes apparent. As Biebricher (2015) makes this link between contemporary faith-based organizations and pastoral power, it can be already applied to missionaries. In this regard, pastoral power supposedly creates a regime of individualized obedience in order to ensure salvation. Missionaries, besides ensuring salvation, had also other aims such as health, well-being, education and more as Foucault suggest a change in its objectives towards a series of worldly aims (Foucault, 1982, p.215 as cited in Biebricher, 2011). Thus, humanitarian aid became a tool of both spiritual and moral transformation, intertwining care with the exercise of control.

This model further outlines the relation of the agent of compassion, in this period, with the recipient as strictly paternalistic. However, this paternalism is not one based on

traditional hierarchies of power, like that between the strong and the weak or between the divine and human. Rather, it depends on a distinction between those who have attained a higher level of knowledge or contact with truth, namely the enlightened and civilized, and those who are ignorant, trapped in an illusory reality. The enlightened, seen this way, have a duty to guide and help the ignorant in getting out of their state of ignorance (Lampert, 2005, ix) It is not a relation of neutrality between the enlightened and the indigenous groups; rather, it is formulated through a mechanism of epistemic domination, whereby the "enlightened" are defined in opposition to those who are "uncivilized" or "uneducated." This binary is not a fact but, rather, an effect of knowledge production that aligns with colonial and religious interests. The ethical duty to "enlighten" others is, obviously, based on the discourse of Christian teachings, particularly the notion of a sacred moral duty to save souls and spread "truth." In this story, compassion goes beyond feeling and becomes an embedded tool in governance structures. Compassion is used as a mechanism by which intervention is legitimized, wrapped up in the rhetoric of moral authority. Compassion here is not a neutral act; it is highly entangled with structures of power that determine who has the capacity to help and who is perceived to require aid. In categorizing specific groups as the receivers of compassion, this system reinforces hierarchical power dynamics, wherein "rescuing" or "enlightening" legitimates unequal power.

The missionaries' ambitions to guide, teach, and civilize indigenous peoples mirrored rather clearly the functions of pastoral power, which emerged from Christian institutions to individualize people with a view to shaping morality and conduct. Religious construction, pastoral power thus provided the grounding for the secular systems of governmentality that emerged during the modern period. A necessary understanding of this involves how the dynamics of humanitarianism, informed by imperial and religious legacies, shaped contemporary societal structures. This displays that humanitarian aid from its very beginning is not just about providing aid, but it is also a practice that reproduces power relations.

In this regard, the development of pastoral power, tracing its roots from ecclesiastical beginnings to its integration within secular governance frameworks, shows that the underpinnings of humanitarian aid are fundamentally connected with systems of

power and regulation. As the authority of religion went into decline in an increasingly secular society, the ethics structures and governance methodologies that derived from pastoral power did not disappear from use; instead, they were adapted to suit the imperatives of modern states. Its nature changed along with its goals: from the salvation of souls in the afterlife to concern with well-being, security, and protection in this life. This type of power was taken up by various institutions: medicine, psychiatry, education, and family structures, among others, distributing it throughout society rather than centering it in religious or political domains (Foucault, 1982 as cited in Follet, 1986, p.6). The priorities of the state shifted toward making individuals capable of being productive and compliant citizens. Humanitarian aid, emerging within this context, redefined compassion as a civic and political virtue, aligning it with the goals of modern governance while retaining its moral urgency. This transformation set the template for new ways of thinking about aid and governance during the Enlightenment, a period that redefined the moral and intellectual bases of humanitarian aid.

3.2. Compassion Beyond Faith: Enlightenment Ideals and the Humanitarian Shift

The compassion in the Enlightenment understanding underlines the fact that suffering is a fundamental and universal aspect of the human condition, which transcends the boundaries of poverty, oppression, or disadvantage. It holds that the first step toward alleviation is the recognition and awareness of suffering—be it personal or collective. In this paradigm, compassion is characterized not just as an emotional response but as an elevated state of awareness that includes understanding the pain and mental state of others (Lampert, 2005, x).

Recognition of fellow human suffering and sympathy were recurrent themes in the arguments of Enlightenment philosophers (Fiering, 1976, p.4). These philosophers contributed to the idea of a community compassionate towards its more needy members, and over the eighteenth century, the rejection of suffering became part of modern culture (Fiering, 1976, p.6). In this period, the humanitarian impulse was not restricted to individual national communities but extended beyond their borders.

Emotional engagement and range of action were extended to foreign men and women and distant populations. Historically, these interventions were largely carried out under the tutelage of the Church and framed within the discourse of Christian missions. The Church as an institution with a unique ability to transcend geo-political barriers was singularly placed to provide aid globally.

However, as the institutional authority of the Church gradually eroded during the eighteenth century, a new paradigm was needed to justify and support interventions across national borders. It was based on Enlightenment ideals, in particular emphasizing the importance of compassion as a secular and universal tenet (Hollenbach, 2019, p. 28). The philosophers of the Enlightenment re-formed this ethical duty to lighten suffering from its exclusively religious settings and grounded it in humanistic and rational foundations. This transition not only broadened the scope of humanitarian projects but also developed a conceptual framework for transnational intervention compatible with the broad aims of progress and rationality typical of the Enlightenment.

The sense of responsibility toward individuals' suffering is unknown; distant places came into being at the moment when Western Europe and North America became the hubs of a global network within which goods, capital, and labor circulated (Salvatici, 2019, p.20). The most important examples of mobilization that crossed national boundaries were the anti-slavery movement and the philanthropic works of missionaries around the world, both appearing at the same time as the construction of the colonial order.

Religious paradigms related to compassion unify emotional experiences with behaviors in order to create a broad and unified concept. In these paradigms, compassion becomes a broad and complex idea, which is often difficult to define clearly. For example, it can encompass a wide range of emotional and behavioral reactions, thus making its application and meaning somewhat ambiguous (Lampert, 2005, xv-xvi). On the other hand, the modern understanding of compassion, as influenced by empiricist thinking, has broken down and divided this comprehensive concept. Modernist ideology, especially since the Scottish Enlightenment era, had

deconstructed the idea of compassion into its basic elements to be compatible with the incipient theories on human cognition and interpersonal dynamics. The eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophers reconceptualized compassion as an inherent, instinctual feeling, quite unlike the conceptions of their time based on metaphysical or symbolic gestures like religious charity (Lampert, 2005, p.124).

This naturalistic conception of compassion has been advanced in order to explain its relevance within human society, especially with regard to the liberal theories focused on individualism, rationality, and free choice. Departing considerably from the Christian paradigm, which frequently carried paternal overtones and attached compassion to religious or symbolic actions, the Enlightenment theorists defined it as a universal human disposition that was natural and therefore free from metaphysical or hierarchical associations (Lampert, 2005, p.124-125). Compassion was partially inspired by the Enlightenment rationality, with its theories and principles of rights, new concepts of the social role of individuals and citizens, and the breaking of religious dominance in people's understanding of their own fate (Reid Henry, 2013).

In this context, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, compassion moved from part of the private sphere into the public sphere, and the alleviation of human suffering became a defining element of modern society (Barnett, 2013, p.33). This evolution can be understood through pivotal historical developments that transformed compassion into an organized and socially meaningful concept. In history, even though people across religious and secular divides showed compassionate behavior, a reasonable framework for practice was not constituted. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Latitudinarian preachers became leading exponents of alternative views that challenged the puritanical doctrine based on an unflattering view of human nature. They preached a more optimistic approach focusing on benevolence and virtue. Even though their influence was not wide-reaching, these preachers were crucial in terms of planting and disseminating ideas that laid a platform for the development of a doctrine based on compassion and affective ties (Sznaider, 1998, p.124-125).

This conceptual shift gained greater momentum in the mid-eighteenth century, as pointed out by literary critic R. S. Crane. Crane (1934) identifies this period as a crucial

turning point when the principles of humanitarianism and the idea of the sensitive person began to crystallize (as cited in Halttunen, 1995, p.305). The author characterizes this evolution as incomparable, defining it as "something new in the world—a doctrine, or rather a complex of doctrines, which a hundred years before 1750 would have been frowned upon, had it ever been presented to them, by representatives of every school of ethical thought" (Halttunen, 1995). Taken together, these changes signal a new social and intellectual paradigm—one that foregrounds compassion as the convergence of modern moral and ethical concerns.

However, it was not until the late eighteenth century that organized compassion became part of the everyday. Reflecting on developments in the late eighteenth century, Hannah Arendt (*On Revolution*, 70–71, as cited in Barnett, 2011)

> History tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for the spectacle of misery to move men to pity; even during the long centuries when the Christian religion of mercy determined moral standards of civilization, compassion operated outside the political realm and frequently outside the established hierarchy of the Church. Yet we deal here with men of the eighteenth century, when this age-old indifference was about to disappear and when, in the words of Rousseau, an "innate repugnance at seeing a fellow creature suffer" had become common in certain strata of European society and precisely among those who made the French revolution.

The expansion of compassion in human thought is widely recognized, though the reasons behind this phenomenon are still widely debated. The Hobbesian view of humans as mechanistic and asocial creatures has been replaced by the realization that empathy is an instinctual trait and a benchmark for assessing human worth (Barnett, 2011, p.51). Works such as Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* singled out sympathy as a crucial human virtue closely associated with the emerging ideals of "humanity" (Fiering,1976, p.195), which becomes the subject of humanitarian aid. This period also witnessed the emergence of the self-governing individual, endowed with the capacity for rational thought and ethical judgment, which heightened awareness regarding elements that impede personal independence and cognitive development (Hunt, 2007, p.16-17).

These ideas were worked out in detail in the eighteenth century into a full-blown philosophical theory, now usually referred to under the name of moral sentimentalism. Its key figures included Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson, who argued in favor of a sentiment they considered innate and integral to moral life: compassion (Fiering, 1976, p.206-209). Shaftesbury contended that human emotions, especially those of compassion, were at root directly attached to social order and the common good. He developed an idea known as an "economy of the passions," arguing that emotions are central to balancing individual and social interests (Fiering, 1976, p.202). In this framework, compassion was a natural sentiment through which social order was generated by inspiring actions of altruism that benefited society in general. However, its changing form did not take it out of the power relation but brought it into a different configuration of governance wherein the emphasis was on lining up individual desires with the common good. Based on this understanding of the common good for humanity, humanity became the subject to be governed by humanitarianism.

Another key figure of the period, David Hume, gave a more analytical perspective on compassion, treating it as an undeniable and universal aspect of human nature. Hume dispelled any need for further justification of compassion by describing it as a "principle in human nature" that needed no explanation beyond its observable effects (Hume, 1988, p. 43). His work reinforced the view that compassion is not some ideal of morality but, rather, an actual psychological reality. Among the Enlightenment thinkers, none influenced the idea of compassion more than Adam Smith. In his seminal work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith put the ability to sympathize with others at the center of the moral judgment process. He starts off by stating that even individuals driven by self-interest possess a natural sense of sympathy. He says, "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others… Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner" (Smith, 2006, p.4). Here Smith defines compassion (or pity) as an effective response brought about either by actual sight of suffering or by lively imagination of it. The sufferer, in Smith's account, becomes the object of the spectator's imagination. Sympathy happens by

imaginative transposition: we put ourselves in the sufferer's position and communicate their feelings. What is notable is the importance given by Smith to the imagination and proximity. When suffering is remote or hypothetical, it demands that our sympathy be engaged by representational mediation or intellectual effort (Smith, 2006) This observation anticipates a central feature of humanitarianism: its dependence upon narrative and visual imagery to close the gap between the experience of distant sufferings and the moral imagination of potential givers. Adam Smith also writes of the limits of compassion, through an extreme example of a European individual responding to a disaster in China. Though this individual may experience temporary compassion, he would soon resume his normal activities, likely more disturbed by the loss of his own finger than by the loss of thousands of individuals overseas. This is an illustration of the fact that compassion diminishes with increased physical distance (Smith, 2006, p.119-120). But Smith does not regard human beings as irretrievably self-interested—he believes that "reason, principle, and conscience," embodied in his concept of the "impartial spectator," allow us to perceive the equal value of distant lives and rise above our narrow self-interest (Smith, 2006, p.120).

In this conceptualization, the Enlightenment concept of suffering particularly in Smith's writings, is therefore double-edged. On the one hand, all sufferers are potentially a fellow human being who can engage our compassion through the universal mechanism of sympathy. On the other hand, the practical extent of that compassion is unequal, frequently limited by proximity and imagination. Adam Smith's moral philosophy struggled with this contradiction. He claimed that compassion can be extended to people one is not familiar with; it "happens in every situation" in a general sense. Yet, he also acknowledged the great challenge in actually feeling the pain of those whom we do not see (Smith, 2006).

In line with this, Smith sees the crucial concept of compassion as the foundation of morality, ultimately leading to the abolition of slavery. The emergence of moral sentiments depends on an individual's ability to imagine and empathize with others. In fact, imagination has been proposed to mitigate human cruelty in the past. The ability to put oneself in the place of those who suffer is essential for cultivating compassion and preventing cruelty (Swaminathan, 2007, p. 482). Humanitarian aid, in fact,

operationalize Smithian compassion on an international stage, using media and other spectacles to make distant suffering emotionally immediate.

The aggregated inputs of these philosophers signified a major transformation in moral philosophy. In emphasizing the intrinsic and universal nature of compassion, they challenged both the preceding rationalist and self-interested views about human conduct. The rise of compassion as a central moral element not only reconfigured the discourse on ethics but also laid the theoretical groundwork for the humanitarian movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This period saw the advent of what Fiering (1976) terms a "sentimental revolution", in which compassion came to be simultaneously a descriptive fact of human nature and a normative ideal for moral conduct. The historical transformation of compassion from a moral duty in classical antiquity to a divine sentiment of charity in Christian theology and then to a principle or cornerstone of moral sentimentalism reflects changes in epistemological frames and changing power relations within those frames.

In the previous conceptualization, compassion was inextricably linked with power dynamics, especially in the context of pastoral power. This connection was also seen in the theological rationale for salvation, where compassion went beyond emotion and became an act that legitimized prevailing structures of hierarchy. In its own structure, compassion created a binary relationship, there was always a giver and a receiver. It was inherently tied to the process of defining the recipient, constructing specific knowledge about them, and subsequently shaping the appropriate humanitarian response. The dynamics, as laid out herein, had an apparent paternalistic bias, framed around an explicit hierarchy—in which the enlightened took the role of benefactor, while those unenlightened took the role of recipient, thereby constituting a dynamic of intellectual as well as moral superiority.

The evolving discourse on compassion has helped to reconstruct its meaning. It is now widely accepted as an intrinsic trait of human beings, a natural inclination instead of a duty defined by social or theological constructs. This development, at first sight, undermines the paternalistic foundations traditionally characterizing the interaction between the giver and the recipient. However, although the openly hierarchical structure of the enlightened ruling over the unenlightened may have been diminished,

the very power relations inherent in compassion have not been eliminated. The act of compassion still involves an implicit assertion of power—it still establishes criteria for determining who is to be compassed, under what conditions, and through what mechanisms intervention is to take place. For this purpose, although the discussion has progressed beyond explicit paternalism, it has not dissolved the hierarchical structures it once upheld; instead, it has rearticulated them within an alternative discourse.

In addition to changing the formulation of compassion, during this period, humanitarian acts, though primarily focused on neighbors helping one another, sometimes also extended to aid foreigners. An example of this was the response to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake that touched off what may have been the first truly pan-European relief effort (Dynes, 2000).

3.3. The Lisbon Earthquake (1755): A Turning Point

One of the most massive natural disasters in history took place in Lisbon, Portugal, on November 1, 1755. An earthquake hit the city, which was then continuously ravaged by a tsunami and other fire outbreaks. Estimates of deaths range between 30,000 to 50,000-the city was reduced to rubble. For it happening upon the religiously central day in Christianity known as All Saints' Day, the impact was all the greater (Dynes, 2000, p.97-98). To so many, the earthquake presented an apparent fundamental theological and philosophical counterpoint to the apparent loss of so many innocent lives at a time when the world was filled with notions of divine justice and divined providence. Incomprehensible to the Enlightenment era optimism, thinkers were forced to confront the existence of natural disasters within an interpretation of a benevolent deity.

When a major earthquake occurs, particularly one as catastrophic and highly publicized as the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, there is almost an irresistible ethical imperative to act by governments, humanitarian organizations, and individuals. However, the character of that action—along with the motivations, methods, and consequences of these efforts—must always be subject to debate.

The Lisbon earthquake became something of a touchstone for the unruliness of nature and the constant human struggle to understand suffering and morality. It inspired naturalists and philosophers, like Kant, to apply scientific reason to the laws of nature, in particular, to the sphere of terrestrial physics (Araujo, 2006, p. 316). At the same time, it encouraged debates on theodicy, divine justice, the relation of nature to moral concerns, and the desacralization of time and historical narrative. It triggered one of the most important debates of the era within European intellectual circles, driven by luminaries such as Voltaire and Rousseau. Their varied responses typified wider transitions within the Enlightenment discourse: the pessimistic critique of Voltaire underlined the patent cruelty and arbitrariness of such disasters, while Rousseau gave a more functional response underlining the role of humans and society in provoking or mitigating the effects of a natural disaster (Dynes, 2000, p.98-99). Together, the two responses cast the earthquake not just as a seismic event but as a prompt toward a reflection on humanity's relation with nature, theology, and society- a starting point for a turn toward more rational and systemic ways of making sense of disaster (Dynes, 2000, p.103-109). As the century progressed, the earthquake became a singular event that drew a clear line of demarcation between a "before" and "after" in historical context, informing cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic discourses, yet coexisting with the broader ideas of the Enlightenment (Araujo, 2006, p. 316).

The Lisbon earthquake was defined as the first modern natural disaster, and it is mainly cited as *"l'événement inaugural"* (inaugural event) in contemporary humanitarianism (Dynes, 2003, p.2). Its modernity comes from the fact that it was the first event in which there was a centralized intervention from Portugal's monarch for relief and reconstruction after the earthquake. More importantly, what locates it within the beginning of modern humanitarianism, for the first time in European history, there was international mobilization to send aid to Lisbon to earthquake-affected people. The aid sent by other countries was a sign of the emergence of a new sensibility to others' suffering. The Lisbon earthquake inspired one of the first pan-European humanitarian responses, showcasing the idea of helping distant communities in need (Barnett, 2011, p.36).

The discussions on an earthquake disaster go beyond description; they create a reality that brings about important social and political consequences. The description of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake as a disaster in need of international aid marked a turning point in the discursive construction of natural disasters as a shared human crisis rather than an individual tragedy. Following Foucault, if discourses produce real power effects, then the discourse on the Lisbon earthquake can be analyzed to show how it shaped the understanding, structures, and practices of disaster relief and humanitarian intervention. This moment can be seen as an early rupture in the genealogy of humanitarianism, in which disaster began to be framed not solely as a theological or moral event, but as a humanitarian crisis that demanded organized, secular responses rooted in compassion and governance.

The Lisbon earthquake was not just a disaster but also a crisis in a broader sense. It disrupted the social, political, and religious order of the time. The destruction of the churches and the timing of the earthquake occurring on All Saints' Day invoked many existential and theological questions. The event was described as a crisis that required not only recovery but also moral and philosophical reflection; it opened discussions on the role of the government, religious bodies, and community in facing suffering and reconstructing lives. By defining the event as a crisis, a space was opened for intervention—on the part of states, philosophers, and religious authorities. The discourse of the crisis thus became a means of exercising power over Lisbon's population.

At that time, Lisbon served as an important trade hub and was one of the wealthiest cities in Europe. The earthquake destroyed 86% of Lisbon's churches, convents, and major buildings. Total direct economic losses were estimated to be between 32% and 48% of the GDP of Portugal, which means the huge riches concentrated in Lisbon at that time (Pereira, 2009, p. 473-474). Its destruction had widespread economic effects on trading networks and markets across Europe and its colonies. The fact that Lisbon's economy was deeply connected with others meant that seeking international help was a must, for its rebuilding was not a local matter alone but also of great importance for broader economic stability (Pereira, 2009, p. 473-475).

There have been so many natural disasters throughout history; however, the Lisbon earthquake was one that marked a critical juncture in the global reaction to these kinds of events, despite its unmatched scale and its sociological and economic effects. One of the major reasons for Lisbon's singularity was not only the scale of the destruction but also the Enlightenment-era paradigms that rethought disasters as events subject to human control rather than as inevitable acts of fate. The earthquake struck at a time when a new epistemological paradigm was just beginning—one that increasingly sought scientific explanations for natural phenomena and began to recognize the potential for human agency in the relief of suffering.

The Enlightenment principle of compassion, rooted in rational thought and the common humanity of people, served as a catalyst for global aid efforts and marked the end of localized or isolated responses to disasters. Technological advances in communication and transportation during this period also played a crucial role in shaping public consciousness of distant suffering. As news of the earthquake and its aftermath spread more quickly and widely than ever before, it fostered a sense of moral urgency to intervene, enabling governments and individuals alike to mobilize resources for relief (Fiering, 1976, p.212). This emerging knowledge base was central to modern humanitarianism in that it generalized disasters into collective human crises requiring collective action. But under this idealized account of compassion lay practical considerations: Lisbon's importance in European commerce and its economic interrelations brought into relief the tangible implications of recovery efforts. The global mobilization of assistance represented not just a manifestation of compassion, informed by Enlightenment ideals, but also an acknowledgment of the far-reaching economic consequences of Lisbon's devastation, which threatened the stability of European markets. Thus, the Lisbon earthquake is an example of how moral, epistemological, and material factors interrelated in a way that helped shape modern responses to natural disasters.

3.4. A Critical Reflection on the Objectives and Selectivity of Humanitarian Aid: The Case of Slavery Abolition

Humanitarian aid is commonly thought of as the provision of short-term material assistance to those in need. However, as the previous chapter described, its broader purpose encompasses more than merely temporary palliatives and includes work specifically aimed at improving the human condition and bringing about change. From this view, humanitarian aid places itself not only as a response to crises but as a project that seeks to address deeper, structural issues. For example, while refugee livelihood programs transcend basic needs satisfaction in an effort to create long-term self-sufficiency, similar concepts can be cast back onto the history of the institution of slavery. To that end, abolition becomes understandable as part of this broader humanitarianism—material aid coupled with structural efforts at increasing human welfare.

The abolitionist movement represents the emerging humanitarian ideals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The movement was based on the knowledge of the shared humanity and suffering of the enslaved, regardless of their race or social position. Abolitionists branded slavery as barbaric and uncivilized, thus fueling the abolitionist campaigns with a number of innovative methods, such as public awareness, petitions, and boycotts—especially of plantation-produced products like sugar. Religious institutions were much involved in such efforts, often combining abolitionist activity with their missionary work. In this regard, missionaries worked to relieve the physical and moral suffering of enslaved and native peoples (Salvatici, 2019, p.20). The goal was to meet the moral imperative to relieve the suffering of others not only by opposing slavery but also by providing indigenous communities with the necessary aid to break out of the economic and moral misery that enslaved them. Their work involved more than proselytization; it included education, health, and sanitation programs to improve the lives of these groups (Salvatici, 2019, p.20-21). This dual strategy represented a complex humanitarian structure that incorporated moral imperatives with practical steps at the same time, situating the humanitarian mission within the broader cultural and religious discourses of its time.

Abolitionism began as a moral and religious movement with roots in seventeenth-century Quaker teachings. George Fox, a Quaker preacher, condemned slavery as cruel and incompatible with Christian values. His sermons emphasized the humanity of

enslaved people and urged slave owners to treat them with compassion. However, it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the Quakers formally opposed slavery, framing it as both spiritually and morally corrupt (Salvatici, 2019, p.21-22).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the abolition movement began to shift from a moral stance adopted by some religious communities to a broader public movement. Compassion for the plight of enslaved individuals catalyzed a unified effort to eliminate the institution of slavery in its entirety. In Britain, the Society for Effecting the Abolition of Slave Trade, established in 1787, emerged as a pivotal organization. Among its founders were Quakers and evangelical Anglicans, such as Granville Sharp, who infused their religious beliefs into the movement. The efforts of the Society acted as a spur to similar bodies elsewhere, most notably the *Société des Amis des Noirs in France*, which boasted members such as Condorcet and Lafayette (Brown, 2006, p.80).

At the heart of the abolitionist movement lay religious, philosophical, and moral arguments. Advocates argued that slavery was opposed to Christian teachings. Enlightenment thinkers like Montesquieu and Adam Smith lent their weight to such views. Montesquieu branded slavery as economically and morally corrupting, while Smith's emphasis on the common human ability to sympathize coincided with the goals of the abolition movement (Fiering, 1976; Hunt, 2007). Additionally, thinkers like Condorcet presumed that enslaved people needed a staged process of emancipation because they were allegedly unready for self-direction paternalist argument that reflected broader racial rankings (Blackburn, 2011, p.171).

The abolitionist movement employed many strategies to gain support and influence. Raising awareness depended on powerful narratives of the sufferings of enslaved people, often conveyed by missionaries and activists . Petitions also became a highly effective means of doing this: a petition from Manchester in 1787 gained 11,000 signatures. Boycotts against goods produced by slaves, especially sugar, significantly galvanized public backing, with women assuming a pivotal position in these endeavors (Dresher, 1987, p.70-71). Various media outlets, including newspapers, pamphlets, and periodicals such as *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, disseminated the movement's

message, linking humanitarian principles to the anti-slavery initiative (Salvatici, 2019, p.29).

The movement achieved great heights in Britain with the 1807 Slave Trade Act, which made the transatlantic slave trade illegal, and the 1834 Slavery Abolition Act, which abolished slavery throughout the British Empire. However, the latter introduced an "apprenticeship" system, where the formerly enslaved were forced to work for their former owners for a period of 4-6 years. This system was not abolished until 1838 (Salvatici, 2019, p.29).

The abolitionist movement was genuinely international, most clearly in the cooperation between British and American Quakers. Individuals like Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet further cemented these ties with their demands for immediate emancipation on transatlantic stages. In France, abolitionism took a different turn, with slavery abolished during the French Revolution of 1793, reintroduced under Napoleon in 1802, and finally permanently abolished in 1848. British abolitionists supported French efforts both financially and ideologically. As previously discussed, missionary societies also played a crucial role in acting as intermediaries between the colonial territories and metropolitan centers, spreading information and amplifying the call for abolition to all parts of the world (Sklar and Stewart, 2007).

By the end of the nineteenth century, anti-slavery initiatives increasingly intersected with imperialistic ideologies. European powers used the eradication of slavery as a pretext for colonial expansion, framing their actions as part of a "civilizing mission" (Forclaz, 2015, p.30-36). The Berlin Conference (1884-85) and the Brussels Conference (1889-90) formulated official commitments to end slavery within colonial territories, though these efforts often masked exploitative practices. Anti-slavery societies collaborated with national governments, aligning abolitionist tenets with imperialist ambitions—hence further muddling the legacy of the movement (Miers,1975).

Furthermore, the abolition of slavery was closely interwoven with the changing economic needs that the rise of capitalism and its demand for wage labor brought about. The change from slave economies to systems based on wage labor exemplified the emerging needs of industrial capitalism, where free labor tended not only to be more adaptable but also more in line with the dictates of market expansion and the efficient organization of production (Bender, 1992). This change in the economy, rather than being coincidental, was a major factor in the efforts of abolitionists, proving that the movement was based on real situations rather than simply compassionate motives.

While framed as a humanitarian milestone, the abolishment of slavery served to realign labor systems with the demands of burgeoning colonial markets. Not only was wage labor more effective, but it also assured greater control and reliability within the colonial administration. Indeed, Mulligan (2013) noted that hand in hand with the rise of abolitionist movements came the fit with the economic motivations of promising capitalist entities, where free labor markets became critical for the maintenance of colonial extraction and fostering industrial development. The abolition of slavery can, therefore, be understood as part of a more general process of socializing bodies—rendering them objects of constant surveillance and control in the interest of capitalist economies (Lawlor, L., and Nale, J., 2014, p.38-39). In contrast to slavery, wage labor was much more flexible and dependable, allowing greater control over the productivity of the workers and their integration into the system of capitalism.

It demonstrates how humanitarianism, often framed as a moral imperative, can be used to legitimize and strengthen economic transformations. In this context, compassion served as a tool that enabled the transition to wage labor systems, thereby safeguarding the power relations that were crucial for the development of both capitalism and colonialism.

Historically, the end of slavery changed how society defined its concept of human welfare and morality. What was once seen as an accepted institution became one that was inhumane, clashed with Christian principles, and opposed the Enlightenment philosophies of the time. This indicates that humanitarian objectives are always in flux

based on the changing knowledge of what constitutes a crisis and what is found to be intolerable. The recontextualization of slavery puts into aid the inherent selectivity that marks humanitarianism. If slavery existed for so many centuries, it was only through specific cultural, moral, and ideological changes that it came to be defined as unacceptable. While attention has been focused on slavery as a humanitarian concern, other forms of exploitation of labor, such as wage labor, were largely ignored (Heuman and Burnard Trevor, 2011, p. 7). This scenario highlights the political aspects of selectivity in defining humanitarian crises. Unlike the immediate devastation of a natural disaster, slavery was a long-standing institution whose "crisis" status was constructed through shifts in moral and ideological frameworks. The question arises: why was slavery, normalized for centuries, suddenly redefined as a crisis requiring intervention? The answer lies in the interplay of historical, cultural, and economic forces, including the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and equality, the Christian moral revival, and the emerging economic interests that increasingly favored free labor over slavery. The crisis was constructed through specific narratives. Identifying slavery as a crisis involved developing knowledge about the enslaved population they suffer, that they have been morally corrupted, and that they have to be saved.

The abolition of slavery is one such example of humanitarian intervention, which includes not only material aid but also advocacy and institutional reform. The initiatives working to abolish slavery employed a variety of tactics, from media campaigns and boycotts to petition methods that served effectively to raise awareness while galvanizing public sentiment and political engagement. These approaches embody a broader understanding of humanitarianism as an intervention practice with goals that often go well beyond the alleviation of immediate suffering. This approach then raises fundamental questions about nature and effects of intervention. Abolitionist movements, for example, often stressed the cruelty of slavery while imagining a world without it, in which freed people would adopt new, often Eurocentric, forms of work and living. This reveals the two-sided nature of humanitarianism: as a way to alleviate suffering, but also as a tool in the creation of new social norms and behaviors, sometimes according to broader political or economic interests.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has traced the early conceptual and practical expressions of humanitarianism, from individual events like the Lisbon Earthquake to longer processes like abolitionism and missionary work. These examples demonstrate that humanitarian aid has been rooted in power relations since its inception. While these power dynamics were present in different settings, compassion as a tool of discourse was common to all of these early humanitarian activities.

Initially, compassion was conceptualized within the bounds of religious and moral authority and, most specifically, in relation to Christian obligation. The provision of aid was legitimized in a theological framework, in which suffering was rendered—and thereby made intelligible—within an ethical framework that demanded a compassionate response. Yet, as humanitarianism developed during the Enlightenment and through the modern period, compassion became re-theorized within a rationalist discourse. The emphasis shifted from religious obligation to a basic human urge to alleviate suffering. The evolution of "humanity" as a manageable construct supported this shift, casting humanitarian action as a rational response to crises rather than a moral or religious one.

This transition implies the early formation of what so far is argued to be a humanitarian governmentality. While not yet a structured or fully developed system, the early version of modern humanitarian aid reveals an underlying logic of governing suffering populations. Whether in the context of colonial subjects, enslaved people, or disaster-affected populations, humanitarian aid was not solely about material relief; it often extended to moral and social improvement efforts—education, behavioral interventions, and reforms framed as the improvement of the afflicted. Thus, the government of suffering was an inherent component of humanitarian practice from its earliest moments. Recognizing these historical roots is vital. Power in humanitarianism did not emerge abruptly at a later stage but was intrinsic to humanitarian aid from its modern inception. The discussions in this chapter thus lay the base for the subsequent analysis of how these power relations persisted and

transformed across different historical moments, demonstrating both continuity and evolution in the mechanisms of humanitarianism.

This chapter concludes by emphasizing that, from this point forward, humanitarian aid started to assume a more tangible and institutionalized character. The formation of an organized body such as the Red Cross mirrors the requirements of the time—both concerning geopolitical circumstances and the power dynamics that required an innovative approach to addressing human suffering. Humanitarianism did not develop in a vacuum but as a product of history, even if it was formulated out of the specific sociopolitical and economic conditions of the nineteenth century.

Discussion in the next chapter will build on this stage, examining how the Red Cross established and expanded operations during and after World War I. It will look at the organization's activities through its various branches, the evolution of its methodologies, and how these approaches influenced the founding of other humanitarian organizations. This exploration will critically consider the wider implications of such practices, most especially in a twenty-century context in which humanitarianism has become increasingly globalized and institutionalized. The following chapter will demonstrate how humanitarian aid developed from an idea into a central feature of modern global governance by situating these developments in the power relations and realities of their time.

CHAPTER 4

HUMANITARIANISM IN THE AGE OF WAR: BIOPOLITICS, CRISIS AND AID

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the evolution of humanitarianism from the beginning of the twentieth century to the early Cold War years, focusing on its development within a specific geographical and temporal framework in Europe. This time frame and geographical context are adopted not only to track distinct events but also to portray Europe as both a location and an influential actor in humanitarian aid during this period. In this era, modern humanitarianism not only emerged and was institutionalized within Europe, but it also served as a context where humanitarian practices merged with broader political, social, and economic processes.

The key argument of this chapter takes its origin in Michel Foucault's theory of biopolitics in terms of an examination of how a tool for governing and controlling life, namely, humanitarian aid, developed during these years. Importantly, this biopolitical framework was not directed by a single actor but emerged as a dispersed and multifaceted process, mirroring the decentralized nature of biopolitics itself. Through this lens, the chapter demonstrates how humanitarian aid during this period was instrumentalized as mechanisms of governmentality, serving broader agendas of control and order while simultaneously shaping new subjects of aid.

Another key argument of the current chapter concerns the start of the development of specialization in humanitarian aid. The era witnessed the very first forms of technical, measured, and professionalized forms of aid delivery. Various actors began specializing in specific areas, and with them, early sectors of humanitarianism

emerged. This reflects the development of humanitarianism into a systemic and technical practice in compliance with the biopolitical needs of efficiency and administration.

Lastly, the chapter shows that during this period, humanitarian aid continued to be Eurocentric, with European countries becoming providers and being subjects of aid. Unlike in earlier periods, when both material and spiritual salvation for others in distant countries characterized humanitarian aid, this era marked a transition toward the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Europe itself. The terms rehabilitation and reconstruction are used purposely as throughout this chapter, both their practical implications and theoretical relevance will be discussed. This shift reflects a broader transition from premodern pastoral power, oriented toward the salvation of souls, to modern biopolitics, understanding it as life-promoting and caring technology. Foucault identifies the techniques of a new biopolitics, "which tends to treat the 'population' as a mass of living and co-existing beings, which evidence biological traits and particular kinds of pathologies and which, in consequence, give rise to specific knowledge and techniques" (Foucault 1989, p. 106, cited in Curtis, 2002, p. 507). In this sense, humanitarianism treats pre-defined subjects of humanitarianism with specific knowledge and techniques to heal them and alleviate their sufferings.

