Jaclyn Granick : Sacralized humanitarianism

Granick, Jaclyn
Sacralized humanitarianism : A comparison of three faith-based private associations / Jaclyn Granick. - 2011. - 20 p. - 25 May 2011. - Seminar "The organization, activities and politics of NGOs, 1800-2000" run by Pierre-Yves Saunier and Davide Rodogno, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva
LINK : http://www.swiss-quakers.ch/ge/library/e-documents/7971-Granick2011.pdf
Humanitarianism / Church and social problems / Friends' Service Committee / Friends Service Council / Alliance israélite universelle / Islamic Relief Worldwide

Jaclyn Granick

Pierre-Yves Saunier and Davide Rodogno

The organization, activities and politics of NGOs

25 May 2011

Sacralized Humanitarianism:

A Comparison of Three Faith-Based Private Associations

One French-Jewish organization, founded in 1860; an Anglo-Quaker organization, founded during the Great War; a British-Muslim organization, founded in 1984: how much could they possibly have in common? The Alliance Israélite Universelle, the American Friends Service Committee (alongside the Friends Service Council, of Britain), and Islamic Relief Worldwide show a remarkable degree of similarity, despite the fact that they all come out of different religious traditions, have headquarters in different nations, and operated in quite different contexts in totally different historical periods. These associations, which today we would call NGOs, all undertook humanitarian relief and made significant efforts towards rehabilitation and reconstruction, what Islamic Relief calls "development" today, making use of much the same rhetoric and ways of operating. I argue that such similarities demonstrate that humanitarian and development organizations today are not simply the descendents of secular humanitarian NGOs that arrived en masse with the human rights explosion of the 1970s and 80s, but that the private humanitarian tradition goes far back into the mid-nineteenth century and has deep roots in organizations that undertook what Lisa Moses Leff calls "sacralized work,"[1] which is to say, a mixing of religious language and motivation with liberal, modern ideas. I begin with an introduction to each organization, situating each in a wider historical context and discussing its founding. Then I compare the organizations at work, from their public face to their day-to-day operations. Before I conclude, I will show how their work operates in practice by presenting a major campaign each conducted.

Literature on these three organizations, and on the larger field of faith-based NGOs, is limited. Work on Muslim organizations seems to lie mainly in the realm of political science and anthropology and is dominated by just a few researchers.[2] Quaker literature is mostly confined to the realm of theology and Quaker studies, and many accounts of the service organizations are memoirs of people who served rather than academic studies. Given the

[1] *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 169.

[2] Primarily, Jonathan Benthall, but also Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan, Bruno de Cordier, and Marie Juul Petersen. There is a separate literature in counter-terrorism studies that I did not consult because it seemed to be quite subjective in its approach.

centrality of organizations to Jewish life, there is not so much work on organizations and politics, and what is available is largely in the form of institutional histories.[3] More general literature, such as the emerging political science and sociology literature on faith-based organizations, is largely ahistorical, consisting of case studies rather than generalizable works that might be of interest to the historian. Yet, my preliminary research suggests that there is a good deal of interest to be found when looking into historical examples, and that a systematic recognition of the role of religion in humanitarian work is necessary. My contribution with this paper is to provide a historic view, and to take on the challenge of studying and comparing organizations other than the mainstream Protestant-affiliated organizations that tend to be the primary subjects of attention. As I could not access primary sources for this research, I must rely on secondary accounts, and given the history and breadth of these organizations, I really can only compare them superficially. Yet, while I could have chosen to be more specific and compare only one small aspect across the organizations, in order to be able to say anything of interest about faith-based NGOs and give these three organizations the contextualization they deserve, I choose to take a broad view.

While these organizations are separated by great gulfs, they are also logical subjects of comparison. None of these associations represent, or come close to representing, the entire spectrum of relief and development work undertaken by Jews, Christians, or Muslims. Even in the case of the Alliance Israélite Universelle ("Alliance"), which was really the first organization of its kind and inspired mimics or reactionary organizations elsewhere, it hardly spoke for all Jews. In fact, as I will continue to discuss, despite their religious origins, each of these organizations in some ways transcended their religious groundings, and particularly for the Alliance or Islamic Relief Worldwide ("Islamic Relief"), often are quite distant from religious conservatives. Bruno De Cordier makes a fundamental distinction between faith-based organizations that have a religious agenda and use humanitarian aid as a vector for it, and organizations that are aid workers foremost but inspired by religion.[4] In the case of Islamic NGOs, Juul Marie Petersen thinks of it as more of a continuum "from an embedded Islam, encouraging a thoroughly Islamized aid and blocking integration into the field of mainstream development and humanitarian aid, to an invisible Islam, accompanied by an almost secularized aid and facilitating integration into the aid field."[5] I would situate all three

[3] Although, of all Jewish international organizations, the Alliance Israélite Universelle is probably the best-researched. There are several institutional histories, but also works on other themes that discuss it.

[4] "Faith-based aid," 609.

[5] "Islamizing aid," 1.

of my organizations on her continuum close to the secularized aid end of the spectrum and place them in De Cordier's latter category. They are all well-known actors in the humanitarian field and, perhaps from the viewpoint of humanitarians, embody what it means to be a Jewish, Protestant, or Muslim NGO, even if their respective co-religionists might disagree. Furthermore, they are all firmly rooted in particularly Western national contexts, acting internationally, and that seems to guide their actions at least as significantly as their religious bases.

