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Resilient Humanitarianism? Using Assemblage to re-evaluate the history of the League of Red Cross Societies

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ABSTRACT

The League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) – known as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) since 1991 – has received little historical attention despite representing the world's largest volunteer network and being an integral part of the Red Cross Movement. Formed in the aftermath of the First World War by the national Red Cross Societies of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, the LRCS aspired to lead in the promotion of global public health and welfare during peacetime. Through the lens of assemblage thinking and the five assemblage elements of exteriority, capacity to evolve, internal machinery, open systems, and desire, the paper seeks to understand the longevity and resilient humanitarianism of the LRCS. In doing so, the paper provides a new conceptualisation of the LRCS that helps to explain how it survived in the rapidly changing and increasingly contested international humanitarian environment of the twentieth century.

KEYWORDS

League of Red Cross Societies; International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent; Red Cross Movement; resilient humanitarianism; twentieth century internationalism; assemblage

Introduction

In recent years, a growing body of historical and International Relations studies have focused on transnational humanitarian organisations to explore their origins and contributions to changing ideas and actions around the principles and practices of humanitarianism. The League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) – known as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) since 1991 – has received relatively little attention. It incorporates the 192 national Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, and is an integral part of the Red Cross Movement, established by the Swiss-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863, now the oldest surviving humanitarian organisation.¹ The LRCS was established in Paris on 5 May 1919 by the national Red Cross societies of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan.² The LRCS's arrival challenged the ICRC to its core.³ While the ICRC until that time had only functioned during and in response to war, the LRCS set itself the task to mobilise established and emerging Red Cross national societies for peacetime work in areas of public

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health, welfare and disaster management. The founders of the LRCS sought to establish a peacetime organisation that complemented the ICRC's wartime focus. It survived the tumultuous first half of the twentieth century where several other organisations born into the same environment of international idealism, such as the League of Nations, did not. After the Second World War, amid decolonisation, the Cold War and an expansion of international non-government organisations (NGOs), the number of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies grew exponentially, boosting the LRCS's ranks and expanding its role in coordinating humanitarian assistance and ambitious welfare programmes across the world.

The aim of this paper is to use the lens of assemblage thinking to provide a new conceptualisation of the LRCS. In doing so, it will help explain the longevity and resilience of the LRCS, and how it managed to remain relevant in the rapidly changing and increasingly contested international humanitarian environment of the twentieth century. We argue that it was the LRCS's federated – as opposed to centralised – structure, representing national Red Cross societies across the world, that assisted in the creation of a global humanitarian network of mutual solidarity and professional co-operation framed around the Red Cross Movement. The LRCS developed a form of resilience that sought to secure its own self-interest as an institution and at the same time strengthen the 'self-securing agency' of its constituent national Red Cross societies.⁴ This involved finding a balance between the traditional model of humanitarianism, one that "attends to the needs of distant strangers", and the desire of national Red Cross societies to "attend to their own". Historian Thomas Laqueur describes the origin of humanitarianism in the eighteenth century as a moment when the 'details about the suffering bodies of others engender compassion and how that compassion comes to be understood as a moral imperative to undertake ameliorative action'.⁵ Managing distance and proximity is a central feature of the LRCS's distinctive approach to humanitarianism in which the binary of international and domestic is replaced by trans-local flows of information, material and people at various scales from the proximate local to the global.

This organisational approach to humanitarianism was associated with a shift in thinking about humanitarianism that, we contend, can be captured most appropriately through the ideas of assemblage and resilience. We suggest that the LRCS played a key role as a resilience builder for disasters and calamities long before the term was taken up by the interdisciplinary framework of resilience studies and contemporary analyses of humanitarianism.⁶ Its focus on public health was one of the League's earliest and most ambitious goals.⁷ From the 1920s onwards, the LRCS developed and facilitated a suite of programmes revolving around public health, including education, disaster management, the promotion of volunteering and transnational communication among children and youth. This broader focus ensured the continued relevance of the Red Cross Movement in newly independent countries across Europe, Asia and Africa despite awkward colonial legacies and political antagonism. We suggest the resilient humanitarianism demonstrated by the LRCS transcends the distinctions between humanitarianism and development. It helps to broaden the definition of humanitarian development, and opens up to humanitarian action and practices from below, informed by diverse cultural ideas and practices about what it is to be human and caring for others.⁸

Since the 1980s, the humanitarian turn has involved a diverse range of disciplines. Led by international relations, political science, anthropology, law, and sociology, the field now includes human rights and development studies. Historians, too, particularly from the 1990s, have become interested in humanitarianism, and it is now a discrete sub-themed area of study. Anthropologist Miriam Ticktin has suggested that 'humanitarianism is not easily defined: It is, among other things, an ethos, a cluster of sentiments, a moral imperative to intervene, and a form of government'.⁹ Political scientist, Michael Barnett, in his history of humanitarianism, focussed on a few 'well chosen' global organisations in order to explore how their experiences have shaped humanitarian action over time.¹⁰ He proposed that humanitarianism is a 'morally complicated

creature, a flawed hero defined by the passions, politics and power of its times even if it tries to rise above them'.¹¹

There has been renewed interest in the study of international organisations, led by historians such as Patricia Clavin, Glenda Sluga and Bruno Cabanes who have sought to re-evaluate the concepts of internationalism in the interwar period.¹² However, internationalism describes organisations constituted by sovereign states and the interactions between them. This fails to adequately capture the LRCS's multi-scalar operations that involve a diversity of actors and other components that transgress national frameworks and methodologies. Furthermore, national Red Cross societies are, in the main, non-state actors that operate across borders and around the world. Although they wear their national status prominently and cooperate closely with governments, they are fundamentally civil society organisations operating at arm's length from government (history, however, has shown this not always to be the case). We suggest that the tools of the historian are of limited value in explaining the perseverance of such organisations. As predominantly historians, we have therefore explicitly crossed interdisciplinary boundaries in search of a concept that might assist in explaining the LRCS. In order to grasp the fluidity and changing dynamics between humanitarian actors at international, regional, national and local levels, we conceptualise the LRCS as a transnational assemblage, using a concept from political geographers' adaptation of ideas originally developed by Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari.¹³ Assemblage thinking brings to the fore the extent to which humanitarian actions are social and political processes generated through relations between sites, involving action both at the local level and across distance, and brings into play human and non-human components, such as technology, information, and nature. As an assemblage, the LRCS enables a focus on the 'relationalities of near/far, and social/material',¹⁴ helping us to understand its emergence, changes over time, and the events that have helped to shape it.