4.2. The Institutional Beginnings of Modern Humanitarianism: The Red Cross and Its Legacy

Before proceeding to the twentieth century, the institutional and practical foundations of the humanitarian efforts in that decade, which belong to the last few decades of the nineteenth century, must be contextualized. The emergence and early activities of the Red Cross in the late nineteenth century were pivotal in defining key humanitarian principles, operational frameworks, and legal foundations that directly defined the boundaries of wartime humanitarian aid.

4.2.1. The Red Cross and the Biopolitical Management of War

The establishment of the Red Cross and the Geneva of the International Committee of the Red Cross most certainly marked a turning point in humanitarianism. They

triggered the completion of acts that were already in progress. As Benthall (1993) observes, the history of humanitarianism can be divided into two periods: the period "before Dunant" and the modern period, which dates from the founding of the ICRC in 1864. He argues that earlier forms of aid for the severely afflicted depended on religious traditions and then, in the Enlightenment, on philosophical notions of shared humanity. These initiatives, however, were localized, even when they did succeed in reaching more widespread communities on an occasional basis. The Red Cross movement represented a real breakpoint with genuine international aspirations (Benthall, 1993, p.187-193 as cited in Paulmann, 2013).

The origins of the Red Cross are deeply entangled with the experiences of Henry Dunant. Moved by what he witnessed on the battlefields of Solferino, in 1862, he published a pamphlet, *A Memory of Solferino*, which recounted his experiences and called for the establishment of societies providing trained volunteer nurses and orderlies in war zones (Dunant, 1986). This led to the founding of the Red Cross in 1863, and Dunant became its de facto father. His idealistic dedication and passion often placed him at odds with Gustave Moynier, the more pragmatic individual instrumental in the organization's development. The founding story of the Red Cross signaled individual heroism and selflessness and reflected a broader cultural movement toward emotional consciousness and the growth of Western humanitarian aid activity (Salvatici, 2019).

This movement towards organized and professional humanitarian aid did not occur in a vacuum, but its precursors developed in terms of early examples. Florence Nightingale's contributions during the Crimean War (1853–1856) established a significant foundation for the humanitarian initiatives of Henry Dunant. Referred to as the "lady with the lamp," she directed a team of 34 volunteer nurses to Scutari, where they tackled the dire conditions present in British military hospitals. In addition to caring for the injured, she led an initiative aimed at reforming the unhygienic and crowded facilities, where elevated mortality rates resulted from infectious diseases rather than injuries sustained on the battlefield. Her dedication and reforms captured public attention through detailed war reporting, a hallmark of the era's communication revolution fueled by telegraphs, railways, and the press. Nightingale's portrayal as a

compassionate, angelic figure reflected a broader cultural shift toward humanitarianism and the "culture of sensibility," which emphasized empathy for suffering. Her example inspired social reformers, anti-slavery advocates, and philanthropists of the time. Henry Dunant himself acknowledged Nightingale's influence in *A Memory of Solferino*, recognizing her devotion to alleviating human suffering as a model for his vision of organized humanitarian aid (Salvatici 2019, p.51-52).

In this context, Dunant aimed to evoke compassion and inspire the establishment of volunteer associations to aid soldiers during peacetime. The small committee formed by the Society for Public Utility which later grew into the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was a product of Dunant's idealism and the pragmatic efforts of figures like Gustave Moynier. Gustave Moynier, a pragmatic and utilitarian philanthropist, was drawn to Dunant's idea. As president of the Geneva Society for Public Utility, he viewed the concept as a confluence of Christian moral imperatives, such as the imitation of the Good Samaritan and the goals of organized charity work. His interest sparked debate in the Society, highlighting how Dunant's idea entangled with the broader aims of nineteenth-century philanthropy. In 1863, the ICRC organized an international conference in Geneva, composed of charity leaders, medical professionals, and government representatives. Without reliance on any existing, the European alliance aimed to encourage nation-states to develop nationally voluntary associations interested in providing aid to wounded soldiers during warfare. It developed some key points, such as working in close collaboration with military medical services, neutrality of the providers of aid, and using a universal emblem for identification the red cross on a white background, based upon the Swiss flag and a Christian cross. In article 7 it was clearly articulated: "A distinctive and uniform flag shall be adopted for hospitals, ambulances and evacuation parties. It should in all circumstances be accompanied by the national flag…… Both flag and armlet shall bear a red cross on a white ground" (Dunant, 1986, p.34). The organization's guiding values—neutrality, impartiality, and use of an international emblem were legally codified in 1864 at the Geneva Convention, at which 16 governments were represented. Not only did these values codify humane care for wounded soldiers, but they represented an even broader civilizing process that grappled with attempting to

make war less barbarous but not less common (Salvatici, 2019, p.53-55). Henry Dunant's book emphasized the neutrality of aid for wounded soldiers, regardless of their allegiance, without endorsing pacifism. In 1867, Gustave Moynier and Luis Appia enlarged the argument of "*La guerre et la charité*" (War and Charity). The West's civilizing process meant to take war away from cruelty, but it did not condemn war. Humanitarianism was, in that respect, a sign of civilization with a charity culture to alleviate suffering rather than oppose war (Salvatici, 2019, p.55).

This marked the institutionality and practice of humanitarianism in the form that set future trends in international aid. Nevertheless, Barnett (2013) states that one of the observations is that the neutral and humanity drive of the Red Cross failed to challenge its root cause but embodied a larger process of civilian, one that only "humanized" war through softening but not practice and reprobation. It is such a contradiction that lies at the heart of the purpose of the Red Cross: it saved lives at an individual level but legitimized and extended structures of a larger form of war through its accommodation and acceptance in society at large (Barnett, 2013, p.80). This paradox underlines the complex relationship between humanitarian aid and biopolitical management. In this sense, the Red Cross can be read as an early, pre-formative nucleus of biopolitics. If biopolitics is understood as a tool that establishes truth discourses, delineates intervention strategies, and modes of subjectification, the Red Cross and its approach during wartime aligns with this process.

First, humanitarianism creates a discourse that the war is dehumanized and cruel, emphasizing that it is not just a matter of statecraft or military issues but an event that results in wounded bodies in need of alleviation. In his book, Dunant apparently reflects on that and makes the bodily integrity of soldiers a matter of issue by saying that "there were poor fellows who had not only been hit by bullets or knocked down by shell splinters, but whose arms and legs had been broken by artillery wheels passing over them" (Dunant, 1986, p. 11). Remarkably, compassion is directed toward those whose bodily integrity has been violated (Ticktin, 2013, p.311), biological factors serving as an impetus for humanitarian aid. By standardizing practice and circulating information regarding care, the Red Cross facilitated a regime of truth and constructed public understandings regarding war and suffering. Second, within this discourse, the

Red Cross produces specific intervention strategies for those wounded bodies. It does not solely respond to suffering but actively organizes and codifies the terms under which aid should be provided. The Geneva Conventions and other types of regulatory tools create a rule set for defining who qualifies as a recipient of care and under which conditions aid should be delivered. Lastly, the Red Cross engages in subjectification as it identifies wounded soldiers as a collective humanitarian subject, while its intervention seems to appear in the individual level of care. Wounded soldiers are defined as a recognizable group within the broader logic of humanitarianism.

> Even before the Geneva Convention was adopted, the 'Committee of Five' decided, while maintaining its specifically Swiss character, to become the 'International Standing Commission for Aid to Wounded Soldiers' and set itself the tasks of encouraging the setting-up of National Red Cross Societies, facilitating their work and, in the event of war, acting as a neutral intermediary to ensure the protection of war victims and give assistance wherever needed (Dunant, 1986, p.30-31).

This passage highlights how wounded soldiers were defined as a recognizable group under the humanitarian framework. The establishment of national Red Cross societies and the commitment to systematically aid wounded soldiers illustrate the identification of humanitarian subjects.

The ICRC's profile and its field of action significantly changed between 1914 and 1918. In the decades after its foundation, it tried to coordinate among different national societies, encourage their formation, and supply them with specific support during the war (Salvatici, 2019, p. 68). As the organization of the Red Cross evolved, particularly through the ICRC, its scope and influence area widened. However, its core logic remained persistent. Over the following decades, this framework continued to shape humanitarian aid. This also demonstrates that humanitarianism is always transforming, yet in a manner that continues to make sense as a recognizable logic of the governance of life. Hence, the establishment in 1863 of the International Committee of the Red Cross was the foundational event routinely associated with the birth of modern humanitarianism. Yet rather than a moral triumph alone, it was a phenomenon based on 19th-century power dynamics: the Red Cross rendered charitable care institutionalized under regulations sanctioned by states, in line with the imperial and

military interests of the time. The existence of historical breaks such as new ideas, new organizations, or "paradigm shifts" in aid – does not contradict the continuity of power. Instead, what often happens is institutionalization and those ruptures, which ultimately incorporate new developments into an ongoing structure of power relations.

Henry Dunant's initiative created a lasting institution and legal framework i.e. Geneva Conventions), which indeed professionalized compassion but also set boundaries on who could be helped and under what conditions. In this way, the advent of neutral wartime aid, which can be seen as an apparent rupture became part of continuity – a regulated, state-approved humanitarian space that extended, rather than upended, existing power relations. As Foucault notes in his analyses of power, new techniques often coexist with older ones instead of replacing them. The Red Cross exemplified this: it transplanted the Christian pastoral care ethic into a secular, international form, effectively moving pastoral power from the Church to a humanitarian institution that managed populations on a global scale.

4.3. Humanitarianism and the First World War: Soldiers, Suffering, and Systematization

The First World War significantly impacted the path of humanitarianism, particularly related to war. During the years of the war (1914-1918), the ICRC's profile and its action fields vastly changed. Before the war, the ICRC had the narrow brief of acting as an international coordinating body of the national Red Cross societies, promoting their foundation, and checking that the Geneva Convention was adhered to. During the war, however, the ICRC entered the conflict as an active neutral intermediary with a priority on two major tasks: monitoring violations of the Geneva Convention and the protection of prisoners of war (POWs) (Forsythe,2005, p.31).

The ICRC extended its work to POW camp visits, deserving respect regarding humane camp conditions, possibilities for correspondence between prisoners and their families, and the prohibition against forcing prisoners to work. Reports on detention conditions were first published but later given only to the governments concerned. This innovative intervention established another humanitarian field of concern and firmly

rooted the ICRC's position as a neutral actor. In recognition, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917. From a theoretical standpoint, such a development mirrors the biopolitical genesis of humanitarianism, with interventions of the ICRC attempting to manage the lives of threatened groups, POWs, according to general terms of state powers and warring. By putting into place prisoner systems of care, the ICRC was instrumental in enabling the formation of a biopolitical paradigm wherein the management of life, even in situations of war, was a shared concern of both governmental and humanitarian organizations. This example represents a dual dynamic: on the one hand, an ethical compulsion to protect and save a life; on the other, a means for maintaining order and control within the purview of state and military interests. The ICRC's intervention in POW camps can thus be seen as a miniature of the broader biopolitical enterprise of humanitarianism, wherein compassion and power converge. In the governance of the conditions of life of POWs, the ICRC's interventions replicated the broader logic of war, sovereignty, and governmentality, locating humanitarian action not outside but inside the power circuits that define contemporary conflict (Forsythe, 2005, p.31-35).

However, these changes did not occur in isolation; instead, they reflected broader trends that were transforming the humanitarian environment throughout the war. While the ICRC was defining itself as a solidly neutral institution, national Red Cross societies within the belligerent states were undergoing basic transformations as well. They were crystallizing tendencies developed over the last decades: patriotic framing of relief work, close links with their respective governments, and intense cooperation with the military administration in charge of the medical support of the armed forces. The strong links between national societies and their governments and the framing of aid within the dynamics of war were not restricted to domestic mobilization. The activities of Red Cross societies within the belligerent states became another source of interstate rivalry whereby governments pursued their international policy aims. The politicization of aid thereafter became a characteristic of this era, with humanitarian agencies recruited in service to state objectives and its cutting edge with political calculation growing increasingly blurred. Yet rather than being only a tool of political aims, humanitarianism itself became a reflection of state interest. An exemplary case is that of the American Red Cross (ARC) (Irwin, 2013, p.13-17).

An ally of President Woodrow Wilson's internationalist ambitions, the ARC's relief work represents a novelty in that society's involvement in the U.S. foreign policy. The aid given to European civilians even before the U.S. declaration of war shared the view that building a modern democratic polity was both a counter to the hostility of war and the foundation of durable peace. Before the U.S. declaration of war, the ARC ran schools, orphanages, and canteens in Italy for refugees and the relatives of enlisted men. Most of these broader welfare and public health programs, which also included malaria prevention, the training of health staff, and child welfare, fell outside the war period. Indeed, all these activities were supposed to not only assist the war effort in Italy but also stabilize political, diplomatic, and cultural relations between the United States and Italy (Irwin, 2013, p.19). These interventions demonstrate the biopolitical logic of the ARC's humanitarian intervention. Through their emphasis on public welfare, education, and health, the ARC's intervention went beyond mere relief to seek to intervene in the government of populations and hence realize the biopolitical mandate to optimize life and regulate the conditions of society. These programs illustrate the use of humanitarianism as an instrument of power, rather than to mitigate suffering but also to manage and organize populations by certain political and ideological ends. Therefore, the efforts of the ARC served to expand American power around the globe, intertwined its agenda with humanitarian efforts, and placed aid in the role of democratizing citizens who were responsive to American values. The ARC's efforts exhibit an important point of convergence between humanitarian action and state power. While representing its relief programs as compassionate and necessary to spread peace, the ARC legitimized a vision of humanity in line with Wilsonian internationalism while also justifying the United States' geopolitical ambitions. Such articulation fits into the humanitarian imperialism framework, whereby aid is an insidious vehicle for advancing the ideological and geopolitical interests of the donor country (Barnett, 2011).

The First World War also witnessed the emergence of non-governmental organizations, many with religious foundations, and they entered the humanitarian landscape, bringing with them diverse symbols, motivations, and approaches. This coexistence of intergovernmental, semi-public, and private actors shaped the nature of wartime aid.

Their involvement would become even more important in the following years, as aid programs emerged as one of the primary tools for the international community to navigate the rough way of transitioning toward peace. The First World War, together with its major impact on European societies, caused a transformation in the experience accumulated during the previous decades, way beyond the care for the wounded. Such circumstances required providing for civilians suffering from widespread poverty and hunger. In doing so, internationally designed programs helped to identify specific groups to be supported, especially children and refugees.

4.4. The Interwar Years: Expanding Humanitarian Subjects and Framing New Narratives

The interwar period was a turning point in humanitarian history that coincided with the emergence of a new form of power concerned with preserving life, satisfying human needs, and alleviating suffering. As Taylor (1984, p. 155) emphasizes, this transformation introduced a qualitatively different set of priorities than earlier methodologies, replacing the religious and moral imperative of spiritual salvation—a pastoral logic—with a secular imperative to facilitate individuals and communities to live a "good life" going beyond the improving situation of those affected from the war. This transformation, institutionalized in organizations such as the League of Nations, was one of engagement with broader societal vulnerabilities, including the protection of refugees, children, and other vulnerable groups.

Foucault identifies such a period as a period of emerging new power, which is distinguished by new techniques of control (Foucault, 1977). According to him, in such a period, control is internalized and exercised through the mechanism of surveillance and not through the direct use of force. In contrast, with older forms of power, concentrated in dominant minorities, newer forms of power are more diffuse, with relations between all segments of society participating in them as Taylor (1984, p. 157) explains, "where the old power relied on the concept of public space and of a public authority that in essence manifested itself in this space, the new power works through universal surveillance." Such a development marks a change in the level of visibility

of power: whereas it ceased to manifest publicly, its apparatuses remained highly visible.

What is novel in this era, in contrast to previous humanitarian interventions, is the greater visibility and purposiveness of the classification of recipients of humanitarian aid and the development of specialized fields to serve them. Although such was not unprecedented in wartime humanitarianism—consider, for example, the Red Cross's concern with soldiers or prisoners of war wounded—interwar humanitarianism added greater specificity to the division of recipients into categories and interventions into goals. This period witnessed humanitarianism extending its scope beyond the battlefields and into the broader civilian population. In its earlier version, such as those concerning soldiers, the justification for humanitarian aid was largely framed within an already existing system of authority, including military codes, conventions of war, and state sovereignty. However, the interwar period witnessed a move toward governing populations no longer embedded within such formal structures. Humanitarianism progressively assumed the role of managing and governing lives outside immediate state control, creating new groups of aid recipients whose protection and administration had wider political and economic ramifications.

Children, for instance, and their welfare and education became central themes in biopolitical interventions, positioning them as subjects to be developed for the future security of states and societies. This was not just delivering aid to alleviate the suffering of children but long-term population management, where the governance of life shapes the productivity and formation of future generations. Refugees, in turn, became an urgent humanitarian issue, not just as individuals to be protected but also as groups whose management had broader political and economic implications.

As humanitarianism's response methods to the crisis in this period, the shift to specialization in humanitarian intervention was necessitated by a number of factors, including the institutionalization of humanitarianism within international governance institutions and the appearance of more organizations with mandates. Compassion, further, is increasingly embedded in popular and moral discourse and was a compelling reason for such interventions. However, this aid and care rhetoric often masked deeper

political and economic agendas, highlighting humanitarianism's conflicted status as simultaneously a moral reaction practice and a mechanism of governmentality. By virtue of its focus on addressing vulnerabilities by intervening in specific sectors, humanitarian action during this time laid the groundwork for the evolution of humanitarian work into a more technical and structured process, forging the aid model for the next several decades.

4.4.1. The Role of the League of Nations

The League of Nations' collaboration with NGOs and its focus on public health reflects a shift toward governmentality, where humanitarian aid evolved from a reactive measure in times of war to an organized system of population regulation through international cooperation. In March 1919, Henry P. Davison, president of the ARC War Council, emphasized the ongoing humanitarian needs in post-war Europe, where malnutrition and epidemics continued to threaten lives even after the war. Recognizing this persistent situation, some organizations collaborated on initiatives, such as food programs for German children. However, Davison envisioned a broader and more ambitious goal: unifying the national Red Cross societies into a supranational organization. This new international body was also supported by the U.S. President Wilson. It aimed to extend its mission beyond wartime emergencies. It would tackle epidemics, natural disasters, and promote welfare development during peacetime. Davison's vision positioned the future International Red Cross as a humanitarian counterpart to the League of Nations (Irwin, 2013, p.141-184).

At first glance, in Geneva, this view was faced with resistance. While those associated with the ICRC, including its president Gustave Ador, realized the need to re-examine the organization's original mandate, which had been focused mainly on wartime operations, they decided to approach carefully. It was agreed to expand relief efforts to include not just wounded soldiers and prisoners of war but also civilian victims of famines and epidemics (Forsythe, 2020). However, there was no desire for a fundamental transformation of the organization's structure or its traditional approach to humanitarian aid. However, the ARC's proposal became a reality with the establishment of the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS), later called the

International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), at the 1919 Cannes Congress. This new body aimed to make humanitarianism a cornerstone of international cooperation. However, during the interwar years, the League remained relatively marginal within the broader Red Cross movement. Initially limited to the national societies of the victorious nations (Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States), it struggled to create unified policies as membership grew. The ICRC further constrained the League's mandate, restricting it to coordinating aid for natural disaster victims while maintaining sole authority over humanitarian protection in conflict situations. Despite this the establishment of IFRC still has significance. This expansion not only represented a deliberate shift but a profound transformation in the biopolitical logic of humanitarianism. Wherein wartime humanitarianism operated long under legally codified borders of protecting combatants, such a new post-war model could penetrate civilian life properly, moving from an ad hoc model of war relief to a systemic apparatus of governmentality.

While originally established to promote peace, security, and respect for international treaties, the League of Nations was largely focused on political and diplomatic issues. Its founding charter mentioned humanitarian activities only regarding the suppression of human trafficking and slavery, reflecting earlier anti-slavery campaigns that had to do with the trading of people. However, the League's humanitarian role expanded beyond what was originally envisioned due to two factors. First was the severe post-war crisis and its position as a hub for political internationalism and collaboration among associations, philanthropists, scientists, and intellectuals. That significantly broadened its influence in responding to global emergencies. Second, private organizations were seeking guidance, while major powers were trying to avoid direct involvement, and small countries were unable to handle crises on their own. As a result, all turned to the League of Nations for help (Salvatici, 2019, p.50). It was a response to waves of refugees caused by territorial changes imposed by peace treaties, the outbreak of health emergencies, and the economic depression. Initiatives in the fields of health, social welfare, and child protection became a dynamic laboratory for internationalism through the synthesis of technical, intellectual, and scientific knowledge.

The transformation of the League of Nations from primarily a political and diplomatic entity into a humanitarian organization gives clear testimony to the development of a new discourse centered on global emergencies and the administration of human existence. The League developed into a center for technical, intellectual, and scientific knowledge that incorporated these fields into its humanitarian efforts. By addressing issues such as the prevention of human trafficking and slavery, alongside its responses to health crises and refugee situations, the League positioned itself as a credible organization with the ability to define and tackle global humanitarian issues. Additionally, originally conceived as a political and diplomatic organization, the League's humanitarian role emerged in response to specific historical conditions, such as the acute crises in the aftermath of the war and the limitations confronting state actors. This unplanned direction testifies to the flexibility of power that reconfigures itself to meet new challenges and still maintain itself. How the League could appropriate technical and intellectual expertise for its functioning illustrates the way institutions are reproduced to keep up with changes to maintain their position of power.

In terms of public health programs, the League of Nations established a strong network of cooperation with many countries, including those not members of the League, such as Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Among the most important activities were training medical personnel, gathering statistics on diseases, and epidemic control, including vaccinations. These activities were conducted by the League's Health Organization. It spread Western-developed principles of preventive medicine and public health throughout the world (Salavtici, 2019, p.61-62). By developing these types of programs, the League of Nations cultivated an international perspective not only on the partnership system but also on the realms of activity that embraced several continents and connected Western countries and colonial territories. The extension of governmentality through public health was similarly found on a civilizational logic, with medical intervention being used to underpin the Western dominance. The League and its related experts were involved in the identification of health crises and the providing of appropriate solutions in what scholars have referred to as the coloniality of global health (Chigudu, 2021, p.1875)—a project in which medical governance was a tool of political power. Therefore, public health was more than a humanitarian approach. Rather, it operated as a mechanism for the

categorization, regulation, and incorporation of populations into modern state systems. The League of Nations' health programs represent the intersection of humanitarianism, governmentality, and colonialism in the shaping of global health politics in the twentieth century.

4.4.2. Construction of New Humanitarian Subjects: Children and Refugees

Children, as discussed, emerged in the interwar period as focal subjects of humanitarian aid, particularly through the Save the Children initiative. Childhood as a state of vulnerability was both social and a matter of history, with its construction emerging from a growing acknowledgment of children as future citizens. This construction represented a move away from disciplining individual children in schools and families towards governing children as a population critical to social and economic reproduction.

This evolving ideal of concern for childhood first took its first institutional shape in 1919 with the establishment of the Save the Children Fund in London. Founded initially as a campaign for rescuing children in general in Europe, including enemy countries, British donors Barbara Ayrton Gould and Eglantyne Jebb initiated and advocated the cause. In May 1919, they distributed leaflets at Trafalgar Square to bring attention to the starvation of children in post-war Europe, especially Austria, which was suffering under British sanctions. It marked the inception of Save the Children Fund, with Jebb often credited as its founder. The organization soon redefined its mission with long-term goals, significantly shaping the recognition of childhood as a distinct focus of humanitarian aid far beyond the British context. The organization became a major player in humanitarian affairs after World War I, focusing on the protection of children and institutionalizing the image of the child as a recipient of the aid (Baughan and Fiori, 2015, p.132).

The SCF gained public support by focusing on primary needs such as hunger, disease, and cold in its appeals and emphasizing the innocence of children as victims of international policies, thus promoting the notion of "pure" humanitarianism, arguing being free from political implications (Baughan and Fiori, 2015). In the following years, the STC grew rapidly, both in terms of its visibility and the support it received

both at home and at the international level. The rise of the Save the Children Fund would run parallel to the emergence of a broader vision of humanitarianism framed both by the aftermath of WWI and an emerging spirit of international cooperation, like the League of Nations (Baughan, 2013, p.119). Rather than building temporary partnerships, the SCF sought permanent alliances that would secure its position in the post-war humanitarian environment. One breakpoint came in the shape of sponsoring body status from the ICRC, further binding it on Geneva, the center of international humanitarianism. It was in 1920 that another significant step was taken when the SCF founded the Save the Children International Union (SCIU), an umbrella grouping bringing together those various organizations concerned with the welfare of children and providing aid to children, now more confidently positioned within this new global humanitarian space (Baughan and Fiori, 2015, p. 131-135).

In its first decade, SCIU focused on distributing material aid to needy children in Central and Eastern Europe. After the acute phase of the emergency had passed, SCIU sought to reinterpret its mandate as an international organization contributing to "good practices" in the protection of children, particularly in health, education, and child labor. Following this framework, SCIU became committed to assisting the small states resulting from the geopolitical reorganization of Europe at the end of the peace treaties to raise their standards of child protection to meet that of Western civilization. Different countries within the federation played different roles on this score: as models of child welfare or recipients of assistance necessary for their development (Paulmann, 2016, p.189). The SCIU, with its new mandate, produced the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It was approved by the League of Nations in 1924. Eglantyne Jebb took on the vast diplomatic work with a view to its ratification on behalf of SCIU. Five articles featured in the Declaration specifically stated that priority aid to children in crises was necessary, that hunger and sickness in children had to be addressed with nourishment and care, and that children needed protection against exploitation (Marshall, 2002, p.187-189).

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child then became the founding policy of the League's Child Welfare Committee, responsible for documenting and debating issues such as underage marriage, child health, child labor, family economic support, and the

repatriation of refugee children. Heavy with British representation and figures such as Eglantyne Jebb, the Committee strongly identified its mission of supporting childhood as the means through which nations would be set "on the path of progression," with today's child viewed as tomorrow's citizen (Baughan, 2013). This conviction truly resonated with efforts taken toward Eastern European countries. This codification not only inscribed the figure of the child as a humanitarian subject but also consolidated power relations, in which Western-conceived welfare standards functioned as a model for development and intervention. More critically, it uncovers that the selection of subjects of humanitarianism was deeply rooted in power relations that echoed in colonial logic, even within Europe. The advancement of these "less developed" nations was defined by their alignment with Western-defined ways of progress.

In light of these initiatives related to children, several critical questions need to be asked and discussed to uncover the true motivations behind the discourse on alleviating the suffering of children and providing them with a better life. Was the prioritization of children simply an act of compassion, or were deeper motives involved in selecting children to be focal subjects in such a narrative? Besides famine, what else contributed to selecting them? What kind of children were prioritized, and why? These questions reveal that the focus on children was not merely driven by compassion but also by a deliberate effort to position them as ideal beneficiaries of humanitarian aid. Their vulnerability placed them in a strong symbolic position, acquiring general compassion and moral urgency.

To fully understand this phenomenon, it is essential to recognize that childhood is a historically and socially constructed concept (Valentine, 2001; Pupavac, 2001; Truong, 1990). The concept of childhood as a time of innocence started in the eighteenth century in Europe, and this change occurred as a consequence of broader social changes, namely the development of the modern state and the Enlightenment thinking. All of these developments prove that the concept of childhood has been profoundly influenced by European colonialist experiences (Stephens, 1995, p.18). In this context, children, like indigenous people of colonies, had to be entirely rational and consequently gain the rights of full citizenship. The notion of children is perceived as a key to the project of a new international ethical order, and to do this, children should

be under greater surveillance (Pupavac, 2001, p.97). Structures such as law and education were produced to institutionalize such an ethical order. Foucault terms them disciplines, and these work to secure a new order in a profound way. For Gallagher (2004, p. 53), disciplines are "forms of power which are not violent or destructive but seek rather produce docile subjects through processes of training, correction, normalization, and surveillance". What they actually do is "normalize" persons and construct new types of knowledge that enable governance over life processes (McHoul and Grace, 2015). Universalized, seemingly natural conceptions of childhood in modern society are a product of such a normalizing power, added to by expert knowledge produced through such disciplines. As a result, the re-conceptualization of childhood in such a period in history involved a transition from a form of control through beating to one through surveillance. Childhood, in turn, became a stage of innocence and dependence, in need of protection from the brutality of life in general and adults in particular. For such an objective, education became institutionalized, and the maturation of children began to fall under the sharp observation of disciplinary professionals such as teachers, social workers, and psychiatrists (Gadda, 2008, p.9).

This reimagining of childhood was motivated by an idealized vision of a positive existence and a dedication to constructing a distinctive kind of global community. It also reflected a particular vision of the place of the "self" within that architecture. Importantly, humanitarianism has political consequences: its practitioners interact with the population to deliver services, thus altering the balance of survival - if only temporarily - and necessarily influencing the power balance. Yet, in attempting to prove their moral authority and obtain support or at least tolerance for what they do, humanitarian organizations have sought to prioritize the discourse of compassion under the tenet of doing good over political motivation (Baughan and Fiori, 2015, p.130). It shows that humanitarianism continually plays an active role in forming what constitutes a 'humanitarian crisis' and who is considered as a worthy victim. It demonstrates that interventions often carry the imprint of colonial or strategic interests, even under the banner of impartial compassion. Such findings are only visible when we analyze aid itself as a discourse of power, rather than assuming it is a neutral good.

Another key subject of humanitarian aid between the two wars was refugees, defined as protracted emergencies. It was due to the consistent flow of refugees resulting from war, and also peace treaties redefined the borders. Specific aid programs, international agreements, and policies determined refugees as the receiver of humanitarian aid (Salvatici, 2019, p.87). Unlike previous humanitarian subjects such as wounded soldiers or prisoners of war whose inclusion in aid operations was largely justified in legal and military frameworks. In this regard, the refugee crisis created a new challenge as these groups were both vulnerable and politically disruptive. The first displacement wave, including more than a million people, was Russians as a result of civil war and severe famine. They were forced to leave the Bolshevik Russia, and in the following year, Moscow annulled their citizenship, and their condition turned to the "stateless person" (Salvatici 2019, p.86-87).

That movement of civilians across frontiers was not a new phenomenon, for it had already been decreed during the so-called the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 due to the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of nation-states, which resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands. In the First World War, the problem multiplied as conquests and moving fronts displaced millions (Salvatici, 2019, p.87). After the War, the refugee problem took on a whole new dimension with the arrival of the Russian refugees, undermining the fragile international order emerging from peace treaties. Their situation was brought to the attention of international humanitarian organizations and became a challenge to the League of Nations since refugees, as persons deprived of state protection, constituted an unusual international problem. In fact, to rectify this, the League of Nations appointed Fridtjof Nansen to coordinate the Russian refugee crisis, thus creating the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) in 1921 (Jaeger, 2001, p.730). It marked the beginning of an institutionalized concern with refugees at an international level.

Nansen, under the HCR, was expected to identify the legal status of the Russian refugees and organize either their repatriation or their integration into other countries (Skran, 1988, p.280-282). The High Commissioner's first step was issuing an individual document to men and women fleeing Russia so that they could be recognized as refugees. The League of Nations issued the certificate that would allow

the host countries' authorities to recognize the significant number of individuals crossing their borders. It coincided with the new regulations on border crossings that had just been implemented after the general adoption and acceptance of passports (Barnett, 2013, p.88).

In response to these demands, an intergovernmental congress convened especially for this purpose in 1922 passed the so-called "Nansen passport." This identification document facilitated the movement of refugees and, more precisely, legalized the admission of the former citizens of the newly formed Soviet Union into the states that had signed the League of Nations document. The Nansen passport is mostly accepted as the earliest point of the road to the later legal definition of a refugee. This passport was not given to a single individual due to being forced to leave their country. Rather, the condition was recognized by a group of people on the basis of their nationality. The passport was issued to Russian men and women because of the civil war in Russia (Skran, 1988, p.282).

Originally, the High Commissioner made the Nansen passport available to Russian refugees and planned to issue it to Armenians who were refugees beyond Turkey's new border. Its application was, however, dependent on approval from the individual countries for the passport to be valid within their borders. The same applied when the scheme was later expanded to include Assyrians and other Christian minorities from the former Ottoman territories. This precursory refugee recognition was envisioned as an emergency and temporary measure for selected groups and reflected the inter-war focus on collective rights and the protection of national communities instead of individual freedoms (Bengel, 2022, p.217). Even though the Nansen passport arranged for refugee recognition at the borders and inside the host state, it neglected the issue regarding the long-term settlement of their destiny and the overall solution to be provided to their issue. The concept of the Nansen passport reflects how power/knowledge operated in humanitarian aid, identifying who was deserving of aid and how they should be managed.

From a Foucauldian analysis, the Nansen Passport is a site of critical bio-politization of refugee identity. Rather than defining persons in terms of discrete vulnerabilities or

requirements, refugeehood was recognized in a collective form, in terms of nationality. It is a transition from individual protection to population management, in which refugees were grouped together as governable subjects whose motions could be monitored, regulated, and politicalized. Initially extended to Russians, the scheme extended to cover Armenians, Assyrians, and other displaced Christian minorities in the fallen Ottoman empire. The range of such classification was neither a matter of neutrality nor universality, it was determined in terms of geopolitical concerns and state and international governance structures and confirmed that humanitarianism lay firmly at the intersection of state and international governance and its powers of knowing about its subjects.

Furthermore, the collectivity of Nansen Passport identifies, too, racialized and selective incorporation of refugees in terms of frameworks of humanity. That the League concentrated its concern with refugees in terms of Russian, Armenian, and Assyrians reflects inter-war concern with protecting displaced national and confessional communities and not with acknowledging persons in terms of individual claims to refuge. That such a concern with collective categories of refugees, instead of individual claims to a refuge, remains a structural feature of refugee governance in the twentieth century and informs later conventions in refugee protection is a significant observation.

Humanitarian organizations' role was not limited to refugees' movements alone; rather, beyond administrative recognition, they also played a significant role in providing material aid to the refugee population. John Hope Simpson, a prominent British liberal, noted in his classic inter-war study of refugees that most material assistance to refugees was provided by humanitarian organizations. Some had been set up with the specific object of refugee relief, whilst others had more general aims, and refugee work was among their activities. The main participating organizations were the ICRC, the Save the Children Fund, and the American Red Cross (ARC). The ARC, one of the best equipped of these organizations, took a leading part in the work of alleviating the sufferings of the Russian refugees, and, in Western Europe and the Balkans, it provided fundamental supplies and medical care to hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled to Greece after the Greco-Turkish War (Simpson, 1938, p.174).