Introducing the organizations (and their national and religious baggage)

In literature on faith-based organizations, there seems to be a widespread assumption that they come out of a tradition of charity. Yet, none of these organizations began on that premise, but for far more practical reasons. For these three organizations, it is a combination of an imperative to act, and a religious motivation for that action.

Alliance Israélite Universelle: Paris, 1860

Until the twentieth century, Jewish diplomacy was largely based around the role of the intercessor, the *shtadlan*, generally a wealthy representative of the Jewish community who spoke on behalf of the community to the non-Jewish authorities. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, acculturated Jews from the "civilized" Great Powers, enjoying the benefits of emancipation and full civil equality in their own countries, attempted to use their privileges and connections to help their fellow Jews in other countries in a more coherent and public way than they had before.[6] This early period was marked by the influence of Jewish notables, including the Montefiores and the Rothschilds, who acted as *shtadlanim* with a transterritorial, not just local, focus. The Damascus affair, for which Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Crémieux successfully intervened on behalf of persecuted Jews in Damascus, might be considered the defining event of this period that, in Tobias Brinkmann's words, "sparked the transnational consciousness of Jews throughout the western Diaspora, and marked the symbolic birth of a public Jewish sphere that transcended national and imperial borders."[7]

The French Alliance was the first Jewish organization to take on the role that individuals had played in the past. A group of young, educated, Parisian Jews founded the Alliance in 1860. These Jews were the descendents of the generation of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, who had lived through the emancipation of the Jews in France in

[6] Green, "Nationalism and the 'Jewish International'," 541-2.
[7] Brinkmann, "Transnational Jewish Philanthropic Organizations," 10.

1791, and they themselves had lived through the revolution of 1848, with its hopes for progress. They were lawyers, poets, professors, engineers, rabbis—members of the intellectual bourgeoisie, themselves products of the progress French Jews had made since the emancipation.[8] Yet, they recognized that the general situation of French Jews was deteriorating and that there were still many problems facing Jews. The failure of the 1848 revolution and the resultant increasing power of the Church—which was hostile to Jews, outburst of violence in Alsace, the Cahen affair,[9] and the Mortara affair[10] served as continual reminders that Jews were not equal citizens. But they had the success of French and British Jewish intervention for their coreligionists in Damascus as well to inspire their efforts.[11]

Theirs was not a utopian effort, but marked by realism. It was meant to be an organization of action, and it took the Universal Evangelical Alliance, created in London in 1846, as its guide in this endeavor.[12] For French Jews, spreading universal French revolutionary values to Jews in other places reflected a particular blend of French patriotic ideology and a form of solidarity with other Jews.[13] From the beginning, they held a desire to present Judaism, and particularly French Judaism, as a flagship of democracy.[14] French Jews had "reaffirmed their Jewishness in new terms meaningful in French culture."[15] In 1863, Adolphe Crémieux, who interceded in Damascus and during the Mortara affair, officially became president and set the course of the Alliance for the next couple of decades.

American Friends Service Committee: Philadelphia, 1917

Quakerism, at least numerically, is a minor denomination of Protestant Christianity. While the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Service Council (I will discuss them hereafter as the AFSC, the British FSC, and together as the Friends Service) were founded for their tasks and maintained by central Quaker institutions, and thus could be said to be representative of all Quakers, they are hardly representative of Christian relief organizations. In fact, in the Interwar period particularly, they were rather a deviant minority

[8] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 12-14.

[9] Involving a bishop firing Cahen from a well-deserved position as a chair of philosophy in a lycée for no apparent reason other than his Jewishness.

[10] Involving a Jewish boy being kidnapped, secretly baptized, and taken away from his parents to be raised in a convent under the personal protection of the pope.

[11] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 23-5.

[12] Ibid., 39.

[13] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, chp. 5.

[14] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 29.

[15] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 4-5.

and were far more involved in relief and reconstruction than most other Christian denominations. The Society of Friends originated in Britain, and most Quakers live in the British Commonwealth and the United States. In the United States, the Philadelphia area is a major Quaker hub. I will focus more on the AFSC than the British FSC, but in fact, it is difficult to speak of them separately because of their close relationship.

Some historians of Quakers trace back their relief work to the early eighteenth century, but that is mostly local charity, and it fails to convincingly explain the emergence of major international relief efforts during World War I. Instead, it seems more worthwhile to link their relief work to their core pacifist belief that if all human are children of God, war is fratricide. Not just pacifism, but active work for peace, is seen as essential; yet, active pacifism and relief work do not seem to necessarily correlate. Where they connect is that during World War I, Quaker objectors to military conscription in Britain and the United States offered to provide relief work as an official, alternative service to their respective governments.

