

# Review of: "The soft power of neutrality Dutch humanitarianism in World War I, 1914-1918"

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This is an interesting paper on the actions of a neutral country, The Netherlands, during WW1. The paper is of importance for the very reason of its focus, a neutral rather than actively warring country, which in my view is rarer in war studies. This paper counters the view of neutral countries being passive bystanders but that they actively attempted to influence their own status in the war and also actively contemplated their neutrality while partaking in humanitarian actions. The paper has good analysis on the motivations behind Dutch humanitarian aid. It also commendably discussed some of the difficulties that neutrality posed and the differing voices in Dutch society regarding it – the conditions of neutrality and the extent of humanitarian aid had to be examined and if needed and adjusted throughout the war.

Although the focus is on the actions of the Dutch during the war, the paper could benefit from stating the military political conditions that allowed the country to stay neutral. Also, it seems that the Dutch government was not tolerant of extreme leftist ideas so at least on a political level, the country was not completely neutral and took critical measures to stop these ideas from spreading. The paper does address these issues and that there are limits to neutrality and humanitarian aid in a war situation, but it might be worthwhile to examine more in depth some of the political ideologies of the time and how they influenced the way certain groups were perceived.

Also, some estimate on how many hospitals were put up and how many ambulances were mobilized and an analysis on their significance overall would be interesting, though this is just a minor issue. The paper's focus is on the history of neutrality, but I would be interested in an analysis of how this tradition of neutrality and humanitarian aid has survived to the present day (if it indeed has) and in what form.