During the 1930s, the League of Nations hesitated in its attempt to address the high degree of crisis, and private agencies took on a more urgent role in refugees' relief. At least 400,000 persons, mostly Jews, fled political and racial persecution, particularly from the Nazi Germany, and an equal number of Republicans from Franco's Spain. International solutions, like the Nansen passport employed ten years previously, came to nothing because of the tighter immigration policy of the majority of countries during the Great Depression, diplomatic reluctance not to offend Nazi Germany, and Germany's increased influence within the League.

The League's inaction was completed by the 1935 resignation of the High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany, James G. McDonald, who publicly attacked the League's reluctance to condemn the Nazi measures, particularly after the so-called Nuremberg Laws (Skran, 1988, p.197). In 1938, the conference called by Franklin D. Roosevelt produced the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR); in fact, it did nothing, having to balance between good emigration terms from Germany and resettlement possibilities from other states. Amid such failure, private organizations, most notably Jewish ones, led the way in aiding refugees, efficiently organizing emigration details, bringing relief en route, and resettling them. However, all too often, governmental resistance marked such endeavors, as with Britain's initial insistence that Jewish refugees must not be charged to the public. By the latter part of 1938, Western countries began to reverse their direction regarding refugees fleeing from National Socialism as their humanitarianism during the forthcoming war commenced to take shape.

While traditional historiography traces the management of refugees back to humanitarian action and legal conventions, in charting this category, the constitutive role of demographic research and statistics needs to be brought to the fore. It is in the deliberations on global population control that refugees were rendered for the first time into a biopolitical population, while methods highlighted in colonial administration constituted the methods of governance. The knowledge of population originated from techniques of observations such as statistics. Stated differently, biopolitics reach its population through calculative techniques that make apparent regularities that can only exist at the population level. The first international attempt to identify and count

refugees beyond the legal definitions was that of Hope Simpson's refugee census of 1937-1939. Simpson attributed legal methods to their inability to reach the root of the refugee problem and instead applied techniques from colonial census practices to render refugees visible and, hence, governable. This becomes a countable population in order to control movements and hence incorporate them within the general plans of population management (Schult, 2023, p. 131-132). It was set within a broader interwar discussion of global population control: refugees required redistribution from one area to another to alleviate economic and demographic disparities. This biopolitical ideology positioned refugees not as displaced persons in a state of vulnerability but as demographic statistics in a state of resettlement in an endeavor to stabilize labor and economic markets. League statistics, in situating statistics of population density in relation to resettlement, positioned refugees in discursive spaces of techno-rational planning (Schult, 2023, p. 135). Simpson's survey techniques were applied not only during and between both wars, but even post-war in formative work in developing the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, in its continued conflation of pragmatic concerns about demographics with legal definitions of refugees (Schult, 2023, p. 132).

This new technical method applied in refugee groups refers to the fact that humanitarianism not only selects its subjects but also establishes a new method of intervention, embedding refugee governance within a reciprocal dynamic of power. In trying to relieve human suffering, humanitarian actors also depended on statistical categorization and demographic information, placing refugees both as recipients of relief and as necessary sources of information for coordinating humanitarian action. This dynamic—where the provision of aid was made dependent on the creation of quantifiable information—illustrates the more extensive biopolitical rationale underlying humanitarian rule, revealing how the exercise of humanitarianism was a field in which biopolitical strategies were both exercised and experimented with. As Foucault (2001 as cited in Peters, 2007, p.167) argues, the development of modern political rationality is inherently tied to developing a new dynamic between politics and knowledge—where statistical thought, popularly referred to as 'political arithmetic,' occupies a fundamental role in the exercise of state rule. In humanitarian government, this logic extends beyond state boundaries. It infiltrates the domain of

global aid, where the categorization and quantification of refugees function not only to legitimize intervention but also to produce forms of knowledge that reproduce the humanitarian apparatus in return. This process of knowledge production reflects the state's application of statistical rationality in consolidating its power, with refugees being cast as subjects who are valuable to the humanitarian framework only inasmuch as it enhances its ability to rule. Consequently, humanitarianism performs biopolitical governmentality, transforming aid interventions into a tool that both regulates life and produces the knowledge necessary for its own growth.

The post-Second World War period offers a similar perspective to the terms before and after the Red Cross in terms of institutionalization and scale of humanitarian organizations. The advent of intergovernmental organizations represents a new era for humanitarianism. The predecessors can indeed be identified as emerging from World War I and from the CHR of the League of Nations under Nansen; however, the post-Second World War era witnessed an accelerated development in the establishment of intergovernmental humanitarian agencies, particularly under the United Nations.

Despite this institutional departure from humanitarianism in the post-Second World War era, the reason behind discussing the period until the Cold War is a connection between the post-First World War period and the 1940s. In this period, just as during the 1920s, Europe was also the focal point for humanitarian enterprise in Europe. With the end of what, Eisenhower would describe as "one of the grimmest ordeals of history," the continent became simultaneously the primary location and the most lasting symbol of the destruction that the war had wrought on Western civilization. The European post-war recovery was nothing but the catalyst for reconstruction, the reconstruction of an international order in which Europe was still going to be the dominant player, albeit in a changed context. Handling refugees, the homeless, and starving children during the second half of the 1940s was more or less synonymous with handling the population of Europe. This Euro-centric approach dominated humanitarian action for nearly a decade and was characterized not just by the long recovery process but also by the geopolitical Cold War environment (Salvatici, 2019, p.109).

4.5. Post World War II: Institutionalization of Biopolitical Management of Humanitarian Subjects

The scale of destruction and displacement during the First World War rendered a systemic and coordinated intervention necessary. With the establishment of such entities as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943, and then, in 1945, the United Nations (UN), a transformation ensued from selective and ad hoc types of humanitarian intervention towards a bureaucratized, ongoing model of administration of aid. The biopolitical direction of humanitarianism increased in terms of its scope. Initially, it was a reaction to an immediate issue but an intervention that sought to reinsert, rehabilitate, and manage whole populations in a grand scheme of post-war rebuilding.

In short, in the post-WWII period, life and population became central objects of governmentality. The transition between inter-war practice and post-war institutionality reflects a transformation in governmentality, in that humanitarianism transitioned from a state-dependent, selective, and reactive practice to a systemic and organized international mechanism for governing populations. Not only did post-war years see an expansion in humanitarian agencies, but a reorientation of aid as an activity of international governance, reenforcing humanitarianism as a key device for governing social vulnerability in an emerging international order.

One of the pioneering humanitarian organizations established during World War II was the UNRRA. It gathered 44 countries in 1943 with an envision of international cooperation to address the war-generated humanitarian crises. Its establishment was affected mainly by the failures of the post-World War I aid efforts, which were criticized for being uncoordinated and ineffective. Planners from Allied countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, averted these mistakes by underlying pre-planned, coordinated action (Reinisch, 2011, p.211). The main aim of the organization was to provide material aid and rehabilitate victims of the Nazi occupation (Salvatici, 2012, p.423). How UNNRA defined its mission and how it operated reveals the historical continuity of humanitarian aid work. The very term of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration captures a broad aim that

goes beyond the provision of immediate relief. Although the word “relief” aligns with providing immediate aid, “rehabilitation” means an ongoing effort to rebuild and reintegrate the affected people. This emphasis reflects the geopolitical agenda that arose following the war, where aid went beyond the alleviation of suffering and targeted the restoration of stability, particularly in Europe.

Despite its global humanitarian mission, it became very Eurocentric in practice after being adopted by the UN. Outside of Europe, UNRRA worked briefly in the Philippines, Korea, and China. It worked within the borders of no less than twelve European countries, from Greece to Poland to Italy (despite the tension that its ex-enemy status provoked). Most of the resources went to Europe against only 2.5 billion dollars’ worth of supplies, a large total (Woodbridge, 1950, p.428). This was against considerably smaller sums elsewhere. Similarly, the China Mission was staffed by 1,200 staff, whereas the operations in Germany alone required 5,200 people (Woodbridge, 1950, p.107-108). This simply reflected the biased resource allocation towards Europe. This disparity in distribution also mirrors political and ideational processes in selecting whose suffering was prior and whose beneficiaries were worthy of aid. In using Michel Foucault’s model for power/knowledge, such distribution mirrors how humanitarianism not only involves generating crises—not necessarily in response to them, however, as objective fact—but in defining them, in prioritizing them, and in intervention mechanisms, as well. The Eurocentric orientation, in its acting towards dire necessity, at the same time re-enforced political geographies and cultural biases and prioritized Europe as a recipient of deserved aid.

The primary target of UNNRA’s care and compassion was a specific population, such as refugees and displaced persons, that were around 21 million by the mid-1940s (Guptil, 1992, p.30). The “rehabilitation” of war victims took concrete forms in the refugee programs and became the most visible face of operations. Although as an umbrella term displaced persons referred to civilians who were forced out of their homelands due to the war, only people from nations not at war with the Axis nations could enjoy refuge and material care under the protection of military governments and UNRRA. One’s country of origin during the war played a significant role in determining whether one was a refugee entitled to international assistance. For instance, displaced persons whose nations fought and lost with the Axis nations were

not entitled to such privileges (Ilcan and Aitken, 2012, p.630). Displaced persons were conceived in terms of population and nationality, a perception that underpinned UNRRA's biopolitical management of camps and supported the grand narratives of post-war planning and rebuilding. In every camp, the UNRRA government administration concerned itself with the "species body," prioritizing the populations' biological processes—births, deaths, and general state of health—Foucault's biopolitics of the population (1978, p. 139 as cited in Ilcan and Aitken, 2012). To measure life and well-being in such populations, the UNRRA officials accumulated voluminous information about nutritional, medical, and welfare provisions received by displaced persons. That included information about diets, state of health, work, and sanitary buildings. In the medical sphere, for instance, they compiled statistics about birth and stillbirths, the proportion of pregnant women, displaced persons' utilization of hospital beds, infant deaths by age, availability of types of medical personnel, and types of disease treated (Ilcan and Aitken, 2012, p.631).

The biopolitical management of displaced persons as a population necessitated specialist expertise and careful information regarding identifying and distinguishing relevant factors in the group. Officials in the UNRRA disaggregated displaced persons into concrete age and gender categories: less than one, one to six, six to 14, and 14 to 18 years, and women and males over 18 years of age. Not only were these totals calculated for each category, but such totals were cross matched with nationalities, as well. Other information entered in these documents included registered and unregistered residence, unaccompanied children sorted out according to age and nationality, largest national group represented, and displaced persons utilized for work (Salvatici, 2012, p.432-436). Here, each life had a value that could be measured in relation to other lives, calculated, and made countable. As Rose (2009) underlines, calculus strategies for a population life attempt to label, manage, or administer a population.

In the countries it operated in, the UNRRA workers delivered food packages, boots, blankets, sprayed DDT, and offered primitive medical care. All these interventions, nevertheless, were of a purely emergency kind and, therefore, did not end in themselves. One of the unstated aims of the organization was the establishment of

conditions under which beneficiaries, women, and children, for the present sustained life through international aid, can become self-reliant in the not-too-distant future. Since its very beginning, the UNRRA has taken “help the people to help themselves” as its main motto (Salvatici, 2012, p.436). The particular origin of the motto is not important; however, what matters is its underlying principle, which means addressing suffering alone was not adequate. There was also a need to transform the conditions of those suffering. In fact, the concept of “rehabilitation” in these terms involved an emphasis on assisting in enabling people to assist themselves, with a combination of reconstruction and social and institutional assistance. Two closely interrelated approaches to this were incorporated: supporting agricultural and manufacturing industries devastated by Nazi-Fascism and working towards collaboration with native institutions through social work intervention (Salvatici, 2019, p.115). These post-war programs to revitalize European production were a consequence of a broader socio-economic development model in line with Roosevelt’s international political objectives. Italian experiences with rehabilitation programs under the UNNRA have been regarded as an ancestor of the Marshall Plan.

The most important concern of the UNRRA was working in collaboration with governments in operational countries for rehabilitation, transferring expertise, and employing scientific, objective, and uniform techniques for welfare and needs assessments. Welfare workers, and social workers, in particular, underwent training in important programs for moving towards a durable welfare infrastructure out of a position of the state of emergency relief. The guiding principle of “help the people to help themselves” emphasized creating modern welfare practices oriented by the model of the New Deal and welfare state reform in Britain (Salvatici, 2019, p. 116).
In the displaced people camps, the UNRRA welfare workers engaged in a range of activities. Material relief in food, clothes, and housing made up early intervention, but rehabilitation programs soon included vocational training, education, and leisure activity. Leisure and entertainment, including dramas and national celebrations, were seen as a weapon for combating perceived passivity and apathy among displaced people (Salvatici, 2012, p.439). Nationalistic ideals underpinned these interventions, with welfare workers encouraging the observation of displaced peoples’ national holidays in a bid to promote identity and morale. Divisions of labor by gender in the

UNRRA could be recognized, with female welfare workers working in domestic areas such as caring for children and sanitation and spreading Western conceptions of motherhood through events such as “Baby Shows,” in which mothers were rewarded for complying with approved standards of care (Salvatici, 2012, p.442-443).

Despite these efforts, tension spread through the UNRRA operations. Relief workers consistently portrayed themselves in heroic rescuer roles and displaced peoples in passive, dependent recipient roles, producing a hierarchical role that contradicted the organization’s stated purpose of creating self-reliance. Repatriation, in the sense that return to the country of origin, in addition, blurred the organization’s purpose. Repatriation became a focal point in rehabilitation’s desired endpoint, but coercion in forms such as restriction of accommodations in camps or offering incentives for return made many aid workers question whether such actions adhered to humanitarian ideals. Additionally, military factors in operations in the UNRRA inserted a hierarchical, rigid model that clashed with international cooperation ideals (Salvatici, 2012, p.440-441). That view has been central throughout humanitarian history, originating in its early stages and becoming prominent after World War I. Thus, it is significant in understanding how this approach was interpreted after World War II.

The broader impact of the UNRRA’s work demonstrates how the way of humanitarian intervention crafted the post-war world order. In its work with displaced persons and international collaboration, the UNRRA formulated the basis for modern global governance. Its biopolitical intervention determined future institution-building, including for the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and United Nations agencies (Karatani, 2005, p.517-518). Whatever post-war world order emerged, whatever form it took, it emerged out of a tension between humanitarian ideals and pragmatic requirements for rebuilding and controlling and for its contestation.

As mentioned, the UNRRA’s legacy extended beyond its direct humanitarian activities to the institutional framework of the United Nations’ humanitarian mechanism. The post-war period saw the proliferation of numerous specialized UN agencies addressing areas such as food security, health, and migration beyond forced displacement, refugees, and children, including the formation of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). In terms of humanitarian subjects discussed in this chapter, when the UNRRA was dissolved, refugee relief was transferred to the UNHCR, and humanitarian action on behalf of children was taken by UNICEF, making for more specialized institutional arrangements. This marked a watershed in the increasing specialization of humanitarian aid and the creation of focused intervention mechanisms within the international system.

4.6. Conclusion

To conclude, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a principal transformation in the actualization of humanitarian aid. Its focus shifted from an interest in individuals to a more organized effort at population management. This was not only an institutional change but also a conceptual one, revealing the growing imbrication of humanitarianism with the logic of governmentality. In earlier periods, humanitarianism was frequently cast in terms of individual suffering and moral duty. However, the start of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a biopolitical form of humanitarianism characterized by the active construction, classification, and management of populations through aid. The founding of the ICRC institutionalized the management of victims of war. Yet, the actual change was realized when humanitarianism extended beyond prisoners of war and soldiers to seek to reach civilian populations. This was not a natural development but one that aligned with the broader political, ideological, and strategic requirements of the time. The suffering bodies on the battlefield became an entry point for a much larger project of humanitarian government, one that increasingly sought to intervene not just in moments of crisis but in the very fabric of social life.

The growth of humanitarianism is most evident in its shifting subjectivities. Following World War I, humanitarian government encompassed two especially prominent subjectivities: children and refugees. These were not neutral categories but were politically constructed categories embodying the agendas of states and international organizations. Children, being the bearers of the future of civilization, were objects of intervention not just due to their vulnerability but also their biopolitical potential. It

was not just a moral imperative but also an investment with returns carefully calculated in terms of the future labor force, the future citizenry, and the ultimate future security of an insecure postwar Europe that drove the establishment of agencies such as Save the Children. In this framework, humanitarian assistance was utilized to mitigate suffering and effectively construct populations by distinguishing who had to be saved, managed, and enhanced. Prioritization of education, nutrition, and health in child-directed aid interventions was not solely a humanitarian interest but rather a method of governing, in a sense that targeted populations would be restored to society as useful citizens.

On the other hand, refugees came to be a humanitarian category intimately tied to geopolitical interests. Displacement was not an apolitical event; instead, it was constructed as a crisis in legal, statistical, and administrative terms. The process of defining a refugee—establishing eligibility for protection, determining access to aid, and defining the terms that apply—was a practice of power. The establishment of the Nansen Passport, for example, did not represent a commitment to egalitarian humanitarian principles; instead, it represented a selective identification with specific displaced groups on the basis of ideological affinities. Those fleeing the Soviet Union were constituted as political subjects, their displacement constructed as an anti-communist counter-narrative, whereas Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany later became subsumed within general humanitarian narratives reflecting changing international alliances. This era was marked by the establishment of humanitarian data regimes, in which demographic data, statistical data, and population mapping became components of humanitarianism. Knowledge production about refugees was more than a technical exercise; it was a means of population management, eligibility for assistance, and prescription of how individuals ought to be integrated or rehabilitated into prevailing socio-political orders.

The formalization of these practices was best observed in the creation of the UNRRA, which expanded the meaning of humanitarianism beyond basic emergency relief to a more organized type of rehabilitation. The language that follows rehabilitation implies that the people receiving relief were not merely in short-term want but required a fundamental transformation. It means a shift in the underlying logic of

humanitarianism. Humanitarian aid was no longer solely a matter of crisis management but was also intended to correct, normalize, and reintegrate populations within the existing socio-economic order. The motto of "helping people help themselves" conveyed the close relationship between humanitarian action and liberal principles of governance. Far from being independent of political and economic systems, humanitarian relief was integrated into these systems, facilitating the integration of its beneficiaries into the production systems of a postwar capitalist economy.

Thus, the first half of the twentieth century was not simply marked by the expansion of humanitarian aid; it saw the institutionalization of humanitarianism as a mode of rule. The growing specialization of humanitarian operations, the dominance of humanitarian responses aimed at particular populations, and the incorporation of legal and statistical systems all worked to form and expand systems of power relations. Contrary to the concept of humanitarianism as a neutral force, it was employed as a means for the control of populations, the building of individual identities, and the maintenance of larger political and economic systems. Throughout the century, these mechanisms only became more embedded, laying the groundwork for the contemporary humanitarian industry—one that still grapples with the paradox of relieving suffering while simultaneously producing the circumstances requiring a humanitarian response.

CHAPTER 5

GOVERNING THROUGH AID: THE TRANSFORMATION OF HUMANITARIANISM IN THE DECOLONIZATION ERA

Emerging from the aftermath of World War II, humanitarianism evolved from a state-led, Eurocentric activity into a transnational domain increasingly shaped by NGOs, influenced by the forces of decolonization and the historical contexts of the Cold War. This chapter thoroughly examines this transformation, concentrating on how humanitarianism broadened its geographical scope while reimagining its techniques.

A key aspect of this translation is the operationalization of compassion—more specifically, how suffering becomes visible, legible, and actionable to intervention within humanitarian narratives. Humanitarianism in this chapter is not assumed solely as an ethical reaction to suffering; instead, it is also presented as a form of governmentality, a theoretical framework that has endured throughout various phases of history, such as the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. What is unique about the post-Cold War era is not the appearance of this logic but the changing nature of its methodology. In particular, the practice of compassion shifts from communicative, immediate, and behaviorally embedded responsibilities to more abstract, far-away, and globally mediated forms of concern, representing a rupture in the understanding and materializing of compassion in the humanitarian context.

The post-war period witnessed also a shift in representations and understandings of suffering. Thanks to technological advancements in television and photography, compassion for humanity could reach deeper and farther than ever before. Suffering, once localized in post-war European urban areas, increasingly intertwined with distant locations, creating a new transnational form of humanitarian imagination that

extended beyond national and territorial borders. In the 1950s and 1960s, amid the Cold War, this development gained momentum, with humanitarianism becoming inextricably linked to ideology. By the 1980s, representations of suffering reached new heights, primarily through compelling photographs and television programs reporting on famine-stricken African children, particularly in Ethiopia, who emerged as influential icons of transnational humanitarianism. Documented through pictures and television and circulated alongside appeals, these representations mobilized international constituencies, highlighting distant suffering and exploding interventions through appeals and advocacy, often championed by prominent personalities and NGOs. Humanitarianism could now mobilize hyper-resources; it had its professionals. In this spectacle, through its reproduction, compassion reenacted global hierarchies, positioning the Global North in proactive, protective, and benevolent roles while framing the Global South in narratives infused with crisis, dependency, and victimhood.

From a Foucauldian perspective, this era signals a biopolitical reconfiguration of power. In the earlier half of the century, humanitarianism was mainly concerned with the lives of geographically and politically close populations—such as displaced Europeans or groups in strategically relevant areas. In postwar times, however, humanitarianism shifted permanently to more distant populations. This revolutionized humanitarian governance practices and heightened biopolitical surveillance mechanisms: suffering was a media-hydrated object of interest across the globe, and knowledge of crises was created and distributed in a manner that appealed to compassion even as it maintained hierarchical relationships between the Global North and South. In this sense, humanitarianism did not merely respond to suffering; it actively structured the conditions under which suffering was recognized, managed, and instrumentalized within the broader frameworks of the Cold War geopolitics and decolonization.

In the aftermath of post-war, discussions about aid expanded to include ambitious development programs. Initiated through channels like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and bilateral programs from colonial powers, these programs aimed to stimulate economic development, build essential infrastructure, and

strengthen state capacities in post-colonial nations. Although often presented within a narrative of humanitarianism, the goals and practices of these programs differed significantly from those of humanitarian aid. The main difference between development and humanitarian aid lies in their respective operational, temporal, and ethical frameworks. Long-term interventions for systemic socio-economic ills, often in conjunction with governance reform, industrialization, and expansion of markets, mark development programs. In contrast, humanitarian aid takes an emergency-responsive, short-term model, working to mitigate immediate suffering, most often in areas afflicted with political upheaval or conflict. In addition, development programs have long been guided by geopolitical concerns, with terms of aid following the Cold War alignments. In contrast, in theory, at least, humanitarianism claims neutrality and urgency in crises. This thesis acknowledges the development of humanitarian aid as a new and autonomous field, divorced from broader trends in development. The post-war development theory is important in providing background but not in providing a basis for analysis; it simply brings prominent shifts in the political and moral environment of humanitarianism following decolonization.

To be more specific, this chapter examines the evolution of narratives of humanitarian aid and responses therein in a postcolonial context, taking as illustrative examples three key events: the Nigerian Civil War (Biafra), the Cambodian Vietnamese crisis, and the Ethiopian famine. While numerous crises helped shape humanitarianism throughout this period, these specific ones have been selected based on their distinct contributions towards shaping aid discourses, framing popular understandings of crises, and mapping methodologies for aid. Every case offers valuable information on how humanitarian agencies considered crises, decided who was to receive aid, and organized responses.

5.1. Introduction: Setting the Fundamental Principles of Humanitarianism

In this period, humanitarian actors sought to define the ethical and operational parameters of their work. Amid post-war efforts to protect civilians, the ICRC engaged in a reflective rethinking of its founding principles. This process involved not simply rewriting but rather one of its first deliberate attempts to dissect and clarify its

fundamental concepts. The ICRC's guiding philosophies evolved in response to events over nearly a century, leading to a relatively ad hoc interpretation. Under Jean Pictet, legal practitioner working in international humanitarian law, post-war discussions were encouraged to illuminate the institution's guiding philosophies and to codify an "official" doctrine for humanitarianism (Barnett, 2011, p.84). In 1965, following years of debate, the ICRC formalized its guiding principles in the "Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross," outlining seven key tenets, with impartiality, neutrality, and independence at the forefront. While these values were not new to humanitarianism, they had long represented essential tenets for aid agencies implementing their mandates. The ICRC consistently underscored the importance of impartiality and neutrality, and even missionaries, aware of the delicate line between church and state, often promoted various independence-related principles. Over time, they established standards for who could claim the legitimacy to act in a humanitarian capacity, and the ICRC model became a benchmark for the broader community of aid workers (Barnett, 2011, p.84-85). Nevertheless, their application in real-world crises often proved challenging. As the following case studies will illustrate, the realities of conflict and geopolitical tensions frequently tested these commitments, raising questions about the extent to which humanitarianism could indeed remain independent from broader political struggles. The Nigerian Civil War was among the first major crises to test these humanitarian principles. As international actors sought to navigate the moral and logistical challenges of aid delivery in a highly politicized conflict, the response to Biafra set crucial precedents for later humanitarian interventions.

5.2. Governing the Third World by Delivering Aid

5.2.1. Biafran War

The Nigerian Civil War, commonly referred to as the Biafran War (1967-1970), marks a significant turning point in the history of humanitarianism. It not only redefined traditional methods and the legitimacy of humanitarian aid but also introduced new entities to the field. Responses to the Biafran War saw competing approaches, a media-fueled urgency, and constraints posed by political realities, all showcasing complex examples of humanitarianism within a web of power and limitation. Amidst this

turmoil, humanitarianism evolved, shifting from a state-sponsored, institution-led activity to a fragmented and political sphere where non-governmental groups assumed increasingly vital roles.

In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from British colonization and then became a post-colonial territorial state with a federation of a variety of ethnically, religiously, and economically disparate groups. After independence, tension mounted, and violent clashes in 1966 culminated in organized attacks on Igbo citizens by groups holding power in the federal government. Thousands died, and about two million Igbo citizens fled for refuge in southeastern Nigeria during this period of upheaval. In May 1967, the Igbo region declared independence and became the Republic of Biafra. In reaction, Nigeria's government started a military campaign accompanied by an embargo, with a view to starving Biafra into submission (Salvatici, 2019, p.165).

The rising civil war resulted in a catastrophic humanitarian disaster, with widespread famine and disease affecting millions of civilians. In terms of humanitarianism, this represented a defining moment, marking their first significant intervention on a large scale for non-governmental organizations. In November 1967, the first shipments organized by the ICRC reached Biafra. By the spring of the following year, the ICRC took a key role in coordinating international relief efforts, including contributions from Caritas Internationalis and the Protestant World Council of Churches (WCC) (O'Sullivan 2016, p.6) However, the ICRC faced considerable difficulty in delivering its aid to Biafra, partly due to its commitment to the principle of neutrality, which required state approval and was subject to legal restrictions outlined in the Fourth Geneva Convention, under which Nigeria obtained permission to inspect and monitor cargo shipments (Davis, 1975). Auguste Lindt, the ICRC's chief negotiator, engaged in negotiations with both Nigerian and Ibo leaders, fully aware that any delays would result in additional loss of life. Although there were considerations for bypassing government approval, such a move could endanger aid workers' lives and render long-term aid delivery a less viable option. Furthermore, the ICRC must be perceived as neutral in its actions, enabling it to maneuver effectively within the complex political landscape and uphold its long-term humanitarian mission (Wiseberg, 2014, p.295).

After months of unsuccessful talks, August 1968 saw a critical point at which, for the first time, the ICRC announced its intention to deliver its aid to Biafra in direct noncooperation of Nigeria's approval. That act of disobedience threatened ICRC operations with severe danger, and Nigeria reacted with an attack on an ICRC refugee camp, costing four French Red Cross workers their lives. Things worsened when, on the 5th of June 1969, ICRC was forced to suspend its operations following one of its aircraft being shot down in 1969. After life-threatening clashes for months, in a worrying decision, the ICRC suspended all its flights until it gained approval, underlining a key problem that humanitarian organizations face in war zones when confronted with state antagonism (O'Sullivan 2016, p.2-3).

The Biafra War constitutes a defining moment in the history of humanitarianism, particularly for the ICRC. The institution's state-bound, legalistic, and neutral stance failed in politics, where suffering was both a weapon and a spectacle and in which politics and propaganda blurred and merged in complex and unpredictable ways. As much as the ICRC adhered to its discipline, new protagonists, free of traditional restraints, reimagined the meaning of humanitarian aid. From a Foucauldian analysis, the failure of the ICRC in Biafra can be seen to reveal how humanitarian institutions function in terms of power relations that prescribe the terms of intervention. It is not a failure of strategy, then, but a failure of a more significant kind in terms of how power, sovereignty, and discourse delimit what is conceivable in terms of humanitarianism and how even neutrality can become a tool of control, constraining humanitarian intervention in a manner that prioritizes state over actual humanitarian concerns. As humanitarianism moved into the 1970s and thereafter, the case of Biafra forced a re-evaluation of traditional humanitarianism's failures, opening the path for a new era of increasingly political and advocacy-oriented approaches that would go on to redefine international humanitarian aid. The ICRC was no longer the main reference point for humanitarianism with also due to its budget and staff reduction since 1945 (Forsythe, 2005, p.63-68).

During the Biafran War, a diplomatic standoff and improper aid distribution took a toll on the Red Cross staff. A group of French medical students, including Max Récamier and Bernard Kouchner, determined to make the crisis public. In November 1968, when returning to France, they wrote an article for *Le Monde*: "De retour du Biafra, deux

médecins français témoignent" (Back from Biafra, Two French Doctors Bear Witness). In the article, they emphasized the insufficiency of humanitarian intervention given the extreme suffering and testified to their will to serve a resilient but devastated population. This article positioned humanitarianism as a source of aid and a witness to injustice, a new development in its function that went beyond mere aid (Salvatici, 2019, p.170).

The actions of French Red Cross physicians, particularly regarding public testimony on the Biafran crisis, directly challenged the neutrality and confidentiality espoused by the ICRC. Having published *Le Monde*, they then initiated public rallies and protests, urging Western governments to extend political backing to Biafra and expand humanitarian assistance. By defining the crisis in terms of genocide and comparing it to the Holocaust, they placed humanitarianism not simply in terms of relief but in terms of an ethical imperative (Davey, 2015, p.40-43). That transformation in perspective fueled more extensive discussions regarding the nature of humanitarianism, with activists declaring that compassion alone no longer sufficed—something urgent must be done to stop the violence.

As a reaction to the shutdown of an ICRC humanitarian shipment, Caritas and WCC merged operations under Joint Church Aid (JCA). JCA became a key icon of the campaign for aid, best known for its bold nighttime sorties out of São Tomé to Uli airstrip in Biafra, flown covertly in an attempt to evade detection by the Federal Air Force. However, in the final months of fighting, more than 250 metric tons of aid could reach Uli nightly, and missionaries and workers coordinated the distribution of such aid both in and out of Biafra (de Waal, 1997).

In terms of international recognition, the Republic of Biafra received little support. Nigeria's blockade and military operations failed to draw a significant reaction from the international community. Due to its strong ties with Nigeria, Britain supported the federation, a stance shared with America (Obiaga, 2004, p.17-19). With its ties with Britain and its dominant position in the region, France attempted to destabilize Nigeria and then supported Biafra but failed to formally recognize its independence (Thompson, 1990). Western countries kept a distance during the first year of fighting,

with little public disapprobation. Things worsened with continued fighting, and in a critical incident in May 1968, Port Harcourt, the only outlet for external shipments to Biafra, was captured by federation forces. It was the intervention of the Western press in 1968, through its reporting, that helped to mobilize public compassion and increase the financial contributions of organizations like Christian Aid, Save the Children Fund, and Oxfam, among many others (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.6). For an extended duration, the fate of Biafra was disregarded for the most part by the international community in a similar manner to other conflicts in the decolonization era. Yet, during early 1968, famine at its beginning placed Biafra in the international spotlight, and it became a high-profile humanitarian cause. There were many factors involved in its transformation, one of them being the enduring contribution of missionaries and religious groups' intervention. Unlike Nigeria's predominantly Muslim regions, both Biafra and its Igbo population shared strong Christian ties owing to widespread Protestant and Catholic missionary work. Religious groups, therefore, were amongst the first to draw attention to events in Biafra, underlining its religious overtones (Barnett, 2013, p.83). International attention was drawn to photos published in *Life* of the bodies of the children and women overwhelmed by starvation (Salvatici, 2019, p.165).

The Biafran War became a key incident in international media, fueled by television's growing presence in the late 1960s. Media sources in the past have emphasized human suffering in an attempt to evoke compassion and outrage, but television's widespread presence intensified its impact. Graphic reports filled newspapers, weeklies, and a variety of popular forms of media. War in Biafra was most often portrayed as a human catastrophe, with an emphasis placed on the suffering of children and with famine portrayed as the principal tool of war, in contrast to conventional fighting (Salvatici, 2019, p.165-166). In this regard, Biafra was the first "televised famine" and the first real test of the West's response to a crisis in post-colonial Africa (Barnett, 2011; Heerten and Moses, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2014). In the rhetoric of the Biafran War, many Western observers and journalists frequently compared it with the Holocaust. In describing the fall of Port Harcourt, British reporting utilized analogies comparing events to being "perhaps as appalling as for Nazi concentration camp victims" or "even worse than at Bergen-Belsen" (Smith, 2014, p.251). Television reporting reiterated

such comparisons and, in doing so, helped to maintain the narrative of extreme suffering (Salvatici, 2019, p.166). The Biafran authorities consistently positioned their situation in terms of genocide, framing it as the heart of their propaganda campaign. In messages conveyed to Westerners, they emphasized the urgency of a general extermination and explicitly drew comparisons with the Holocaust. That narrative was supported with powerful images recalling Nazi concentration camps, and in both its political effectiveness and its emotional impact, it gained added force (Heerten, 2015, p.252).

The Biafra War was one of the first crises involving mass media's profound reorganization of the politics of compassion worldwide. Perhaps for the first time, Western society faced the sufferings of a distant population in a direct manner, not through the formality of diplomacy and appeals for aid, but through the immediate, gut-wrenching presence of television and photographs in living rooms. The unprecedented visibility of thin, skeletal, and weak Biafran children circulated into countless households, transforming the nature of humanitarianism from a mere abstract moral concern into an urgent spectacle. This transformation reflects Foucault's concept of knowledge production, where power operated not through legality and mandates, but through the ability to make misery present, demanding action. In contrast to earlier forms of humanitarianism, which were directed mostly by elites, the Biafra crisis initiated a new model where public outrage and emotional reactions became key drivers for mobilizing aid. This development laid the groundwork for Didier Fassin's (2011) definition of humanitarian reason —a form of governance in which humanitarian intervention increasingly gained legitimacy through a moral economy of compassion, woven through narratives in the press and deliberately constructed spectacles. However, it also ushered in a new politics of suffering, where crises that could be photographed and packaged for Western consumption gained excessive prominence, creating a lasting model for the spectacle of humanitarian crises in the ensuing decades.