Assemblages are considered to have five distinct characteristics that, we argue, are of strong heuristic value in helping explain and understand the LRCS's longevity and its resilient humanitarianism.¹⁵ First, as suggested by Jason Dittmer, assemblages are formed through relations of exteriority among constituent elements, and thus the elements in the assemblage cannot be reduced to their function or properties within the assemblage. Rather, it is the capacities of these elements, often in interaction with an infinite number of other components, which constitute the assemblage. Second, assemblages are 'constantly becoming', changing, renewing, and 'a range of contingent futures is always possible'.¹⁶ They produce new behaviours, actors, realities, and organisations.¹⁷ Third, assemblages are composed of heterogeneous elements including human beings, texts, non-human beings, and things. Also important in producing the assemblage are the multiple sites, institutions, networks and informal encounters through which it operates, and which in turn shape the assemblage.¹⁸ Fourth, assemblages are open systems that can only be delimited in their relational space over time (they become more or less coherent); and lastly, they are marked by desire, which can be understood as will, or force. In the context of the LRCS, we suggest that this relates to its sense of mission or organisational culture. The article introduces the concept of the LRCS as an assemblage by working through the five elements in turn. In conclusion, we discuss the LRCS's longevity and resilient humanitarianism. In doing so, we offer up a preliminary account of how this approach shines a light on a hitherto largely ignored LRCS, and helps to place it into the history of international organisations.

The LRCS's survival in the tumultuous twentieth century is in large part due to its assemblage as a network. It has favoured a grassroots and horizontal approach rather than a hierarchical top-down structure, and encouraged international solidarity between national Red Cross Societies as well as regional exchanges and empowerment at a local level. The interactions between and among its member societies produced solidarity, alignments and cross-fertilisation, but also inequalities, contestation and debate. Whether by accident or design, the LRCS was deliberately operating across various scales – international, national, regional and local – and developed an innovative transnational approach. In order to unpack these processes, we draw

on the vantage point provided by assemblage theorists to help articulate our conceptualisation of the LRCS, its longevity and resilient humanitarianism. Assemblages are not easily defined, but can be thought of as a 'collection of relations between heterogeneous entities to work together for some time'.¹⁹

Applying the characteristics of assemblage theory to the LRCS captures it as a network that transgresses boundaries, for example, between public/private, state/civil society and local/trans-local. Rather than fixing the LRCS as a structure operating within a specific space and time, an assemblage perspective focuses on how the LRCS is actualised at different times and in different places. Temporality thus becomes an important feature. This involves examining its governance structure, documentation and modes of communication, but also its various component elements ranging from individuals and institutions to technologies, infrastructure, funding, and material things that together produce humanitarian action. External relations, such as interaction with governments, its rivalry and cooperation with the ICRC and with national Red Cross societies, connections to a myriad of other social and political movements and actors, have shaped the LRCS as much as its internal relations. Elements that were at one point in time external or subordinated, for example, humanitarian movements incorporated or simply excluded by colonial or imperial structures of governance, have later become part of the LRCS, changing its relational space and coherence in the process. While the LRCS promotes autonomy of its constituent units (the national societies), they do have criteria for entry, and members that do not comply or remain compliant can be sanctioned or expelled.²⁰ However, within the LRCS assemblage, relations between LRCS leadership and membership are not strictly hierarchical, but instead are better understood as a set of micro places connected in multiple ways. This does not mean that all components have equal power within the LRCS assemblage; indeed, their powers to act may shift over time, and in this sense, it is a structured but simultaneously open assemblage. Finally, analysing desire within the assemblage of the LRCS involves studying the intent of the individuals that formed and shaped the LRCS over time. It involves examining the humanitarian ideals they articulated, how they attempted to recognise the diversity and the plurality of the Red Cross Movement more broadly, and how this is viewed as strength rather than as a way to homogenise or codify. In addition, analysing the LRCS as an assemblage provides us with a productive avenue to follow Akira Iriye's call for historians to 'transgress the boundaries' of national and state-based conceptualisations of political power and human communities.²¹

Relations of exteriority

The first characteristic of an assemblage focuses on the formation through relations of exteriority among constituent elements. Here we are concerned with the structure of the LRCS as a federation. This model for international organisations post First World War was set by the League of Nations, and despite its demise, this federated structure has proved very useful for international organisations. The idea for a LRCS originated with Henry Pomeroy Davison, the American banker and Chairman of the War Council of the powerful American Red Cross.²² His bold vision for the LRCS was that of an exemplary global community, not supranational (like the League of Nations) but truly transnational, one that aimed to facilitate and coordinate contact and mutual assistance, disseminate ideas and practices, and operate across borders between and within national Red Cross societies around the world. The aim was not only to relieve human suffering but, as Davison suggested, 'to prevent it. Red Cross concerns itself not with the suffering of one people but with the welfare of our fellow beings throughout the world'.²³

This focus on the prevention of suffering and on peacetime programmes prompted a shift in humanitarian thinking which had, until that point, been dominated by the Geneva-based ICRC, the most well-known and recognised international body of the Red Cross Movement. Emerging out of a concern for protecting the wounded on the battlefield and those charged with

attending to combatants in the mid nineteenth century, the First Geneva Convention was drafted in 1864 and later ratified by over twenty governments.²⁴ This approach to humanitarianism, as Barnett points out, was 'imprinted by modernity, the Enlightenment', 'connected to governance' and the idea that human society can be improved.²⁵ Expanded over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with four Conventions and Additional Protocols, the ICRC remains the unofficial custodian of the 'laws of armed conflict' and has played a major role in the development of international humanitarian law (IHL).²⁶

However, as historians such as John Hutchinson and others have argued, the voluntary universalism that marked the birth of the Red Cross Movement gave way to institutions that were effectively co-opted by the state and the states' military medical establishment. This complicated the Red Cross' brand of humanitarianism and its codification of law and norms in order to humanise war.²⁷ Many within the Red Cross Movement saw the First World War and the processes of legalisation and breaches of the Geneva Convention as 'a memento of failure'.²⁸ Henry Davison and the founders of the LRCS seized the initiative in 1919 to 'expedite and modernize the work of the Red Cross by addressing social activities and preventive health care in peacetime'.²⁹ The First World War saw an unprecedented growth in the Red Cross Movement, both in terms of its geographical extent and the number of actors it mobilised. New national Red Cross societies were formed as a direct result of the war, while older national societies, such as those of the United States, Great Britain and Japan, were buoyed by the long drawn out conflict with increased national prestige in the work that they carried out as well as the monies raised through fundraising as part of the war effort. Before the war concluded, the ravages of a global influenza epidemic saw national Red Cross societies work alongside governments to provide invaluable assistance in the form of unpaid labour, trained nurses, medical expertise and access to deep fundraising coffers. Red Cross leaders around the world realised that there was still much to do once peace was declared and were keen to continue their work, building further on the war momentum to create a range of peacetime programmes.³⁰ This built on the pre-war work of a number of national Red Cross societies, most notably the United States and Japan, who already had developed sophisticated programmes outside of wartime work, programmes that focused on civilian assistance during disasters such as earthquakes, floods and fires as well as during epidemics, and to control and prevent the spread of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.³¹

When the LRCS was created, it embraced a new-world internationalism that emerged out of war and challenged the continentalist traditions of the Red Cross Movement. By organising itself into a federated body, one that included a committee structure of representatives from many different national societies, the LRCS was forming exterior relationships amongst its constituent elements, adding a democratic element to the Red Cross Movement. At the time, the ICRC was strictly composed of Swiss members, mostly from Geneva. From 1921, the LRCS, however, established a Board of Governors representing national Red Cross societies from different global regions, and from 1926, each national society had representation on the Board of Governors, which met annually in Paris. An Executive Committee (made up of appointed members) met four times a year and was responsible for the LRCS Secretariat. National Red Cross societies, such as that of Australia and New Zealand responded positively to this democratic and federated structure.³² Additionally, these constituent elements or national Red Cross societies themselves have their own specific cultural, social and political relationships with states and other NGOs that are distinct from that of the LRCS. Ideas and ideologies are also examples of relations of exteriority, which can enter the assemblage or lead to existing elements to be removed from it.