Over the summer of 1914, British Quakers were setting up several emergency war relief committees, some officially approved by the Quaker Yearly Meeting, some not. At first the Yearly Meeting wanted nothing to do with military service or alternative service of any kind, but the life-saving work provided by the unofficial relief committees gradually changed the opinion of the Quaker establishment.[16] Debates in the United States were not as heated. American Quaker objectors proposed in 1917 to organize one relief agency to work with the Friends War Victims Relief Committee in Britain, the official Quaker relief organization, to provide relief to Allied troops in lieu of conscription. During the war, the US government never fully committed to or rejected this proposal, and thus, hardly any of the Quakers trained for service were sent to Europe.[17] Yet, they were trained, and Quakers quickly saw that they could continue to be of service in an important way post-war. The decision to stay on the continent for relief and reconstruction was debated, but maintained, and in 1928 the AFSC finally incorporated with plans to exist indefinitely.

Islamic Relief Worldwide: Birmingham, 1984

Jonathan Benthall, *the* expert, understands the rise of Islamic NGOs as a confluence of two factors: first, the general explosion of human rights and humanitarian NGOs in the 1970s and 1980s, and second, an Islamic resurgence going back to the Six-Day War in

[16] Greenwood, *Friends and Relief*, 181-4.
[17] Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 31-47.

1967.[18] I would agree with this assessment more than the more standard explanation, which tries to connect traditional Islamic charity (zakat) and the pious foundation (waqf) to Islamic NGOs, but has no way of explaining why these ancient charities and foundations suddenly became institutionalized and internationalized outside of traditional religious institutions. While Islamic NGOs have taken on many different forms over the last few decades, Benthall argues that they all share some resemblances: they draw on those ideas of zakat and waqf, refer to the religious calendar and quotations from the Koran and hadiths, and have a special concern for orphans and refugees.[19]

Besides the central Muslim traditions, there is a history of Red Crescent societies which goes back to the early twentieth century. Red Crescent Societies in Britain (1912-1920) and Turkey (after 1922) led the way for the development of others across the Muslim world.[20] It is difficult to trace Red Crescent Societies' connections with the Islamic NGOs that began appearing in the 1970s, however, the way in which the Red Crescent Societies drew inspiration from the West but acted autonomously in the Muslim World probably served as historic models on which some aid-oriented Muslim NGOs sought to build. Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan envisions the rise of Islamic NGOs as a form of Islamic solidarity in reaction to aid provided by Western humanitarian NGOs, building not on Red Crescent Societies but on traditional Islamic archetypes of the medic, the militant, and the fighter. He argues that they did not just imitate Western organizations, but re-appropriated and contested them, grounding their work in an Islamic tradition of commitment to those in need and a desire for justice. [21] While NGOs mixed these three roles in their early days, they eventually differentiated themselves in various ways, some sticking to traditional charity, others taking on a dual political and social welfare identity, and still others becoming international relief-only operations.[22] For the third category, Bellion-Jourdan argues that they arrived at such a status while trying to meet demands for efficiency and effectiveness.

Islamic Relief somehow fits into Bellion-Jourdan's third category, though while it has always been distinctly Muslim, it was founded in the West, so it needed to fit into a Western context from the start rather than working towards Western efficiency standards, and it did not emerge in response to a war. Hany El Banna, then an Egyptian medical student at the University of Birmingham, founded Islamic Relief in 1984 after he visited refugee camps in

[18] "Islamic Charities," 3.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Benthall, *Charitable Crescent*, 4950.
[21] *Charitable Crescent,* 69-70.
[22] Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent,* 2.

Sudan and as a response to famine in the Horn of Africa. For its first three years, it operated out of a room in a student hostel in Birmingham. It is now one of the two major British Islamic relief agencies, alongside Muslim Aid, and the largest Islamic NGO in the world. It is rooted in the Pakistani community in Birmingham,[23] and it is more "establishment-oriented" than Muslim Aid. [24] Its position is such that Benthall writes, "it is hard to see any Islamic charity other than Islamic Relief Worldwide soon becoming a genuinely transnational NGO."[25]

Comparing the Visions, the Practices, and the Operations

In this section, I proceed thematically. I will discuss the big picture and the "public face" of these organizations—the type of work they do, what motivates their work, their ideological underpinnings, and whom they target. Then I will move to study their internal bureaucracies to try to understand who they hire, how they operate, who they work with, and how they raise funds. I will not be comprehensive, but even if I were, there is no way to account for how these organizations have evolved over time. In general, I am talking about the Alliance before the Great War, the Friends Service in the Interwar Period, and Islamic Relief from the 1990s until today.

The External Image and the Broad Goals: Religious Justifications for Universalism

In terms of the work these organizations do, each one is a relief organization, a development organization, and in its own way, a political organization, but they arrived there via different routes. The Alliance set two tasks for itself: advocating for Jewish rights in other countries, and establishing education programs.[26] It did this by creating a self-help network amongst Jews worldwide.[27] Thus, the Alliance conceived of itself as more of a political and rehabilitation organization than a relief organization, and it is most famous for the schools it set up in North Africa. Yet, as the Alliance became aware of the suffering of Jews in other parts of Europe while advocating for them politically, they were swept into the role of relief. The Friends Service entered the humanitarian field via relief, specializing in feeding programs and distribution of emergency supplies, and ended up staying for the work of reconstruction as well. While it was so successful because of its ability to remain nonpartisan

