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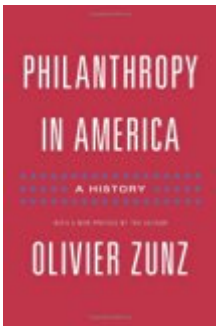
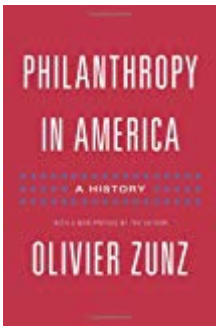


Inderjeet Parmar. *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. $40.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-51793-5.



Olivier Zunz. *Philanthropy in America: A History.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. 400 S. $29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-12836-8.

Reviewed by Katharina Rietzler

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The history of American philanthropy has resembled a booming cottage industry in recent years. There have been several edited volumes and specialised studies, and the field has increasingly attracted historians based outside the United States. To name just three recent examples, John Krige / Helke Rausch (eds.), American Foundations and the Coproduction of World Order in the Twentieth Century, Göttingen 2012; Nicolas Guilhot (ed.), The Invention of International Relations Theory. Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation and the 1954 Conference on Theory, New York 2011; Ludovic Tournès, Sciences de l'homme et politique. Les fondations philanthropiques américaines en France au Xxe siècle, Paris 2011. Now we also have two monographs that attempt to tell the story of twentieth-century American philanthropy in a broad sweep, one written by the British political scientist Inderjeet Parmar, and the other by Princeton historian Olivier Zunz. These books complement each other. Parmar's account analyses the activity of overseas foundation philanthropy as one which took place under the banner of aggressive American hegemony. Zunz's focus is largely domestic and his assessment mostly positive: in his view, American philanthropy enriched American democracy and promoted a global civil society.

Parmar charts the influence of the so-called Big Three, the foundations created by the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie families. He begins his story with short biographies of the founders, fol-

lowed by a sociological analysis of the elite socio-economic background of foundation trustees. These foundation leaders tended to be recruited from the professions or government service, and were part of the American foreign policy establishment. Parmar describes their world view as one marked by "religiosity, scientism, racism and elitism" (p. 59). From the 1930s onwards, the Big Three sought to convince ordinary Americans that the United States should play an active role in world affairs, and built up a fairly sophisticated propaganda infrastructure by supporting organisations such as the Foreign Policy Association. During the Second World War, the foundations put their resources at the disposal of the American state by funding studies which were drawn on by the State Department.

This partnership with official US foreign policy continued after 1945 when the foundations became major players in an intellectual Cold War, waged first in Europe and then the Global South. Parmar analyses foundation-sponsored programmes in public diplomacy, such as the Salzburg Seminar, aimed at persuading Europeans that the United States' cultural and intellectual life was worthy of study. To that end, the foundations also supported American Studies programmes at European universities in the 1950s and 1960s, in cooperation with American state agencies such as the US Information Agency. Working with institutions of higher learning also formed a cornerstone of foundation policies in the Third World. Here, Parmar relies on case studies of foundation programmes in economics in Indonesia, Nigeria and Chile. In Indonesia, the Ford Foundation financed the cooperation between Indonesian academics and American universities from 1956. American-trained economists later played a significant role in the transition from Sukarno to Suharto. These programmes had an informal intelligence dimension, as Ford-funded academics conducted field research which had direct policy relevance to the American government and had been cleared with the CIA and the State Department. In Nigeria, the Ford Foundation's programmes in economic planning "played an indirect role in Nigeria's slide into civil war" (p. 178) in the 1960s, whereas Ford and Rockefeller support for free market economics in Chile consolidated a technocratic approach to the Chilean economy after the coup of 1973. In the post-Cold War era, research financed by the foundations provided scholarly legitimisation for American democracy promotion in the form of the Democratic Peace Theory.