In an effort to further differentiate itself from the ICRC and to be of value to national societies, the LRCS created an innovative series of 'Regional Conferences' in the 1920s. Pan-American Conferences were held in Buenos Aires (1923) and Washington (1926); Central and Eastern Europe Conference in Warsaw (1923) and Vienna (1925); and Oriental Conferences in Bangkok (1922) and Tokyo (1926).³³ In other words, the LRCS created a transnational community that deliberately

engaged all corners of the world rather than one directed from, and controlled by, Geneva.³⁴ This strategy of pursuing transnational solidarity sought to build 'resilience from below', to build a place for itself within the Red Cross Movement as an enabler and as a 'mediator of intercultural dialogue'.³⁵ The Oriental Red Cross Conferences in Bangkok and Tokyo were significant as they were the first to be held outside Europe and America. These conferences assisted in the facilitation of the LRCS's mandate to allow for the difficulties of 'distance and time'. The Regional Conferences were an innovation that the League's Secretariat considered 'essential to an adequate realization of the ideal for which the League was founded'.³⁶ They were based on the view that a key to the League's success was 'the development of active co-operative relations between the national Societies themselves', and that this was only possible if there was 'fairly frequent and regular contact' between national societies. Apart from facilitating a publishing network of ideas, innovations, programmes and outcomes from across the Red Cross network, the League Secretariat saw itself as a 'clearing house of Red Cross information' as well as assisting national societies to equip themselves technically, to inform them to enlarge this aspect of their work.³⁷

Another example of assemblage's exteriority is to consider the LRCS's *Bulletin*, the League's most regular publication from 1919 to 1946. *The Bulletin* was published in English, French and Spanish, and reported on the League's activities as well as national and local Red Cross societies. The international gaze provided by the worldwide circulation of the *Bulletin* was supported by national societies and they fed regular reports of their activities to the League's Secretariat for publication. The *Bulletin* acted as a transnational newsletter that enabled information and initiatives to flow, while the Secretariat of the League facilitated communication between national Red Cross societies. To take one year, 1923, the League reported having received over 12,000 letters and sent out a similar number. It also reported receiving documents in over twenty languages.³⁸ Translation work and circulating information on all types of initiatives undertaken by national Red Cross societies was paramount to the League's mission and strategy to expand its institutional role.³⁹ The League did not impose regulations or an agenda in a top-down manner with guidelines established in Geneva or Paris. Instead, it tried to identify effective strategies developed by its member societies and reported on those in the *Bulletin* to facilitate cross pollination across national Red Cross societies, and provided documentation on demand, while facilitating the creation of networks between national branches interested in one another's work.

Further illustrating the LRCS's relations of exteriority are the connections it had with other organisations and bodies, other assemblages dealing with public health, such as the League of Nations that introduced a range of international public health programmes in the aftermath of the First World War. The LRCS often had representation on these international bodies and in the early years of the 1920s, the LRCS had the lead on innovation and ideas (but not sufficient funds) around public health initiatives in particular.⁴⁰ And as far as the LRCS was concerned, a failure to engage would have killed off the experiment at an early stage. For instance, the League of Nations established a Health Organisation with research into topics such as diseases, epidemiology, rural hygiene and opium consumption.⁴¹ The Rockefeller Foundation was also involved in initiatives relating to diseases and public health nursing.⁴² The League of Nations' International Labour Organisation, and its office in Geneva had an Advisory Committee on Industrial Hygiene that collated research and formed regulations regarding topics affecting workplaces, with, for example the first topic being the risk to human health of anthrax from animal hides and skins, working with the League of Nations' Health Committee.⁴³ Whereas the League of Nations did not survive the Second World War, with new supranational organisations taking on its health remits, like the LRCS, the International Labour Office continued its work, partly by temporarily locating its headquarters and some of its staff to Montreal.⁴⁴ These relations of exteriority can be seen as the defining characteristic of assemblages, which Müller suggests, 'implies a certain autonomy' of the component parts of an assemblage which enables them to plug into other assemblages.⁴⁵

Capacity to evolve

The second defining feature of an assemblage is its ability to continually evolve and produce new organisations, actors and behaviours. From its earliest days, the LRCS attempted to adapt and progress in reaction to a diverse set of changing circumstances. In presenting itself as a viable peacetime organisation, the initial vision for the LRCS was to operate as a global health network where the Red Cross would take the lead in public health work, fostering and facilitating research 'to the peoples of the world'.⁴⁶ This was mentioned in the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919), Article 25, which states:

The Members of the League agree to encourage and promote the establishment and co-operation of duly authorized voluntary national Red Cross organisations having as purposes the improvement of health, the prevention of disease, and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world.

This phrase was incorporated into the Articles of Association of the LRCS where it was to promote the 'welfare of mankind' through dissemination of information and 'new contributions to science and medical knowledge' across the world and to, finally, coordinate 'relief work' in times of national and international 'calamities'.⁴⁷

However, within two years, these highly ambitious aims were tempered by budget constraints and institutional skirmishes with the ICRC. Although almost entirely funded by the American Red Cross, Henry Davison received less financial support than he anticipated from the national society, and his untimely death in 1922 contributed to a crisis within the fledgling LRCS. An obstructionist attitude from within the ICRC, too, hampered its progress in the early years. Relocating the LRCS Secretariat from Geneva to Paris in 1922, as well as cutting costs, allowed the organisation to slowly regain the momentum. However, rivalry with the ICRC remained a source of constant aggravation as in many instances, the newly formed LRCS and the ICRC were in direct competition with each other. The continuation of the Russian civil war, for instance, and lack of peace, kept the ICRC relevant and brought its fields of operation closer to those of the LRCS. As *sorties de guerre* scholars have observed, post 1918 it was difficult to talk about "peace" and "war" in binary terms, and the realities in many parts of Europe were much harder to manage than simple binaries would predict.⁴⁸ While the LRCS was adding man-made disasters to its original remit of natural disasters as a legitimate field for Red Cross activities, the ICRC, too, began to extend its scope by attending to natural disasters with the help of the Japanese Empress Shôken Fund and other fundraising mechanisms. As the twentieth century wore on, the boundaries between war and peace became increasingly blurred, and by the 1960s both LRCS and ICRC found themselves aiding people living with complex humanitarian emergencies. This frequently required the two organisations to negotiate boundaries. In January 1991, for example, overlapping activities during the Gulf crisis led to the signing of a 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the ICRC and the LRCS. This clarified that the LRCS would concentrate on work in non-conflict zones, but this included work in relation to the conflict, such as with refugees, displaced persons, and the evacuated wounded who were outside of the conflict zone. The ICRC could also invite the LRCS and national Red Cross societies to contribute to specific relief tasks within the conflict zone.⁴⁹