Notwithstanding the growing public criticism and pressure displayed by the government of Biafra, United Nations agencies remained primarily inactive. This passive stance stemmed from the institution's founding mandate, which prohibited intervention in internal conflicts. The UN avoided becoming involved in a dispute

stemming from competing positions taken by Britain and France, and it was afraid of creating a precedent for future post-colony African secessionism. Strict interpretations of agency directives hindered them even further from becoming involved in the role of humanitarian intervention. For example, when delegations of the Biafran government visited the UNHCR for assistance, the agency refused, citing its restrictions regarding operational jurisdiction in areas outside of its mandated role (Salvatici, 2019, p.167). The New York Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions placed under the 1951 Geneva Convention[1]. However, it kept in place the requirement that refugees pass through their country of origin to gain international protection. As a result, many, including many fleeing out of Biafra, were refused access to international protection, with an immediate consequence of famine and isolation.

Instead, NGOs played a central role in mobilizing support for Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War. Both major organizations, like Oxfam, Save the Children, CRS, and the YMCA, as well as smaller religious and philanthropic groups, expanded their efforts. New organizations explicitly dedicated to Biafra emerged in Western cities such as Dublin, Frankfurt, Zurich, London, Hamburg, and New York, particularly from student-led activist circles. Their primary goals were to raise public awareness and collect funds for humanitarian aid. NGOs also helped sustain and amplify media interest in the conflict, sometimes directly engaging in information gathering and distribution (Kuhn, 2016, 314-317). As discussed in the previous chapters, NGOs have long been involved in disaster relief, dating back to the work of charities during the era of colonialism through to international intervention during the famine in post-war Russia (Baughan, 2013; Paulmann, 2013; Little, 2014). Involvement increased most during the 1940s, particularly in reaction to the widespread refugee crisis in post-war Europe (Barnett, 2011). Yet, in terms of both its enormous dimensions and its impact, the Biafran crisis marked a defining point. Not only did it involve a record level of

[1] The 1951 Geneva Convention determined refugee qualifications and placed two basic restrictions: one in terms of time and one in terms of geography. Article 1 restricted qualification for refugee status to persons whose forced migration stemmed from events preceding 1951, namely those about World War II and the early years of the Cold War. In addition, signatory countries could restrict consideration to persons fleeing European countries, a restriction that, in practice, many countries adopted. In consonance with provisions in the UNHCR charter, these provisions represented a Eurocentric view of refugee protection. In practice, this system effectively overlooked significant humanitarian crises in parts of the world outside of Europe (Fitzpatrick, 1996).

humanitarian activity, but it also stimulated a record level of financial funding to humanitarian NGOs.

Despite differences in methods and resources, all NGOs launched information campaigns and fundraising initiatives to aid the starving population of Biafra. They positioned themselves as channels through which Western citizens could express solidarity, shifting the narrative from imperial benevolence toward a moral and responsible duty to the Third World. This dynamic compelled Western societies to reconsider their roles in the evolving global order. The "people-to-people" approach became central to humanitarian aid activities by private organizations (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.6). By taking on the roles of informers, awareness-raisers, and sustained advocates, these NGOs effectively acted as interpreters of Biafra's plight for Western audiences. As O'Sullivan (2016) argued, the NGO response to Biafra was diverted by the prism of decolonization and its impact on both the West and the Third World. The end of colonialism forces such organizations to adapt to changing requirements in a new post-colonial African environment.

The campaigns initiated by NGOs during the Biafra crisis closely supported both the discourses of the secessionist governments and the media, exaggerating famine and heartbreaking statistics of widespread deaths amongst children in an attempt to generate a "tragic urgency." This approach emphasized immediate aid, by passing a sophisticated awareness of the complex factors driving the war and effectively disenfranchising the civil war and its politics. Biafra became a signifier of African hopelessness, restructuring a simple and passive depiction of the Third World that humanitarianism would go on to exploit in the following decades (Heerten, 2014, p.302).

Despite its overly simplistic depiction, the campaigns were incredibly successful, achieving unprecedented fundraising results. In Britain, a coordinated effort among NGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, War on Want, Christian Aid, and the British Red Cross raised £100,000 in less than four weeks (Heerten, 2014, p.312). Media-driven humanitarianism bolstered public confidence in NGOs, portraying them positively in contrast to their international counterparts, who often faced delayed delivery times due to bureaucratic hurdles. Therefore, the Nigerian Civil War

highlighted the increasing roles of NGOs in delivering humanitarian aid and underscored the limitations placed on governments and intergovernmental agencies (O'Sullivan, 2014, p.210-211).

Nevertheless, the crisis uncovered deep-rooted proto-imperial ideologies that Western society struggled to shed. Public consciousness, constructed through such deep-rooted presumptions, sustained the role of non-governmental organizations in interventions and the imperative for emergency relief. As such, a specific narrative about intervention and Africa filled Western consciousness, a narrative that continued in the following years (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.5)

The Biafra crisis constitutes a foundational moment in the history of humanitarianism, perhaps most significantly because of how its narrative was established and communicated. The spread of images of starving children from Biafra, primarily through Western media outlets, was key in portraying the crisis as a humanitarian emergency deserving of swift international response. This crisis brings to light the ways in which specific crises come to global attention, as opposed to others that get pushed to the periphery. In the Biafran case, Western humanitarian organizations and news media utilized specific representational tactics to render the crisis comprehensible to the global audience. The Holocaust references, the touching invocation of starving children's bodies, and the framing of Biafra as the "first television famine" collectively advanced a distinctive aesthetic of representation that not only represented suffering but also gave it a moral value, building Western spectators as witness and would-be rescuers alike. Being exposed to these bodies in global media was not merely an act of witnessing. It was also a strategic deployment of suffering to attract public compassion and fundraising efforts. Yet, this approach also depoliticized the crisis, reducing complex political and historical dynamics to a simplified narrative of victimhood and salvation. By portraying Biafrans primarily as passive subjects needing rescue, such representations obscured their agency and the broader structural conditions that contributed to the crisis.

5.2.2. *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF): A Rupture in Humanitarian Response?

The Biafran War has been seen for a long time as a defining event that gave birth to *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), a critical point in humanitarianism (Davey, 2015, p.19-22). Several have characterized Biafra as a "new Solferino," representing a new era in modern humanitarian intervention. MSF's founding is often seen as a reaction to failures seen in Biafra and a catalyst for a sea change in international relief work (Salvatici, 2019, p.171). The fact that MSF's founding changed the face of humanitarianism cannot be disputed. However, its origin must be understood in terms of its more significant political and cultural environment in the 1960s and 1970s to appreciate the deep forces driving its creation.

The founding of MSF must be understood in terms of the political and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in developing international humanitarianism. The Biafran doctors were part of and drawn to the period's far-left politics and student movements. These helped shape for them a solidarity, as they called it, not simply a passive compassion but a passionate commitment. This position, a form of *sans-frontiérisme*, emphasized both moral dimensions of humanitarianism: providing care, actively bearing witness, and speaking out about abuses (Davey, 2015, p. 42-45). The concept of "witnessing" (*témoignage*) has become a key feature in humanitarian work. Givoni (2011) interrogates overlooked aspects of MSF's genesis, with a specific focus on the rise of the "expert witness" in relation to humanitarian governance (Givoni, 2011, p.154-157). Apart from the famous Biafran doctors, a group of medical professionals played a significant role in founding MSF in collaboration with them. Motivated by an ethical imperative in medical practice, threatened in their view by an increasingly bureaucratized, commercial, and technocratic environment, Givoni (2011) argues that humanitarian work in the Global South represented a site for reviving purpose and moral dedication in medical practice (Givoni, 2011, p.46). In its early years, MSF functioned predominantly as a recruitment agency, acting between French doctors and development and humanitarian groups in search of medical professionals prepared to work in the Global South. Unlike traditional forms of humanitarianism, in which rhetoric focused on compassion, this one explicitly linked work in aid with work defending universal human rights, representing a significant transformation in humanitarian practice (Taithe, 2004, p.151-153).

MSF founders rejected the Red Cross's silent neutrality and insisted on *témoignage*. Indeed, this was an actual rupture, a more politicized, advocacy-driven humanitarian stance. Yet over time, even this countermovement was co-opted into the system. MSF itself has grown into a large organization and, although remaining independent, works in the same crises and through the same coordination mechanisms as other NGOs. Its witness principle, once revolutionary, is now the norm in humanitarian discourse. In brief, the counter-example of MSF did not overthrow the humanitarian establishment – it expanded it, introducing a new dimension.

In the context of the Biafran War, the centralization of children in humanitarian discourse functioned as a symbol of vulnerability and a site of power/knowledge that intensified the moral imperative surrounding innocence as a basis for providing care. Between the two world wars, a field of humanitarian concern emerged—defined by its vulnerability and potential, thus necessitating a protective stance—centered on childhood; in Biafra, this concern escalated alongside increased attention to explicit representations of suffering and the legitimacy of humanitarian aid. For instance, through images of frail, gaunt bodies with distended bellies and expressionless faces, the Biafran child served as undeniable evidence of humanity and, consequently, humanity's duty to provide care: a new form of political existence at its most fundamental level. The distribution of such images not only documents but actively generates a demand for humanitarian action by reimagining children's embodied lives as a site of moral concern. In this framework, compassion is elicited not for a specific individual child in and of himself but for an idealized and universally relevant model of a victimized child whose embodied state represents innocence and, therefore, triggers a demand for care (Ticktin, 2023, p.311). This model creates a paradox where the spectacle of suffering must become paramount in necessitating intervention, and in doing so, establishes the terms for intervention, identifying whose lives matter under its definition of humanity.

Suffering bodies became a central criterion for innocence, and markers for delivering aid were necessarily linked to tangible forms of suffering. In contrast to political and, therefore, "non-innocent" adult males, who could not claim innocence, children were portrayed both metaphorically and biologically in a state of innocence. Identified as "the humans of the future," their vulnerability and potential for transformation merged,

creating a rationale for defining them as beneficiaries of aid. The case of Biafra exemplifies how humanitarianism extends beyond mere compassion into a regime of biopolitical visibility, where aid is allocated not just based on need but on the demonstrable and publicly consumable spectacle of suffering.

5.3. Cambodian Crisis

The Biafra War represented a defining moment in the era of humanitarianism, demonstrating how, beginning in the late 1960s, its character grew increasingly determined by the conflicts taking place in postcolonial regions of the world. Characterized by a catastrophic loss of life, forced exile, and general destruction, these crises increasingly entered Western consciousness through media reports and television images. Underlying them lay complex international relations, partially determined by colonial experiences and a long-standing Cold War, with important regional consequences. As private humanitarian organizations moved relatively quickly to respond to changing realities, UN agencies, having been relatively passive in the case of the Biafran war, took the chance to redefine their mandates and expand their sphere of intervention (Salvatici, 2019, p.172).

The challenges of mediating between national and international authorities regarding the provision of aid to refugees became even more pronounced a few years later during the Cambodian crisis. In 1979, the war between Cambodia and Vietnam ended with the overthrow of Cambodia's oppressive Khmer Rouge regime, but a new, Vietnam-backed puppet government quickly took its place. As a result, many Cambodians fled to Thailand, leading to the establishment of refugee camps near the border. In theory, these camps were managed by Thai authorities, but in reality, anti-Vietnamese guerrilla groups, like the Khmer Rouge, seized control and turned them into recruitment and logistical hubs. Meanwhile, Cambodia's population continued to endure prolonged dictatorship, fighting, and occupation (Salvatici, 2019, p.174).

UNICEF and the ICRC asked for permission from the government of Cambodia to deliver aid. However, they encountered a range of stringent requirements: they must collaborate with national groups, not work in Thai refugee camps, and not make cross-border transfers of goods and services. Humanitarian work became mired in Cold War politics—obedience to these requirements would violate the principle of neutrality and

indirectly serve a regime backed by Vietnam, but providing for the refugees could serve anti-Vietnamese guerrilla groups, including the Khmer Rouge, responsible for two million deaths between 1975 and 1979 (Salvatici, 2019, p.175). The Cambodian conflict had dual consequences. It prolonged war-related suffering but also served as a counterbalance to Vietnamese regional dominance. The U.S., China, and anti-Vietnamese Southeast Asian states, including Thailand, aligned against Vietnam. Thailand had a contradictory stance as it desired to remove refugees while benefiting from their connection to anti-Vietnamese guerrillas. This humanitarian crisis unfolded along the Thai Cambodian border, where past perpetrators and victims sought aid. Agencies like UNICEF and the ICRC engaged in negotiations with Phnom Penh, agreeing to delegate aid distribution locally but refusing to abandon impartiality. They firmly rejected the ban on assisting Cambodian refugees in Thailand. A final agreement was signed in September 1979 amid heightened political tensions, particularly following a UN resolution recognizing the Khmer Rouge-led government-in-exile as Cambodia's official representative (Forsythe, 2005,78-81).

On the NGOs' side, a coalition of approximately 40 European NGOs, led by Oxfam and spurred on by its representative, James C. Howard, mobilized to deliver aid. Howard, an experienced Quaker relief expert, was shocked at Cambodia's horror in July 1979 and enlisted journalist John Pilger's expertise in securing its intervention. Pilger's documentary for the BBC, *Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia*, took British television audiences through desperate times, creating a feeling for immediate intervention in a growing demand for action (Black, 1992, p.218-221).

In contrast to negotiations pursued over a long and contentious journey by UNICEF and the ICRC, Oxfam's group took a speedy intervention path, compromising its principle of neutrality in a bid for access to refugees in Thai camps, according to requirements in Phnom Penh. This decision was driven by the urgency of the crisis and a recognition of the international community's past neglect of Cambodia's suffering under Pol Pot. Oxfam's quick and independent intervention placed it at the head of NGO humanitarian work, developing its operational capacities and profile in international affairs (Walker and Maxwell, 2014, p.50-51). By May 1980, momentum for intervention gained momentum, with journalist Caroline Moorehead citing hope

for “Cambodia’s full rehabilitation in month”, perhaps in time for Christmas, due to Pilger’s campaign and Howard’s intervention (O’Sullivan, 2014, p.201-211).

Humanitarian aid to Cambodia, organized through agreements between the government in Phnom Penh and NGOs, was primarily supervised by national authorities. This supervision was inefficient and led to a preference for military over civilian needs while also ensuring aerial monitoring of operations. Humanitarian agencies received inadequate information about actual needs and the delivery of aid, and manipulation by the Vietnamese-sponsored administration was deemed unacceptable by certain humanitarian groups, most notably MSF (Brauman, 2006, p.94 as cited in Salvatici, 2019). Undergoing internal restructuring, MSF debated between enhancing efficiency and preserving its activist spirit.

MSF’s new position highlighted Cambodia’s urgent need for its starving population to access aid. Firmly rejecting Phnom Penh’s terms, MSF insisted on complete independence in distributing its aid to prevent any misuse by the totalitarian regime. To expose Cambodia’s obstruction of humanitarian aid, MSF organized the *Marche pour la Survie du Cambodge.* On February 8, 1980, notable intellectuals, dissidents, and prominent figures marched toward the Thai Cambodian border, symbolically challenging the obstacles to aid. The demonstration garnered significant international media attention, with photographs of participants singing *We Shall Overcome* in front of military barriers broadcast worldwide. However, the demonstration fueled internal controversy at MSF. Some criticized MSF for allowing celebrities and for one-sidedly criticizing Cambodia’s pro-Vietnamese government, stating that it placed MSF in an inescapable position with the Western bloc. In addition, the demonstration seemed to overlook the humanitarian challenge in the Thai refugee camps, in which MSF was already involved (Davey, 2015, p.203-207).

The humanitarian response to Cambodia revealed profound stresses in the international humanitarian system, particularly on the neutral role, media influence, and politicization of humanitarian aid. The initial reluctance of major agencies such as the UN and the ICRC to deliver relief to Cambodian refugees in Thai camps highlighted the state-centric and bureaucratic nature of traditional humanitarianism.

However, a collective of non-governmental organizations led by Oxfam sought to bypass these boundaries through direct lobbying and public mobilization efforts. This change represented a move away from intervention strategies and a wider transformation in the international community's approach to imagining and responding to humanitarian crises.

A critical juncture in this development was achieved with the broadcast of *Year Zero*, a BBC documentary that was central to the development of public perception of the crisis. Like with the media initiatives seen during the Biafra War, *Year Zero* transcended mere documentation of agony—it was able to produce a sense of urgency, channeling global focus on the human tragedy. Here, the complex relationship between media and humanitarian action is easily observed. Through its ability to frame stories around crises, the media moves beyond reporting humanitarian crises; it actually influences which crises are prioritized and how interventions become legitimate. In such a situation, biopolitics becomes the central issue: the authority to determine who is "in need" and what type of assistance is appropriate does not rest solely with governments and relief organizations but also resides inextricably intertwined in the vast system of media representation and social discourse.

The interventionist approach of MSF activists is representative of a new trend in humanitarian approaches. Their *March for the Survival of Cambodia*, undertaken along the Thai-Cambodian border, signaled a willingness to cross political borders in a more explicit manner, using protests and symbolic action. The march, planned in conjunction with intellectuals and notable personalities, was given wide media coverage in international media, hence increasing exposure to the crisis. An underlying question, though, is: Was it to provide humanitarian relief that was mainly responsible for the intervention or to affect the framing of the crisis? The demonstration, in bringing Cambodia to attention, was a performative action that was amplified and sensationalized in media reports. This speaks to a more fundamental problem in humanitarianism, one of how crises become circumscribed, represented, and given priority in the global humanitarian system. Some crises get amplified treatment in media representations, while others get overlooked, hence creating a perception of need and a feeling of moral duty on a global scale.

This situation represents a basic dilemma in humanitarianism: a struggle between neutrality and advocacy. Traditional institutions such as the ICRC and the United Nations, in their commitment to neutrality, avoided dealing directly with Cambodian refugees in Thai refugee centers. In contrast, humanitarian groups such as MSF and Oxfam took a more activist approach. Nevertheless, this stance caused intra-MSF conflicts. Some of MSF's critics argued that the one-sided nature of criticism of the Vietnam-backed government of Cambodia during protests put MSF in a position of siding with the Western bloc. This episode is a reflection of a basic reality—humanitarian work is never absolutely apolitical. Responses to crises always become inextricably linked to power plays, media representations, and political ideologies, making neutrality more a theoretical ideal than a practical reality.

5.3.1. Refugees in Thailand

As discussed, since the days of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian refugees have fled to Thailand. However, Bangkok, which refused to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention, has not granted them formal refugee status or allowed them to move into the country's interior. With the fall of the Khmer Rouge and the subsequent invasion of Vietnam, the number of camps at the borders increased. Some camps were operated under the auspices of the UNHCR, while others were managed by the Thai military, resulting in varying living standards (Taithe, 2016, p.342-344).

Khao-I-Dang, the largest refugee camp operated by UNHCR, housed over 100,000 people and was widely regarded as the best-equipped refugee camp in the world (UNHCR, 2000). It was funded with financial assistance from the U.S., Australia, Japan, and Europe and offered a variety of programs, including education, medical care, mental health services, policing, and peace initiatives. Numerous NGOs operated within its borders, reflecting the increasing presence of private humanitarian agencies and their coordination with intergovernmental organizations like UNHCR. The hope for resettlement in countries such as the U.S., Australia, or France fell precariously in the balance. However, for many refugees, bribery became necessary to pass through security, only to encounter exploitation upon entering its gates (Taithe, 2016, p.342-344).

For refugees without access to resettlement programs, life remained in a state of uncertainty. Their fate was uncertain amid Cambodia's internal conflicts and the ongoing war between its Vietnamese occupiers and the diverse Cambodian resistances. Violence and oppression from multiple sources confronted refugees: camps under the Khmer Rouge and various guerrilla groups were attacked by the Vietnamese army, and in retaliation, these groups-imposed taxes, forcibly recruited individuals, and hijacked aid distribution for personal gain (UNHCR, 2000, p.95). Meanwhile, security in the camps was in the hands of Thailand's military, whose leaders frequently abused their power.

Humanitarian aid flooded into the region thanks to UNICEF, the ICRC, the World Food Program, and prominent U.S.-based organizations like CARE and Catholic Relief Services. Distribution methods varied, with some aid handed directly to camp leaders while Thai security forces managed other distributions. However, many of the supplies, including blankets, oil, and rice, ended up at Thai military bases, on the black market, or were used to finance anti-Vietnamese armed groups supported by the Phnom Penh government. This situation trapped humanitarian relief within the region's persistent political and military turmoil (Terry, 2002, p.128-134).

By the end of 1981, growing concerns regarding the abuse of aid encouraged the ICRC to discontinue its food programs for refugees in Cambodia and its cooperative work with UNICEF. Initially, UNICEF continued, but in 1982, it chose to withdraw, opening the doors for the recently formed United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) to assume responsibility for providing relief in the border areas. Nevertheless, with UNBRO in attendance, little changed—the warring groups continued to run the camps, diverting goods and exploiting susceptible refugees. Meanwhile, America, Japan, and France, in supporting anti-Vietnamese guerrilla groups, opted to overlook such concerns, motivated by a desire to promote friendly relations with Thailand and indirectly fund guerrilla operations in Cambodia (Gatrell, 2013, p.214).

Between 1984 and 1985, significant events unfolded as the Vietnamese launched a violent offensive, destroying many camps along the borders. The UNBRO took over

refugee relocations, attempting to separate civilians from combatants in new camps, yet contact between the camps and warring groups remained constant. One striking example was Site 2, a massive camp housing 200,000 people, where NGOs expanded their operations beyond basic food and medical care to create programs focused on mental health, working to heal the wounds inflicted by Pol Pot's genocidal regime. These types of psycho-social interventions, implemented in post-intervention phases, are necessarily coercive, according to Pupavac (2001, p.361), to reshape social and political processes so that these groups comply with the security requirements of global governance. The concept of post-conflict traumatic stress disorder is not merely seen as an individual pathology but as a general danger to society, one that can erode stability and heighten the risk of future conflict. In terms of frameworks for global governance, trauma is often regarded as a causative force, driving victims to re-live experiences (Pupavac, 2001, p. 365). Intervention techniques, therefore, revolve around treatment modalities designed to help individuals work through trauma in a way that reduces the potential for future violence. However, in doing so, these techniques inevitably pathologize basic human emotions—most prominently anger, which is often characterized in post-intervention trauma discourses as a "maladaptive" reaction (Silove, 2005). It is not too difficult to argue that these types of interventions operate in line with biopolitics that pathologize the emotional and psychological responses of displaced people, framing post-conflict trauma as a disorder requiring correction. By framing anger and distress as maladaptive reactions to displacement and violence, suffering and real causes of crisis are depoliticized. This process mirrors historical humanitarian approaches that sought to restore physical bodily integrity but now extends to the realm of mental health, producing a normative psychological subject.

The camps began evacuating in 1989, coinciding with Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia, and by 1993, the last major camps, such as Khao-I-Dang and Site 2, had closed. Cambodia held UN-sponsored elections in 1993, marking a crucial moment for humanitarian aid in the region. The crisis revealed the unavoidable intersection of Cold War politics and aid—while humanitarian intervention provided essential support to refugees, it unintentionally prolonged the conflict by bolstering the Cambodian resistance. Simultaneously, large refugee camps transformed into arenas for complex

aid programs, fostering a rich dialogue among NGOs and UN agencies. Ultimately, the Cambodian refugee crisis not only reinforced the foundations of humanitarianism through improved techniques but also highlighted its weaknesses and moral dilemmas (Salvatici, 2019, p.181).

5.4. The Ethiopian Famine

The Ethiopian famine of 1983–85 became a defining moment in humanitarian aid (de Waal, 1997, p. 106). It was not the first famine to challenge humanitarianism in the latter half of the twentieth century, having been preceded by famines in Cambodia during the 1970s and in Biafra in the 1960s (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). However, its impact was significant, playing a key role in reshaping the practice of humanitarian aid. Often referred to as "the Ethiopian famine," a term that carries pejorative and oversimplified connotations, it suggests a single, naturally occurring disaster when, in reality, it represented a complex issue with numerous contributing factors (de Waal, 1997).

The long-term impact of famine was manifested in two forms. First, it initiated a general discussion that positioned famine as a multidimensional political crisis, often initiated and fueled by state behavior (Watts, 1991; Macrae and Zwi, 1994; Oliver-Smith, 2002; Binet, 2005). Second, it initiated a new age of celebrity humanitarianism, epitomized in efforts such as Band-Aid and, subsequently, Live Aid, with high-profile personalities such as rock singer and founder of Band-Aid, Bob Geldof, becoming at the heart of humanitarian aid (Richey and Ponte, 2011). Central to Band-Aid's genesis lay television's concentrated reporting, a significant catalyst in unprecedented growth in the humanitarian field (Benthall, 1993).

Ethiopia carries a long and painful heritage of famines, and these have a striking tendency to increase profound political upheavals in their wake. In 1973, a famine took an estimated 100,000 lives and helped contribute to the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie's government. In its aftermath, the new revolutionary government under Mengistu Haile Mariam, who took over in 1974, prioritized eradicating famine as its first objective. To deal with such a critical problem, the regime initiated significant reform, including a

Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to explore famine causation and famine prevention and a radical 1975 land reform in a feudalistic direction, abolishing tenancy in a feudalistic manner. However, the famine of 1983–84 in Ethiopia became even more devastating than the one in 1973–74 (de Waal, 1997, p. 106-108). Despite the Marxist military regime's claims that famine had been eradicated, food remained scarce due to ongoing economic and political instability. While the drought exacerbated the problem, its root cause lay in the regime's war economy. As its army fought in Somalia and engaged with domestic guerrilla groups, it diverted critical assets away from agricultural production, leading to disastrous food shortages during a crucial period. Government actions, including forced relocations, disruptions in the marketplace, and direct attacks on civilians, only worsened the situation (de Waal, 1997, p. 108).

The Ethiopian government sought international aid in early 1984, but its request was largely ignored. Western governments were hesitant to assist a pro-Soviet nation, and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, which was responsible for coordinating aid, took a contradictory approach—lobbying for assistance while minimizing the severity of the famine both domestically and internationally. European diplomats and humanitarian organizations, including Save the Children, raised alarms, but the response remained insufficient, leaving millions at risk of starvation (Kissi, 2005, p.113-117). In Western countries, both the media and institutions mostly did not pay attention to it until autumn 1984 for the international media to start reporting about famine, but a change took place in late October 1984 when the BBC broadcast a report filed in Ethiopia, prepared by Michael Buerk and Mohammed Amin (Salvatici, 2019, p.183).

Michael Buerk's 1984 BBC report on the Ethiopian famine, enhanced by Mohammed Amin's camerawork, became one of history's most widely broadcast humanitarian reports, reaching approximately 470 million viewers (Gill, 1986, p.91). Often regarded as the most influential humanitarian recording, it played a pivotal role in launching celebrity humanitarianism, particularly through Band-Aid. In this regard, celebrity humanitarianism means that celebrities initiate to galvanize support and compassion for distant populations by using various kinds of emotional practices (Mitchell, 2016,

p.288). During their visit to Ethiopia, Buerk and Amin focused on Korem, a refugee camp that had swollen to tens of thousands due to the famine and ongoing secessionist conflicts. The report framed the famine using biblical imagery, depicting Korem as a timeless scene of suffering while omitting the political and military realities. This selective portrayal contributed to what scholars refer to as the "archetypical media famine," shaping Western perceptions of Ethiopia as a place of unending humanitarian crisis (Moeller, 2002; Müller, 2013, p.473). It conveys the message that camps like Korem have been an integral feature of rural Ethiopian life for years. In reality, such camps indicate a desperate sign of overall disintegration, emerging when all other survival options fail. Equally important is selective reporting, which ignores crucial factors and undermines its claims of divine and natural intervention at work. Most notably, there was no sign of rocket launchers scattered across the plains of Korem, drowned out by the deafening roars of Ethiopian jet fighters flying toward rebel strongholds in the north. These overlooked factors could contribute significantly to a deeper understanding (Franks, 2010, p.71-74).

The unprecedented visibility of the crisis placed "the Ethiopian crisis" at the forefront of international concerns. In reaction, governments and intergovernmental organizations started disbursing specific financial funding and initiating emergency programs, and many organizations accelerated the issue of appeals for funding. These actions resulted in immediate aid delivery. More importantly, they increased awareness worldwide regarding the Ethiopian famine. Most remarkably, widespread reporting in the media generated a new mobilization that touched deep chords, creating a lasting impact for years in Western society (Salvatici, 2019, p.183). This representation played a decisive role in transforming the abstract reality of multiple deaths into a dramatic story of individual suffering (Müller, 2013, p.473).

A rock singer, Bob Geldof, soon recognized the powerful impact of directly exposing audiences to the suffering of famine victims, understanding that such imagery would evoke widespread compassion. Mobilizing fellow musicians, Geldof coordinated the Band-Aid single "*Do They Know It's Christmas?"* less than a month after Buerk's report in Korem, quickly rising to become a British pop singles chart-topper. The Band-Aid single became the fastest-selling single in history, selling over three million

copies and raising more than £8 million. Following its success, Bob Geldof organized Live Aid, a large-scale charity concert. The event attracted 172,000 attendees and was broadcast in 150 countries, reaching an estimated 1.5 billion viewers worldwide. The concert raised over £110 million, all donated to Ethiopia's famine relief efforts (Tester, 2010, p.3). Geldof's key role in creating Band-Aid and then Live-Aid secured him a place at the forefront of a new breed of celebrities committed to common-sense humanitarianism (Tester, 2010, p.10).

To draw a picture of the situation, during the Wembley Stadium and Philadelphia Live Aid concert, painful photographs of malnourished Ethiopians were flashed on television to illustrate urgency, but with little context and background information. Performativity contributed to a simplistic media narrative, portraying famine as a singular, unproblematic, and solely "natural" disaster while ignoring the political and socioeconomic realities in Ethiopia. Even in reports by Amin and Buerk, mentions of the civil war's impact on delivering aid were merely incidental (Salvatici, 2019, p.184).

Live Aid oversimplified further. In Live Aid's most famous single performance, "*Do They Know It's Christmas?"* Africa, rather than Ethiopia, was mentioned in general terms, casting an entire continent in terms of horror and fear. Live Aid's logo continued to generalize its depiction, using black for Africa, which illustrated its geographical and pictorial disconnection from the rest of the world. By portraying an imprecise geographical location, it provided a more straightforward cause for Westerners to address; simultaneously, it echoed older postcolonial representations of Africa as unproductive, lacking, and perpetually in need, in stark contrast to a modern Western image of humanity extending goodwill worldwide (Franks, 2006, p.307). It operates in the myth of a purely capitalist society—one that sustains the dominant international order by depicting capitalist exploitation and the conspicuous inequity between worldwide wealth and destitution as solvable through acts of compassionate consumption. This model constructs aid recipients as voiceless and passive African victims, detached from the social, economic, and political structures that define Western life (Richey and Ponte, 2011, p.171).

The Ethiopian Famine was a turning point in humanitarianism's formation, shaped equally by material circumstances and modes of its expression, portrayal, and use. The crisis was initially overlooked, yet it was brought unprecedented exposure via media reports and celebrity humanitarianism in events like Live Aid and reporting done by the BBC, which heightened public sentiment to unprecedented levels. The new exposure, though, did not challenge the underlying power relationships that caused the crisis; instead, it was used to reinforce existing power relationships in representations of the crisis and its sufferers in ways that served humanitarianism. The famine was more than a mere cataclysmic event; it was transformed into *the* Ethiopian Famine—a unique, consumable story that situated the crisis in epistemic contexts that conformed to Western modes of knowledge. In such a system, recipients of aid were presented not as politicized, socially situated subjects but as passive sufferers in need of rescue by the West. The iconography of African famine sufferers—thin, vulnerable, isolated from political and economic contexts that funded Western modernity—played a crucial discursive function that legitimized humanitarianism's expansion. This iterative process, in which crises were framed, subjects constructed, and aid positioned as a necessary intervention, is highly congruent with the recurring logic of the postcolonial paradigm. The impact of humanitarianism, in this case, was more than mobilizing financial support; it was also to produce the very subjectivities that required intervention, creating a self-referential circularity in which exposure, speech, and aid continually interacted with each other.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the comeback of humanitarian aid to the Third World in the context of decolonization, with former colonial powers refocusing their humanitarian work on their former colonies. By studying three critical cases—the Biafran War, the Cambodian Crisis, and the Ethiopian Famine—we have examined how humanitarianism created the narrative of crises, chose its beneficiaries, and operationalized particular responses.

In this period, compassion takes its starkest expression in humanitarian aid where, as Peter Redfield (2008p. 196) observes, "concern for human life serves as a key value in international moral discourse". To create attention to the suffering of distant others

and accumulate funding for aid, humanitarianism in this period relied on the systematic use of appealing advertising campaigns. The humanitarian reactions to the Biafra War, the Cambodian Crisis, and the Ethiopian Famine illustrate how compassion during this era was not an entirely spontaneous emotion but one that was framed, regulated, and instrumentalized by social, political, and cultural forces. Compassion did not arise in a void but was framed by certain stories and visual images that determined who was recognized as a victim, how their suffering was represented, and what kinds of responses were considered suitable. The circulation of humanitarian images and stories did not merely represent suffering but actively constituted it, not just the urgency of a crisis but also who was worthy of aid. Compassion, in this way, was a productive power tool, constituting humanitarian subjects and underwriting existing social assumptions regarding crisis and suffering. The portrayal of Africa, for example, as a site of ongoing emergency was not arbitrary but an extension of long-entrenched colonial paradigms that determined what type of suffering was recognizable to Western audiences.

These cases illustrate how humanitarian aid does not simply react to crises but also builds them through narrative and visual selectivity. The figure of the child-in-need materializes throughout each of the three examples as a quintessential humanitarian subject, conflating innocence with vulnerability and rendering suffering palatable and readable to Western constituencies. Likewise, refugees were positioned not simply as recipients of aid but as entities to be stabilized and reinstated within an imagined normality.

Finally, the humanitarian changes witnessed during this era reach beyond the material assistance to the management of compassion itself. Media, celebrities, and global campaigns were significant in framing humanitarian action, demonstrating how aid was not only a matter of responding to needs but also of generating and steering global compassion. This change highlights the power dynamics that are part of humanitarianism, in that crises are told, aid recipients are fashioned, and responses are framed in ways that fit with larger geopolitical and moral agendas.

CHAPTER 6

HUMANITARIAN AID IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA

The post-Cold War period is particularly challenging in terms of the search for a "pure" type of humanitarian aid. In contrast to previous decades, this era is characterized by the blurring of boundaries between humanitarian aid, military intervention, and development policy, making it difficult to separate humanitarian aid from broader geopolitical and security-related objectives. In truth, humanitarianism has never been apolitical; despite its image as an impartial endeavor, the 1990s and early 2000s were pivotal in shaping a new humanitarian paradigm. This framework was characterized by the privatization of aid, an increasing role for non-state actors, the securitization of humanitarian discourse, and indeed aid, and the integration of humanitarian aid into broader crisis management and migration control strategies. By the 2010s, humanitarianism had become a fully integrated aspect of neoliberal governance, in which aid was utilized as a response to crises and a mechanism for population management.