Parmar is openly critical of the foundations, and, to some readers, his account may seem overly polemical. Yet, his findings confirm recent tendencies in the historical literature on American philanthropic foundations, not least an acknowledgment of the close connection between foundation programmes and official US foreign policy in the Cold War, a bond which Volker Berghahn once called a "symbiotic relationship". Volker R. Berghahn, Philanthropy and Diplomacy in the 'American Century', in: Diplomatic History 23 (1999), 393–419, here 417. Parmar introduces the Gramscian notion of 'state spirit' to describe this complex relationship, which is a useful concept as it ascribes agency to the foundations and treats them as more than mere adjuncts of American foreign policy. Parmar's focus on knowledge networks also moves in step with recent scholarship which has proposed 'knowledge production' as the prime analytical lens through which foundation activity should be viewed. See Krige / Rausch, especially the introduction. Moreover, Parmar adds an often neglected dimension to the literature on foundations and foreign policy by highlighting the philanthropic preoccupation with public opinion and propaganda.

The overall argument does raise some questions, though. Parmar portrays foundation philanthropy as a more or less unitary actor, which glosses over dissent within the wider foundation community. For example, he cites a rejected application by the Columbia sociologist Robert Lynd as

crucial evidence that the Big Three marginalised scholars who deviated from a foundation-supported consensus. In 1940, Lynd asked the Carnegie Corporation to fund research on wartime mobilisation in democracies, a project that, according to Parmar, jarred with the foundations' top-down conceptions of democracy. Therefore, it was rejected: "Philanthropy's fertilizer was more appropriate for Yale, Earle, et al. than for Lynd." (p. 91) However, Lynd was anything but a foundation outsider. He served as secretary of the Rockefeller-funded Social Science Research Council and advised the Rockefeller Foundation on the Princeton Radio Research Project in the late 1930s, helping to move the project to Columbia University in 1940. Christian Fleck, Transatlantische Bereicherungen. Zur Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung, Frankfurt am Main 2007, 265–266, 331–339. This suggests that Lynd's application to the Carnegie Corporation may have failed due to rivalries within the foundation community rather than ideological incompatibility. Parmar sometimes hints at dissent within the foundations themselves, for example when he records a Ford Foundation Program Officer's criticism of her employer's economic determinism (p. 213). It would have been instructive to hear these voices more often as foundation policies were not implemented by elite trustees but a wider philanthropic network. Parmar also overstates the strength of the foundations' adversaries when he claims that Rockefeller and Carnegie programmes overturned an isolationist "hegemony" (p. 67) in the United States before the Second World War.

In contrast to Parmar, Zunz defines his subject broadly. Although his account also begins with the creation of the big foundations by wealthy families such as the Rockefellers, the author quickly turns to the beginnings of mass philanthropy in the United States. He points to the transnational roots of this development – it was a fundraising campaign for a Danish tuberculosis hospital which served as a model for the first successful mass fundraising drives in the 1900s – and also offers an explanatory model for this "people's philanthropy" (p. 51): constructed as publicly displayed thrift, it served as a form of insurance for the common man. Institutionally, mass philanthropy manifested itself in the community chest and the community foundation. Both models proliferated across the United States, particularly after philanthropic giving expanded rapidly in the course of the First World War. The Great War also marked a departure in the way philanthropy was perceived. The massive leap in donations as well as the cooperation between elite philanthropy and grassroots fundraisers established that "giving was part of being an American" (p. 56). The post-war era saw the professionalization of fundraising as well as the further integration of local campaigns with national structures, for example in the March of Dimes which had begun as a fundraising drive for polio patients in Georgia. Zunz's broad approach is welcome, drawing attention to lesser-known initiatives far away from Washington D.C. and New York, such as the philanthropy of the du Pont family in Delaware.

Zunz devotes a significant part of his study to the American debate on whether philanthropy could ever legitimately influence the political process. It had its origins in the nineteenth century when probate courts first came up with a somewhat artificial distinction: bequests to beneficiaries who aimed to educate public opinion were lawful but those trying to change legislation were not. From the early twentieth century, this debate continued in the arena of federal tax policy. Lawmakers and the IRS struggled with the question of what kind of philanthropy should benefit from tax-exempt donations. The distinction between (illegitimate) propaganda and (legitimate) education was formalised in the 1934 Revenue Act but became subject to numerous revisions after the Second World War. Zunz tells this somewhat obscure story engagingly, highlighting how changes in the tax code served as a way of disciplining political opponents. Thus, segregationists in Congress who opposed the Ford Foun-

dation's support for radical Civil Rights groups succeeded in rendering the 1969 tax code more restrictive. Beginning in the Reagan years, limits on lobbying by charitable organisations were successively loosened, not least due to the influence of conservative foundations which had set up a network of influential right-wing think tanks in the 1970s. These organisations ushered in a conservative backlash to the liberal philanthropy practised by the Big Three.