The development and facilitation of the Junior Red Cross from the early 1920s was another feature that speaks to the ability of the LRCS to evolve and maintain a connection with national Red Cross societies. The Junior Red Cross 'became a flagship initiative for numerous national Red Cross societies' crossing 'national borders and into international spaces'.⁵⁰ The initiative not only increased the membership of national societies but also improved their financial capacity. The Junior Red Cross soon became the largest and most successful children's humanitarian organisation in the world, facilitated through the LRCS' Bureau of Junior Membership. This network focused on children's understanding of citizenship and humanitarianism and became a global movement for fostering good practices for the younger generation of Red Cross members.⁵¹ Additionally, the growth in numbers of national societies due to decolonisation and the earlier

break-up of European empires from 1945 in particular, and the resulting changes in rules and ideologies to accompany them also saw the LRCS continue to evolve. For example, within twenty years, membership of the League increased by one-third, from 61 to 108 national societies including Red Crescent societies in the Middle East and Africa including from Afghanistan to Morocco. The League constantly evolved with the ambition to grow. The growth in its programmes and membership ensured its prolonged relevance and heightened levels of complexity.

Internal machinery

The third characteristic of an assemblage focuses on what Colin McFarlane suggests is the machinery of the assemblage; the internal factors or 'mechanisms etc., that allow power to be organised and space to be governmentalised'.⁵² Examples of mechanisms are laws, government structures, bureaucracies, and archives. For instance, the LRCS's multinational structure composed of a rapidly expanding number of national Red Cross societies produced complicated internal relations and more opportunities for friction and dissent. This contrasts with the ICRC, where a homogenous, close-knit leadership composed of Genevan middle-class predominantly male protestants maintained 'cohesion and discipline in times of crisis'.⁵³ But the federated, networked mechanisms of the LRCS were also a strength that enabled it to mediate between the different and divergent streams of thought within the Movement. The multiple sites, institutions, networks and informal encounters that produced the LRCS as an assemblage, and the volunteers, professionals, communities, national societies, above-mentioned regional conferences through which it operated, also, in turn, shaped the assemblage.⁵⁴

The precarious nature of its early years ensured a degree of flexibility that was essential within the LRCS and that we can easily discern in aspects of this third assemblage characteristic involving the machinery of the LRCS. One mechanism used to actualise the work of the LRCS and to activate its potential was through the development of a Nursing Division. It became one of the most successful and longstanding departments of the LRCS.⁵⁵ An important programme was the international public health nursing course established by the LRCS at Bedford College, London, in the 1920s. An idea from the 1919 Cannes Conference, this was an area of little interest to the ICRC and one that the LRCS could develop unimpeded by internal Red Cross politics.⁵⁶ The LRCS sought to negotiate and manage the difficult path between the multiple views of national Red Cross societies towards nursing education and public health in the 1920s and 1930s. The LRCS represented a number of national societies who had varied training standards and practices for nurses. National societies such as Japan, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Czechoslovakia and Poland were all involved in the professional training of nurses. However, standards for nursing training varied enormously across the Red Cross Movement based on long-standing historical, cultural, religious and gender practices.⁵⁷ Funding constraints in the early 1930s saw the LRCS hand over direct responsibility to the newly formed Florence Nightingale International Foundation.⁵⁸ The Bedford College programme brought nurses from member countries together in a capacity building initiative that was led by Red Cross societies, such as America and Great Britain where professional nursing standards were already in place.

The Second World War saw a contraction and re-organisation of the LRCS's activities. The League's staff returned to Geneva from Paris in 1939 under the leadership of Frenchman Bonabes de Rougé who served as Secretary General from 1936 to 1957. Alongside war relief activities, there was some continuity in humanitarian and research activities; assistance was provided for earth tremors in Turkey in December 1939, and a guide regarding first aid in mining disasters was produced. Meetings also continued: representatives from a variety of non-belligerent countries, including the USA, Belgium, the Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Switzerland gathered in Geneva in April 1940. The fourth Pan-American Red Cross Conference was held in December 1940, hosted in Santiago, Chile, and three

senior staff members were sent from Europe. Representatives of eighteen national societies attended and discussions beyond war included topics such as rural public health, nursing, life-saving and disaster preparedness. To continue their work after invasion, Red Cross societies from some occupied countries set up offices in London, for example, Norway, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Along with offices set up by the Dominions all this enabled the wider Red Cross network to continue operating from London.⁵⁹

Appointed in 1939, Director of the Nursing Division, Yvonne Hentsch, reinvigorated the work of the LRCS's Nursing Bureau by focusing on South American national Red Cross societies and others that were not directly involved in the Second World War. In July 1942, and with assistance of the national Red Cross societies, she conducted a five-month tour of Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Bolivia and Paraguay to ascertain the nursing situation in each country. She stayed around two weeks in each country gaining an insight into nursing practices and standards and formulating ideas for future LRCS assistance.⁶⁰ This visit reveals the broader geographical focus of the LRCS, that its work was not only focused on Europe, and that it continued to function, albeit on a limited basis, throughout the Second World War.

Despite the strong voluntary tradition of the Red Cross Movement, professionalism remains an important component of the endeavour to strengthen 'the capacity and socio-political standing' of local Red Cross or Red Crescent national societies.⁶¹ In Liisa Malkki's contemporary ethnographic study of Finnish Red Cross workers, she argues that professional bonds and affective responses between members of the League's international missions are more important than humanitarian principles in connecting distant strangers.⁶² This suggests that transnational professional connections among Red Cross workers can disrupt the binaries of distance/proximity, humanitarian actors/objects, and produce powerful affective responses that challenge the prevalent conceptualisation of humanitarianism as an asymmetrical relationship based on compassion. Another area that further demonstrates this characteristic of assemblage theory is road safety, including accident prevention, and first aid for road traffic accidents. The ability of the LRCS to facilitate knowledge exchange and promote action regarding road safety was picked up by many national societies between 1930 to 1971. There has been a recent revival from the 1990s with what is now titled the Global Road Safety Partnership based at the IFRC, working in collaboration with the World Bank and the British Government's Department for International Development.⁶³

However, perhaps the most important feature of the internal aspects of the machinery of the assemblage of the Red Cross Movement more broadly is its liminal status between other humanitarian non-government organisations (NGOs) and international governmental organisations (IGOs), and its evolving recognition gradually embedding the Movement into national legislation. The ICRC has been described as 'quasi-public, quasi-private ... an arm of states even as it was independent of them', 'falling in the space between a private relief agency and a public international organization.'⁶⁴ It is a 'hybrid' between an NGO and an IGO. The ICRC was not established by States and it is not governed by them either: it was founded as a private Swiss organisation and does not have State representatives on its governing body.⁶⁵ Ratifications of the Geneva Conventions gave the Red Cross 'semi-official' status from the 1860s.⁶⁶ The 1949 Geneva Conventions formalised the ICRC's mandate from States to provide protection and assistance to people suffering from violence and armed conflicts. This requires 'privileges and immunities' through international and domestic law, which, by 2016, were similar to that of other IGOs in at least 103 countries.⁶⁷