[23] De Cordier, "Faith-based aid," endnote 6.
[24] Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, xvi.
[25] "Islamic Charities," 11.
[26] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 159.
[27] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 36.

and nonpolitical, that does not mean it was not involved in politics—Quakers constantly undertook complex negotiations with governments and other private agencies to obtain funding and authorization for their work. Islamic Relief began, like the Quakers, with emergency relief, but recently moved into long-term, participatory development. Now, once the work of emergency aid is over, Islamic Relief almost always continues operations, shifting its focus to development programs, like microfinance, education, health and nutrition, orphan sponsorships, water, and sanitation.[28] Before 2000, Islamic Relief's work also consisted of mosque-building and other Islamic activities, but does not any longer.[29] Islamic Relief has a clear political dimension, its advocacy work and political stances clearly delineated on its web site, and it positions itself as a moderate, as opposed to fundamentalist, Islamic organization.[30]

One significant difference amongst the organizations is the object of their assistance. All three make claims to the universal, but probably the one that comes the closest is the Friends Service. Quakers assisted whomever was in need, when necessary prioritizing as scientifically as possible and favoring children. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee funneled aid through the Friends Service because it realized the Quakers could be trusted to not discriminate against Jewish recipients. The Alliance and Islamic Relief are similar in that their assistance was aimed at their co-religionists. While the Alliance addressed people as individuals, not as groups, and pretended that it was universal and open to everyone, Judaism "constitutes the essence of its fight, the battle flag behind which it rallies its members but also the weapon of aid with which it defends its convictions."[31] The Alliance in practice worked on behalf of Jews in the Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.[32] Islamic Relief chooses to operate in areas that are predominantly Muslim or have a significant Muslim minority,[33] but it stresses that in the areas where it works, it distributes aid to all communities without distinction.[34] In general, Islamic Relief does not do any development or crisis relief in the West, but instead raises funds in the West to dispense for Muslims in the Muslim world. Petersen observes that in the concrete

[28] Kirmani, Khan, and Palmer, "Does Faith Matter?" 5.

[29] Said, "Faith-based Organisations" 43.

[30] http://www.islamic-relief.com/InDepth/Default.aspx

[31] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 35. Translation my own.

[32] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 2.

[33] Islamic Relief has operations in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, with Pakistan, Indonesia, Lebanon, and Palestine hosting its largest programs.

[34] Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, 78.

implementation of activities, Islam does not seem to play a role, and that Islamic Relief views universal humanitarianism and Islamic humanitarianism as equivalent.[35]

The choices each organization makes have to do with the organizational identity, which in each case is a combination of universalism and a particular religion, but the balance varies. The Alliance aimed to promote Jewish rights worldwide by promoting tolerance, equality, and religious freedom.[36] Yet the Alliance's definition of Judaism and ethics were just one version, rooted not in religion or ancestry, but in a belief that Jews actually contained a modern, universalistic, democratic essence that could be reached through education.[37] Basically, the Alliance used references to Jewish mysticism and the Talmud to talk about modern ideals.[38] For the Alliance, their work had to be international as well as national, because each justified the other—French Jews used international advocacy to secure their place in the French nation, putting equal rights for religious minorities on the agenda in French diplomatic work to remind them of their commitments at home as well as to actually assist Jews abroad.[39] Yet, the Alliance avoided seeming to be representative of world Jewry, promoting the idea that networks, rather than nations, could create peace.[40] Quakers operated mainly out of their pacifist beliefs. Evangelism was never a motivating factor, although they believed in leading by good deeds and a good reputation rather than direct preaching and conversation. This, in fact, did create a following for them in many areas where they worked, notably in Germany. Their deep belief in the humanity of individuals also characterized their work. The memoirs I came across consistently emphasized that they not only provided bread and milk, but also positive human contact, and they tried to connect to aid recipients as individual humans. Islamic Relief has a twofold identity, Islamic and humanitarian. It speaks the language of mainstream development and humanitarian aid and shares its core principles, but also promotes religious aspects that are acceptable and useful to both its institutional and individual donors. It needs to be religious enough to maintain religious legitimacy, but also seem moderate enough to garner Western institutional funds.[41] For example, it hands out special food packages on Ramadan and meat on Qurban, and combines orphan sponsorship (a traditional focus of Islamic zakat) with education and vocational training for orphans.

---

[35] "Islamizing Aid," 21.
[36] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 2
[37] Simon-Nahum, "Aux origines de l'Alliance," 37, 42.
[38] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 169-71.
[39] Ibid. 8-9.
[40] Ibid. 162.
[41] Petersen, "Islamizing Aid," 20, 24-5.

Inside the Organizations: The Drive to Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Funding

When one starts to really focus on the details of how the organizations functions, from how they reach an international objective to how their offices and staff are set up to where they get their funding to who they partner with to achieve their various objectives, commonalities seem to fade. Largely, this has to do with a difference in time and historical context. The Alliance Israélite was creating an organization without many models to mimic, the Quakers were navigating new and uncertain geopolitical terrain, whereas Islamic Relief was looking to create a niche in an already occupied humanitarian field. But despite differing results, I would argue that many of the pressures remain the same—and these organizations found different solutions depending on the particular circumstance.