To draw a more concrete picture of this transformation, it is essential to clarify the key phenomena shaping humanitarianism in this period, including privatization, securitization, and the increasing role of non-state actors. Each of these will be discussed thoroughly in the following sections regarding the concept of aid. This period, covering the post-Cold War era to the present, can be analyzed in three distinct but interrelated sections referring to different periods. While certain phenomena are more dominant in specific phases, all of them defined humanitarianism of this era remained present for each sub-period.

The demise of the Soviet Union, along with the related reduction in ideological bipolarity, marked an inflection point for humanitarianism. The construction of

humanitarian crises during the Cold War within a broader ideological struggle transitioned to a post-Cold War discourse focused on issues such as “ethnic cleansing,” “failed states,” and international stability. Within this period, humanitarianism was increasingly incorporated into structures of global governance, thus legitimizing military interventions while simultaneously strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as key actors within the humanitarian industry.

The increased expansion of humanitarianism generated a growing demand for formality, fueled partly by an explosion of aid groups, increased donor expectations, and high-profile failures—like in Rwanda, where unorganized interventions fueled the fighting. As a reaction to such failures, humanitarianism developed a more organized system that included codes of conduct, accountability, and training programs for professionals. Institutionalization added in bureaucratic and corporation-style approaches, with an accent on efficiency, deliverables, and brand management, at times at the expense of responsiveness to recipient communities’ needs. As a result, even though such institutionality generated increased coordination and operational efficiency, it blurred distinctions between humanitarianism, commercial enterprises, and even military operations. During this period, the provision of aid became dominated by the public-private contractual networks that link donor governments, military establishments, UN agencies, NGOs, and private companies depicting relations of global liberal governance. (Barnett, 2005, p.375).

In terms of discourse humanitarianism created, the post-Cold War ideological vacuum has redefined humanitarian emergencies as threats to the international liberal order. The resurgence of ethnic and intercommunal violence, the resorting to violence by both state and non-state actors, and the emergence of a decentralized wartime economy—largely fueled by illicit trafficking and exploitative practices—have resulted in what is referred to as “complex emergencies” (Keen, 2008). These emergencies present an unprecedented challenge to the humanitarian community. Defined by “widespread violence and fatalities, significant displacement, and extensive societal and economic destruction,” complex emergencies necessitate “broad, multidimensional humanitarian assistance” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 1999, p.4). This approach to a humanitarian crisis

and the response, indeed, reinforces the narrative that there are some anomalies in the international liberal order and that they pose a threat to it. Here, the human who are perfectly fit with this liberal order faces with a security issue. Based on ideas of human security and removing the effects of this kind of "anomaly," aid now plays a direct security role. In this sense, security means being rather than concerned with relations between states; the main purpose of this security paradigm is to change and adapt the behavior of populations within them through the aid (Duffield, 2001, p.308). In Foucauldian terms, the power relations simply migrated into new institutional forms. What appeared to be a new era of principled, humanitarianism was also an era of intensified governance, as aid was used to manage populations and crises in line with a neoliberal security logic. Notably, Duffield (2001) observed that post-Cold War aid often served to "adapt the behavior of populations" under the rubric of resilience and security – a direct echo of Foucault's governmentality, in which the ultimate goal is shaping conduct. Thus, institutionalization has given humanitarianism a remarkable resilience of its own: new modes of aid are absorbed into the existing power apparatus, lending an appearance of continuity and stability to the enterprise even as it changes labels or tactics.

The recognition of the growing need led to a significant increase in financial resources allocated to humanitarian aid, which almost quintupled between 1990 and 2006 (Fearon, 2008, p.65-72). However, the increase in funding for humanitarian emergencies resulting from armed conflicts was associated with the rise of what some scholars have described as the "tyranny of emergency." This refers to the overriding tendency to prioritize aid interventions as an "immediate protective reflex" rather than engaging in a concerted search for long-term solutions. A significant implication of the trend is that, since the early 1990s, private and public funding sources have progressively focused their donations on purely humanitarian aid—primarily those executed in conflict areas—rather than splitting resources between development initiatives (Binde, 2001, p.91 as cited in Salvatici, 2019).

These developments shows that as bipolar geopolitics ended, humanitarian aid shifted its rhetoric and scope – embracing such terms as "humanitarian intervention," "failed states," and "complex emergencies." On the surface, this was a rupture, blurring the

lines between relief, development, and military intervention. But humanitarianism shortly became even more fundamentally embedded in global governance structures. By the 1990s, an organized system of relief existed: common codes of practice, professional standards, UN coordination mechanisms, and the cluster system all codified the lessons of early post-Cold War crises.

This chapter examines the evolution of this transformation through three main stages: (1) the humanitarian interventions of the 1990s, characterized by a strong link between military intervention and the provision of aid, both under the framework of international responsibility; (2) the securitization and militarization of humanitarian action in the 2000s, particularly within the context of the War on Terror; and (3) the neo-liberalization of refugee management in the 2010s, which reached its peak during the Syrian refugee crisis.

6.1. The 1990s: Aid as a Way of Military Intervention and the NGO-Industrial Complex

6.1.1. The Case of Somalia: Humanitarian Aid and Military Protection

The 1992-1993 humanitarian response to the Somali famine was marked by the growing militarization and politicization of humanitarian aid. Initially, INGOs and the UN functioned in traditional frameworks, prioritizing immediate relief operations such as food distribution, medical care, and delivery of key services. However, as security in Somalia deteriorated, humanitarian agencies increasingly utilized military intervention to secure access and maintain contact with target populations (Menkhaus, 2010, p.321-323). In this regard, the Somalia famine was the first case in which troops were implemented to enforce the delivery of the food aid, setting a precedent for military involvement in humanitarian aid (Nestle and Dalton, 1994, p. 19).

Like many crises of the 1990s, the famine in Somalia from 1991 to 1992 arose from deep-rooted issues and had severe consequences for its victims. The historical background of Somalia's crisis is complex and deeply embedded in its colonial legacy and clan-based society. Formed in 1960 through the union of British and Italian

colonies, Somalia did not include all ethnic Somalis, many of whom resided in neighboring countries, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. Alliances with clans continued to take precedence over national affiliation. Siad Barre ruled from 1969 to 1991, capably manipulating clan allegiances and leveraging Cold War rivalries to maintain his power. The collapse of his regime plunged Somalia into intense intra-clan fighting. In the aftermath, no effective successor government emerged, with Somalia divided under militia factions and clan chieftains' control (Hoffman and Weis, 2017, p. 65-67).

The humanitarian crisis in Somalia resulted from a combination of this intra-clan fighting and drought. After the downfall of Siad Barre's government in January 1991, Somalia fell into a vacuum of power in which no faction was in charge. The fight for supremacy, especially between General Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, degenerated into large-scale violence. This fighting, principally in Mogadishu, capital of Somalia, hindered food production and distribution throughout southern Somalia. Compounding the crisis, a severe drought devastated the inter-riverine farming region, home to the Rahanweyn and Bantu peoples. These groups, distinguished by their military weakness, bore disproportionate misery as stronger clan-based militias looted their food supplies and sought to commit massacres against them. The economic consequences were catastrophic. Food prices rose by 800-1,200%, making basic survival unaffordable. At the same time, livestock exports to Saudi Arabia and Yemen collapsed, thus cutting off a lifeline income source for farmers (Natsios, 1996, p.70-71). The signs of famine were evident; however, global concern did not increase significantly until it was reported in the media (de Waal, 2017, p.185). By mid-1991, only a few humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC, MSF, and Save the Children, were present in the country; however, their efforts were not enough to slow down the mounting crisis. By February 1992, the ICRC, recognizing the severity of the situation, broke its standard policies and dedicated around half its overall budget to Somalia (Taw, 2004, p.9-10).

The UN lacked direct field leadership in Somalia, operating remotely from Nairobi and responding slowly. By the time it intervened, the humanitarian crisis had escalated, with media coverage of looted aid convoys fueling calls for military intervention. This pressure led to Operation Restore Hope, a US-led mission beginning in December

1992, which was meant to be short-term but soon entangled in Somali clan politics. In 1993, a confrontation between peacekeeping forces and General Mohamed Aidee's forces flared, heightening long-standing tension and culminating in the Black Hawk Down debacle, in which 18 Americans died, their corpses shamefully marched through Mogadishu streets. That incident delivered a disappointment to both the US and UN credibility, creating a worldwide reluctance to future interventions, particularly in such locations as Haiti and Bosnia (Hoffman and Weis, 2017, p. 67-70).

While the food aid delivery successfully created a system for providing aid, it simultaneously brought about many unexpected consequences. One major concern was that humanitarian food was reduced to a medium of exchange and fueled the war economy. Food shipments were hijacked and invested in arms and consolidating warlord power. Somali merchants took advantage and sold stolen food aid, further interfering market forces. Somali farmers reported that the distribution of provided food had a negative impact on local marketplaces, making it difficult for them to sell their products. The intervention was also met with wide-reaching structural problems in food aid efficiency in the form of looting, diversion, and market distortion. Food convoys were frequently looted and sold in arms exchanges, while the high level of free food decreased local agricultural producers' selling prices, discouraging domestic agricultural production. The picture was familiar and enduring with food aid—it provided short-run benefits but not local economies and longer-run food protection (Nestle and Dalton, 1994, p. 22-24).

In addition, humanitarian agencies hired local militiamen to protect their convoys, unintentionally increasing the demand for arms and consolidating the war economy. The unintentional reinforcement of warlord power made longer-term stabilization even tougher. Traditional systems of governance, particularly the power of clan leaders, weakened as young military people bypassed these leaders and took power in violent and coercive ways. A major concern was that humanitarian relief efforts disrupted local economies and stimulated displacement. The ICRC soup kitchen network, intended to provide emergency food, inadvertently drew rural agriculturalists into town and refugee colonies. The movement fueled the problems of agricultural rehabilitation, as a significant number of displaced people could not get back home in advance of the

next planting season. The process produced a vicious cycle in which dependence on aid increased and accordingly lengthened durations of instability (Natsios, 1996, p.70-71).

A major turning point in the intervention was the militarization of food aid. The unprecedented decision to commit U.S. forces to organizing food distribution fueled escalating hostility among Somali groups. Although a majority of the Somali populace initially welcomed external intervention, perceptions changed over the summer months, and U.S. and UN forces began increasingly to be viewed as a foreign occupation power, generating growing opposition. What began under the guise of a humanitarian effort aimed at securing necessities degenerated into direct combat, ultimately resulting in violent exchanges in October 1993 with substantial fatalities on both sides (Nestle and Dalton, 1996).

As explicitly seen in the case of Somalia, the internal conflicts were reinterpreted as threats to international peace and security, leading to the resurgence of humanitarian intervention (MacFarlane, 2005). This concept quickly gained traction, fundamentally transforming humanitarianism. The concept of humanitarian intervention lacks a precise definition, but it is generally understood as "coercive action by one or more states involving the use of armed force in another state, mainly without the consent of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants" (Roberts, 2000, p. 4). The UN operation in Somalia marked the first intervention in a civil war with a humanitarian mandate and represented a case of multidimensional peacekeeping (UN, 1996, pp. 3–4). According to Breau (2005, p. 192), the intervention in Somalia was a pivotal moment in UN practice, as it was the first instance where "a civil war was declared to be a threat to international peace and security, and the use of force was authorized in the delivery of humanitarian supplies."

The militarization of aid has left long-term implications for humanitarian aid, with humanitarian organizations increasingly operating in active threads of conflict under the military security umbrella. As noted by Duffield (1996), this shift in humanitarian action—operating in war and civil unrest—is a fundamental leap that contributed to the expansion of NGOs.

6.1.2. Balkan Wars

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, early hope for international relations soon started to erode, most strikingly manifested in the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, revealing a resounding failure in Europe's ability to respond effectively. As economically and regionally destabilized Yugoslavia, many saw Serbian nationalism as the root cause of its disintegration. In 1991, national forces, at orders of Serbian leaders, invaded both Slovenia and Croatia, and a rapid independence declaration in Slovenia and escalating fighting in Croatia soon developed into a full-fledged war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992. War in Bosnia produced the macabre phrase "ethnic cleansing[2]," in which non-Serb communities, particularly Muslims, fled their homelands.

Approximately four million people were displaced due to conflict, with many opting to remain in Bosnia while relocating to areas controlled by their respective groups. Even those who were not forced from their homes faced difficulties, particularly during the harsh winters in the Balkan region. At times, a full fifty percent of a country's population relied solely on humanitarian efforts for support (Morris, 2007). The Bosnian War was significant in many ways. It was the first European conflict after 1945 and cast a shadow over a time filled with hope following the Cold War. Unlike in many parts of the world, observers and aid workers often noted an unsettling familiarity with those they were reporting on and those they were aiding (Rieff, 2002, p.123). The international community handled the Bosnian War but failed to settle it. As a result, the UNHCR led humanitarian efforts despite most victims not qualifying as refugees under international law. Bosnia emphasized protecting civilians, but nothing changed for the better. In 1992, the UN Security Council mandated United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), with a bias towards providing humanitarian aid at the expense of civilian security. In 1993, the "safe areas" collapsed, and 8,000 Muslim males and adolescents were massacred in Srebrenica in 1995, even with the presence of peacekeeping troops in the region. The 30,000 UNPROFOR troops

[2] The term "ethnic cleansing" does not have legal status but refers to removing all people of a given ethnic group from a given area.

prioritized delivering aid at the expense of civilian security, and the war and refugee problem continued (Rieff, 2002, p.127)

Despite the lack of strong directives for resolving the crisis, the UNHCR received widespread praise for its effective coordination of humanitarian operations. The airlift campaign in Sarajevo played a key role in sustaining the civilian population during the long-lasting siege, and the World Food Program (WFP) effectively delivered over one million tons of food aid. However, it must be noted that humanitarian aid at times functioned as a stand-in for political intervention, with actions taken to mitigate suffering but not to stop fighting in Bosnia (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, p. 62).

The Bosnian War forced a deep re-evaluation of humanitarian neutrality and impartiality principles. In contrast, the Bosnian government argued that it underwent an international embargo similar to that of the Serb army, even when its continued re-supply via Belgrade and overtly hostile actions continued unabated. Humanitarian professionals started re-thinking whether neutrality could ever represent a principle applicable universally or simply a tool for accessing at-risk groups. In a moral conundrum, the UNHCR struggled with allowing Muslims to flee regions taken over by the Bosnian Serb Army, effectively sanctioning ethnic cleansing, or withholding intervention during times of fighting (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, p.60).

The Dayton Peace Accord, signed in 1995, saw a sharp demarcation of borders in Bosnia according to ethnicity, but disintegration continued in the Yugoslav region. By 1999, when fighting in Kosovo started, “humanitarian warfare” became a dominant theme. Unlike in Bosnia, in a quick and efficient move, NATO moved with urgency, and bombings culminated in a rapid cease-fire but accompanied by a sharp but transient refugee problem. The Kosovo War underlined discrepancies in interventions, with a bias towards participating in sensitive political regions for political motives and not in less accessible ones, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Before the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the Kosovo War saw unprecedented per capita contribution towards humanitarian aid (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, p.62-63).

6.1.3. Rwanda

The Rwandan emergency demonstrates the complex interplay between humanitarian aid and political and military interests. Humanitarian aid delivered by international agencies, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has been incorporated into structures of violence and oppression, according to African Rights (1994, p.3 as cited in Hoffman and Weis, 2017).

The 1994 Rwandan Genocide was one of the worst events in the twentieth century, in which up to 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed in less than nine weeks. The tragedy was exacerbated by the failure of powerful Western and African nations such as the U.S., France, Nigeria, and South Africa to intervene when they could have done so. The United Nations, especially its peacekeeping under Kofi Annan, failed to act. Although it is uncertain whether intervention would have ended the genocide altogether, there is a good possibility that several lives could have been saved. This failure to act was not just a failure to react but also a failure to foresee (Hoffman and Weis, 2017, p.73).

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), commanded by Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, was deployed in 1993 to monitor a peace agreement between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). However, its mission was not one of preventing large-scale atrocities because the international community had assumed that the peace agreement signaled that Rwanda was on the path to stability. This was a fatally incorrect assumption (Hoffman and Weis, 2017, p.75-76).

The failure of the United Nations in Rwanda stemmed from its inclination to bureaucratic process over content, legalism over reality, and naive optimism over historical experience. UN representatives, including Hedi Annabi to Kofi Annan, presumed that longstanding warring factions in Rwanda would seriously engage in peace despite a past filled with political violence and massacres. This misplaced optimism led the UN to operate under the belief that its peacekeeping force, UNAMIR, could function without the mandate to intervene militarily. Even after the genocide,

Annan defended this policy of non-intervention. This episode was characteristic of a broader pattern across Bosnia, where the United Nations perceived its role as a passive institution committed to peacekeeping and not as an active military presence. United Nations peacekeepers understood that their mandate was symbolic and not operational in nature. This approach, therefore, resulted in inaction even with the presence of clear indicators of impending mass violence. It was on April 6, 1994, that the Rwandan Genocide started following the shooting down of a plane that was carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi near Kigali airport. It is not clear who the perpetrators were; the RPF have been accused. In retaliation, Rwandan troops, together with the Hutu extremist group Interahamwe, initiated a systematic genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. In a horrifying nine-week span, this violence caused more deaths than any other modern-day massacre in so limited a time frame. In these terrible events, the Western governments—and the United States mainly—chose to sit it out, refusing to get involved. This lack of action underscored a broader trend of Western indifference to crimes against humanity, where political concerns were prioritized over humanitarian imperatives. (Hoffman and Weis, 2017, p.76-78).

After the RPF took power in July 1994, tens of thousands of Hutus escaped to camps in Zaire and Tanzania. However, the camps were not precisely neutral territory. They were dominated by elements of the genocidal regime, such as ex-officials, soldiers, and the notorious Interahamwe militia. These forces asserted control over the refugees through violence, intimidation, propaganda, and well-organized acts of terror (Storey, 1997, p.387). NGOs and UN organizations, in an effort to provide humanitarian relief, were working in these camps and, in most instances, helping either directly or indirectly the same militia that had been accountable for carrying out genocide. The priority of relief in such external refugee camps, rather than within Rwanda, had significant political implications. By directing resources into formerly government-controlled areas, NGOs enabled them to maintain their power and gave them a safe haven where they could reorganize and even attack Rwanda.

A significant portion of humanitarian aid went to Rwandan refugees overseas rather than those who remained inside Rwanda. In mid-1995, twenty times as much aid had

been spent on refugee camps outside Rwanda as on projects that helped repatriation and reconstruction within Rwanda (Storey, 1997, p.388). This unequal allocation of funds quite clearly transmitted a political message—whether NGOs themselves intended this or not. The former government forces successfully convinced many refugees that their return to Rwanda would mean extermination, using intimidation and coercion tactics to maintain control over the camp populations. The significant presence of relief agencies in the camps unintentionally legitimized their authority. In addition, besides geographical considerations, the nature of the relief delivered by non-governmental organizations also played a significant part in maintaining the authority of the former regime. More often than not, food aid, medicines, and material assistance were directed to militias and former government soldiers. In some cases, NGOs distributed aid directly to ex-FAR (Forces Armées Rwandaises) soldiers, including child soldiers. In other cases, militias diverted food and supplies meant for civilians and controlled distribution within the camps. Also, non-governmental organizations hired individuals with connections with the previous administration to run aid operations, thereby tightening their grip (Storey, 1997, p.388-390).

Additionally, some NGOs inaccurately portrayed the crisis as a two-way battle, interpreting one group's genocide and the other's efforts at preventing it. The ceasefire would have enabled the FAR to consolidate its position in Rwanda and resume the massacres. Officials portrayed it, too, as an ethical conflict between Hutus and Tutsis, ignoring political and historical realities. In Rwanda, NGO activities were under intense media surveillance, and their ability to attract funding often depended on high media visibility. It resulted in a competitive environment where humanitarian organizations felt required to act quickly in high-visibility areas, sometimes at the expense of more strategic interventions (Belloni, 2007, p.468). Moreover, increasing reliance on government funding made NGOs more prone to external pressures, such as European donors, as evidenced by the European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), pushing them to focus on IDP camps in southwest Rwanda.

Consequently, the response unintentionally legitimized the perpetrators of genocide in a way that indirectly facilitated their rearming and likely worsened the situation in

refugee camps in Zaire rather than improving it. The Rwandan tragedy forced the entire humanitarian community to undergo painful introspection that raised questions about the legitimacy and effectiveness of humanitarian efforts (Terry, 2002). It resulted in a shift in the UN's conflict management method. The 1996 Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance in Rwanda criticized the lack of policy coherence. Additionally, it emphasized that humanitarian aid could not be replacement for political intervention. It recommended the creation of a core advisory team for each crisis to ensure coordination between political action, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid (Eriksson, 1996).

This evaluation reinforced the coherence agenda, influencing the development of integrated peace missions. The UN OCHA defined integrated missions as a system-wide framework for crisis response, aligning various UN actors under a unified political-strategic structure (Reindorp and Wiles, 2001, p. 12). While this approach aimed at synergizing development assistance, humanitarian relief, and conflict management, tensions arose over prioritization, leading critics to argue that integration primarily served political objectives over humanitarian principles (Donini et al., 2006, p. 23). States echoed with similar concerns, leaving aid organizations worried about their funding sources. In response, humanitarianism began to institutionalize, becoming increasingly rationalized by standardizing basic codes of conduct for intervention, developing accountability mechanisms, and assessing the consequences of actions (Barnett, 2005, p.725).

In short, all these three cases demonstrate that humanitarianism exercises selective interventionism, prioritizing crises according to geo-strategic concerns and security over simply considering purely high-magnitude suffering. This selective intervention creates an unbalanced distribution of aid, with specific regions enjoying an undue proportion of funding and intervention and other regions, with similar—and in many cases, even more significant—humanitarian crises, receiving relatively little funding and aid.

A particularly insightful example of such a lack of proportionality in the distribution of humanitarian intervention can be seen in a comparison between Sudan, Angola, and

Kosovo in 1999. As discussed above, humanitarian actors actively participated in the intervention in Kosovo in 1999; the province was its focal point for humanitarian intervention, with almost five times the funding for Sudan and Angola during the same period (Olsen et al, 2003, p.117). There is no justification for such disproportion in terms of humanitarian imperative, considering both Sudan and Angola have long-standing, high-magnitude humanitarian crises with catastrophic consequences.

6.2. Post-2001 Problematizing Afghanistan and Securitization Discourse of Aid

Donor governments have historically used humanitarian aid to pursue economic, political, and military objectives. However, the post-9/11 period witnessed a deepening of this trend, particularly in conflict zones. Identifying the crisis as a way of framing a problem and simultaneously bringing solutions to it is a significant first step for the government. Defining the problem, thus implying a solution, is a kind of deliberation of political power (Leader and Atmar, 2004, p.174). Consequently, a closer examination of the dominant description of the situation in Afghanistan since 2011 would further understanding of the total aid programs as well as of the particular policies and procedures related to the militarization and securitization of the aid.

The 2001 US-led military intervention in Afghanistan, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), was focused on counterterrorism due to the Global War on Terror. It led to alliances with warlords, which delegitimized disarmament, exacerbated regional rivalries, and undermined state legitimacy. The limited counterterrorist vision undercut reconciliation and broader security despite possibilities for nation-building (Marsden, 2009). The Bonn Agreement and post-Taliban transition prioritized short-term stability, assuming Afghanistan was post-conflict. This resulted in inexperienced NGOs entering and a lack of respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), specifically medical neutrality (Donini, 2006). The UN authorized the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), initially confined to Kabul under UNSC Resolution 1386. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were formed to surmount its narrow mandate to combine security and assistance. In 2003, NATO expanded ISAF's mandate and utilized PRTs to widen missions. In 2011, ISAF deployed 132,000

soldiers from 48 countries, intending to transfer security responsibilities to Afghan forces by 2014 (Rubin and Hamidzada, 2007, p. 12).

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was launched in 2002 under UNSC Resolution 1401 to assist the post-conflict process and implement the Bonn Agreement (UNSC, 2014). The mission integrated several UN components into one operation, founded on a political affairs structure and a humanitarian and development structure. Nevertheless, the mission was considerably driven by the War on Terror, which caused the political goals to overshadow humanitarian issues. UNAMA replaced the UN OCHA, which had operated in Afghanistan since 1988 (Johnson and Leslie, 2009; Donini, 2006). This led to a reduction in monitoring, coordination, and humanitarian data collection capacity. Critics argued that UNAMA was being utilized as an "aid-induced pacification" tool rather than independent humanitarian action, and tensions were created due to its coordination with ISAF and OEF forces (Costy, 2004, p. 146). The shutting of UN OCHA contributed to the perception that Afghanistan was no longer in a humanitarian crisis, thereby rendering extensive suffering invisible (Marsden, 2009). This denial in 2002 resulted in the absence of a Consolidated Appeal Process for humanitarian resource allocation. The United Nations and donor denial of major humanitarian needs persisted until 2009–2010, thwarting the re-establishment of UN OCHA operations and limiting the international community from appropriately responding to the escalating humanitarian crisis (Donini, 2006, p. 32).

Most aid organizations had to modify their programming because of scarce humanitarian funds, moving toward multi-mandated programming and, in the process, consolidating prevailing crisis definitions. By the end of 2002, most of them had moved away from purely humanitarian action, albeit donors continued to utilize bureaucratic "humanitarian" funding instruments (Costy, 2004, p. 160). This contradicted the humanitarian rhetoric that accompanied Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Even though the U.S.-led intervention was not an avowed humanitarian enterprise, American policymakers used humanitarian rhetoric with growing intensity to justify the war (Ayub and Kouvo, 2008, p. 647). However, in terms of humanitarian needs, the situation worsened. Between 2002 and 2012, Afghanistan's humanitarian

situation deteriorated. Malnutrition reached emergency thresholds by 2008. Maternal mortality was among the highest globally, and under-five mortality stood at 149 per 1,000 births in 2011, the worst in Asia. Food insecurity had impacted 68% by 2008, and 4.1 million needed assistance by 2011 due to conflict and drought. By 2010, attendance in primary schools was just 55%, and girls' attendance was even less, particularly in the war-ravaged south. IDPs rose from 232,000 in 2008 to 445,856 in 2012 amid increasing forced repatriations from Iran and Pakistan. Afghanistan has eight or more large-scale natural disasters annually, including earthquakes, floods, and droughts (Benelli, Donini, and Niland, 2012, p.6-17).

The securitization and militarization of aid in Afghanistan since 2001 were possible due to evolutions and conceptual challenges that had guided humanitarian objectives since the 1990s. It means the absorption of global and national security interests into framing, structuring, and implementing development aid (Howell and Lind, 2009). In the post-Cold War transformation, humanitarian interventions had come to encompass functions beyond relief, taking on conflict resolution and peace-building functions through initiatives such as the coherence agenda, comprehensive approaches, and integrated missions. These shifts also enabled humanitarianism to legitimize military interventions. The evolution of "military humanitarianism" was pushed to the forefront in Kosovo (1999) and Afghanistan (post 2001) (Ankersen, 2008, p. 2). Military humanitarianism extended beyond rhetoric and involved active military involvement in aid and broader civil-military cooperation, for example, in composite missions like UNAMA.

Despite the enormous document needs and sufferings to be alleviated, aid distribution has been heavily influenced by security concerns, with funds disproportionately allocated to conflict-prone regions as part of broader counterinsurgency efforts. Over 50% of U.S. aid was directed toward the four most insecure southern provinces, reflecting a strategy that prioritized military stabilization over nationwide development. This security-first policy meant that Afghanistan had received far less assistance on a per capita basis compared to other post-conflict countries, like Bosnia and Kosovo. On the other hand, as the United States spent $7 million daily on humanitarian assistance, the country's military expenditure amounted to $100 million

daily (Howell and Lind, 2009, p.721). This disparity highlights how security issues overshadow developmental needs, shaping aid distributions that respond to geopolitical interests rather wider socio-economic needs.

Rather than overturning the power dynamics of aid, these new developments reinforced them by creating a bureaucratic network linking Western donor governments, the UN, and NGOs in a system of global liberal governance. Humanitarian agencies themselves acknowledged past "failures" but responded by professionalizing and streamlining their operations. The result was greater coherence without challenging who was in charge: Western states and international agencies retained control over funding and agenda-setting, and humanitarian aid became another tool in liberal international policy such as supporting stability or "human security."

6.3. The 2010s: Neoliberal Subject Creation and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Following the end of the Cold War, especially since the early 1990s, there is a consensus in the literature that the nature of humanitarianism has been changing, a shift referred to as "new humanitarianism" (Duffield, 2001; Rieff, 2002; Mills, 2005; Hoffman & Weiss, 2006). As discussed in the previous sections, these changes increasingly rationalized military interventions, thereby legitimizing actions that take human lives. In addition, humanitarian intervention played a key role in reconstruction after such interventions, enforcing liberal governance models at the expense of alternative arrangements (Piotukh, 2015, p.8). Throughout this process, the provision of aid and protection was implemented in a discriminatory manner, thereby reinforcing distinctions between individuals perceived as more or less deserve assistance. Consequently, the main argument regarding the changing nature of humanitarianism posits that its language and practice have become highly politicized. However, it is an overarching argument that, as discussed through various periods of humanitarianism, has always been political. Its practices have consistently been deeply embedded in power relations within different modes of governmentality. What has changed today is its discourse, whereby the language it employs is also notably politicized. The tools, methods, and language associated with humanitarianism have evolved in accordance

with neoliberalism. As Sözer (2020) argued, a dialectical relationship has emerged between neoliberalism and contemporary humanitarianism. In this context, humanitarianism serves to validate neoliberalism while restructuring the neoliberal premises related to its agents, roles, activities, assessments, and modes of thinking and discourse.

Neoliberalism promotes the production of specific subjectivities by encouraging individuals to become entrepreneurs themselves, effectively transforming their existence into a continuous and multifaceted enterprise. This kind of self-entrepreneurship not only structures one's relationship with oneself but also with others. Foucault (2008, p. 148) argues that "the multiplication of the 'enterprise' from within the social body is what is at stake in neoliberal policy." In such an approach, human capital as a notion takes center stage on the basis of the principle that the wage one earns is returns derived from capital—capital directly linked with the skill and ability of the individual. Human capital is composed of two simple elements: innate qualities, which comprise physical and genetic predispositions that are inherent and acquired qualities, molded by educational activity, health practices, and mobility (Foucault, 2008). By viewing individuals as bearers of human capital, neoliberalism proposes a novel form of governance—one that submits individuals to control through their own economic interests. Workers become "governmentalisable" since they are regarded as rational economic actors.

In the promotion of entrepreneurialism, neoliberalism applies this rationale to collective bodies, encouraging groups and communities to assume roles historically reserved by state institutions. This transformation ultimately places the social welfare and economic security on the individual as an emergent type of "responsibilization" (Burchell, 1993, p. 29). As Hamann (2009, p. 43) argues, viewing one's social position as the result of personal choice and investment has profound implications, inasmuch as it conceals "exploitation, domination, and every other type of social inequality" by making them invisible as social phenomena. Moreover, the lives of those incapable of being enterprising themselves, who do not have a place in neoliberal order, are increasingly seen as disposable and redundant (Giroux, 2008). This exclusion is not simply a passive process but frequently takes on a punitive form (Hamann, 2009). One

can see then how neoliberal logic, the logic of the market, informs the biopolitical imperative to divide populations, identifying sub-groups that can have a negative effect on the life of the population as a whole.

The neoliberalization of humanitarianism has not just influenced humanitarian practice; it has also influenced the notion of crisis in the direction of the notion of a humanitarian emergency. It recontextualizes emergencies as situations in which populations that were previously viewed as ungovernable are translated into governable subjects in line with the requirements of sustainability of the neoliberal system. These crises are not just sites of suffering but are politically significant because they mark populations that have failed to adapt to the conditions of survival. Such failures are viewed as threats interrupt global security and governance as discussed in the above-mentioned cases, as they are seen to cause economic disruption and political instability. As a result, humanitarian interventions function as biopolitical tools, disciplining populations and integrating them into a framework of liberal rule under the guise of aid (Reid, 2010, p.395-396).

In this new era, humanitarianism introduced a new set of actors, reshuffling their mandates and roles. States began to insert themselves as humanitarian actors, but just as one of several "stakeholders." This allowed them greater flexibility of action while protecting them from patent responsibility. INGOs and NGOs, in turn, became increasingly specialized—gender or livelihoods, for example—with specific roles like relief, advocacy, or awareness-raising. This specialization formalized their limited ambitions and lowered their total impact.

Humanitarian organizations have increasingly embraced a neoliberal orientation regarding the standardization of their operations, structures, and overall humanitarian environment. To implement this, they formalized the field through volunteer protocols and codes, impact assessment methodologies, and compliance with uniform processes for increased operational effectiveness. Bureaucratization introduced specialization and structured means-ends calculations, while professionalization became a key focus. In addition, humanitarian engagement was structured around short-term, time-limited, and highly specialized "projects." Such programs complied with rigid technical

guidelines for planning, implementation, and evaluation and thus prevented the development of long-term, systematic, and integrated policies.

The assessment of humanitarian action changed to new criteria grounded on "efficiency" and "accountability" (Lawson, 2021, p. 53–60). Efficiency meant the strict management of project funds instead of quantifiable outcomes of interventions. In contrast, accountability meant being answerable for explaining expenditures to benefactors, not proving effectiveness with the broader public. A project's worth was quantified more by its overall financial outlay or by the number of individuals it touched rather than by concrete enhancement of the welfare of the affected. Hence, humanitarian projects could appear successful as long as they were funded—irrespective of the origin or functional adequacy of such funding—and reached a certain number of beneficiaries, irrespective of whether the latter's welfare was positively affected.

The end objective of humanitarian interventions was altered to empower independent, entrepreneurial beneficiaries who can "choose" among new forms of assistance, including cash transfers. In neoliberal governance, humanitarian aid aims not only to protect its subjects by providing shelter, food, hygiene kits, and medicine but also to create self-governing and entrepreneurial subjects who will take responsibility for their futures (Ilcan and Rygiel, 2015, p.336). Not only has this move lowered operational costs for humanitarian actors, but it also allowed failures to be reinterpreted as a consequence of poor beneficiary choice rather than a fault in the humanitarian response itself.

6.3.1. Constructing Refugees as Crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis and Turkey's response to it serve as a critical case study that exemplifies key themes raised throughout this analysis. Three interrelated questions, central to this study, become particularly relevant here. Syrian refugees and the humanitarian response provided to them in and around Turkey greatly exemplify the argument that three questions have been posed since the beginning of the study: How does humanitarianism define a crisis as a crisis, or, more accurately, a humanitarian crisis? How does it select its aid beneficiaries? And how does it respond to it?

Reviewing the response to the Syrian refugee "crisis" and humanitarian interventions through these lenses allows for a deeper interrogation of the neoliberal foundations of contemporary humanitarianism, revealing how aid provision is shaped not just by need but by strategic interests, governance mechanisms, and the reproduction of hierarchies within the refugee population.