Like the ICRC, the LRCS was formed as a private body, and today, as the IFRC, is governed by the Swiss Civil Code; and yet it represents and co-ordinates national Red Cross societies, which were increasingly formally recognised by states as voluntary aid societies and auxiliaries.⁶⁸ At the League's Board of Governors meeting in Oxford in 1946, the role of national

societies as 'impartial, independent and voluntary', with their role as 'auxiliaries to their public authorities' was made a condition for LRCS membership. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution encouraging member states to establish authorised, but independent, Red Cross and Red Crescent organisations; this was adopted at the Plenary Session of the UN General Assembly in November 1946.⁶⁹ The relationship between national societies and public authorities was formalised in the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which stated they should have the same respect and protection as the medical services of the armed forces, when engaged in particular tasks relating to sickness and disease and the administration of 'medical units and establishments'.⁷⁰ More recently, this status was further clarified within the Statutes of the Movement in 1986, with a list of ten criteria. Criteria 3 was 'Be duly recognized by the legal government of its country on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and of the national legislation as a voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.'⁷¹

Open systems

The fourth criterion views assemblages as open systems delimited in the relational spaces that shift and change over time. The LRCS can be viewed as an open system, one that is concerned with the building up of individual national Red Cross society practices within the broader context of the Red Cross Movement. The LRCS sought to develop and expand the humanitarianism of the Red Cross through the creation of a global network of national Red Cross societies around the world. The facilitation of events such as the Oriental Conferences in the 1920s reflected a new way forward for the Red Cross Movement, one that sought to reach out to national societies outside of Europe. This, in turn, calls for attention to the LRCS's work in particular historical and geographical contexts, to investigate how it brings together both national humanitarian contexts and international humanitarianism. As the gradual inclusion of non-western, decolonised societies into the Red Cross Movement demonstrates, a clear distinction between humanitarian action and political action 'as two distinct and separate modes of acting and being-in-the-world' is difficult to draw because humanity itself is a political concept.⁷² We argue that, to a significant degree through the agency of the LRCS, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies pose several challenges to the argument that humanitarianism, by putting humanity at the centre, transcends the particularism of the principle of state sovereignty. The formation of national Red Cross societies came in response to, and is reflective of, local needs. The founder of the American Red Cross, Clara Barton, for example, sought 'to serve the particular humanitarian interests of the United States' and established a close collaboration with the US government which gave it a central role in US foreign aid for decades to come.⁷³ Furthermore, relief of human suffering often requires negotiations with states and other stakeholders that are 'intensely political even when framed as neutrally technical'.⁷⁴ An example of this is the intricate and deeply political role the American and the Cuban Red Cross societies played in securing and overseeing the exchange of American prisoners for humanitarian goods after the US's failed attempt to overthrow the Cuban government in 1961.⁷⁵ In facilitating this collaboration across the Cold War divide, the LRCS demonstrated its potential for unity through difference, as historical analysis of many other complex political crises throughout the twentieth century can demonstrate.

Desire

The final characteristic of assemblage theory as defined by Dittner suggests that assemblages are marked by desire, and a 'will or force'. The origins and values of the Red Cross Movement are closely linked to the development of Western humanism and humanitarianism. Its

development coincides with the birth and development of international law that claims its universalist dimension from the seventeenth century onward.⁷⁶ Different national movements of the Red Cross in the late nineteenth century claimed their universalism as a defining element that justified their existence. The foundation of the Red Cross in 1863 is often cited as a landmark for humanitarian norms in international affairs, though Redfield and Bornstein, among others, have noted that it was not the only expression of humanitarianism at that time nor was it applied universally.⁷⁷ Universalism as a key value, and the *modus operandi* of what has been termed 'classical humanitarianism' had been central to the ICRC's formation, even though in practice it did not include large parts of humanity until much later.⁷⁸ However, the Red Cross could leverage and integrate a variety of humanitarian traditions through their universalist language and a shared desire to relieve human suffering and improve well-being. The religious and European origins of the Red Cross Movement proved capable of being muted. Key to the 'conversion' of the Ottomans to the concept, and the willingness to embrace the 'red crescent' from an early date was this mechanism of a 'universal language' represented by the Red Cross. This partially reflects the belief that there were different humanitarian traditions and ideas in circulation, and that the 'western' Red Cross was not the only one to capture the imagination of nineteenth century humanitarians.⁷⁹ We argue that the LRCS held on to the core values of the Red Cross Movement but its approach to humanitarianism was transnational and inclusive rather than universal. The LRCS thus focused on propagating its own form of transnational 'unity in diversity' of its membership.

The emblems of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal are a globally recognised and highly respected set of symbols representative of a specific type of humanitarianism that can be viewed as a 'force'.⁸⁰ Also associated with these Red Cross symbols is a set of specific and unique fundamental humanitarian principles that have changed over time. As Daniel Palmieri has explained, their evolution is highly political.⁸¹ It had taken over one hundred years for the Red Cross Movement to arrive at a coherent and unanimous understanding of the Red Cross principles. These commenced with volunteering and philanthropy, fundamental beliefs of Henri Dunant, through to the beginning of the twentieth century when around twenty principles existed to explain the ideas and rules of the Red Cross and national societies, to four main principles enshrined by the ICRC in 1921; these were 'the impartiality, the political, religious and economic independence, the universality of the Red Cross and the equality of the National Red Cross Societies'.⁸² Although the development of the principles of the Red Cross Movement has typically been viewed as being driven by the ICRC, we must not dismiss the role played by the LRCS who sought to reframe the principles in the aftermath of the Second World War. At the XIXth Board of Governors meeting at Oxford in July 1946, the first since the war, the LRCS drafted thirteen fundamental principles to be added to the four traditional principles. The ICRC considered these revised principles too 'verbose' and the document far too 'loosely drafted' to be of much use. They were 'for the most part of organic or institutional principles and of simple rules for action' and 'have no place in a proclamation'.⁸³ The style and content of the principles are detailed, focusing on the importance of youth in the Red Cross, 'the child is the adult of the future'; democratic and open membership of national societies; work towards the maintenance of peace; and the importance of freedom of action amongst other things, and also include the principle that 'Red Cross Societies are voluntary, public and self-governing organisations'.⁸⁴ The LRCS sought and failed to have the principles confirmed at the 1952 Eighteenth Red Cross Conference in Toronto. After some manoeuvring by the ICRC and the commissioning of what became the Pictet study, seven principles were eventually unveiled – humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.⁸⁵ These recognised principles remain the foci of the Red Cross Movement. After leading the discussions on principles, the LRCS was able to continue to expand and contract the list of principles, absorb the different perspectives of the Movement, internalise them, and then move on.