All three of these organizations, particularly the Alliance and Islamic Relief, had wide networks that enabled them to work internationally while remaining centered in one particular place. Alliance had a decision-making central committee ranging between 40 and 60 members, mostly French, a small corps of officers that carried out the actual operations from the Paris headquarters, all French, and a huge network of local committees formed of members. Despite professing democracy and universalism, the Alliance was always dominated by the French Jewish elite. Yet the local committees were crucial to the work of the Alliance, as the donor base, the informant base, and potential sites of lobbying or relief work. Depending on the location of the committee, it might be more a center for donations or a center for information or a target for aid; but it was not usually all, although there was formally no distinction. At its highest point, the Alliance had 30,100 members in 1885, formed into 349 local committees in 1880, from thirty countries all over Europe, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire, but not including Russia. So it did, in a sense, adhere to democratic principles by involving its members, but the desire for an efficient and effective organization pushed it to concentrate power in the hands of a small number of people.[42] Islamic Relief has a similar network, though firmly grounded in the UK instead of France, and rather than voluntary committees, professional offices. It has offices across Europe and the US for funding and project managing, and projects and field offices across the Muslim world. Its staff of 1,500 people are mostly locals—hardly any expatriates are imported into their offices, making up only 1.7% of Islamic Relief's contracted work force.[43] This reliance on locals, which De Cordier thinks of as far more typical of Muslim aid organizations than

[42] Weill, "Les structures et les hommes."
[43] De Cordier, "Faith-based aid," 615; Petersen, "Islamizing aid," 20.

Western NGOs or IOs,[44] is in fact, quite similar to that of the Alliance. The Quakers are more the outliers among my cases, and are a perfect example of the typical imported international worker. Quakers came from Britain and the United States to aid strangers in Central and Eastern Europe. Though they engaged in projects with locals, they were the directors. Official Quaker bodies which used the name "Friends" were supposed to, according to Quaker custom, draw their officers and most of their members from the Society of Friends.[45] Yet in the areas they worked, at least at first, there were mostly no Quakers, but where local Meetings were developed, such as Berlin, locals became integrated directly into the work. They generally managed to have access to authorities and the places where they sought to provide relief through reliance on the personal contacts of individual Quakers, or they drew on the networks of other organizations, like the American Relief Administration.[46]

When it comes to these workers, staff or volunteer, the greatest factor seems to be the time in history. Private associations have been increasingly professionalized over their long history. All workers in the Friends Service were volunteers—what qualified you for the work was your belief in the work and preferably, being a Quaker. In John Forbes words, "the role of leadership becomes less important than the general requirement that has been aptly called 'divide ordinariness.'"[47] And, remarkably, women were included from the beginning at all levels of the Friends Service, which reflects on the role of women in Quaker life in general. The Alliance was the domain of Jewish men—intellectuals in France, and typically rabbis outside of France,[48] who were thus professionals in other capacities, but acted as volunteers when it came to their work with the Alliance. The responsibilities were divided amongst the central committee and the elected officers largely depending on the authority and charisma of the president at any given time. Adolphe Crémieux wielded significant power as president. The elected officers acted as a professionalized secretariat now would, the secretary acting as its managerial leader, gathering information, creating infrastructure, writing agendas, hiring personnel, and the president strategized and handled the political work. I cannot determine whether or not the elected officers were paid, and if they hired paid staff, and I do not know whether these officers worked for the Alliance full time or if they held other jobs while maintaining their roles at the Alliance. Islamic Relief, however, is highly professionalized.

[44] De Cordier, "Faith-based aid," 615
[45] Greenwood, *Friends and Relief*, 182.
[46] Ibid., 225.
[47] *Quaker Star*, 18-19.
[48] Weill, "Les structures et les hommes," 70.

Even the Quakers have a paid professional staff at their United Nations-directed lobbying offices in New York and Geneva now, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, in some ways only a shadow of what it used to be, occupies a building in Paris with a large professional staff, though both continue to draw heavily on volunteers. Islamic Relief in 1995 began to professionalize its staff, searching for candidates based on objective qualifications, rather than commitment to Islam, who would consider their work at Islamic Relief part of their career.[49] Their staff members are multiethnic, and their offices are marked by an informal religiosity, mostly confined to the spheres of personal motivation and practice, not codified.[50] Yet this professionalization is a source of tension for Islamic Relief, whose board members and trustees do not have qualifications in the humanitarian world, but are more often dignitaries or leaders in the British Muslim community, and who sometimes block efforts at professionalization, despite the necessity of professionalization to achieve goals of effectiveness and efficiency.[51]

Finally, it is clear that each organization carefully chooses its tactics based on not only its larger goals, but also while strategizing about support and funding. The Alliance sought to align with republicans and anticlerical liberals and make "civilization" rather than Catholicism the vision for French foreign policy.[52] In order to create change, the Alliance publicized the plight of oppressed Jews in the Western press and appealed to high officials abroad on their behalf. They sought funding only from Jewish donors, involving the Rothschilds and other wealthy benefactors as well as their network of members, seeking to avoid burdening governments with Jews and keep matters internal. While Crémieux may have spoken with very important people, the Alliance aimed to reduce, not augment, anti-Semitism, so its strategies were simultaneously bold, but somewhat secretive and closed. The Friends Relief was open, but highly cautious. Nonpolitical efforts to secure money and access required patience and government cooperation, which was often slow work[53] After all, they had complex relationships with enemy countries, and with Bolshevik Russia, so they had to be careful about funding sources and maintaining neutrality. Their transparency and their neutrality were also essential to their funding so that they could be viewed as nonpartisan, responsible distributing agents by almost anyone. Well-to-do Quakers gave their share and covered the administrative overhead of the Friends Service, but the Quakers relied on the US