Rather than focusing on a comprehensive concern for the well-being of refugees, the aid provided by humanitarian actors to Syrian refugees in Turkey is organized through individualized, fragmented, and conditional mechanisms. This strategy reinforces hierarchical distinctions among refugees and aligns humanitarianism with broader economic and political governance goals, potentially at the expense of refugees' long-term agency and autonomy. This section further develops the earlier examinations of humanitarianism's dynamic nature and inherent power relationships. I enhance the discourse by showing that humanitarian assistance, instead of merely alleviating suffering, has become a method of governance through categorization, access control, and strategically distributed aid.

During the first three quarters of 2015, over 487,000 individuals reached the Mediterranean shores of Europe. Many of these individuals were Syrians fleeing the civil conflict that began in 2011.Until then, 429,000 Syrians have applied for asylum in Europe (UNHCR, 2015). However, the so-called 2015 "crisis" was not entirely unprecedented; Western Europe has previously faced significant movements of refugees from various regions of the world at different times (Baldwin-Edwards 2005, 2008; Fortune, October 15, 2015). It was estimated that an additional one million refugees would arrive, prompting the European Commission to describe it as the "largest global humanitarian crisis" in recent history (ECHO, 2015, 1). The Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, emphasized the magnitude of the situation when she stated that this crisis would be the defining challenge of the decade (UK Guardian, August 15, 2015). Although the actual crisis, namely the displacement of Syrians, started before, in 2011, the mass movement of Syrians to the EU territory resulted in it being framed as the "refugee crisis" (Crawley, H., and Skleparis, 2018). By framing the situations as "crisis", the problem is reflected as an "emergency" that needs to be

solved immediately, and it is defined in a way that centers Europe's governance concerns, including border control.

Following this, in March 2016, an agreement was reached regarding the joint action plan that became effective between the European Union and Turkey on November 29, 2015. As part of the deal, Turkey has committed to accepting returned irregular migrants while simultaneously allowing Syrian refugees in Turkey to be relocated to Europe for resettlement—effectively a population exchange. This scheme, which is referred to as the "one-to-one initiative," requires that for each Syrian who has entered Greece irregularly and is returned to Turkey, one Syrian refugee in Turkey will be resettled by EU Member States (European Council, 2016).

Additionally, the agreement refers to progress like "Turkey's opening of its labor market to Syrians under temporary protection, the introduction of new visa restrictions for Syrians and other foreigners, improved security measures adopted by the Turkish police and coast guard, and increased exchange of information" (European Council, 2016). Furthermore, the European Union began the disbursement of three billion Euros under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) to be allocated to specific projects, and there has been significant advancement in visa liberalization and accession talks, notably the opening of Chapter 17" (European Council, 2016). Already in 2015, the EU had started to disburse the first phase of the payment, where the "facility is not a fund in itself, but a coordination mechanism for the mobilization of resources, both from the EU budget and the Member States" (Mills, 2021, p.21). This funding approach extends beyond being a simple humanitarian aid measure; it is intricately integrated into a structure characterized by rigorous financial oversight and reporting protocols emphasizing adherence to donor stipulations. The requirement of maintaining fiscal accountability to donors is prioritized over the obligation to ensure participatory accountability to refugees, thereby prompting significant inquiries regarding the primary beneficiaries of the aid system. To exemplify this, The Thirteenth Monitoring Report of the EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye Program (June 2024) provides an overview of how accountability arrangements are operating in FRIT. The report outlines how the program is divided into seven sectoral priority areas and one cross-cutting priority area, each with a Theory of Change-based

intervention logic, result frameworks, and agreed-upon predefined indicators with Implementing Partners (European Commission, 2024, p.3-4). The data is collected from Internet Protocol addresses, validated, and stored in a program. Data Management System, thus creating a highly structured and metric-driven accountability system. In addition, the monitoring system integrates surveys, focus group discussions, and field reports in coordination with key stakeholders such as the European Union Delegation program managers, the ECHO field officers, the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), and relevant government ministries (European Commission, 2024, p.6), also exemplifying the stakeholder logic of humanitarianism in this period.

The agreement reveals that it built on the produced discourse about the "crisis" strictly categorizes territories and peoples and creates a geographical control and also a triage of deserving and undeserving refugees entering into the EU by affirming a form of biopolitical control and care. The "one-to-one" initiative, in enabling a trade-off of human beings, objectifies migrants and thus essentializes their identities according to random access conditions. The policy marks a line of difference between those who are worthy to enter Europe and those who are unwanted and liable to be sent back to Turkey (Casaglia and Pacciardi, 2022, p.1661). Instead of problematizing people's suffering across the EU-Turkey border and questioning this exclusionary system, the terminology employed in the agreement precisely delineates territories. It discriminates against individuals, thereby influencing the construction of Eurocentric meanings regarding the definition of a refugee, the appropriate responses to their suffering, and the expected reaction of Europe to the mobility of populations.

6.3.2. Selecting Aid Beneficiaries in Turkey Based on Their Vulnerability and Transforming Them Self-Reliant Subjects

Since the start of the crisis, Turkey, which has a 911 km border with Syria, has pursued an open-border policy and welcomed all Syrians in need, independent of their political, ethnic, cultural, or religious affiliation. Regarding their legal status, Syrians in Turkey are registered on a temporary protection basis, in line with Regulation No. 29153 on Temporary Protection (2014 Regulation). This was in line with Article 91 of Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP). Nonetheless, because Turkey

still maintains the geographical limitation of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Syrians and those who are not coming from Europe are not granted official refugee status. The 2014 Regulation establishes a group-based temporary protection regime for all Syrians and stateless Syrians in need of international protection, including those who are undocumented. It guarantees non-refoulement and assistance to all Syrians in Turkey. Unlike conventional refugee status determination procedures, the Turkish temporary protection system is primarily based on nationality rather than subjective claims.

During the first months of Syrian migration to Turkey, the Turkish government declined assistance from international NGOs and UN agencies. However, as the number of arrivals surged, particularly after exceeding 100,000 refugees in 2012, the government allowed dozens of UN organizations and INGOs to begin operating in the country (Chemin and Aras, 2017, p.324). Although Turkey is the main legal and political actor responsible for enforcing conditions for the presence of refugees, humanitarian agencies, especially international non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and donors, have successfully negotiated a defined role in service delivery. Nevertheless, this work takes place within a framework of strict state control, where a fragmented and conditional environment for providing humanitarian services exists.

Refugee response inside Turkey involved further stratification and classification, producing a hierarchical model for the eligibility of receiving aid. The mechanisms for aid distribution in Turkey operated via a triage model, so among those not allowed to enter Europe, namely those staying in Turkey, those identified as most vulnerable were given priority. However, the selection was based on the neoliberal concept of vulnerability. In this sense, vulnerability can be defined as a state of weakness to problems emergent from stresses associated with social and environmental changes and, significantly for resilience discourse, from the incapacity of systems, communities, or individuals to adapt to those changes on positive terms (Adger, 2006, p. 268; Béné, Wood, Newsham, and Davies, 2012, p. 15). Various actors, including international organizations, INGOs, and local NGOs, operate within a framework set by plans such as the Turkey Refugee Response Resilience Plan (3RP), coordinated by UNHCR and UNDP. While this plan provides an overall framework, actual aid

delivery mechanisms are determined by various partner organizations that are specialized in particular sectors.

In 2015, the 3RP was introduced to coordinate humanitarian efforts to address the challenges faced by Syrian refugees and their host countries. The program itself outlines its objectives under two main branches: to meet the immediate protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and to fulfill the long-term resilience and development requirements of affected communities. The essential objective of 3RP is to pursue durable solutions, meaning that refugees no longer need specific assistance linked to their displacement. Additionally, through the building conditions and economic opportunities, 3RP seeks to promote self-reliance and stability for displaced persons and host communities. 3RP identifies its role as a complementary approach to the Turkish state's response, both connecting persons of concern to public institutions and providing additional support when services are overstretched (3RP, p.27). Under 3RP Turkey's response, several appealing partners include INGOs, UN agencies, and Turkish NGOs. Humanitarian organizations engaged in the Syrian refugee response in Turkey provide refugees with various services across different sectors. These sectors encompass protection, basic needs, health, education, and economic empowerment. There is an apparent paradox in 3RP's two main objectives: addressing the immediate needs of refugees hinges on their vulnerability, whereas achieving long-term resilience depends on fostering individuals who are independent of aid. Analyzing the responses of humanitarian actors across different sectors would greatly illuminate this paradoxical logic. Among the aforementioned sectors, health and education are entirely under the authority of the Turkish state, specifically the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, respectively. Thus, the following pages will discuss protection, basic needs, and economic empowerment sectors to reflect their neoliberal logic.

In contrast with legal protection provided by the Turkish government, humanitarian protection is distinguished by its discretion, fragmentation, and reliance on vulnerability assessments performed by INGOs and United Nations agencies. INGOs and United Nations agencies use triage approaches to rank refugees in terms of vulnerability and, in that manner, make them qualified for a range of forms of

protection. The protection sector in Turkey draws its strategic objective under the four main lines. The first one is related to promoting access to legal protection under the LFIP in Turkey for individuals in need of protection. In addition to integrating individuals needing legal protection, the protection sector ambitiously supports the most vulnerable community members in identifying and accessing protection solutions, particularly the most "at-risk" groups. The protection sector has many sub-sectors, including but not limited to legal assistance and advocacy, protection from gender-based violence, child protection, assistance and protection of persons with disabilities, community development, and outreach.

This approach reflects a selective model in which protection is not guaranteed but one in which distribution is allocated to a range of institutions and funding availability. For instance, The Intersectoral Vulnerability Study (IVS-2), conducted between December 2021 and July 2022 by the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) in collaboration with the IFRC and funded by the ECHO, emphasized that vulnerability assessments play a crucial role in determining access to humanitarian aid. The report further categorizes vulnerability into four distinct levels— "not vulnerable", "slightly vulnerable", "moderately vulnerable", and "highly vulnerable"—allowing for a more granular understanding of refugee needs. According to IVS-2 (2023, p.17), 10% of refugee households are classified as highly vulnerable, facing the most severe hardships, while 50% fall into the moderately vulnerable category. The report highlights key factors contributing to high vulnerability, including a lack of working-age adults, language barriers, low levels of education, and restricted access to employment. This structured ranking system underscores the selectivity of humanitarian aid. The same logic applies to INGOs operating in Turkey and provide aid for refugees. For instance, on the website of Care International and the page of Turkey response it is obviously articulated that "CARE prioritizes assistance for people with specific needs: women, youth, and people with disabilities" (CARE, 2024).

Related to the basic needs sector, moving forward on the other pillar of the deal, the EU provided a significant amount of money to support Syrian refugees. This funding caused the initiation of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program, a large-scale cash transfer program that provided monthly financial assistance to over 1.5

million of the defined “most vulnerable refugees” in Turkey and 2.3 billion Euro EU funds in three phases. The program is implemented through four different actors. It was funded by the ECHO. The main implementing partners were first WFP and IFRC, which took over from WFP in April 2020. The Turkish partners of the project are the Turkish Government’s Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) and the TRC (European commission, 2024).

The program claims to be “a program that provides cash to the most vulnerable refugee families living in Turkey,” and it “aims to allow refugees and asylum seekers living outside of camps across Turkey to cover their basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing in dignity” (ESSN, 2018). An assessment conducted by the WFP in 2019 underscores this targeted approach by comparing the vulnerability levels of eligible and ineligible refugee populations. As noted in the report:

> “To complete the comparative assessment of vulnerability between eligible and ineligible, the analysis turns to the other six dimensions of vulnerability. The findings reveal that the population targeted by ESSN is more vulnerable across most, though not all, dimensions. In particular, the most noticeable differences are found in the use of coping strategies. ESSN refugees have a consumption coping index that is 32 percent higher than ineligible refugees” (WFP, 2019).

The assistance is made available through debit cards, allowing beneficiaries to decide how to spend the funds on essential expenses such as shelter, utility bills, groceries, and medicines. Financed predominantly by the European Union under the FRIT funds, EU officials emphasize the scale of the project as follows: “the ESSN is the biggest humanitarian project that the European Union has ever funded and draws on the World Food Program’s expertise in handling large-scale cash programs in the Middle East and elsewhere” (ESSN, 2018). The total worth of ESSN, valued at approximately 1.5 billion Euros, is complemented by other financing beyond the FRIT envelope and by the complementary program (C-ESSN) to provide for those with special needs. The overall objective of the ESSN program is to allow vulnerable refugees to attain their basic needs while simultaneously decreasing their dependence on negative coping strategies, including child labor.

Through the provision of economic support, the program aims to assist families in managing and lowering their indebtedness and becoming "financially independent". The ESSN program is available to refugee families registered in Turkey and who are under international or temporary protection. Those in greatest need are prioritized, including "large families, the elderly, single females, single-headed households, and people with disabilities". Meanwhile, those with formal jobs, work permits, or registered assets in Turkey are excluded from receiving support. Every qualified family is given a KIZILAY card, a debit card that can be used both for ATM withdrawals and for payments at retail outlets. The card is replenished once a month, and the equivalent is approximately €17 per family member in Turkish lira. As a cash-based transfer scheme, it offers a degree of autonomy in spending decisions. However, as it is shown on its criteria, it is highly conditional, temporary, and subject to regular reassessments based on changing vulnerability situations (IFRC, ESSN Program).

To understand the humanitarian response to the Syrians in Turkey, we need to examine the trends of humanitarianism related to refugee response in the twenty-first century. Beginning in the early 2010s, humanitarianism's approach has changed from reacting to the general vulnerability of all refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants to targeting only specific "vulnerable" subgroups. This transformation was observed in the 2013 EU Asylum Procedures Directive, which aggregated asylum seekers into groups according to age, gender, sex, and disability. Likewise, the UNHCR launched the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) in 2013 to identify certain refugees as vulnerable. VAF aims for "standardized criteria to talk about vulnerabilities in equivalent terms" and includes vulnerability categories under the titles "child at risk", "unaccompanied or separated child", "women at risk", "older person at risk", "disability", "serious medical condition", "family unity", "specific legal and physical protection needs", "torture" and "sex and gender-based violence" (UNHCR, 2013).

Today, humanitarian organizations cooperating with the United Nations and the European Union use this framework, which represents a change from a general concern for all displaced people to a targeted concern for certain subgroups with specific vulnerabilities. In Turkey, humanitarian aid providers' vulnerability criteria are subject to change depending on the new conditions. ESSN, for example, as

discussed, incorporates socio-economic and demographic factors. In 2017, it expanded its eligibility criteria to include categories such as “a single female,” “a single parent without other adults in the household,” “an elderly person living alone,” “a disabled person in the family,” “households with more than three children,” and “families where there are at least two dependents for every one adult” (ESSN, 2018). These revisions broadened the scope of targeted groups. Notably, the introduction of a new dependency ratio criterion (requiring a household to have at least 1.5 dependents per adult) increased the proportion of individuals eligible for assistance from 40% to 56% (Simeon, Ricouart, and Walden 2017, p.14).

Through the Foucauldian lens, this conditional aid mechanism in the nature of humanitarian protection reflects the neoliberal governmentality mentality in which populations, in this case, Syrian refugees in Turkey, manage through a triage system by categorization, assessment, and regulation. In this mentality, aid providers first assess the protection risks and vulnerability of their targeted population to decide who deserves the aid, at least initially. Even prior to these assessments, the aid providers create a set of criteria to define what it means to be in a vulnerable or at-risk group, creating their own knowledge and truths about being vulnerable. The deployment of this triage system reflects the logic of biopolitics, wherein protection services is not a right but a privilege to those considered effectively “at risk”. Butler (2016) conceptualizes vulnerability as something that “can be projected and denied (psychological categories) but also exploited and manipulated (social and economic categories) in the process of producing and naturalizing forms of social inequality” (Butler, 2016, p. 15). The moral definition of vulnerability has a biopolitical character, highlighting how power can organize life and exercise control over lives, including establishing specific evaluation criteria (Butler, 2016, p. 12). This implies the presumption that some people have the right to judge the lives of others and the authority to define the criteria by which their worthiness—or lack thereof—is assessed. This act of compassion also means that some individuals will be denied the opportunity to safely access a better life. It reinforces Butler’s argument about the “unequal distribution of vulnerability” (Butler, 2016, p. 15).

The conditionality of humanitarian protection has significant implications for the refugee agency as a subject. As refugees navigate this fragmented protection system, paradoxically, they are supposed to present themselves as "vulnerable" subjects, even required to prove they are qualified for the aid. Through the assessments identifying vulnerable refugees, humanitarian aid providers not only decide how to allocate resources but also render refugees as governable subjects.

Under the scope of protection programs and the ESSN, aid providers evaluate needs based on legal status, residential location, age, sex, disability, and more, if necessary. This overlaps exactly with the techniques of biopolitics in the neoliberal era. Here, the knowledge of the population of the refugees residing in Turkey is derived from observations and statistics, and humanitarian organizations utilize this knowledge with a view to regulating the population. In these large-scale and anonymous assessments, biopolitics access the population through calculation techniques. In this way, humanitarian actors can make visible "protection risks" that exist at the population level. To illustrate this point more vividly, exploring some insightful excerpts from the UNHCR Turkey Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment will be helpful:

> In this Round, 28% of respondents indicated observations of an increase in sexual violence and abuse against women and girls, compared to 16% in Round 5. In terms of geographical differences, findings show that reports are highest in the Aegean (43%). Lastly, both female-headed households and women respondents indicated slightly higher levels compared to their counterparts (UNHCR, 2023, *Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment*, p. 25).
>
> Across all Rounds of the assessment, increased stress and anxiety were the highest reported protection and community concern. To specify, in Round 5, 63% noted an increase in stress levels within their communities. In this Round, findings indicate that across groups, 69% observed increased stress within their communities *(UNHCR, 2023, Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment*, p. 26).
>
> Most respondents (62%) report feeling safe at distribution points; however, 27% indicate that they do not feel safe. This percentage is slightly higher among female-headed households, with 31% reporting safety concerns compared to 26% of male-headed households. Partner observations during the earthquake response align with these findings, particularly noting that some distribution points were located too far from where earthquake survivors reside. Additionally, distributions conducted at night lacked sufficient lighting, which may have hindered some individuals and groups from accessing the aid. Based

> on these findings, it is strongly recommended that distributions be situated closer to residential areas with adequate lighting to ensure safety and security. Alternatively, where feasible—especially for specific groups such as female-headed households—a door-to-door distribution modality should be considered *(UNHCR, 2023, Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment*, p. 24).

The UNHCR Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment (2023) depicts how humanitarianism within neoliberal reasoning and governmentality functions to regulate populations under risk management rather than structural transformation. The increase in sexual violence and abuse and heightened insecurity among female-headed households illustrate how vulnerability is identified yet addressed primarily through technical change (e.g., improved lighting, different delivery modalities) rather than systemic responses to gender inequality or socio-economic vulnerability. Similarly, stress and anxiety, being the most significant issues of the community (rising from 63% to 69%), point to biopolitical governance, wherein psychological well-being is framed as an issue of resilience and not as a sign of systemic structural failure.

By doing this, neoliberal humanitarianism blames and individualizes risk onto recipients of aid for their fate, providing logistical fixes (e.g., door-to-door deliveries) rather than contesting the power relations that produce these vulnerabilities. In this line, humanitarian government operates through mechanisms of surveillance, population management, and subtle regulation, influencing behaviors and expectations but not addressing the root causes of insecurity.

Another vital sector of humanitarian aid focuses on economic empowerment. The sector defines its primary objective as "improving livelihoods and employment opportunities, including better and decent work conditions and job creation for persons under temporary protection and international protection and host communities" (3RP Turkey, 2023-2025). The sector has two sub-sectors: livelihoods and food security and agriculture. In the 3RP Turkey Country Chapter, both define their aims "…to assist the transition of vulnerable groups towards self-reliance through a comprehensive approach that supports the supply and demand sides of the labor market while contributing to establishing an enabling environment for formal work" (3RP Turkey 2023-2025, p.67).

How to assist refugees' livelihoods and promote their economic independence has become the ultimate priority on the global refugee agenda. The UNHCR has defined self-reliance as "the social and economic ability of an individual, household, or community to fulfill basic needs sustainably". It is a concept rooted in the belief that refugees have the skills, resources, and autonomy necessary to be independent without ongoing humanitarian assistance. Self-reliance has become an integral part of UNHCR's refugee protection and assistance policy and rhetoric over the years (Jacobsen, 2005). For instance, the UNHCR *Handbook for Self-Reliance* (2005) states that self-reliance is "an integral and underpinning part of any durable solution" and needs to be fostered at all stages of refugee assistance (UNHCR, 2005).

While refugee self-reliance has gained attention in recent forced migration policy discussions, the concept itself is not new. Refugee self-sufficiency programs have been in place for nearly a century, yet few have attained large-scale success. Several structural barriers contributing to this limited success include a lack of legal pathways to work, fragile host economies, restrictions on rights, inadequate administrative planning, and insufficient access to arable land for sustainable farming.
Throughout history, the concept of self-reliance has evolved in various contexts. In the interwar years, terms like rehabilitation and self-sufficiency were widely used to promote the resettlement of refugees. In contrast, during the 1960s and 1970s, ideas such as self-help and rural animation shaped approaches regarding African refugees (Barry,1981). Despite the differences in focus—from agricultural independence to vocational training, the core principle remains the same: empowering refugees as independent individuals with reduced reliance on external support from humanitarian and development organizations.

Within the scope of 3RP Turkey, the livelihood sector aims to enhance employability by fostering workforce development in language and vocational skills through flexible, blended, and online training. It supports key industries such as food logistics, tourism, and textiles, enabling youth, refugees, and host communities to integrate into the digital economy. Financial and technical support will aid both new and existing entrepreneurs in digitalizing their operations, complying with labor laws, and engaging in electronic trading. From a demand perspective, the sector facilitates job

diversification post-COVID-19 by collaborating with national entities, SMEs, and international companies. It fosters collaboration between the private and Syrian sectors to create jobs and promote social cohesion. The sector also enhances access to international markets and ensures compliance with the Global Compact for Refugees. Assistance will focus on cooperatives, especially those led by women and vulnerable groups, to improve quality, legal compliance, and marketing strategies (3RP Turkey 2023-2025).

The food security sub-sector defines its activities under six components. First, it promotes food security skills for increased incomes and access to food. Second, it promotes employability and entrepreneurship through training and support, enabling jobs for vulnerable groups in the agri-food economy. Third, investing in human and institution development, including collaboration with entities beyond 3RP, is critical for long-term food and agricultural sustainability. The other critical component is naturally sustainably managing natural resources, integrating environment protection in sector activity. Environmental awareness and tools for a sustainable agricultural environment are encouraged. Sector activity also addresses knowledge management through assessments and gender-sensitive monitoring for planning and resource utilization efficiency. Lastly, it promotes social cohesion through private sector engagement in agriculture, awareness of labor rights, and refugee- host community relations, explicitly supporting women's empowerment and employability. The sector targets provinces with high refugee concentrations and agri-food opportunities. Implementation will include gender mainstreaming and providing access to food security, healthy diets, and fair jobs for everyone in agriculture.

Contrary to protection response where Syrian refugees in Turkey portrayed as vulnerable to be eligible for the aid, the discourse surrounding refugee self-reliance reproduces a shit in how refugees are conceptualized. Self-reliance frames refugees as responsible economic and market actors and autonomous, resilient, and entrepreneurial individuals authorized for their future rather than passive aid recipients (Welsh, 2014, p.16). In the prevailing neoliberal conceptualization of self-responsibility, the autonomous and self-governing individual is presented as the par excellence ideal. Such an approach has the tendency to obtain strict reactions to the

seeming dependence of others; individuals who depend on government welfare aid or other aid programs are commonly regarded as not taking responsibility for themselves, a fact appropriately proven by the political discourse pairing neoliberalism (Ilcan and Rygiel, 2015). However, in practice, this is not always the case, and it is questionable whether the concept of self-reliance within the neoliberal framework is a viable approach for refugees' economic empowerment (Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018, p.1462).

This approach tends to disregard the structural impediments confronting refugees within various national contexts. To illustrate, Turkey's refugee labor market policies exhibit the neoliberal logic of self-reliance through enhancing employability and entrepreneurial initiatives. Turkey's work permit regime, established by the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners under Temporary Protection (2016), is presumably designed to enable the integration of Syrian refugees into the formal economy. In practice, however, the implementation of this process is severely challenged by a range of administrative and legal limitations. Syrians under temporary protection are required to apply for a work permit to access the formal labor market. An application for a work permit for a Syrian in Turkey can be eligible after 6 months from the granting of temporary protection status, by the employer through an online system (E-Devlet) or by the beneficiary him or herself in the case of self-employment. In this approach, employers are required to apply for work permits instead of individuals, implying that a refugee's access to the labor market is conditional on the goodwill of employers (İçduygu and Diker, 2017).

The regulation exempts Syrians under temporary protection from obtaining a work permit for seasonal agricultural and livestock work, but they must apply for an exemption through the provincial governorate. The Ministry of Family and Social Services can impose restrictions on the number and locations where refugees may work in these sectors. Additionally, refugees cannot apply for professions reserved exclusively for Turkish nationals.

Work permit applications are assessed based on the refugee's registered province, and permits may be restricted in provinces deemed a risk to public order, security, or health.

The Ministry may also impose sectoral and regional quotas. Employers can hire temporary protection beneficiaries only if they do not exceed 10% of the workforce unless they can prove a lack of available Turkish workers. For businesses with fewer than 10 employees, only one refugee may be hired. As a result of these barriers, a vast majority of refugees remain in the informal economy, where they experience exploitative working conditions, low wages, and limited legal protection. As of 2023, according to the data shared by Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services a total of 108,520 work permits were granted to Syrians, and around 94% of work permits for Syrians were issued to men. Consequently, the vast majority of Syrians continue to work in the informal economy to be able to sustain their lives in Turkey. In addition to exposing refugees to exploitation within the labor market, informal employment prevents them from being protected by social security benefits, health services, and legal protection against exploitation in the workplace. This is a sign of more general criticisms of self-reliance policies that presume employment equals economic independence but do not consider the structural inequalities in labor markets.

Additionally, the issue is wider than just facilitating access to livelihood opportunities. For those who manage to achieve a work permit and enter the labor market, employment alone is not seen as sufficient. It is equally important to consider themselves with the adaptation of those individuals to the workplace, a major issue that arises. As such, ILO Türkiye implemented a "Social Cohesion Through Workplace Adaptation Program." ILO itself defines the program as the following:

> The Workplace Adaptation Program helps refugees adapt to work, while orienting them culturally in the host community. It generates self-reliance by giving them vocational, legal and socio-cultural skills that allow for better integration and facilitate their access to the labor market (ILO, 2018).

This definition reveals how the self-reliance concept for refugees is shaped in Turkey, particularly in relation to the neoliberal market logic. Self-reliance here is understood as the integration into and sustained participation into the formal labor market. However, mere access is not sufficient in this approach, refugees should also adapt to the conditions of market logic to sustain their position within it. This framing suggests that being self-reliant is also one's ability to align with the demands of an existing

economic structure, namely the neoliberal market. As stated in the program website, "this initiative also helps to enhance refugees' self-reliance by creating a better match between their skills and the local labor demand" (ILO, 2018). The emphasis is on the being match with the requirements of the market rather than questioning the market's inclusivity, fairness, or structural barriers. Instead of improving conditions and removing barriers originated from the "demand side" to accommodate refugees in the formal employment, humanitarian efforts often function as tools to ensure refugees' compliance with the existing system. Consequently, the concept of self-reliance work as a tool of regulatory adaptation to a market-driven order.

In fact, refugees are governed through expectations of responsible behavior, aligning with a neoliberal governmentality that shifts responsibility to the individual while leaving broader power structures intact. Likewise, cash-based interventions are lauded as empowering beneficiaries with choice. They do represent a tactical rupture from traditional food distribution. However, these programs remain constrained by strict conditions and monitoring like in the case of ESSN scheme in Turkey.

As a result, through the economic empowerment sector, refugees are normalized by removing their "vulnerabilities" through workforce, vocational training, and social cohesion initiatives. The assumption behind this logic is that employability and productivity are essential tools or even more than just tools but rather fundamental targets to achieve self-reliance instead of questioning the reasons behind the "vulnerability" in the first place. Furthermore, the concept of self-reliance itself is constructed as a goal that must be achieved through integration into the capitalist economy. In this regard, humanitarian response plays the role of regulatory force that produces "desirable" and "governable" subjects who enter labor markets and digital markets and contribute to the local and global economies in a predefined way.

Both subsector responses on economic empowerment suppose that knowledge production about food security and employment is a universal "truth." However, these frameworks are deeply embedded in power relations. The methods of monitoring, data collection, and gender-sensitive planning reflect the mentality of neoliberal governmentality, which seeks to govern individuals through scientific methods. The responses posit the knowledge generated by the aid providers, while the experiences

and voices of refugees are absent. The appearance of flexibility masks continued oversight – agencies decide eligibility, track expenditures, and can suspend aid if benchmarks of "vulnerability" change. Thus, even cutting-edge modalities like, self-reliance and cash transfers serve to modernize humanitarian governance, not overturn it. They introduce new event-terms and policies, but the fundamental relation (aid providers administering the life conditions of aid recipients) persists. As in the first pages of this thesis noted, "the progression from… 'shepherding' of at-risk populations to… neoliberal self-regulation/self-reliance illustrates an evolution of compassionate practices fundamentally connected to governance and control." In other words, the idiom changes, but the exercise of power – guiding and delimiting the lives of others under a banner of compassion – remains continuous.

6.4. Conclusion

The post-Cold War era, as discussed in this chapter, has witnessed the transformation of humanitarian aid into an increasingly potent power tool. While each crisis and each period within this era have had distinct and unique requirements, the overarching trend has been the deep entanglement of aid with preserving the international neoliberal order. In this order, any given crisis—whether in Somalia, Rwanda, or elsewhere—has the potential to disrupt global stability. Consequently, crises are increasingly framed as security threats, not merely humanitarian emergencies. State failures, in particular, have been construed as risks to this order, justifying interventions that are not only framed as acts of relief but also as mechanisms of governance over the populations produced by these crises. These populations, in turn, become the new humanitarian subjects, those who are now to be governed, not just assisted. As demonstrated in the cases examined, the rationale behind this governance is fundamentally tied to safeguarding the neoliberal system.

Within refugee governance, there is a particular form of selectivity that is historically rooted. While humanitarianism has always involved some form of selectivity in deciding its subjects, in neoliberal-era this selectivity is legitimized on the basis of apparently scientific and quantifiable criteria. This rationale is frequently combined with scarce economic resources and the imperative to provide aid in a more effective

manner. But this change points to a more fundamental shift: humanitarian responsibility is being transferred away from humanitarian actors and the system itself and placed onto the individuals receiving aid. To that end, the notion of vulnerability enters the scene in a starring role. As defined, vulnerability is not merely material lack; it is situated within the framework of the individual's capacity to cope with changing conditions. Those who fail to integrate are deemed the most vulnerable and, paradoxically, also the most threatening, thus justifying their prioritization for material aid.

At the same time, to pursue the efficiency of the system, the main expectation placed on these humanitarian subjects is self-reliance. The methodologies developed to facilitate this goal reinforce the idea that self-reliance equates to successful integration into the system. In the case of Turkey, for example, this means integration into the market economy—not just participation, but full adaptation to its conditions, skill requirements, and structural expectations. This process effectively positions self-reliance as the inverse of vulnerability: those who remain vulnerable are those who fail to integrate, while those who become self-reliant are those who have been successfully absorbed into the system, converting them no longer a threat.

What distinguishes this period from previous historical periods of humanitarian aid, however, is the relative disappearance of compassion discourse from the visible justifications of aid. Humanitarianism has always relied on compassion as a moral and political tool—whether by invoking religious duty, appealing to a universal human instinct, or mobilizing the public's and elites' emotions through media portrayals. Nevertheless, in this era, humanitarianism no longer requires explicit references to compassion to justify its interventions. The structuring of humanitarian aid into rigid institutional mechanisms, the increased reliance on scientific metrics and measurable criteria, and the framing of aid as an issue of systemic efficiency have all contributed to the erosion of compassion as an overt discourse.

This does not mean, however, that compassion has entirely vanished; instead, it has been embedded within the mechanisms themselves, operating as a hidden yet foundational logic. The allocation of six billion euros to support refugees in Turkey,

for instance, implicitly reinforces the idea that these populations are in need, that their vulnerability requires external intervention, and that they must be transformed into self-reliant actors to sustain aid flows. In this way, this process affirms the donors' authority over the resources but also reaffirms their control over the knowledge that dictates how these resources should be used. In this sense, while compassion is no longer explicitly evoked, the very structures that define and justify aid still rely on the fundamental logic of identifying a needy population and responding to their needs. Western actors, in particular, continue to assert their role as compassionate responders—not through emotional appeals but through a systematized and institutionalized form of aid that ensures their control over the funding and governance of those in need.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has conducted a thorough analysis of the historical development of humanitarianism, and it contends that humanitarianism operates not merely as a compassionate response to human suffering but rather as a mode of governmentality that is thoroughly ingrained in broader political, economic, and ideological systems. Despite dominant narratives' inclination to describe humanitarianism as a neutral and de-politicized engagement, it has been evident throughout this research that humanitarianism has always been motivated by and in return, driven by power dynamics. Applying Michel Foucault's power/knowledge framework, this study has shown that humanitarianism does not simply respond to crises; instead, it plays an active role in their creation—crafting systems of knowledge that determine the nature of suffering, choose those who are acknowledged as humanitarian subjects and regulate the means of intervention. In this context, power is relational and mutually constitutive, constantly reproducing itself through interactions. Humanitarianism builds its own discourses and narratives, which subsequently frame how crises are constructed. These crises, having been constructed, then call forth humanitarian responses, and yet the very substance and articulation of these crises inform and reshape humanitarianism itself. This is indicative of the productive quality of power—not simply repressive or dictatorial, it is generative and organizes the field upon which humanitarianism takes place.

Throughout its history, humanitarianism has emphasized compassion as a discourse, positioning it as a primary rationale for its activities. However, compassion has never been a neutral or entirely altruistic sentiment; instead, it has been a strategic instrument

expressed through different mechanisms according to time and place. The means by which compassion is put into practice—by whom, to whom, and on what

terms—has permanently shifted, mirroring more significant transformations in political, economic, and ideological frameworks.

At its core, compassion inherently contains an element of inequality. It starts with an assumption of an asymmetry between the giver and the receiver, reinforcing a power dynamic in which one party assumes the authority to recognize, define, and respond to another's suffering. This asymmetry has persisted across historical moments, even as the actors, rhetoric, and intervention methodologies have transformed. In early humanitarian formations, particularly missionary endeavors, compassion was deeply embedded in religious salvation narratives. The rescuer was not merely an external benefactor but a moral guide, bringing spiritual salvation alongside material aid. This dynamic positioned the recipients of compassion as passive and lacking knowledge of what was best for them. Over time, this framework was secularized, but the fundamental relationship remained intact. Humanitarianism continued to frame specific populations as objects of concern, necessitating external intervention.