Resilient humanitarianism – some considerations and conclusions

In this paper we have argued that the concept of assemblage helps explain why the LRCS has for over a century remained effective and relevant to international humanitarianism. We have, above all, shown how the institution is 'resilient'. Resilience has become an increasingly popular concept across a range of disciplines as a way to describe the 'capacity to cope with change and uncertainty'. From its original use in the context of ecological systems, where resilience refers to the ability of a system to absorb some disturbance whilst maintaining its cohesion, the term has become pervasive in the social sciences concerned with global risks and crises.⁸⁶ Indeed, since the 1990s, the concept of resilience has become so ubiquitous among 'agencies charged with coordinating security responses to climate change, critical infrastructure protection, natural disasters, pandemics and terrorism' that it is linked to a view that future crises will be both unpredictable and inevitable.⁸⁷

In this view, resilience is about being prepared for crisis, mitigating its impacts and re-establishing normality. It is also, as David Chandler notes, a form of 'self-securing agency' that is clearly distinguishable from earlier 'liberal international' approaches to human security.⁸⁸ While the latter assumes Western responsibility for external, top-down intervention to provide for victims after a crisis, resilience focuses on enabling vulnerable people or societies to prevent crises and maintain human security through bottom-up capacity strengthening. When the League assisted populations in times of crises – such as the Polish typhus outbreak (1919), the Russian Famine (1921), the Japanese earthquake (1923), the flood in China (1931), the cooking oil poisoning in Morocco (1959) and the Guatemalan earthquake (1976), among many of its interventions – it did so not by over-riding national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies but by building up their capacity on the ground, with funding and staff, ensuring the responsiveness of these national societies when their populations needed them most. Western inculcation of resilience in developing countries may still be considered necessary but, critically, it does not undermine national sovereignty in the way liberal internationalist discourses did when positing the West as the securing agency. The LRCS has attempted to elicit international solidarity between its members to assist in times of calamity. We need to examine this in closer detail, for example with the League's interventions in the 'African famine' of the mid-1980s.

Having changed its name to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in response to the seismic global shifts that occurred at the end of the Cold War, the IFRC currently defines resilience as 'the ability of individuals, communities, organisations or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects', whatever these may be.⁸⁹ Two central pillars in the IFRC's approach to resilience are the importance given to 'pre-disaster investments to reduce or even prevent crises' and to the central role occupied by the individual. According to the IFRC, these are 'fundamental principles, tested over decades' which centre on the role of ordinary people in continuous, ongoing developmental and preventative action.⁹⁰ The LRCS/IFRC can thus claim resilience as part of its decades-long work of building the capacity of societies not only to mount life-saving responses in times of crisis – as narrowly defined humanitarian action – but also, and more importantly, to prevent such crises through ongoing pre-crisis actions. In this view, it is not the objective crisis itself that makes the event a crisis, but the failure of the international and local community to manage the 'event'. This also speaks to the multiple themes of assemblage thinking particularly the concepts of desire, internal machinery and open systems.

By focusing on building global, societal and bodily resilience since the 1920s, the LRCS (and now IFRC) offers an alternative understanding of resilience as a form of solidarity, one that also has an ability to absorb shockwaves and surprises. Recent research has sought to challenge the view that resilience is one that focuses on the ability 'to withstand severe conditions and to absorb shocks'.⁹¹ For example, Ute and Rhys Kelly explore contexts in which resilience and

solidarity interconnect and result in transformative systemic change rather than just coping.⁹² They find that key to this transformative potential is the effort of building trans-local connections and relationships, which strengthens resilience and solidarity simultaneously. This focus on local action and relationships is evident in the IFRC's 'One Billion Coalition for Resilience' initiative to create networks of 'caring individuals, motivated communities and like-minded organizations from all sectors' that will enable one billion people to take action that builds resilience by 2025.⁹³ These networks are built from the bottom up, from the local to the centre in Geneva, and not the other way around.

The LRCS's particular form of resilience, therefore, is not only predicated around the 'humanitarian action's single-minded purpose [of] alleviating suffering, unconditionally and without any ulterior motive' – it is much more than that.⁹⁴ From the beginning, the LRCS's particular brand of resilient humanitarianism focused on the body – not only the suffering body but also the healthy body, through its public health network and its international nursing programme at Bedford College, and its work with children through the Junior Red Cross. With epidemics and natural disasters part and parcel of the humanitarian kit bag, the resilient humanitarianism demonstrated by the LRCS/IFRC was part of what Barnett has termed 'alchemical humanitarianism', one that tries to address the root cause of suffering, to use experts to 'harness the science of the day, to transform social, political, economic and cultural relations'.⁹⁵

What we have attempted to do in this article is to explore the origins and history of the LRCS and by using the concept of assemblage, we have sought to explain why the LRCS survived the turbulent twentieth century, unlike so many other non-government organisations formed in the aftermath of the First World War. Our analysis has mapped out a research agenda through which questions raised by assemblage thinking can be tackled. In particular, it raises questions about the role of the LRCS and its constituent societies in shifting understandings of humanitarianism. How did the LRCS (and the ICRC for that matter) frame, present and organise itself in the post-1919 period when it has been forced to engage with and adapt to a range of non-western traditions and practices through its expanding national society network? What kind of responses to various geo-political and cultural shifts over time and place enabled the LRCS to sustain itself amid the increasingly compromised and complex arena of humanitarianism/s? What role has the LRCS played in bridging the binary and contested concepts of First, Second and Third World during the Cold War era by creating a neutral and non-contested space in which different politics and humanitarianisms were allowed to develop, coexist and collaborate? How has it contributed to a shift from classical, Western dominated and emergency focused humanitarianism to one that is focused on a specific type of resilience – social, cultural and organisational – across a range of borders and boundaries. And lastly, to what extent has the LRCS been an antidote for 'universalism' or scientific/modernity?

The LRCS/IFRC has become embedded in the fabric of international society; its work has been sustained over its one-hundred-year history and continues to support the broader global humanitarian project as part of the Red Cross Movement. Conceiving the LRCS as an assemblage assists us in framing this particular type of resilient humanitarianism as practised by the LRCS since the 1920s. Assemblages, are 'historical in nature, shaped by past experiences', as Dittmer points out, and 'always vulnerable to crisis'.⁹⁶ As we have suggested, this can be observed at various points in the history of the LRCS, from its difficult early years to the rise of fascism, the Cold War and post-war decolonisation. Each crisis point, however, offers us more opportunities to analyse the LRCS's capability for resilience and to test its specific brand of resilient humanitarianism.

Notes

1. Daniel Palmieri, 'An Institution Standing the Test of Time? A Review of 150 Years of the History of the International Committee of the Red Cross', *International Review of the Red Cross*, xciv (2012), 1273–1298.