[49] Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, 79.
[50] Petersen, "Islamizing Aid," 22.
[51] Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, 79-80.
[52] Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, 119.
[53] Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 80.

government, private associations, individual donors, religious institutions, and industries to provide their funds, including gifts in kind as supplies. They found their supporters along national British and American lines, and sometimes had to sacrifice international cooperation between the British FSC and the AFSC in order to maintain the support of other national groups. They framed their appeals based on need and opportunity---for example, the children need us, use this opportunity to help them. Its first year, the AFSC raised and expended $511,000, and by 1922, their peak year, they received $1,419,000 plus gifts in kind. [54] To a greater extreme than both the Alliance and the Friends Service, Islamic Relief is committed to transparency and accountability, both as a way of garnering support in the West and as a way of defining themselves against terrorist and fundamentalist organizations. As a British NGO, it follows the United Kingdom's reporting and auditing requirements, forcing public accountability, and it requires its Muslim partners to sign statements that funding and training will not be used for terrorism. It knows significant grants come from the West and from International Organizations, and it therefore sought integration within the wider development and relief community, cooperating extensively with Western NGOs and with IOs.[55] It does draw on Islamic traditions for fundraising within the British Muslim community, such as zakat, but those donations cover only a small part of their budget, which has skyrocketed from about 15 million USD to 60 million USD in the past ten years, and are more important for legitimacy than for their size.[56] Islamic Relief's commitment to transparency and to cooperation with the West, while remaining Muslim faith-based, make it particularly attractive to the West, because it acts like a bridge from the West to the Muslim world and giving it support appears to be a possible antidote to fundamentalist Islamization and terrorism. Accordingly, Islamic Relief is the only major Islamic agency in the United States to have been allowed to raise funds in the United States post 9/11.[57]

---

[54] Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 20-2.

[55] To give examples, projects are funded by organizations such as UK Department for International Development, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations , and the World Food Programme. Islamic Relief is a founding member of the Disasters Emergency Committee. It works on projects with Oxfam and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. It has held consultative status with the Un ECOSOC since 2006 and works with UN High Commission for Refugees. It signed the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief.

[56] Petersen, "Islamizing Aid," 10.

[57] Benthall, "Islamic Charities," 8.

Campaigns

In order to provide not just a more accessible view of the organizations and what they actually did, as well as to overcome treating each as essentially static over time, I will briefly cover a major relief campaign that each undertook. The campaigns are exemplary of their respective organizations, as opportunities for both carrying out planned-for tasks and developing new strategies and identities in response to the work. Although relief was not the primary goal of the Alliance, and it might be better viewed through its advocacy campaign on behalf of Romanian Jews, emergency relief is a uniting theme for comparison.

Relief for Russian Jews, 1869-1901, Alliance Israélite Universelle

Massive population growth amongst Jews in Tsarist Russia occurred in the nineteenth century. Jews were restricted to residing in the Pale of Settlement along the empire's Western border, amongst other restrictions that hindered their economic growth. The result was widespread unemployment and poverty. In 1869, the Alliance suddenly became aware of the gravity of the situation of Jews in Poland and Russia when a local committee of the Alliance in Koenigsberg, Germany, near the border with Russia, alerted the central committee of the Alliance of the devastation caused by typhus and famine in Poland and Russia. The Koenigsberg committee, led by a rabbi, became immediately and critically involved in the effort, because it was willing and close to Russia, transforming into the Comité principal de Koenigsberg institute pour les Israélites de l'ouest de la Russie. Politically, the Alliance had to make a choice as to whether it would support the dissolution of the Pale and lobby for Jews to move towards the Russian interior, or whether it should support massive emigration to the West. The Alliance decided to work towards both goals, though the first resonated more with the Alliance's general stance that it should be possible to improve the conditions of Jews where they already lived. Meetings were quickly organized in Berlin and delegations and committees created to investigate the problem and work on solutions, which they determined would first focus on emergency aid and then focus on the development of schools and encouraging manual and agricultural labor, while working on migration out of and within Russia.