But the legal wrangling over tax-exempt donations was just one site of negotiation over the larger question of the appropriate relationship between private philanthropy and the American state. Philanthropy played a crucial role in the delivery of social services, encouraged or reined in by different administrations. Herbert Hoover's attempts to use philanthropic resources to mitigate the effects of the Great Depression soon reached their limits. The Roosevelt Administration discarded Hoover's voluntary associationalism in favour of a strict separation of government and private funds, and prohibited private agencies from administering public relief. Harry Hopkins, the head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, justified this step by arguing that needy citizens were entitled to aid as a right, not as a gift, a motivation that Zunz rather puzzlingly dismisses as "beside the point" (p. 128). Under Lyndon B. Johnson, the tide turned again and welfare provision by non-governmental organisations became a pillar of Great Society programmes.

State-private cooperation remained a feature of American philanthropy overseas, a topic which Zunz examines in two out of nine chapters. Like Parmar, Zunz focuses on programmes in the post-1945 era and the close relationship between philanthropy and diplomacy. American philanthropic organisations did not manage to "escap[e] the strategic Cold War framework" (p. 158) and those who refused to cooperate with American government agencies had to abandon their projects, as did the American Friends Service Committee in 1950s India. In conceptual terms, this is the weakest part of the book. Zunz describes the motivation behind overseas philanthropy vaguely as "enlarging American foreign policy" (p. 159) but he does not explain adequately what this 'enlargement' entailed. Did it mean that philanthropy enabled successive administrations to undermine Congressional opposition to US globalism? Or did the increased participation of American NGOs in international organisations actively write an American bias into international structures? In a subchapter on the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Zunz argues that the participation of American NGOs gave UNRRA "direction" (p. 141) but he does not mention what the alternatives would have been, or, indeed, what the alternatives would be to the spreading of American models for NGO activity across the globe since 1989, often associated with a global civil society. Neither does Zunz give much room to the negative impact of philanthropic programmes on overseas communities, notably in the case of the green revolution. See e.g. Nick Cullather, Miracles of Modernization. The Green Revolution and the Apotheosis of Technology, in: Diplomatic History 28 (2004), 227–254. Overall, he portrays the foundations as reluctant partners of the American government, well-intentioned but hampered by a national security state, whereas to Parmar, philanthropy served as a motor of aggressive US foreign policy.

The authors disagree strongly on two other counts. First, there is the issue of racism. Both detail the flawed compromises philanthropists made with Southern segregationists in the first half of the twentieth century but only Zunz gives transformative actors like the Taconic Foundation and also the Ford Foundation the credit they deserve for supporting Civil Rights activists in the 1960s. The religious motivation behind philanthropy forms a second area of disagreement. Zunz regards American philanthropy as "ecumenical if not secular" (p. 297), yet his study is peppered with faith-based actors, from Catholic Relief Ser-

vices to the Quakers. The author explains that even philanthropists who held strong religious views personally promoted secularism through their gifts, citing the example of the Baptist Rockefellers who designed the University of Chicago as a secular institution to promote academic excellence. But this sidesteps the question of to what extent religious conviction inspired philanthropic action. Parmar, on the other hand, ascribes a religious world view to the founder generation of large-scale American philanthropy. Nevertheless, the rest of his account is curiously quiet on religion, so one may assume that it inspired the creation of the Big Three but not much more than that.

Finally, both books analyse twentieth-century philanthropy as a uniquely American story, running against the grain of much of the recent transnational scholarship on US philanthropic foundations. Neither author makes much use of non-American sources. It remains to be seen whether this is the beginning of a reversal of the scholarly trend, celebrating or denigrating an arguably unique feature of American state-society relations.Nevertheless, both Parmar and Zunz have produced persuasive syntheses which contain fresh material and provide numerous avenues for further research.

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