2. For a history of the League of Red Cross Societies, see Clyde E. Buckingham, *For Humanity's Sake. The Story of the Early Development of the League of Red Cross Societies* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1964) and the IFRC commissioned book Daphne A. Reid and Patrick F. Gilbo, *Beyond Conflict. International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, 1919-94* (Geneva: IFRC, 1997). This is a useful work that covers the major events of the LRCS's history to 1991 with accompanying illustrations. For more recent historical analysis on aspects of the League/IFRC, see Melanie Oppenheimer, "'A Golden Moment?': The League of Red Cross Societies, the League of Nations and Contested Spaces of Internationalism and Humanitarianism, 1919-22' in Joy Damousi and Patricia O'Brien (eds), *League of Nations. Histories, Legacies and Impact* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018), 47-8; Julia F. Irwin, 'Connected by Calamity: The United States, the League of Red Cross Societies and Transnational Assistance after the First World War, *Moving the Social*, lvii (2017), 57-76; Neville Wylie, Melanie Oppenheimer & James Crossland, 'The Red Cross Movement: Continuities, Changes and Challenges', in Neville Wylie, Melanie Oppenheimer & James Crossland (eds), *The Red Cross Movement: Myths, Practices and Turning Points* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020). For a new short biography of Henry Davison, see Melanie Oppenheimer and Carolyn Collins, *Henry Pomeroy Davison* (Geneva: IFRC, 2019). The constitutive societies had grown out of other voluntary organisations and were recognised by the Swiss based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the 1870s and 1880s. The British, for example, used the term from 1899 for a liaison committee with the War Office (the Central British Red Cross Committee), but retained the title of the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War from 1870 until 1905, when it was retitled the British Red Cross Society. See Beryl Oliver, *The British Red Cross in Action* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 170-192. The French had three different societies under the 'French Red Cross' or *Croix-Rouge* banner that only merged in August 1940. See Rachel Chrastil, 'The French Red Cross, War Readiness, and Civil Society, 1866-1914', *French Historical Studies*, xxxi (2008), 445-76.
3. The testy relationship between the LRCS and the ICRC has been discussed mainly from the ICRC's perspective. See, for example, John F. Hutchinson, "'Custodians of the Sacred Fire": The ICRC and the Postwar Reorganisation of the International Red Cross', in Paul Weindling (ed), *International Health Organisations and Movements, 1918-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17-35; Carolyn Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).
4. David Chandler, 'Resilience and Human Security: The Post-Interventionist Paradigm', *Security Dialogue*, xliii (2012), 213.
5. Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Bodies, Details and the Humanitarian Narrative' in Lyn Hunt (ed), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 176.
6. See, for example, Dorothea Hillhorst, 'Classical Humanitarianism and Resilience Humanitarianism: Making Sense of Two Brands of Humanitarian Action', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, iii (2018). Available at <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-018-0043-6>. See the brochure 'When disaster Strikes. Suggestions for Red Cross chapters' prepared by the American Red Cross and translated into French by the League for broader circulation under the title: *L'action de secours en cas de désastre*, 'Premier Conseil Général, Genève Mars 1920', 362.191/366, IFRC Archives, Geneva.
7. See the *Bulletin de la Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge*, 7 (February 1920), 1 and the booklet, *LRCS Services de Salubrité Publique. Programme* by the *Service de Salubrité Publique* (Geneva: LRCS, 1920), IFRC Archives, Geneva.
8. Johannes Paulmann described humanitarianism as a 'dynamic field'. See Johannes Paulmann, 'The Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid: Historical Perspectives', in Johannes Paulmann, (ed), *The Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 9.
9. Mirian Ticktin, 'Transnational Humanitarianism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, xliii (2014), 274. Available at DOI 10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030403
10. Barnett focused on the ICRC, Care International, Oxfam, Medicine Sans Frontier, World Vision International, Catholic Relief Services, UNHCR and Lutheran World Relief. See Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 17.
11. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 7.
12. See, for example, Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford: OUP, 2013); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Daniel Laqua (ed), *Internationalism Reconfigured* (London: IB Tauris, 2011); Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
13. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) cited in Colin McFarlane, 'On Context', *City*, xv (2011), 375-88; see also Jason Dittmer, 'Geopolitical Assemblages and Complexity', *Progress in Human Geography*, xxxviii (2014), 385-401; Jason Dittmer, *Diplomatic Material: Affect, Assemblage and Foreign Policy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
14. McFarlane, 'On context', 384.
15. Dittmer, *Diplomatic Material*, 9.
16. Dittmer, 'Geopolitical Assemblages and Complexity', 388.

17. Martin Müller, 'Assemblages and Actor-Networks: Rethinking Socio-Material Power, Politics and Space', *Geography Compass*, ix (2015), 29.
18. McFarlane, 'On context', 384.
19. Martin Müller & Carolin Schurr, 'Assemblage Thinking and Actor-Network Theory: Conjunctions, Disjunctures, Cross-Fertilisations', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, xli (2016), 219.
20. See, for example, the recent expulsion of the Hellenic Red Cross Society.
21. Akira Iriye, 'Foreward', in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds), *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xiii-xiv.
22. For a brief biographical overview of Davison's life, see Oppenheimer and Collins, *Henry Pomeroy Davison*.
23. Henrik Beer in Buckingham, *For Humanity's Sake*, vi.
24. It was led by a Geneva Committee of five men including Henri Dunant, author of *A Memory of Solferino* (1862) and arguably the most well-known of the five who provided the inspiration for what became the Red Cross Movement. The literature is extensive on the ICRC history. See, for example, David Forsythe, *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also James Crossland, *War, Law and Humanity: The Campaign to Control Warfare, 1853-1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).
25. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 21.
26. IHL has a long and distinguished interdisciplinary historiography. See, for example, Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). See also Robin Geiss, Andreas Zimmermann & Stefanie Haumer (eds), *Humanizing the Laws of War. The Red Cross and the Development of International Humanitarian Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); David P. Forsythe, 'On Contested Concepts: Humanitarianism, Human Rights and the Notion of Neutrality', *Journal of Human Rights*, xii (2013), 62-3.
27. John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity. War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996). Heather Jones claims that the 'ICRC remained determinedly neutral' when it came to aid for prisoners of war; see 'International or transnational? Humanitarian Action During the First World War', *European Review of History*, xvi (2009), 698.
28. Crossland, *War, Law and Humanity*, 196.
29. Palmieri, 'An Institution Standing the Test of Time', 1280.
30. See Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of the Australian Red Cross 1914-2014* (Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), especially chapters two and three. See also Oppenheimer, 'Golden Moment'.
31. This focus on peacetime work, including disease prevention, was best reflected in the establishment of the Empress Shōkun Fund by the Japanese Red Cross in 1912. For the Japanese Red Cross, see Gregory John DePies, 'Humanitarian Empire: The Red Cross in Japan, 1877-1945', (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2013), especially chapter 4; Olive Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan, 1877-1977* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994); Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Reflections on the Easternisation of the Red Cross Movement: The Role of the Japanese Red Cross and League of Red Cross Societies, 1907-1926', *Pacific and American Studies*, 20 (2020), 23-39.
32. Officially, the Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross were branches of the British Red Cross Society until 1927 and 1932 respectively, and were thus not recognised by the ICRC. The LRCS, however, embraced them as independent national Red Cross societies. See Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Realignment in the aftermath of war: The League of Red Cross Societies, the Australian Red Cross and its Junior Red Cross' and Margaret Tennant, 'A cog in the great wheel of mercy": The New Zealand Red Cross and the International Red Cross Movement', in Wylie, Oppenheimer and Crossland, *The Red Cross Movement*, 130-147 and 181-198.
33. See Oppenheimer, 'Reflections on the Easternisation of the Red Cross Movement', 33-37.
34. The ICRC had also not limited its conferences to Geneva, with meetings in locations such as Paris (1867), Berlin (1869), Karlsruhe (1887), Vienna (1897), St Petersburg (1902), London (1907) but the meetings did not branch out of Europe until the Ninth International Conference at Washington in 1912, and further afield for the Tokyo International Conference in 1934. See François Bugnion, *The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Protection of War Victims* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2003), 60-80.
35. Joelle Droux, 'Life during Wartime: The Save the Children International Union and the Dilemmas of Warfare Relief, 1919-1947', in Paulmann, *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century*, 185.
36. 'General Report of the Secretariat of the LRCS to the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, Tokyo', [probably written by Lewis Gielgud], LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo, 15-26 November 1926*, LRCS, Paris, 1927, 131.
37. 'General Report of the Secretariat of the LRCS to the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, Tokyo', LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo, 15-26 November 1926*, LRCS, Paris, 1927, 133-135. LRCS Secretariat member, Lewis Gielgud, was despatched to Japan to assist in the organisation of this conference. His recollections were published in the *Bulletin* and later in a book. See LE Gielgud, *About it and About. Leaves from a Diary of Travel* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd, 1928). The relocation of the LRCS to Paris from Geneva resulted in lower costs and the ability to institute a system of 'study visits' for national societies to League headquarters – Geneva was considered too much of a back water. It could also