The Koenigsberg committee received funds from the Alliance and collected its own in Germany, it worked to establish schools and to facilitate emigration from Russia, in particular, arranging to send Jewish orphans West for adoption. Notably, it did not believe in charity, which cost too much money and did not meet its aims. Meanwhile, the central committee worked on trying to create Jewish centers to welcome the refugees in the United

States, and although American Jews were reluctant to do so, they eventually conceded. On the whole, however, the Koenigsberg committee and the central committee were completely overwhelmed on the ground, facing overwhelming numbers of people soliciting their assistance and finding it difficult to focus on their priorities. The Alliance thus turned to local committees, press campaigns, appeals to European and American governments, and rallies to inspire action for the cause. This campaign, which was a combination of humanitarian relief, development work, emigration assistance, and political lobbying, continued until 1901. By the end, the Alliance had sent refugees to various locations in Central and Western Europe, and eventually New York and England, though they never found the efficient, inexpensive solution they sought. The Alliance sent only 865 families overseas and helped only 1,200 children in Russia, out of a total of 15,000 to 20,000 Jews who managed to leave Russia during that time period.[58]

Postwar Relief in Central and Eastern Europe, from 1918, American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Service Council

The Quakers, particularly the Americans ones, had only started arriving in France when the Armistice of the Great War arrived. Instead of pulling out, the Friends Service decided to stay and continue the relief they had begun during the war, their efforts peaking in 1922. They moved from France eastward, all the way to Russia, in an attempt to help Europe survive the disease and famines that were sweeping across the continent and to reconstruct. As wartime restrictions and complications on relief started to ease, Quakers from the AFSC were discharged from the army and the Friends Service was allowed to continue in the field and expand operations across the country, cooperating closely with the American Red Cross (ARC). The Friends Service focused on food while the ARC distributed medical supplies. By 1919, the Quakers were realizing that there were extensive needs in other countries, as well.[59] At the request of Herbert Hoover then head of the American Relief Administration (ARA), the Friends Service officially entered Germany in February 1920 and got large scale feeding operations underway, though some Quakers had already gone as civilians to Germany to assess the damage.[60] The AFSC carried out the work of the ARA in Germany, directing all operations, but that close relationship between American organizations meant that the British

[58] Kauffmann, Laskier, and Schwarzfuchs, "Solidarité et defense," 104-115.

[59] Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 56-63.

[60] Greenwood, *Friends and Relief*, 220.

FSC was sidelined.[61] By 1921, the AFSC was working more on students and clothing than feeding. Throughout, the Quakers insisted that the needs in Germany required more than private money, but their consistent appeals never raised government funds.[62]

In Serbia, from 1919-1922, the AFSC quickly met obstacles due to the weak government and poor infrastructure. It took three months in the field before distribution began, but the Friends Service concentrated on self-help projects from the beginning, since Serbians were not as needy of relief.[63] A joint project of the Friends Service operated in Austria, from 1919-1925, fought incredible hunger and tuberculosis, cooperating with the ARA. They brought in cows and cow feed for milk and food for tens of thousands of meals daily provided to children and students.[64] In Poland, a joint Anglo-American effort worked to check the typhus epidemic, under the auspices of the ARC and the ARA, delousing, creating clean housing, and distributing food to children.[65]

Last, the Friends Service was involved in Russia. The British FSC had been there already during the war, and the AFSC resumed relief after the revolution and continued for ten years. The Friends Service expended significant effort in negotiations to have access, authority, and funding to work in Russia while remaining autonomous as the governments negotiated their new positions—the ARA, for example, was constantly pressuring the AFSC and the British FSC to sever ties so that the Quakers would serve under the American flag more than the Quaker star, the Soviet government was suspicious of the Quakers, and the American government was suspicious of Quaker ties to Bolshevism. Accordingly, until 1921, most initiatives, funding, and supplies were provided by other private associations and were minimal—but finally, the Soviets reached an agreement with the ARA which regulated the role of the AFSC and subjected them to the direction of the ARA.[66]

Bosnia, from 1992, Islamic Relief Worldwide

Conflict flared up in Bosnia in 1992 and was a major cause for Islamic mobilization. The general Islamic interpretation of the conflict was that of a vast plan of elimination of Muslims by infidels—and Islamic Relief followed suite, creating a video "Yugoslavia: the Crime of our Time" to demonstrate it. As Muslim NGOs and governments competed, Islamic

[61] Ibid., 223.
[62] Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 118.
[63] Ibid., 69-72.
[64] Ibid., 75-81.
[65] Greenwood, *Friends and Relief*, 237; Forbes, *Quaker Star*, 124-7.
[66] Forbes, *Quaker Star* 138-165.

Relief experienced huge growth, seeing its donations quadruple to help Bosnian Muslims. Islamic Relief confined themselves to humanitarian programs and did not engage in military commitment or politics, conforming to the UK Charities Acts. Other Islamic organizations accused it of being a Western agent by not giving Bosnians the means to defend themselves. A 1996 attack from *Le Figaro* against Islamic Relief's work in Bosnia ended in an out of court settlement and an apology from the newspaper.

Funds collected in Britain and France went toward Islamic Relief's two-fold goal of making it easier for Muslim refugees to stay in the region so that evacuation would not aid the cause of ethnic cleansing, through building Islamic centers and economic micro-projects, and of taking care of the refugees with food, medical care, psychological support, and teaching.[67] The provision of food and emergency assistance happened through the war's end in 1995. Immediately after, Islamic Relief began promoting the return of refugees through reconstruction. It was only later that long-term development and rehabilitation occurred through education and economic projects.[68] Islamic Relief carried with it a religious aspect, as well. It focused projects around important dates on the Islamic calendar and distributed 100,000 copies of the Koran or principles of Islam. It, like other Islamic NGOs, built mosques and disseminated concepts of Islam. [69]