During decolonization, there was a new formula in humanitarian discourse. The previously colonized populations were reconstituted not just as passive victims of suffering but rather more specifically as underdeveloped and unproductive units that needed to be integrated into the world system. The rationale for delivering aid changed from outright paternalism to a more technical one grounded in expertise, with development experts, economists, and international organizations as the compassionate actors. They were no longer merely engaged in the act of saving individuals; instead, they aimed to integrate them into a specific economic and political structure, i.e., the liberal capitalist structure. Compassion was still there but was coupled with productivity and economic reasons.

With the rise of neoliberalism, the mechanisms of compassion further evolved. The focus of humanitarian response shifted from direct intervention to self-sufficiency narratives, where the burden of adaptation and survival was placed on the individual. Failure to adapt to the system—on the basis of economic adversity, displacement, or social exclusion—then became increasingly characterized as an individual failure rather than an articulation of systemic fault. Humanitarian interventions no longer

sought simply to save or alleviate sufferings of populations but to equip them with the tools to navigate and survive within the dominant economic structure. This form of assistance appeared to be embedded within market-driven logic, reinforcing the idea that humanitarianism was no longer about mere survival but about ensuring economic participation.

Despite these transformations, one element stayed constant. The hierarchical relationship embedded within the act of compassion has endured. While the mechanisms, rhetoric, and strategies of humanitarianism have shifted from paternalistic salvation to technical expertise to neoliberal responsibilization, the fundamental power asymmetry has continued. Compassionate actors, whether religious missionaries, development experts, or neoliberal institutions, have consistently defined both the crisis and its resolution. In doing so, they have shaped the identities and trajectories of aid recipients and continuously redefined themselves, refined their methods, expanded their authority, and adapted to new political and economic imperatives. Rather than being a purely ethical or humanitarian impulse, compassion in humanitarianism functions as a technology of power, structuring relations between those who give and those who receive, and reinforcing a system in which some are positioned as agents of intervention while others remain dependent on their recognition and response.

In line with this constant nature of it, across various periods in history, humanitarianism has been at the center of establishing the criteria for determining crises, defining populations worthy of assistance, and delineating how interventions are implemented. This dissertation was organized around four key research questions:

i) Throughout its history which discourses are used to produce humanitarianism?
ii) How has it defined a crisis as a humanitarian crisis?
iii) How has humanitarianism selected its subjects?
iv) What kind of mechanisms or practices does humanitarian aid use in a response to a crisis in different historical periods?

7.1. Construction of Crisis Narratives

The definition of humanitarian crises has not remained constant over time; instead, it has been constructed in light of changing socio-political contexts and power relations. Events that are viewed as humanitarian crises now were not always viewed in this way. Slavery, as a centuries-long economic and social institution, was only redefined as a humanitarian crisis during a specific historical period when abolitionist movements and evolving moral norms labeled it a basic injustice in need of intervention. Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and famines were traditionally viewed as inevitable acts of nature. At some time, their effect started being referred to as humanitarian crises, which called for intervention and assistance at an international level. Therefore, crisis formulation is not just an acknowledgment of misery but rather an intentional process that identifies some incidents as exceptional, pressing, and in need of humanitarian intervention. This crisis formulation process accelerated a lot when humanitarian interventions began broadening their activities from local communities to more expansive regions.

As humanitarianism evolved, it reached out to encompass distant populations whose emergency came to be a matter of global concern. Such an expansion was neither linear nor impartial; rather, it followed the dynamics of political, economic, and ideological interests. Different historical periods have seen different issues expressed as humanitarian crises: the Lisbon earthquake in the eighteenth century, displacement caused by World War II, and mass hunger and war in postcolonial Africa. Each of these crises was not simply “discovered” but was constructed within a particular discourse that defined the terms on which someone was worthy of aid, who had the authority to provide it, and under what conditions it could be given. A constituent element of crisis construction is its concurrent establishment of the limits of humanitarianism.

Humanitarian intervention was originally identified with certain exceptional instances—such as wars, natural disasters, or acute manifestations of suffering. Later, however, this characterization was expanded. For example, during the postcolonial era, entire regions—such as Africa following decolonization—were constructed as ongoing humanitarian crises. The saturation of crisis narratives provided a justification for long-duration humanitarian interventions, which, in the process, configured geopolitical relations and governance structures. Instead of being framed as natural

events, crises were communicated in power discourses that authored their relevance, the urgency for response, and the nature of resolution. Second, humanitarian crises are temporal constructions. They exist in a "temporal present," as called by Ticktin (2014, p.281) that characterizes the way humanitarian discourse focuses on the immediate urgency of a crisis, often at the expense of its more profound historical causes. The temporary nature of crises means that a crisis framed at one point in time may not have been perceived as a problem at another.

The identification of a crisis triggers a simultaneous humanitarian response; the response is not, however, permanent—it functions in a time parameter. The moment a narrative of resolution to the crisis has been established, humanitarian organizations tend to pull out irrespective of whether the root socio-economic and political situations that generated the crisis have been adequately resolved. This demonstrates that the duration of a crisis is not always associated with the actual end of suffering but is associated with shifting priorities within the humanitarian community and the political environment that propels it. In this instance, the delineation of a crisis is a practice of power. The capacity to characterize a situation as a humanitarian crisis—and, just as significantly, to announce that it is at an end—testifies to the fundamental dynamics involved in governmentality. This practice highlights the degree to which humanitarianism is more than merely the alleviation of suffering but rather how humanitarianism plays a role in the governance, sorting, and management of the criteria under which suffering is identified, addressed, and ultimately forgotten.

7.2. Selecting Its Subjects and Framing Humanitarian Response

The nature of humanitarian response is not static; it evolves in alignment with shifting power structures and governance techniques. As we have established through multiple historical cases, humanitarianism operates within power relations, and its response is a mechanism through which it governs humanity. This governmentality of humanitarianism is crucial in understanding how not only the crises themselves but also the very definition of "humanity" and its subjects are constructed, expanded, and transformed over time. The methods and tools used in this governance process have varied throughout history, adapting to broader socio-political shifts from pastoral

power to biopolitics and later to neoliberal biopolitical responses as crises grew more complex and interconnected.

Early on, humanitarians were working under the cover of a pastoral type of authority steeped in Christian theology. The form of leadership was that of shepherding their flock since humanitarians were striving towards the relief of the suffering of individuals in the name of moral obligation and empathy. These activities were considered to be acts of benevolence, depicting a formalized relation in which the giver of aid exercised control over those being assisted. The suffering subject was thus governed through an ethical and religious discourse that justified intervention in their lives, presenting humanitarianism as a moral obligation rather than a political act.

However, as the modern state consolidated its power and population well-being became central to governance, humanitarianism also aligned itself with this model. It extended its concern beyond mere survival in the realm of sovereign power and into biopolitics, where humanitarian response began managing not just the lives but also the well-being of its governed subjects. Unlike the state, which governs its citizens within fixed political boundaries, humanitarianism operates across borders. This meant that humanitarian actors had to justify their authority over populations that were not officially under their rule. To be able to do so, humanitarianism depended on the formation of a certain humanitarian subject whose requirement for attention necessitated the need for worldwide recognition and action.

As crises became more complicated, biopolitical interventions became more evident. This can be especially seen in the evolution from initial humanitarian medical intervention, like that of the International Committee of the Red Cross's concern for the physical state of soldiers following injury, to more general intervention in postcolonial conflict zones. Over time, humanitarianism expanded its domain from preserving biological life to managing psychosocial well-being, incorporating mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder into its biopolitical framework. This expansion was not just a response to evolving humanitarian needs but also a mechanism to deepen its governance over suffering populations.

To strengthen this governance, humanitarianism relied heavily on the media to construct and legitimize its responses. The humanitarian subject needed to be seen to be governed. The suffering of populations was visually represented through carefully curated images and narratives, whether it was the image of a starving African child, a refugee camp in Thailand, or celebrities walking in front of military barricades to draw attention to a crisis. This mediated visibility simplified suffering, reducing complex socio-political contexts into digestible, emotionally compelling visuals that justified humanitarian intervention. However, this simplification of suffering also reinforced the humanitarian system's power by defining who was visible, whose suffering mattered, and what kind of response was deemed appropriate.

In the neoliberal era, humanitarianism adapted its response to align with broader economic and political transformations. The prevailing neoliberal framework, with its focus on market solutions, individual responsibility, and self-reliance, has, therefore, remade the nature of humanitarian interventions. The humanitarian subject evolved from a simple passive receiver of assistance to a subject that must be fixed, rehabilitated, normalized, and reintegrated within the economic order. This marked a shift from traditional humanitarian assistance towards self-reliance-based interventions, where aid was framed not as an ongoing obligation but as a temporary mechanism to ensure that individuals could sustain themselves within the neoliberal system.

This transformation was deeply connected to securitization discourse, which framed specific populations as potential threats to global stability. Refugees, displaced persons, and marginalized communities were increasingly seen as disruptions to the system problems that needed to be managed and contained. Humanitarian response, therefore, became entangled with policies aimed at preventing migration, integrating refugees into labor markets, and ensuring that crisis-affected populations did not become long-term burdens on the international order. This was reflected in shifts in humanitarian aid priorities: while material assistance continued, greater emphasis was placed on education, vocational training, and financial independence, creating self-sufficient, governable subjects who would no longer disrupt the system.

Today, the humanitarian community is currently overwhelmed by a profound sense of ambivalence. On one level, calls to humanity and compassion still have a significant part to play in the moral discourse of aid. On another, there is a firm withdrawal of state-funded humanitarian commitments, frequently justified in terms of political conditions, donor fatigue, or strategic re-evaluation. The recent suspension of funds by key donors such as USAID, coupled with the increasing reluctance regarding humanitarian access to Gaza, marks an alarming reversal of the fundamental principle of universal and impartial aid. In such a paradigm, compassion seems to be in the guise of a tactically used narrative—turned on when politically convenient and severed when politically inappropriate. This, then, raises the question: are we witnessing an actual rupture in humanitarian aid or merely another example of readjustment within a historically flexible system?

From a Foucauldian viewpoint, what might initially appear as a humanitarian crisis could, in fact, signify a more profound alteration in the governing rationale underlying humanitarianism. Far from indicating the breakdown of the system, recent trends are interpretable as a qualitative transformation—where compassion is no longer the ordering principle and is complemented or even replaced by rationalities that are interest-based, securitized, or punitive. The present era, however, might be undergoing a shift due to forces like nationalism, digital surveillance, and austerity. Nevertheless, this change is still understandable within the humanitarian government regime, which has a long history of internalizing critique, acknowledging but also adapting to disruptions, and persisting through constant reinvention.

7.3. Limitations of the Study and Prospects for Future Research

This study has attempted to examine humanitarian aid as an independent concept, separated from its related fields, although this proves difficult. Humanitarianism is easily equated with humanitarian development, and at times, it works in direct combination with humanitarian military intervention, as examined in previous sections. Although human rights fall completely beyond the scope of this dissertation, literature tends to links the concepts of humanitarianism and human rights as overlapping or synonymous. I argue that these two concepts are essentially different.

Humanitarianism does not attempt long-term structural transformation to rectify systemic injustice. Its action is necessarily present-oriented, with a preference for immediate alleviation rather than long-term efforts to uproot injustice or structural inequalities. This time limit differentiates it from human rights approaches, which foreground long-term legal and political institutions for change. While the complex relationship between these two fields lies outside the bounds of this project, future research can further explore their points of divergence and convergence, particularly in historical and institutional contexts.

Another limitation of this project stems from its expansive historical scope. This thesis follows humanitarianism through approximately 300 years or thereabouts, choosing key developments throughout the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and into the early twenty-first century. As a result of the scale of this expanse of time, selective methodology in determining which crises and eras were to be included was unavoidable. This methodology replicates precisely the selectivity with which humanitarianism itself selects crises, determining what criteria it will fulfill. However, the cases selected in this research were picked because they could best represent the prevailing humanitarian aid dynamics of their times. Although these selections are warranted, it is recognized that every historical era discussed in this dissertation could be the subject of an independent, detailed study. Moreover, an in-depth study of particular humanitarian actors—organizations and individuals—may produce valuable information on the processes by which humanitarian rule has evolved over various periods of time. Follow-up questions may expand on this study, which attempts to address a significant gap in the literature by offering an extensive historical account of humanitarianism. Although discrete eras of humanitarianism have been examined in isolation, this dissertation seeks to construct a comprehensive analysis that critically assesses the whole historical development of humanitarianism.

A composite appreciation of humanitarian history enables a critical re-appraisal of prevailing genealogies, providing alternative insights into the reciprocal influence between humanitarianism and power relations. This thesis does not aim to debate whether humanitarianism is “good” or “bad” in nature—so heavily emphasized in the introduction—but instead seeks to explain the dynamics by which it works. Due to the constraints of time and space, certain historical periods have been explored in less

detail. However, this dissertation's overarching framework provides a foundation for further research that could deepen the inquiry into specific periods, actors, and ideological shifts within humanitarianism's long and complex history.

7.4. Concluding Remarks and Thoughts

This topic of research had significance for me. Having worked in the humanitarian sector for over three years and directly engaged in field operations, I was constantly exposed to the discourse surrounding humanitarian aid. Even from the earliest days of my involvement, I witnessed aspects of these narratives that unsettled me—statements, assumptions, and operational frameworks that felt misaligned with the realities on the ground. These discomforts led me to question the very foundations of humanitarianism. However, my intent in undertaking this critical reexamination was never to dismiss the humanitarian sector outright but rather to create space for reflection, critique, and, ultimately, improvement. By critically analyzing humanitarianism, I hoped to contribute to a discussion on how it might become more impact-driven, focused on outcomes, and better aligned with the actual well-being of those it seeks to assist.

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to work within humanitarian aid organizations, INGOs, and international humanitarian entities, as well as to observe the internal dynamics of the United Nations. These experiences provided me with insights into how humanitarian aid is structured, negotiated, and implemented. At times, the dissonance between the humanitarian rhetoric and its actual impact became increasingly evident. Thus, this study, in many ways, is a product of those observations. It is not merely a theoretical exercise but a reflection of lived experiences and professional encounters that shaped my understanding of how humanitarianism operates in practice.

Beyond my professional exposure, my perspective on humanitarianism was also shaped by my own personal experience as a recipient or at least as someone positioned within a crisis where humanitarian aid became a central mechanism of response. The February 6 earthquake in Turkey placed me, like many others, in situation where

humanitarian assistance became not just an abstract concept but a tangible force in daily survival and recovery. While I was not directly embedded within the humanitarian response ecosystem during the post-earthquake period, I observed its mechanisms from the outside but very closely. One of the most striking realizations for me was witnessing how the humanitarian system itself was momentarily paralyzed in the face of a large-scale, factually undeniable crisis. This earthquake was not a constructed crisis; it was an event of immediate and overwhelming devastation. And yet, humanitarian entities designed to function in crisis settings struggled to respond with the speed and efficiency that their own institutional frameworks demand. This moment reinforced my reflections on the tensions between humanitarianism's discourse and its real-world impact and further fueled my motivation to undertake this study.

At the same time, my critical analysis of humanitarianism does not negate the undeniable, tangible impact that humanitarian aid has had on countless lives. While this dissertation has engaged with a structural, systemic critique, examining hierarchies, inequalities, and the prioritization of certain crises over others, it does not dismiss the fact that humanitarian aid has alleviated suffering, provided critical assistance, and, in many cases, saved lives. Acknowledging the systemic issues of humanitarianism does not mean ignoring the immediate and material improvements it has brought to individuals and communities in distress.

We are living in a world where humanitarian need is not hypothetical, but immediate and ongoing. Every day, humanitarian response feeds the hungry, shelters the displaced, and brings life-saving relief to victims of conflict and disaster. This thesis is not trying to refute or minimize those realities. Nor does it argue for a wholesale rejection of humanitarianism. Instead, it maintains that recognizing both lives saved and suffering eased can be consonant with a critical analysis of the systems and logic that drive aid. The objective here is not to launch a cynical and dismissive critique but to provide an intellectual framework that compels us to reconsider—more historically, ethically, and politically—aid mechanisms and alternative functions.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

Degree	Institution
PhD in Political Science and Public Administration	Middle East Technical University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, 2025
MA in International Relations	TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Department of International Relations, 2018
BA in International Relations	TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Department of International Relations, 2016

Research Roles

Role and Dates	Institution and Notes
Consultant and Research Specialist (March 2024 – Present)	Force and Brothers
Research Officer (December 2020 – March 2023)	Danish Refugee Council, Turkey Country Office, Protection Unit Publications: - Protection Needs Assessment 2023 - Child Labor in Turkey - Legal Protection of Refugees in Turkey
Senior Research Assistant (September 2018 – March 2019) Project: Working Towards Self-Reliance – Syrian Refugees' Economic Participation in Turkey	The Research Center on Asylum and Migration (IGAM) (Founded by the Durable Solutions Platform)
Research and Teaching Assistant (September 2016 – August 2018)	TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Political Science and International Relations
Research Intern	UNHCR, Education Unit

B. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Giriş

Bu tez, insani yardımın tarihsel gelişimini eleştirel bir perspektiften inceleyerek modern anlamdaki kökenlerinden günümüze kadar uzanan süreçte insani yardımın yalnızca bir yardım eylemi olmadığını, aynı zamanda iktidar ilişkileriyle şekillenen bir yönetim biçimi olduğunu savunur. Michel Foucault'nun "yönetimsellik" (governmentality) kavramı çerçevesinde, insani yardım "insanlığın yönetimselliği" olarak tanımlanır. Tez, insani yardımın krizleri nasıl "insani" olarak sınıflandırdığını, kime yardım edileceğini nasıl belirlediğini ve bu krizlere yönelik müdahale mekanizmalarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini, 18. yüzyıldan 21. yüzyıla kadar uzanan beş ana tarihsel dönem üzerinden analiz eder.

Tezin temel argümanı, insani yardımın tarih boyunca merhamet (compassion) söylemiyle meşrulaştırıldığı, ancak bu söylemin altında iktidar ilişkilerinin sürekli bir şekilde varlığını sürdürdüğüdür. Merhamet, insani yardımın temel motivasyonu olarak sunulsa da bu merhametin uygulanış biçimi ve iktidar mekanizmalarıyla ilişkisi her dönemde farklı biçimler almıştır. Pastoral iktidar, biyopolitika ve neoliberalizm gibi farklı iktidar türleri, insani yardımın işleyişinde belirleyici roller oynamış, ancak iktidarın varlığı değişmez bir unsur olarak kalmıştır. Bu doktora tezi, insani yardım tarihine eleştirel bir yaklaşım getirerek, insani yardımın yalnızca insanî duygularla yürütülen tarafsız bir çaba olmayıp, iktidar ilişkileriyle iç içe geçmiş bir alan olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Tezin temel argümanı, merhamet kavramının insani yardım söyleminin kurucu unsuru olduğu, ancak merhametin somutlaştığı yöntem ve mekanizmaların tarihsel, siyasal ve ekonomik koşullara bağlı olarak önemli dönüşümler geçirdiğidir. Bu bağlamda merhamet, bu çalışma kapsamında, bireysel bir erdem olmaktan ziyade insani yardım pratiklerinde iktidar ilişkilerini meşrulaştıran söylemsel bir araç olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Literatürde yaygın olan görüş, insani yardımın tarihsel olarak tarafsız ve apolitik bir karaktere sahip olduğu, ancak özellikle Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde politik unsurlar kazandığı yönündedir (örneğin bkz. Duffield, 2001; Rieff, 2003; Hoffman ve Weiss, 2006; Barnett, 2011). Bu tez ise, insani yardım pratiklerinde güç ilişkilerinin her tarihsel dönemde – sadece Soğuk Savaş sonrasında değil – belirleyici olduğunu vurgulayarak bu görüşe karşı çıkmaktadır. Farklı dönemlerde ortaya çıkan insani yardım uygulamaları ilk bakışta politik bağlam olarak birbirinden farklı olaylar gibi görünse de aslında her biri merhamet söylemi altında iktidar ilişkilerinin sürekli tekrar üretilmesinin bir parçasıdır. Dolayısıyla bu tez, insani yardım uygulamalarındaki değişimleri ele almakla birlikte, bunların altında yatan iktidar yapılarındaki süreklilikleri de açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu metin, insani yardım tarihindeki yeni fikirler, söylemler, örgütler ya da "paradigma değişimleri" gibi kırılmaların iktidar ilişkilerinde bir kesinti anlamına gelmediğini savunmaktadır. Michel Foucault'nun soykütük (genealogy) ve olaylaştırma (eventalization) kavramları, bu yaklaşımın temelini oluşturur. Foucault'ya göre olaylaştırma, iki temel işlev görür: İlk olarak, doğal kabul edilen olguları sorgular. Yani, tarih içinde evrensel ya da zorunlu sanılan bazı gerçekliklerin aslında belirli koşullarda ortaya çıktığını ve başka alternatiflerin de mümkün olabileceğini gösterir. Örneğin, deliliğin mutlaka "akıl hastalığı" olarak anlaşılması ya da suçluların mutlaka hapsedilmesi zorunlu değildir (Keskin, 2002).

İkinci olarak ise, olaylaştırma; doğal ve kaçınılmaz görünen şeylerin aslında belli tarihsel bağlamlarda oluşmuş tesadüfi karşılaşmalar, stratejiler ve engellerin ürünü olduğunu ortaya koyar. Böylece evrensel doğruların çözümlenmesini ve bunların ardındaki koşulların eleştirel biçimde açığa çıkarılmasını sağlar. Bu çerçevede, tarihteki kırılmalar genellikle "olaylaştırılır" ve kurumsallaştırılır. Bu sayede, aslında radikal olabilecek yenilikler bile mevcut iktidar yapıları içine entegre edilerek süreklilik kazandırılır. Örneğin Henry Dunant'ın 1859 Solferino Savaşı sonrasında başlattığı insani yardım girişimi, zamanla Cenevre Sözleşmeleri çerçevesinde kalıcı bir kurumsal yapıya ve hukuki düzene dönüşmüştür. Bu süreç, merhameti profesyonelleştirmiş; ancak kimin, hangi koşullarda ve nasıl yardım alabileceğine dair sınırlar da koymuştur.

Bu tür kurumsallaşmalar, insaniyetçiliğe kendi içinde bir direnç ve istikrar kazandırır. Yeni yardım biçimleri mevcut iktidar yapılarıyla bütünleşir; böylece söylemler veya yaklaşımlar değişse bile insani yardım faaliyeti süreklilik gösteren bir yapı olarak varlığını sürdürür. Belirli krizler veya yenilikler "olay" olarak çerçevelenir ve bu olaylaştırma süreci, insani yardımın görünürde kesintisiz bir tarih anlatısı üretmesine olanak tanır. Bu tarih anlatısı, genellikle ardı ardına gelen acil durumlar ya da dönüşümler etrafında şekillenir. Her biri değişim yaratan şoklar olarak sunulsa da insani yardım bu olayları kendi sürekli anlatısına entegre eder. Acil durumlar, paradigmayı baştan sona değiştiren dönüm noktaları olmaktan ziyade, gelişmeyi tetikleyen zorluklar olarak çerçevelenir. Soykütük yöntemi ise, tarihsel olguları doğrusal ve kesintisiz bir ilerleme anlatısı olarak değil, süreksizlikler, kopuşlar, rastlantılar ve iktidar mücadeleleriyle şekillenen bir süreç olarak ele almayı mümkün kılar. Foucault'nun kendisi de erken dönem arkeolojik tarih analizinden soykütüksel yönteme geçerken tarihteki süreksizlik ve çatışmaları görünür kılmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu tez de benzer bir çizgide ilerleyerek, insani yardım olgusunu düzensiz birikimler ve beklenmedik kırılmalar üzerinden çözümlemeyi amaçlamış; böylece her dönemde meydana gelen kopuşların altında yatan iktidar ilişkilerini görünür kılmaya çalışmıştır.

Bu tezin yaklaşıma göre insaniyetçilik, yalnızca acıya verilen merhamet dolu bir yanıt değil; aynı zamanda belirli "hakikat rejimlerini" inşa eden ve sürdüren karmaşık bir iktidar mekanizmasıdır. Bu bağlamda, acı yalnızca fiziksel bir gerçeklik olarak değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal olarak inşa edilen ve yönetilen bir deneyim olarak görülmektedir. İnsani anlatılar, acıyı insanlığı birleştiren bir unsur olarak temsil eder; hatta çoğu zaman aşırı acının, ortak insanlığımızı ortaya çıkardığı ve teyit ettiği öne sürülür (Ticktin, 2011; Redfield, 2012). Bu anlayışta acı, ahlaki müdahaleyi gerekli kılan ve "insanlık" kavramının içeriğini belirleyen ampirik bir zemindir. Bu yaklaşımın temelinde insaniyetçiliğin, krizlere nesnel gerçeklikler olarak sadece tepki vermediği, aynı zamanda belirli tarihsel, siyasi ve toplumsal bağlamlarda neyin "insani kriz" olarak tanımlanacağını bizzat biçimlendirdiği düşüncesi yer alır. Bu süreç üç aşamadan oluşur: krizin tanımlanması, krizin merkezinde yer alan hedef kitlenin belirlenmesi ve müdahale yöntemlerinin kararlaştırılması. Bu üç adım da iktidar-bilgi ilişkileriyle doğrudan bağlantılıdır.

İnsani yardım, insan topluluklarını etkileyen kriz ve felaketler bağlamında işlerlik kazanır. Dolayısıyla ilk adım, bir durumun "kriz" olarak tanınması ve etiketlenmesidir. Bu tanıma süreci, bazı koşulları öne çıkarırken diğerlerini arka plana iten bilgi üretimiyle yakından ilişkilidir. Herkesçe kabul edilmiş tek bir kriz tanımı olmasa da Birleşmiş Milletler Afet Riskinin Azaltılması Stratejisi, afetleri toplumun işleyişinde ani kesintilere neden olan ve insanî, maddi, ekonomik ya da çevresel kayıplara yol açarak toplumun kendi imkânlarıyla başa çıkma kapasitesini aşan olaylar olarak tanımlar (Kelman, 2011). Ancak bu olaylar yalnızca doğal süreçler olarak açıklanamaz; etkileri büyük ölçüde sosyoekonomik kırılganlıklar, coğrafi tehlikelere maruz kalma ve hazırlıksızlık gibi toplumsal etkenlerden kaynaklanır. Bu nedenle kıtlık, savaş, afet veya zorunlu göç gibi olayların kriz olarak tanımlanması yalnızca ölçülebilir acı göstergelerine değil; aynı zamanda kurumsal, siyasi ve kültürel kökenli anlatılara da dayanır. Bu tür söylemler, krizler arasında bir hiyerarşi kurarak dünyadaki dikkat ve kaynakların nasıl dağıtılacağını etkiler.

İkinci adım, yardıma layık görülen grupların yani insani yardımın hedef kitlesinin belirlenmesiyle ilgilidir. Bu süreç, bireyleri veya toplulukları kırılganlık, masumiyet ya da ihtiyaç düzeyine göre değerlendiren ahlaki ve bilgi temelli yargılarla şekillenir. Ancak bu kategorileştirmeler tarafsız değildir; çoğu zaman mevcut toplumsal hiyerarşileri ve dışlamaları yeniden üretir. Örneğin günümüzde yaşanan mülteci krizinde, yeniden yerleştirme programları çoğu zaman yaş, cinsiyet ya da meslek gibi kıstaslara göre "yardıma layıklık" düzeyi belirler. Kadınlar, çocuklar ve yaşlılar sıklıkla öncelikli yardım alıcıları olarak kabul edilirken, özellikle savaş bölgelerinden gelen tekil yetişkin erkekler şüpheyle karşılanmakta ve çoğu zaman bazı yardımlardan dışlanmaktadır. Bu tür kasıtlı ayrımlar yalnızca etik değil, aynı zamanda yardımın tarafsızlığını tehdit etmeyecek biçimde şekillenen jeopolitik hesaplara da dayanır. Böylece insani yardım, bazı acıları önceliklendirirken diğerlerini görünmez kılar; bazı grupları "yardım edilebilir" olarak tanımlarken, diğerlerini yardımın kapsamı dışına iter. Didier Fassin'in *Humanitarian Reason* adlı eserinde ifade ettiği gibi, insaniyetçilik bir tür "masumiyet ve kırılganlık ölçeği" üretir ve bu ölçek bazı acıları ayrıcalıklı kılar (Fassin, 2011, s.67). Ticktin'e göre de insaniyetçilik evrensel bir acı çeken insanlık adına hizmet etmeye çalışsa da sahada bazı acıların daha "yardıma değer" sayılmasına yol açarak hiyerarşileri pekiştirir (Ticktin, 2016).

Üçüncü aşama ise müdahale yöntemlerinin geliştirilmesi ve uygulanmasıdır. Bu müdahale teknikleri, görünürde acıyı hafifletmeyi amaçlasa da gerçekte nüfusları yönetmeye ve düzenlemeye yönelik yönetsel araçlardır. Mülteci kamplarının kurulması, yardım faaliyetlerinin izlenmesi ve sağlık-hijyen kurallarının uygulanması gibi örnekler, insani müdahalelerin sadece yardım değil aynı zamanda gözetim, denetim ve insan yaşamının biyopolitik yönetimi anlamına da geldiğini gösterir. Bu bağlamda insani yardım, geçici bir destek olmaktan çıkıp, kalıcı denetim yapılarının bir parçası haline gelir.

Bu dinamikler, insaniyetçiliğin yalnızca acıya tepki veren bir sistem olmadığını, aynı zamanda acının nasıl tanımlanacağını, kimlerin "yardım edilebilir" olduğunu ve hangi araçlarla müdahale edileceğini belirleyen söylemsel ve yönetsel bir alan olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle çalışmanın temel araştırma soruları da insaniyetçiliğin yalnızca ahlaki bir refleks değil, aynı zamanda iktidar ilişkileriyle iç içe geçmiş bir yönetim biçimi olarak nasıl işlediğini sorgulamayı hedefler.
Tezin araştırma sorularında dört ana sorunsala odaklanmaktadır:

- (1) Tarihsel süreç boyunca insani yardım olgusunu hangi söylemler üretmiştir, insani yardım hangi kavramsal çerçeveler üzerinden meşrulaştırılmıştır?
- (2) Hangi koşullar veya olaylar "insani kriz" olarak tanımlanmış; bir kriz ne şekilde insani bir kriz niteliği kazanmıştır?
- (3) İnsani yardım pratikleri, hangi bireyleri veya toplulukları yardımın öznesi (yardım alıcıları) olarak seçmiş ve bu "yardım edilen" özneler nasıl kurgulanmıştır?
- (4) Farklı tarihsel dönemlerde krizlere ne tür mekanizmalar ve pratikler aracılığıyla müdahale edilmiştir?

Tezin teorik temeli, Michel Foucault'nun "yönetimsellik" kavramına dayanır. Foucault, yönetimselliği "davranışların yönetimi" (conduct of conduct) olarak tanımlar; bu, bireylerin ve toplulukların davranışlarını şekillendiren bir iktidar biçimidir. İnsani yardım, bu bağlamda, yalnızca krizlere yanıt veren bir yardım eylemi değil, aynı zamanda bireylerin ve nüfusların nasıl yaşayacağına, hangi koşullarda yardım alacağına ve hangi krizlerin "yardım gerektiren" olarak tanımlanacağına karar

veren bir yönetim biçimidir. Tez, insani yardımın "insanlığın yönetimselliği" olarak işlediğini öne sürer. Bu, insani yardımın bilgi ve iktidar ilişkilerinin kesiştiği bir alan olduğunu gösterir. Örneğin, bir kriz "insani" olarak tanımlandığında, bu tanım belirli bir bilgi üretimi sürecinden geçer ve bu süreç, kimin yardım almaya layık olduğuna dair bir seçicilik yaratır. Merhamet, bu hiyerarşik ilişkiyi meşrulaştıran bir mekanizma olarak işler; yardım eden ile yardım alan arasındaki güç farkını gizler.

18. ve 19. Yüzyıllar: Modern İnsani Yardımın Kökenleri

Modern insani yardımın kökenleri, büyük ölçüde dini merhamet anlayışına ve özellikle Hıristiyanlığın hayırseverlik geleneğine dayanmaktadır. Hıristiyanlığın erken dönemden itibaren yardıma muhtaçlara el uzatma yükümlülüğü, sadece bireysel iyilik eylemlerini değil, aynı zamanda toplumu belli ahlaki normlar etrafında yönetmenin de bir aracı olmuştur. Foucault'nun pastoral iktidar kavramını kullanan tez, Kilise'nin ve misyonerlik hareketlerinin "merhamet" pratiğini, bireylerin davranışlarını ve toplumsal yaşamı şekillendiren bir yönetimsellik tekniği olarak işlediğini ileri sürmektedir. Pastoral iktidar çerçevesinde, dini otorite bir yandan muhtaçların fiziksel ve ruhsal bakımını üstlenirken diğer yandan onların hayatları üzerinde nüfuz kurmuştur.

Örneğin misyoner faaliyetleri ve kilise öncülüğündeki yardım girişimleri, yoksullara yardım etme ahlaki yükümlülüğünü disiplin ve itaat sağlama gündemiyle iç içe geçirmiştir. Bu dinamik, yardım sağlayan ile yardım alan arasında hiyerarşik bir ilişki tesis ederek, merhamet eylemi üzerinden bağımlılık ve kültürel üstünlük fikirlerini pekiştirmiştir. Sonuç olarak, modern insani yardımın temelleri atılırken bile merhamet söylemi, iktidar ve kontrol mekanizmalarına hizmet eden bir araç işlevi görmüştür.

On dokuzuncu yüzyıla gelindiğinde, Hıristiyan ahlakının yanı sıra sömürgecilik ve misyonerlik faaliyetleri insani yardımın coğrafi olarak genişlemesinde rol oynamıştır. Batılı güçler, sömürgelerdeki eğitim ve sağlık hizmetleri gibi yardım faaliyetlerini "uygarlaştırma misyonu" adı altında hem insani hem de siyasi bir proje olarak yürütmüşlerdir. Bu dönemde merhamet, bir yandan samimi bir yardım duygusunu yansıtsa da diğer yandan sömürge yönetiminin meşruiyet araçlarından birine dönüşebilmiştir. Yardım edenler, Hıristiyan merhameti ve uygarlık götürme iddiasıyla

hareket ederken, yardım alan topluluklar "muhtaç" ve "geri kalmış" olarak tanımlanmış; böylece merhamet söylemi, sömürgeci iktidar hiyerarşilerini örtük biçimde yeniden üretmiştir.