collaborate more closely with Health Demonstrations. As well as *The World's Health*, the League published, from 1925, a fortnightly *Information Bulletin* – information from national societies about new programmes and evaluations of its work. The League also published its own studies of special problems to meet the requirements of national societies and collected a range of materials – ‘pamphlets, posters, photographs, films, etc.’ to disseminate to national Red Cross Societies around the world.

38. *La Ligue des sociétés de la Croix-Rouge* (Paris: Secrétariat de la Ligue, 1925), 18.
39. Dockets and letters for tariffs' exemptions kept in French archives testify to the volume of booklets, films, posters and material it provided to national societies of the Red Cross over the world. See file number 1136, 'Unions internationales, période 1907-1944', MAE archives, La Courneuve.
40. Buckingham and Howard-Jones agree that the LRCS had the early running in what became the League of Nations Health Organisation – but the LRCS in the end did not have the funds or capacity to develop the initiatives and that they were taken up by others. See Norman Howard-Jones, *International Public Health between the Two World Wars – the Organisational Problems* (Geneva: WHO, 1978); see also Buckingham, *For Humanity's Sake*.
41. Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 147-9; Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation 1921-1946* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).
42. John Farley, *To Cast Out Disease: A History of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation (1913-1951)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
43. Rosemary Wall, *Bacteria in Britain, 1880-1939* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 112-16. The Rockefeller Foundation, the International Council of Nurses, the ILO and other institutions participated in the Panamerican Conference in Washington 1926. See Maria Silvia Di Liscia and Adriana Carlina Alvarez, 'La Cruz Roja, el panamericanismo y la salud en el periodo de entreguerras', *Salud Colectiva*, xv (2019), 9.
44. Mazower, *Governing the World*, 193; Daniel Maul, *The International Labour Organization: 100 Years of Global Social Policy* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019), 113-15.
45. Müller, 'Assemblages and Actor-Networks', 28.
46. Oppenheimer, 'Golden Moment', 64.
47. *Bulletin of the League of Red Cross Societies*, i (1919), 1-4.
48. Among other works, see Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeillée: la sortie de guerre des soldats français, 1918-1920* (Paris: Seuil, 2004); Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Christophe Prochasson, *Sortir de la Grande Guerre. Le monde et l'après 1918* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008). For a historiographical review on *sorties de guerre*, see Cosima Flateau, 'Les sorties de guerre. Une introduction', *Les Cahiers Sirice* xvii, (2016), 5-14.
49. Michael A. Meyer, 'The Role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Problems Encountered' in Peter Rowe (ed), *The Gulf War 1990-91 in International and English Law* (London: Routledge, 1993), 224-5.
50. Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Realignment in the Aftermath of War', in Neville Wylie, Melanie Oppenheimer and James Crossland (eds), *The Red Cross Movement*, 142.
51. Much of the work to date on the Junior Red Cross has focused on the national societies of America, Canada, and Australia with little interest on the role of the LRCS. See, for example, John F. Hutchinson, 'The Junior Red Cross Goes to Healthland', *American Journal of Public Health*, lxxxvii (1997), 1816-23; Julia F. Irwin, 'Teaching "Americanism with a World Perspective": The Junior Red Cross in the US Schools from 1917-1920s', *History of Education Quarterly*, liii, (2013), 255-79; Sarah Glassford, '"International Friendliness" and Canadian Identities: Transnational Tensions in Canadian Junior Red Cross Texts, 1919-1939', *jeunesse: young people, texts, cultures*, x (2018), 52-72; Annie Campbell, '"... thousands of tiny fingers moving": The Beginnings of the Junior Red Cross Movement in New South Wales, 1914-1925', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, xv (2004), 184-200.
52. McFarlane, 'On Context', 384.
53. Palmieri, 'An Institution Standing the Test of Time?', 1280.
54. McFarlane, 'On Context', 384.
55. From 1919 through to 1939, the unit was termed the Nursing Division. In 1939 it became the Nursing Bureau, renamed the Nursing and Social Services Bureau in 1947. In 1951, it was simplified to the Nursing Bureau, and in 1972, became the Nursing Unit. In 1984, another re-organisation saw its work integrated into the Community Health Department.
56. The April 1919 Cannes conference was organised on the initiative of Davison, with the support of President Wilson, and held under the banner of the Committee of Red Cross Societies, formed by the National Societies of the US, the UK, Japan, France and Italy. The Committee was formalised in May under the name of League. For more on the Cannes Conference, see Oppenheimer, 'Golden Moment'.
57. See Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Humanitarianism for the Twentieth Century: The League of Red Cross Societies and Public Health Nursing between the Wars', in Alan Lester, Joy Damousi & Trevor Burnard (eds), *Humanitarianism, Empire and Transnationalism in the Anglophone World, 1760-1995: Selective Humanity in the Anglophone World*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

58. For an overview of the problems facing international nursing in this period, see Susan McGann, 'Collaboration and Conflict in International Nursing, 1920-39', *Nursing History Review*, 16 (2008), 29-57.
59. Reid and Gilbo, *Beyond Conflict*, 114-138.
60. Yvonne Hentsch, 'Nursing in Latin America', *American Journal of Nursing*, xliii (1943), 1-3.
61. Liisa H. Malkki, *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism* (Harrowgate: Duke University Press, 2015), 201.
62. Malkki, *The Need to Help*, 74 & 199.
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93. IFRC, *World Disaster Report*, 4.
94. Former Director of Medicines Sans Frontier-USA in 2004, Nicolas de Torrente as quoted in Ticktin, 'Transnational Humanitarianism', 276.
95. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 39. He centres his analysis on 'emergency humanitarianism' and 'alchemical humanitarianism'. He suggested that, in 1918 in the aftermath of war, the ICRC was offering 'emergency humanitarianism', and continues to do so to this day. The ICRC concerns the 'provision of relief to those in immediate peril; cleaves to the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and has a hands-off attitude towards politics'. The LRCS, on the other hand, sought to practice what Barnett calls 'alchemical humanitarianism' which is to address the root cause of suffering, to use experts and to 'harness the science of the day to transform social, political, economic and cultural relations' in ways that will prevent suffering and make the world a better place.
96. Jason Dittmer, 'Geopolitical Assemblages and Complexity', 394.

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