Analysis and Conclusion

Jonathan Benthall asks, "How can one form a true picture of Muslim ethical values and traditions, in all their variety, without being trapped by media caricatures of fundamentalist Islam or by their opposite—a sentimentalized oleograph of Muslims as akin to Quakers in jellabas? To what extent does a legacy of Judaeo-Christianity underpin the supposedly universal humanitarianism that originated in the West? Is there one humanitarian tradition or several, each molded by its cultural past?"[70] In this essay, I have addressed these questions by looking at three actual faith-based organizations, including those Quakers that Benthall caricatures, at different points in modern history. I would argue that the Alliance, the Friends Service, and Islamic Relief are all subsets of one humanitarian tradition, each shaped by its own past and ideology, reappropriating humanitarianism while simultaneously redefining it. Clearly, these organizations are not replicas of one another, yet, they resemble one another to

[67] Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, 130-40.
[68] Kirmani, Khan, and Palmer. "Does Faith Matter?" 5.
[69]Bellion-Jourdan, *Charitable Crescent*, 142-4.
[70] *Charitable Crescent*, 1.

high degrees at all levels, and where they differ, they differ together or differ in their adaptations of similar principles and pressures.

A truly historical discussion of faith-based NGOs is in order. If these organizations have been around for two centuries, it hardly makes sense to start in the 1970s to analyze a humanitarian tradition. Petersen argues that organizations like Islamic Relief are "quasi-secular," by which she means faith-based organizations are expected to reproduce discourses and practices of development and humanitarian aid, not to reconceptualize them or to challenge their basic principles.[71] But that is short-sighted, assuming that the secular humanitarian NGOs that appeared in the 1970s formed the humanitarian discourse, not the faith-based organizations such as the Alliance, the Friends Service, or even the ICRC, which existed beforehand. If the NGOs of today do not seem to be the inheritors of the Christian tradition of charity, it is because they are not only inheritors of that, but of a rich, multi-faith contribution to humanitarianism. The Alliance and the Friends Service were not founded on the idea of charity, and they provided much more than palliative relief.

Here I return to the idea of sacralized humanitarianism. None of these organizations, not the Quakers, not the Alliance, not Islamic Relief, are deeply, conservatively religious. If they were, they would not be engaged in international humanitarian work. These three organizations drew on their religions for moral compass, for motivation, for justification, for empathy and combined it with the liberal ideas of the times. It took modern ideas and modern infrastructure, none of which is recognized by religious tradition, for people to look outside their communities and seek to assist strangers. They interpreted the world in light of their particular beliefs and adapted their organizations to navigate the balance of an ever-changing world and religious tradition and, at once together and apart, built a humanitarian tradition.

[71] "Islamizing Aid," 12.

Bibliography

Benthall, Jonathan and Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan. *The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World.* London: I. B. Tauris, 2009.

Benthall, Jonathan. "Islamic Charities, Faith-Based Organizations, and the International Aid System." In Alterman, Jon B. and Karin von Hippel (eds) 2007. *Understanding Islamic Charities*. Washington, DC: CSIS Press

--. "Islamic Relief Worldwide." The Palgrave dictionary of transnational history. Akira Iriye, Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds.

Brinkmann, Tobias. "Transnational Jewish Philanthropic Organizations and the Jewish Mass Migration from Eastern Europe 1860–1914" *Transnational relations of experts, elites and organizations in the long 19th century*. Conference, Geneva: Aug. 31–Sept. 1, 2009.

De Cordier, Bruno. Faith-based aid, globalisation and the humanitarian frontline: an analysis of Western-based Muslim aid organisations. Disasters, 33: 608–628.

Forbes, John. The Quaker star under seven flags, 1917-1927. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962.

Green, Abigail. "Nationalism and the 'Jewish International': Religious Internationalism in Europe and the Middle East c. 1840-c. 1880." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 2 (2008): 535-558.

Greenwood, John Ormerod. *Friends and Relief.* York, England: William Sessions, 1975.

Kauffmann, Grégoire, Michael M. Laskier, and Simon Schwarzfuchs. "Solidarité et defense des droits des juifs (1860-1914)." *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours.* André Kaspi, ed. Paris : Armand Colin, 2010.

Kirmani, Nidi, Ajaz Ahmed Khan, and Victoria Palmer. "Does Faith Matter?: An Exmaniation of Islamic Relief's Work with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons." Birmingham, UK: Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2009.

Leff, Lisa Moses. *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Petersen, Marie Juul. "Islamizing Aid: Transnational Muslim NGOs after 9.11" *Voluntas.* March 2011.

Said, Hossam. "Faith-based Organisations as Political, Humanitarian, or Religious Actors: An Islamic Perspective." Proceedings of *Religion, Politics, Conflict and Humanitarian Action: Faith-Based Organisations as Political, Humanitarian, or Religious Actors*. May 18-19, 2005. Geneva, Switzerland.

Simon-Nahum, Perrine. “Aux origines de l’Alliance.” *Histoire de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours.* André Kaspi, ed. Paris : Armand Colin, 2010.

Vital, David. *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe 1789-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Weill, Georgies. “Les structures et les hommes. ” *Histoire de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours.* André Kaspi, ed. Paris : Armand Colin, 2010.