

Running Head:THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The International Committee of the Red Cross:

Managing Across Cultures

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## Abstract

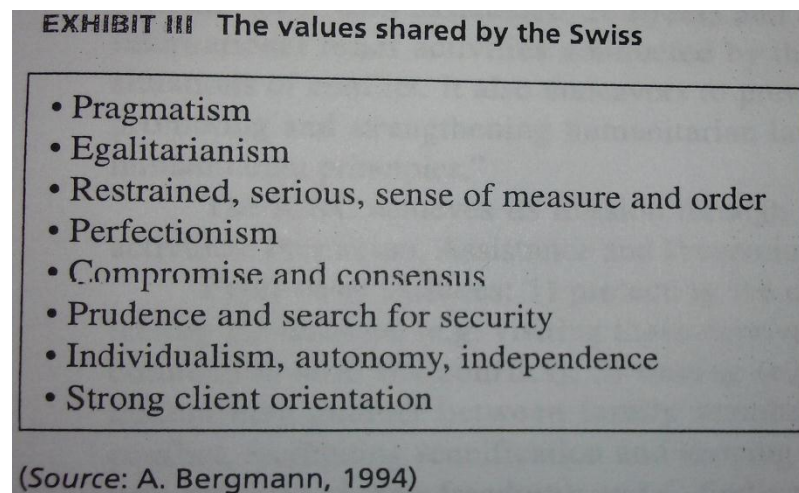
This paper discusses the history and background of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It also discusses how the Red Cross came to be today, what their goals, values, and strategies are for operating in the future. What we know of as the ICRC was originally The International Committee for Relief to the Wounded in Time of War and was founded in 1863 by a Swiss businessman by the name of Henri Dunant and four other Genevois.

## The International Committee of the Red Cross: Managing Across Cultures

In 1859 a brave Swiss businessman by the name of Henri Dunant had a most ingenious idea. After witnessing the pain and suffering of dead or wounded soldiers that resulted from a battle between the Austrian and French armies during the War of Italian Unification he wanted to aid in providing adequate medical services to those who needed them. Dunant thought of two different strategies that would aid in the suffering of victims during war times. These two strategies are as follows: “1) the formation of national relief societies to supplement armed forces with medical services in time of conflict; and 2) the development of an international convention to protect the sick and wounded in combat,” (Deresky 436). Accompanied by four other Genevois, Dunant took these new strategies and formed The International Committee for Relief to the Wounded in Time of War in 1863. Today that committee is known as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Seeing as the Red Cross was founded by a Swiss businessman, it only makes sense since that the Red Cross reflect Swiss values such as autonomy, egalitarianism, and consensus-seeking. Early on, the ICRC was organized and managed by the “first families” but as they began to grow and diversify slightly they allowed Swiss-Italians and Swiss-Germans to join the organization on one condition, they had to fully master both written and spoken French as well as conform to the Swiss-French culture that the organization was made up of. Similar values across all Swiss cultures made the

transition fairly manageable. These values are displayed below in Exhibit III.



The ICRC developed a strategy for 2007-2010 entitled “Committed to meeting new challenges through action”. Included in this strategy was the continuance of developing an “all-victims and all-needs approach” in regards to armed conflicts, the further establishment of partnerships with National Societies, and remaining as the “reference organization for matters pertaining to international humanitarian law,” (Deresky 437). The mission for both their new proposed strategy as well as the organization as whole was stated as being:

*“The ICRC is an impartial, neutral, and independent organizations whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavors to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.” -- Deresky 437-38*

The ICRC plans to achieve this mission through the involvement of three different fields: Protection, Assistance, and Prevention. Protection includes but is not limited to:

1. Protecting the civilians who become involved in the conflict
2. Protecting those detained due to their involvement in the conflict
3. Tracking down and maintaining contact between family members who have been separated by the conflict
4. And attempting to find people who have gone missing as a result of the conflict

Assistance is to include but not limit:

1. Relief for both economic and security survival needs e.g. food, shelter, agricultural, and veterinarian
2. Providing clean drinking water and stable shelters
3. Emergency medical services for both those wounded by war or basic health care needs
4. Physical rehabilitation for those who have been disabled due to the conflict

Prevention is everything entailed with the possible prevention of further conflicts as well as spreading knowledge discussed in the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as stated below. The preferred goal for the ICRC is to maintain a “low profile” and try not to get too heavily involved in the right or wrong of activities but instead to rather provide assistance to those being hurt as a result of the conflict. However the ICRC will get more involved and even rally the newspapers and other press as a means to bring attention to violations of the IHL and attempt to bring the violators of the IHL to justice.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is a wonderful organization aimed towards the protection of human life, medical aid, and prevention of International

Humanitarian Law violations. Exhibit II below discusses how they go about maintaining impartiality and neutrality.

**EXHIBIT II The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

**Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavors, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality**

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

**Voluntary Service**

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

**Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

**Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Works Cited

Deresky, Helen. "The International Committee of the Red Cross: Managing Across Cultures." *International management: managing across borders and cultures : text and cases*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2011. 433 - 444. Print.