Aydınlanma çağı, insani yardım anlayışında önemli bir kırılma noktası oluşturmuştur. Dini inanç ve ilahi takdir yerine akılcılık ve dünyevi açıklamalar ön plana çıkarken, felaketlere ve krizlere yaklaşımlar da sekülerleşmiştir. 1755 Lizbon Depremi, bu bağlamda, felaketlerin nasıl algılandığında ve felaketlere müdahalede köklü bir paradigma değişimini simgelemektedir Lizbon'daki büyük yıkım sonrasında, dönemin düşünürleri ve yöneticileri felaketi yalnızca Tanrı'nın cezalandırması olarak görmekten uzaklaşıp bilimsel ve ampirik bir bakış açısıyla neden-sonuç ilişkilerini sorgulamaya başlamışlardır. Bu deprem, ilk kez merkezi otoritenin yani Portekiz devletinin kapsamlı bir seküler yardım girişimiyle halkın yardımına koştuğu örneklerden biri olmuştur. Böylece felaketlere müdahalede dinsel açıklamaların yerini akılcı, devlet öncülüğünde yürütülen insani yardım uygulamalarının alabileceği gösterilmiştir.

Aydınlanma düşüncesi ve evrensel insanlık ideali, insani yardım pratiğini dini temellerin ötesine taşıyarak yeni bir evreye sokmuştur. Bu dönemde yükselen insan hakları söylemi, her bireyin doğuştan sahip olduğu insan onuru fikrini pekiştirmiştir. Bunun bir sonucu olarak, uzak coğrafyalarda yaşanan acılar ve krizler de insani bir mesele olarak tanınmaya başlanmış, merhamet duygusu ulusal toplulukların sınırlarını aşarak evrensel bir sorumluluk fikrine dönüşmüştür (Norman Fiering, 1976, s.195). Nitekim 18. yüzyıl sonu ve 19. yüzyıl boyunca kölelik karşıtı hareketlerin güç kazanması, merhamet ve adalet duygularının küresel ölçekte seferber edilebileceğini göstermiştir. Yüzyıllardır süregelen kölelik kurumu, tam da bu dönemde ilk kez ciddi biçimde insani bir kriz olarak çerçevelenmiş; köleliğin ahlaken kabul edilemez bir zulüm olduğu argümanı etrafında uluslararası bir insani müdahale (köleliğin kaldırılması) gündeme gelmiştir.

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren insani yardım alanında kurumsallaşma yönünde önemli adımlar atılmıştır. 1859 Solferino Savaşı sonrasında savaş alanında gördüğü dehşet karşısında derinden sarsılan İsviçreli iş insanı Henry Dunant'ın

fikirleri bu adımlara yön vermiştir. Dunant, 1862 yılında yayımladığı *Bir Solferino Anısı* (*Un Souvenir de Solférino*) adlı eserinde savaş zamanlarında yaralı askerlere taraf gözetmeksizin yardım edecek gönüllü ilk yardım organizasyonlarının kurulması çağrısında bulunmuş ve bu çağrı, 1863'te Cenevre'de Uluslararası Kızılhaç Komitesi'nin kurulmasına zemin hazırlayarak modern insani yardımın kurumsal temellerinden birini atmıştır.

Uluslararası Kızılhaç Komitesi'nin kurulması, insani yardımın ilk kez uluslararası düzeyde örgütlü bir form kazanmasını sağlamıştır. Kızılhaç hareketi, savaş alanlarında yaralı askerlerin taraf gözetmeksizin korunması prensibini ortaya koyarken, tarafsızlık, yansızlık ve insanlık gibi temel insani ilkelerin kurumsallaşmasına öncülük etmiştir. Bu gelişme, merhamet duygusunun devletler üstü bir organizasyon bünyesinde somutlaşmasını ve evrensel bir insani hukuk diline tercüme edilmesini temsil eder. Ancak tez, köleliğin kaldırılması ya da Kızılhaç'ın kuruluşu gibi olayların yalnızca ahlaki ilerlemeler olmadığını, aynı zamanda kapitalist ve sömürgeci sistemlerin gelişimiyle de yakından bağlantılı olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Örneğin köleliğin kaldırılması, insani bir kazanım olarak sunulsa da sanayileşen ekonomilerin emek rejimini dönüştürme ihtiyacıyla ve emperyal güçlerin yeni sömürge biçimleri geliştirmesiyle örtüşmüştür. Benzer şekilde Kızılhaç'ın ortaya çıkışı ve savaş yaralılarına insani muamele talebi, Avrupa merkezli güç dengelerinin ve sömürgeci çatışmaların insani hukuk kisvesi altında yeniden düzenlenmesiyle paraleldir. Bu dönemde merhamet teşvik edilirken, kime ve ne ölçüde yardım edileceği konusunda seçici davranılmış; böylece insani yardım, görünürde ahlaki ilerlemelere rağmen fiiliyatta iktidarın kontrolünü ve nüfuzunu pekiştirmenin aracı haline gelebilmiştir. Dolayısıyla Aydınlanma ve 19. yüzyıl deneyimi, insani yardım söyleminin ahlaki idealler ile siyasi çıkarların nasıl iç içe geçebileceğine dair çarpıcı örnekler sunmaktadır. Bu dönemle birlikte insani yardım, uluslararası normlar ve kurumlar vasıtasıyla küresel bir boyut kazanmaya başlamış, ancak bu süreç de iktidar yapılarını dışarıda bırakmamıştır.

Dünya Savaşları Çağında İnsani Yardım ve Kurumsallaşma

Yirminci yüzyılın ilk yarısı, insani yardım pratiklerinde hem büyük bir ölçek büyümesine hem de kurumsal yeniden yapılanmaya sahne olmuştur. Birinci ve İkinci Dünya Savaşları, sivil nüfusun kitlesel acı çekmesine yol açarak uluslararası insani yardımın kapsamını genişletmiştir. Savaşlar sırasında ve sonrasında ortaya çıkan insani krizler, yeni yardım kurumlarının doğmasına ve mevcut kurumların büyümesine ivme kazandırmıştır. Özellikle II. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında kurulan Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) ve ona bağlı yardım kuruluşları, insani yardımın küresel koordinasyonunda merkezi bir rol üstlenmiştir.

II. Dünya Savaşı sırasında ortaya çıkan büyük ölçekli insani krizler, yardım edilecek kitlelerin kategorize edilmesi ihtiyacını da beraberinde getirmiştir. Örneğin savaş mağduru ve açlıkla mücadele eden çocuklar "masum kurbanlar" olarak tanımlanırken, yerinden edilmiş mülteciler uluslararası toplumun himayesine muhtaç "mağdurlar" olarak görülmüştür. Bu dönemde "kimlere yardım edilmeli?" sorusu etrafında şekillenen söylem, insani yardımın aynı zamanda ahlaki bir hiyerarşi içerdiğini gösterir. Bu bağlamda *Save the Children Fund* gibi sivil toplum girişimlerinin I. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında ortaya çıkışı, özellikle çocukları yardımların merkezine koyarak masumiyet ve koruma söylemlerini öne çıkarmıştır. Bu tür kategorileştirmeler, yardım programlarının meşruiyetini güçlendirmiş, ancak aynı zamanda yardım alanları edilgen konumda tasvir ederek, yardım veren ile alan arasındaki güç dengesizliğini yeniden üretmiştir.

Yirminci yüzyıl ortasında uluslararası insani sistemin kurumsallaşması hem devlet aktörlerinin hem de hükümet dışı organizasyonların (STK'ların) artan rolüyle karakterize olmuştur. 1920'lerde Milletler Cemiyeti nezdinde başlayan ulusötesi insani girişimler, 1940'lar ve sonrasında BM çatısı altında daha kapsamlı hale gelmiştir. Bu çok aktörlü yapıda bilgi ve uzmanlık, insani müdahalelerin önemli bir gücü haline gelmiştir. Foucault'nun iktidar/bilgi kavramını andırırcasına, insani yardım operasyonlarında güç, teknik bilgi ve insani sorumluluk kavramları iç içe geçerek birlikte inşa edilmiştir. Uzmanlar ve bürokratlar, insani krizlere verilecek yanıtları belirlerken, bu konudaki otoriteleri bilgi üretme kapasitelerinden beslenmiştir. Böylelikle insani yardım alanı, sadece duygusal bir merhamet pratiği değil, aynı zamanda uzmanlık ve bürokratik yönetim aracılığıyla sürdürülen bir iktidar

ağı olarak şekillenmiştir. Böylece 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında insani yardım, bir yandan benzersiz insani acil durumlara yanıt verirken diğer yandan uluslararası sistemin bir parçası olarak bürokratikleşmiş ve devletlerarası güç dengeleriyle bütünleşmiştir.

Soğuk Savaş ve Sömürgecilik Sonrası Dönemde İnsani Yardım

Soğuk Savaş dönemi (1945-1990), insani yardımın jeopolitik rekabetlerle iç içe geçtiği bir dönem olmuştur. İki kutuplu dünya düzeninde insani yardım faaliyetleri, ideolojik nüfuz mücadelelerinin bir aracı haline gelme riski taşımıştır. Nitekim doğu ile batı blokları, kalkınma yardımları ve insani yardımlar yoluyla "Üçüncü Dünya" ülkelerinde etki kazanmayı hedeflemişlerdir. Bu dönemde ortaya çıkan karmaşık insani acil durumlar (kompleks acil durumlar), sadece doğal afetleri değil, uzun süreli iç savaşlar, kıtlıklar ve kitlesel nüfus hareketlerini de kapsamıştır.

Özellikle 1967-1970 yılları arasında Nijerya'daki *Biafra Savaşı*, insani yardım tarihinin dönüm noktalarından biri olarak tezde ayrıntılı incelenmektedir. Biafra'da savaşın yol açtığı büyük insani kriz ve kıtlık, ilk kez televizyon aracılığıyla tüm dünyaya canlı olarak yansıtılmış, böylece kamuoyunun dikkatini küresel ölçekte "uzak bir ülkedeki" açlık felaketine çekmiştir. Açlıktan ölmek üzere olan çocukların görüntüleri Batı'daki evlere kadar ulaşmış ve güçlü bir vicdani tepki yaratmıştır. Bunun sonucunda Batılı sivil toplum kuruluşları ve gönüllüler, devletlerden bağımsız şekilde Biafra'ya yardım götürmek üzere seferber olmuşlardır. Tez, Biafra örneğinin insani yardımın coğrafi ve ideolojik odağını kalıcı biçimde değiştirdiğini öne sürer: Avrupa merkezli insani yardım anlayışı, bu olayla birlikte dikkatini sömürgecilik sonrası bağımsızlığını kazanan ancak iç çatışmalarla boğuşan bölgelere çevirmiştir.

Biafra Savaşı deneyimi, geleneksel insani yardım uygulamalarının sorgulanmasına da yol açmıştır. Savaş sahasında tanık oldukları aşırı insani dram karşısında mevcut müdahalelerin yetersiz kaldığını düşünen bir grup Fransız doktor, "acıya tanıklık etme" ve ihtiyaç halindeki insanlara doğrudan müdahale etme konusunda daha aktif bir tavır almak üzere yeni bir örgüt kurmuşlardır. Bu çabalar 1971'de Sınır Tanımayan Doktorlar (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, MSF) adlı uluslararası tıbbi insani yardım örgütünün doğuşuyla sonuçlanmıştır. MSF, insani yardımı devletlerin diplomatik önceliklerinden bağımsız, doğrudan insani ihtiyaç odaklı bir müdahale olarak

konumlandırmış; gerektiğinde devletleri veya uluslararası toplumu müdahalede yetersiz kalmakla eleştiren bir "şahitlik" yaklaşımı benimsemiştir. Böylece Biafra sonrasında insani yardım alanı, kendi içinde de farklı norm ve stratejilerin tartışılmaya başlandığı bir evreye girmiştir.

Soğuk Savaş yıllarında Birleşmiş Milletler'in kalkınma ve insani yardım ajandası genişlemiş, eşzamanlı olarak bağımsız insani yardım kuruluşlarının sayısı da hızla artmıştır. Özellikle Afrika ve Asya'nın yeni bağımsız devletlerinde yoksulluk, açlık ve hastalıklarla mücadele için çok sayıda Batılı sivil toplum kuruluşu faaliyet göstermiş; 1980'lere gelindiğinde uluslararası STK'lar insani girişimlerin temel aktörleri haline gelmiştir. Bu süreç, insani yardımın kurumsal yapısında adeta bir patlamaya işaret ederken, yardım pratiklerinin söylemsel boyutunda da önemli etkiler yaratmıştır. Tez, bu dönemde yürütülen kampanyaların ve medya anlatılarının, yardım alan insanları basitleştirilmiş ve pasifleştirilmiş biçimde temsil ettiğini belirtir. Özellikle Afrika'daki açlık krizlerine ilişkin Batı medyasında çizilen tablo, bu toplumları sürekli dış yardıma muhtaç, kendi kendine yardım kapasitesinden yoksun "zavallı kurbanlar" olarak kodlamıştır. Bu tür temsiller, küresel kamuoyunu seferber etmede etkili olsa da, "yardım eden" zengin toplumlar ile "yardım alan" yoksul toplumlar arasındaki iktidar hiyerarşisini pekiştiren bir anlatı oluşturmuştur.

Tez, medyanın ve küresel söylemin insani yardım üzerindeki etkisini incelerken, 1984-85 Etiyopya kıtlığı gibi vakalara özel bir dikkat göstermektedir. "Live Aid" konserleri ve yoğun medya ilgisiyle tarihe geçen bu kıtlık, Batı'daki yardımsever duyguları harekete geçirmenin yanı sıra, insani krizlerin sunum biçiminin kendisinin de bir iktidar ve yönetim aracı haline gelebileceğini ortaya koymuştur. Medyada acı çeken insanların görüntülerinin bir *seyirlik* hâline getirilmesi, acıyı estetize ederek ahlaki bir müdahale aciliyetine dönüştürmüş ve Foucault'nun bilgi üretimi kavramını akla getirecek şekilde, iktidarın yasal yetkiyle değil sefaletin görünür kılınıp eylem talep etme becerisiyle işlediği yeni bir alan yaratmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Soğuk Savaş ve sömürgecilik sonrası dönemde insani yardım, bir taraftan küresel ölçekte vicdani bir seferberlik yaratırken (örneğin Biafra ve Etiyopya krizlerinde olduğu gibi), diğer taraftan Batı dışı toplumların "gelişmemiş" olarak kurgulandığı ve bu yolla uluslararası sistemin hiyerarşilerinin yeniden üretildiği bir araç olmuştur. Bu dönemi

takip eden neoliberal çağda ise insani yardım ile güvenlik siyasetinin daha da iç içe geçtiği, piyasa mantığının merhamet söylemine nüfuz ettiği bir evreye girilmiştir.

Neoliberal Dönem: Güvenlikleştirme, Askerileşme ve Mülteci Krizleri

Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesiyle 1990'lardan itibaren insani yardım alanı yeni dinamiklerle karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Bu dönemde öne çıkan olgulardan biri, insani yardım ile askeri müdahale arasındaki çizginin bulanıklaşması olmuştur. 1990'larda yaşanan Kosova krizi ve Balkan Savaşları ile 1994 Ruanda Soykırımı, uluslararası toplumun "insani müdahale" kavramı etrafında sert tartışmalara girmesine yol açmıştır. İnsan hakları ihlallerini durdurmak için zorlayıcı güç kullanımını içeren bu müdahaleler, insani söylemin askeri ve siyasi amaçlarla iç içe geçebileceğini göstermiştir. 11 Eylül 2001 sonrasında Afganistan ve Irak örneklerinde ise insani yardım operasyonları doğrudan askerî harekâtlarla eklemlenmiştir. Tez, bu örnekler üzerinden insani yardımın uluslararası güvenlik söyleminin bir parçası haline geldiğini vurgular. Özellikle terörle mücadele ve "başarısız devlet" söylemleriyle birlikte, insani yardım operasyonları çoğunlukla jeopolitik stratejilerin uzantısı olarak kurgulanmış; insani söylem, askeri müdahaleleri gerekçelendirmek için kullanılmıştır.

Yirmi birinci yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde küresel insani gündemi en çok meşgul eden konulardan biri mülteci krizleri olmuştur. Özellikle 2011'de başlayan Suriye İç Savaşı'nın tetiklediği kitlesel nüfus hareketi, II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan bu yana en büyük mülteci krizlerinden birini yaratmıştır. Milyonlarca Suriyelinin ülke içinde yer değiştirmesi ve komşu ülkelere sığınması, insani yardım kavramının yalnızca acil yardım değil, uzun vadeli entegrasyon ve dayanıklılık (*resilience*) politikalarını da içerecek şekilde genişlemesine neden olmuştur. Tez, bu çerçevede Türkiye'nin Suriyeli mültecilere yönelik politikasını ayrıntılı bir vaka olarak ele almaktadır. Türkiye örneği üzerinden, neoliberal yönetimsellik anlayışının insani yardım alanında nasıl tezahür ettiği incelenmektedir. Özellikle mültecilerin *özne* olarak inşasında, onları yardıma muhtaç pasif alıcılar olmaktan çıkarıp "kendi kendine yeterli bireyler" haline getirme hedefi dikkat çekicidir. Uygulamada bu, mültecilere yönelik geçim kaynakları sağlama, yerel ekonomilere entegrasyon ve kapasite geliştirme programlarına öncelik verilmesi demektir Böylece insani yardım söylemi içinde

dayanıklılık ve *kendi kendine yeterlilik* kavramları merkezi bir konuma yerleşmiştir. Yardım eden aktör, artık sadece acil ihtiyaçları karşılayan değil, aynı zamanda yardım alanları üretken ve uyumlu bireyler kılmaya çalışan bir rehber konumundadır. Bu durum, merhametin neoliberal dönemde dahi bir iktidar teknolojisi olarak işlev görmeye devam ettiğine işaret eder: merhamet, bu kez bireyleri piyasa odaklı bir düzende hayatta kalmaya teşvik eden ve uyum gösteremeyenleri sistemin dışında bırakarak başarısızlıkla damgalayan bir söylem biçiminde karşımıza çıkar.

Günümüzde insani yardım müdahaleleri giderek daha fazla sayısal göstergeler ve veri temelli yöntemlerle planlanmaktadır. Mültecilerin ve diğer yardım alanların durumunu izlemek için detaylı izleme ve değerlendirme araçları kullanılmakta; verimlilik adı altında uygulanan bu yöntemler, aslında yardım programlarını sıkı bir gözetim ve koşulluluk rejimine tabi kılmaktadır. Yardım kuruluşları, yardımların hangi koşullarda verilip durdurulacağını belirlerken kendi ürettikleri "kırılganlık" tanımlarını ölçüt almakta ve bu yolla yardım süreçleri üzerindeki kontrollerini sürdürmektedir. Bu bakımdan nakit transferleri gibi yenilikçi yardım biçimleri dahi, insani yönetimselliği tamamen dönüştürmemekte; sadece yeni kavram ve politikalar getirerek temel hiyerarşik ilişkiyi modernize etmektedir.

Neoliberal insani yönetimde kimin yardım alacağına karar verilirken kırılganlık kavramı da belirleyici hale gelmiştir. Görünürde bilimsel ve ölçülebilir kriterlere dayanan bu yaklaşım, kısıtlı kaynakların verimli kullanımı gerekçesiyle yardım edilecek kişilerin seçimini meşrulaştırır. Ancak bunun ardında yatan mantık, insani sorumluluğun bir kısmını sistemden bireylere aktarmaktır; zira uyum sağlayamayan ve kendini kurtaramayan kimseler en "kırılgan" kabul edilerek öncelikli yardım hedefi haline gelirken, aynı zamanda mevcut düzene entegre olamadıkları için potansiyel bir istikrarsızlık unsuru olarak da değerlendirilmektedir. Bu bakımdan, *öz-yeterlilik* (self-reliance) ideali kırılganlığın karşıtı olarak yüceltilir: kendi kendine yetebilen bireyler sisteme başarılı biçimde entegre olmuş sayılır. Örneğin Türkiye örneğinde de görüldüğü üzere, mültecilere piyasa ekonomisine katılım ve uyum koşullarını sağlayacak beceriler kazandırmak, insani programların temel hedefi haline gelmiştir. Kısacası, neoliberal dönemde merhamet, bireyleri "kendi kendine yeterli" kılmayı amaçlayan ve uyum gösteremeyenleri risk kategorisinde tanımlayan bir iktidar tekniği

olarak yeniden biçimlenmiştir. Bu neoliberal evrede insani yardımın temel paradoksu iyice belirginleşmiştir: hayat kurtarma ve acıyı hafifletme iddiasındaki girişimler, aynı zamanda jeopolitik stratejilerin, piyasa odaklı reformların ve güvenlik kaygılarının taşıyıcısı haline gelmiştir.

Tezin Akademik Katkıları ve Kısıtları

Bu çalışma, insani yardımın tarihsel ve teorik analizine üç önemli katkı sunmaktadır:

İlk olarak, tez insani yardımın tarihselliğine ilişkin genel kabullere meydan okumaktadır. Yaygın inanışın aksine, insani yardımın sadece yakın geçmişte siyasallaştığı tezine karşı çıkarak en başından beri insani yardımın iktidar ve siyaset ile derinden iç içe olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu sayede farklı dönemlerde ortaya çıkan siyasi ve ideolojik meydan okumaların aslında süregelen bir güç ve yönetim örüntüsünün parçası olduğu ortaya konmaktadır. Böylelikle, insani yardımın nötr ve apolitik bir geçmişten gelip sonradan politize olduğu yönündeki varsayım yerine, her tarihsel kesitte değişen formlarla da olsa iktidar dinamiklerini barındırdığı argümanı literatüre kazandırılmaktadır.

İkinci olarak, araştırma kuramsal düzlemde Michel Foucault'nun *yönetimsellik* kavramını insani yardımın tüm tarihsel sürecine uygulayarak yeni bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Foucault'cu analizler daha önce kalkınma politikaları veya halk sağlığı gibi alanlarda kullanılmış olsa da insani yardım tarihinin bütünü için böylesi kapsamlı bir uygulama yenilikçidir. Tez, insani yardım olgusunu farklı dönemler ve vakalar üzerinden tek bir analitik çerçeve ile ele almayı önermektedir: 1850'lerde bir misyonerin yoksullara yardımı, 1980'lerde bir mülteci kampındaki faaliyetler veya 2020'lerde bir nakit yardımı programı, hepsi "insan hayatını merhamet adına yönetme sanatı"nın (yani insani yönetimselliğin) tezahürleri olarak analiz edilebilir. Bu bakış açısıyla çalışma, insani yardımın "insanlığın yönetimi" şeklinde kavramsallaştırılabileceğini göstererek ilgili literatüre kuramsal bir araç kazandırmaktadır. Böylece gelecekteki araştırmacılar, spesifik insani müdahaleleri incelerken bu çalışmanın sunduğu kapsamlı yönetimsellik yaklaşımından faydalanarak, ardındaki iktidar ilişkilerini daha net analiz edebileceklerdir.

Üçüncü olarak, tez ampirik düzeyde önemli bir boşluğu doldurmaktadır. Aydınlanma döneminden günümüze insani yardımın genel bir tarihsel panoramasını sunarak, literatürde dağınık halde bulunan örnek olay incelemelerini eleştirel bir perspektifle tek bir çatı altında birleştirmiştir. Önceki çalışmalar genellikle Kızılhaç'ın kuruluşu veya Biafra Savaşı gibi tekil vakalara odaklanmış ve bu vakaları ayrıntılı biçimde incelemiştir; ancak insani yardımın tüm tarihini süreklilik ve kırılmalar ekseninde derinlemesine irdeleyen bütüncül bir çalışma eksik kalmıştır. Bu tez, geniş zaman aralığını kapsayan bütüncül yaklaşımıyla tarihçiler ve kuramcılar arasında bir köprü kurmakta, farklı dönem ve vakalar arasındaki bağlantıları ortaya çıkararak dar odaklı çalışmaların gözden kaçırabileceği örüntüleri görünür kılmaktadır. Böylelikle, insani yardımın her dönemde bağlamsal koşullara göre şekillenen ancak temelde siyasi iktidar yapılarıyla iç içe bir pratik olduğu yönündeki kavrayışı derinleştirmektedir. Bu akademik katkılar sayesinde tez hem kuramsal hem de tarihsel düzeyde insani yardım olgusuna ilişkin yerleşik kabulleri sarsarak literatürde yeni bir tartışma alanı açmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, insani yardım olgusu diğer yakın kavramlardan – özellikle insani kalkınma, askeri insani müdahale ve insan hakları – ayrıştırılarak bağımsız bir kavramsal yapı olarak ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu ayrıştırma çabası teorik düzeyde gerekli olsa da uygulamada oldukça zordur. Literatürde insani yardım ile insan hakları genellikle örtüşen ya da eş anlamlı kavramlar olarak değerlendirilse de bu tez iki kavram arasında esaslı bir fark olduğunu savunur. İnsan hakları uzun vadeli yapısal dönüşümleri ve sistemsel adaletsizliklerin ortadan kaldırılmasını hedeflerken, insani yardım eylemi mevcut krize acil müdahale odaklıdır. Yani insani yardım, kısa vadeli, şimdiki zamana odaklı ve geçici çözümler üretirken; insan hakları yaklaşımı daha uzun vadeli hukuki ve siyasal kurumlarla dönüşüm hedefler. Bu temel zaman perspektifi farklılığı, iki yaklaşımı birbirinden ayırır. Bu tezin kapsamı dışında olmakla birlikte, gelecekteki araştırmalar bu iki alanın tarihsel ve kurumsal bağlamlarda nasıl kesiştiği ya da ayrıştığını inceleyebilir.

Tezin bir diğer sınırlılığı ise geniş tarihsel kapsamıdır. Bu çalışma, yaklaşık 300 yıllık bir süreci – 19. yüzyıldan başlayarak 20. ve 21. yüzyıla kadar – analiz etmekte; ancak

bu geniş zaman dilimi nedeniyle hangi krizlerin ve dönemlerin inceleneceği konusunda seçici davranmak zorunda kalmıştır. Bu seçicilik, aslında insani yardımın kendisinin de krizleri seçerken başvurduğu tercih mekanizmalarını yansıtır. Araştırmada yer verilen örnekler, dönemlerinin baskın insani yardım dinamiklerini en iyi temsil ettikleri için seçilmiştir. Ancak yine de tezin her bir dönemi, başlı başına derinlemesine çalışmalara konu olabilecek zenginliktedir. Gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalar, belirli insani aktörlerin (kurumlar ve bireyler) uzun vadede bu alanı nasıl şekillendirdiğini daha ayrıntılı biçimde inceleyebilir. Bu tez, insani yardım alanının tarihine bütüncül bir eleştirel bakış getirerek literatürdeki önemli bir boşluğu doldurmayı hedeflemektedir.

İnsani yardım tarihine yönelik böyle bütüncül bir bakış, bu alandaki yerleşik anlatıların yeniden değerlendirilmesini mümkün kılar. Bu tez, insani yardımın "iyi" ya da "kötü" olup olmadığını tartışmak yerine, onun nasıl işlediğini, hangi dinamiklerle biçimlendiğini anlamayı amaçlar. Her ne kadar bazı tarihsel dönemlere daha az derinlikte değinilmiş olsa da sunulan genel çerçeve, ileride yapılacak araştırmalar için sağlam bir kuramsal ve tarihsel zemin sunar.

Bu doktora tezi, insani yardım olgusuna dair yerleşik kavrayışları dönüştürerek, bu alanın göründüğünden çok daha fazla siyasi ve iktidar yüklü olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. İnsani yardımın tarihsel gelişimine Foucault'nun yönetimsellik kavramı ekseninde bakıldığında, merhametin her dönemde değişen biçimlerde de olsa bir iktidar teknolojisi işlevi gördüğü anlaşılmaktadır. Merhamet söylemi, yardım eden ile yardım alan arasındaki ilişkiyi hiyerarşik bir biçimde yapılandırmakta; kimliği "yardım eden" olarak tanımlanan aktörlere müdahale etme ve tanımlama yetkisi verirken, "yardım alan" tarafı bu tanıma ve müdahaleye bağımlı kılmaktadır. Tez boyunca gösterildiği üzere, merhametin içerdiği bu asimetrik güç dinamiği, misyonerlik döneminden Soğuk Savaş döneminde insani yardım uzmanlarına ve günümüz neoliberal kurumlarına kadar farklı aktörler ve söylemler aracılığıyla süreklilik arz etmiştir. İsimler, yöntemler ve retorik değişse de yardım edenin acıyı tanımlama ve çareyi tayin etme konusundaki üstün konumu her tarihsel dönemde varlığını korumuştur.

Bu çalışma, insani yardımın her tarihsel uğrağında krizlerin tanımlanmasında, yardım edilecek kitlelerin seçilmesinde ve müdahale biçimlerinin belirlenmesinde etkin rol oynayan bir söylemsel iktidar alanı olarak işlediğini ortaya koymuştur. Başka bir deyişle insani yardım pratikleri, "kendiliğinden" eylemler olmayıp belirli çıkarlar ve bilgi sistemleri çerçevesinde şekillenen ve aynı zamanda bu çıkar ve bilgileri yeniden üreten bir yönetişim biçimidir. Tezde vurgulanan bir diğer önemli sonuç, insani kriz kavramının sabit bir olgu olmayıp değişen sosyo-politik bağlamlarda inşa edildiğidir. Örneğin, yüzyıllar boyunca sürdürülen kölelik, ancak belirli bir tarihsel dönemde ahlaki normlardaki değişimlerle ve kölelik karşıtı hareketlerin yükselişiyle birlikte temel bir adaletsizlik olarak yeniden tanımlanmış ve insani bir kriz haline getirilmiştir. Benzer şekilde, geçmişte kaçınılmaz doğal afet olarak görülen depremler, seller veya kıtlıklar, modern dönemde uluslararası yardıma ihtiyaç duyulan istisnai insani krizler şeklinde çerçevelenmeye başlanmıştır. Dolayısıyla kriz kurgusu, yalnızca acıyı tespit etmek değil, hangi olayların "olağanüstü ve acil" kabul edilip küresel müdahaleye layık görüleceğini tanımlayan kasıtlı bir süreçtir.

Sonuç olarak insani yardım tarihine bakıldığında bu alanın özünde apolitik veya bütünüyle insancıl bir faaliyet olmayıp iktidar yapılarını sürekli yansıtan ve dönüştüren bir pratik olduğu görülmüştür. Bu farkındalık, günümüzde insani eylemlerin daha adil ve eşitlikçi bir şekilde tasarlanması için kritik önem taşımaktadır; zira merhamet söyleminin ardındaki güç dinamiklerinin bilincinde olmak, insani yardımın gerçekten "insani" kalabilmesinin önkoşuludur. Böylece çalışma, insani yardım söylemine eleştirel bir bakış getirerek, modern insani müdahalelerin rolü ve etkilerini anlamak için gerekli tarihsel ve kuramsal zemini sağlamaktadır. Sonuç itibarıyla, insani yardımın tarihi, merhamet ve iktidarın iç içe geçtiği bir örüntünün tarihidir. Bu tez, bu örüntüyü gözler önüne sererek insani yardım alanındaki güç ilişkilerinin anlaşılmasına önemli bir katkı sunmuştur.

Son Değerlendirme

Bu araştırma konusu, yazar için kişisel olarak da anlamlıdır. Üç yılı aşkın süredir insani yardım sektöründe sahada çalışmış biri olarak, yardım söylemleriyle sürekli karşı karşıya kalmış; bu söylemlerin bazı yönlerinin sahadaki gerçekliklerle çeliştiğini

erken dönemlerden itibaren gözlemlemiştir. Yardım söylemlerinde yer alan bazı varsayımlar, kurum içi işleyiş biçimleri ve krizlere verilen tepkiler yazar açısından rahatsız edici olmuştur. Bu rahatsızlıklar, insaniyetçiliğin temelini sorgulama arzusunu doğurmuş; ancak bu sorgulama kesinlikle insani yardım sektörünü bütünüyle reddetme amacı taşımamış, aksine bu alanın daha etkili, sonuç odaklı ve gerçekten fayda üreten bir yapıya dönüşmesi için eleştirel bir düşünme alanı yaratmayı hedeflemiştir.

Yazarın insani yardım alanındaki mesleki deneyimleri – uluslararası STK'lar, BM ve diğer insani kurumlarla çalışma fırsatları – bu çalışmanın temel gözlemsel zeminini oluşturmuştur. Bu süreçte insani yardımın nasıl yapılandığı, nasıl müzakere edildiği ve uygulandığına dair derin bir içgörü geliştirilmiştir. Çoğu zaman yardım söylemleri ile gerçek etkileri arasındaki uyumsuzluk çarpıcı şekilde açığa çıkmıştır. Dolayısıyla bu tez, yalnızca kuramsal bir egzersiz değil, aynı zamanda sahada edinilmiş deneyimlerin ve gözlemlerin sistematik biçimde düşünülmesidir.

Bu mesleki deneyimlerin yanı sıra yazarın şahsi yaşamı da insani yardım algısını etkilemiştir. 6 Şubat 2023'te Türkiye'de meydana gelen deprem, insani yardımın yalnızca soyut bir kavram değil, hayatta kalma ve iyileşme için somut bir güç olduğunu doğrudan hissettirmiştir. Yazar, yardım sisteminin doğrudan içinde yer almamış olsa da bu süreçte yardım mekanizmalarını yakından gözlemlemiştir. En çarpıcı gözlem, büyük ölçekli ve tartışmasız bir kriz karşısında insani sistemin anlık olarak nasıl durakladığıdır. Bu deprem, kurguya dayalı olmayan, fiziksel gerçekliği apaçık bir felaket olmasına rağmen, insani yardım sistemlerinin kriz ortamına etkin şekilde tepki vermekte zorlandığını göstermiştir. Bu yaşantı, yardım söylemi ile gerçek dünya pratikleri arasındaki gerilimi daha net kavramayı sağlamış ve bu çalışmayı yapma motivasyonunu derinleştirmiştir. Öte yandan, bu eleştirel analiz, insani yardımın çok sayıda hayatı doğrudan etkilediği ve iyileştirdiği gerçeğini reddetmemektedir. Tez boyunca yapısal eleştiriler, hiyerarşiler, eşitsizlikler ve krizler arası önceliklendirme gibi sorunlar tartışılmış olsa da yardımın acıyı hafiflettiği, kritik destek sunduğu ve birçok durumda hayat kurtardığı gerçeği teslim edilmektedir. Bu sistematik sorunları tanımak, insani yardımın somut katkılarını inkâr etmek anlamına gelmez.

Bugün yaşadığımız dünya, insani ihtiyaçların hayali değil, somut ve sürekli olduğu bir dünyadır. Her gün insani yardım, açları doyurmakta, yerinden edilmiş insanlara barınma sağlamakta ve çatışma ya da afet mağdurlarına yaşamsal destek sunmaktadır. Bu tez, bu gerçekleri yadsımak ya da insani yardım sistemini toptan reddetmek amacında değildir. Aksine, kurtarılan hayatların ve dindirilen acıların kabulünün, sistemin işleyişini eleştirel biçimde analiz etmekle çelişmediğini savunur. Amaç, karamsar ya da yıkıcı bir eleştiri sunmak değil; insani yardım mekanizmalarının tarihsel, etik ve politik yönlerini sorgulayarak, daha adil, etkili ve insana odaklı alternatiflerin düşünülmesini sağlayacak entelektüel bir çerçeve ortaya koymaktır.

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