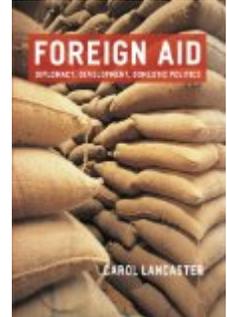


Carol Lancaster. *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 288 S. \$22.50, paper, ISBN 978-0-226-47045-0.



Reviewed by Maegan Hendow

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As a modern phenomenon, foreign aid was virtually non-existent until 1947, when the rise of Cold War politics manifested itself in a rise of foreign aid, and today foreign aid is recognized as an international norm in relations between rich and poor countries. But its acceptance as an international norm could not have been solely as a result of Cold War politics. Up until now, foreign aid has been discussed as a tool of diplomacy motivated by a state's own interests, a means for dominant states to continue exploitation of developing countries, a way for states to cooperate in addressing global problems, or an ethical manifestation of rich countries' obligation to help the poor. All this debate, however, lacks a discussion of the impact of domestic politics on aid-giving. Rarely are domestic factors cited as affecting the purposes, extent, and direction of aid. Carol Lancaster sees domestic factors as a fundamental element of foreign aid, and her book, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, attempts to fill this gap in foreign aid discourse. Lancaster uses her knowledge of US aid, collected over many years, as well as extensive interviews with foreign ministers, NGOs, and politicians in Japan, France,

Germany, and Denmark to analyze the effect domestic politics has on the amount, distribution, and purposes of foreign aid.

Her preface presents the key question guiding the book (Why is aid given?) and how she attempts to answer it (by looking at domestic politics), as well as discloses her extensive experience working in the US on foreign aid issues. The first chapter sets up the book by defining "foreign aid" and "purposes" and by outlining the various purposes of aid (diplomatic, developmental, humanitarian relief, cultural, promotion of economic and social transitions, democracy-building, addressing global issues, and mitigating conflicts and managing post-conflict transitions) which she sees as reflections of the overlapping influences of domestic ideas, institutions, interests, and organizations, her conceptual framework for the book. Her second chapter goes further in her analysis of the purposes of aid, providing a brief history of aid-giving from 1945 to today and the purposes for which it was used. Chapters three to seven provide case studies of domestic politics and aid-giving in the US, Japan, France, Germany, and Den-

mark. These chapters outline each country's specific history of aid-giving and relate it to the changes in its main purposes, then highlights the key ideas, institutions, interests, and organizational characteristics that make each case unique. Each chapter ends with a summary of the main purposes and influences on aid, and a question for the future challenges for aid-giving in the country. Chapter eight concludes with findings from each case study, insights provided by the conceptual framework, implications for future policy, and predictions for the future of foreign aid. She ends with a discussion of the globalization of private giving, which has both positive and negative consequences for the future.

In the first chapter, she admits that she does not have an overarching theory or model of aid-giving, because there are too many variables. She says she uses political science concepts to help structure her argument, but she avoids theoretical arguments. This lack of an overarching model makes aid-giving from each country seem to be based entirely on domestic politics, since her remarks on international events are only discussed with respect to the effect they had on the domestic arena. She admits a general trend around the world towards an emphasis of the development purpose, but does not offer much of an explanation beyond mentioning more active NGOs and pressures from the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, which show changing opinions but does not explain why these opinions have changed. The lack of a theory also limits the audience of the book, which would by and large be political scientists. She does, however, offer a conceptual framework for domestic politics based upon the four categories of ideas, institutions, interests, and organization. Her evidence of organizational changes, variations in the amount of aid, and public discourse on the subject show how these categories interact with each other to influence aid-giving.

As she herself admits, the book's focus is on qualitative, rather than quantitative data. This makes it hard to evaluate the country case studies by any other criteria than qualitative, and prohibits comparing aid levels across the board, forcing the reader to look elsewhere for more detailed information, but it makes the book easier to read. For a complicated subject, she writes in a clear and concise manner, organizing the history of domestic influences on aid in each country into her conceptual framework. The organization of the book allows her to examine not only each country's particular history of aid, but also to illuminate the specific characteristics that make each case study unique.

While each case study is unique, she largely focuses on aid donors in the Western world, with the key exception of her case study of Japan. The case study of Japan can offer insight to current discourse on Chinese aid, especially the practice of tied aid and the different traditions which influence aid-giving, but its use as an example of non-Western aid is limited. I would have liked to see more varied case studies, in order to have a more nuanced view of the different practices and traditions of aid giving around the world.

For a book on the politics of aid-giving, she deftly avoids ideological arguments and opinion, focusing instead on objective analysis of the domestic influences. She clearly separates her politics from the politics of aid-giving, objectively discussing the failures of structural adjustment and the wasting of aid from lack of coordination, analyzing them as reactions to domestic factors of the time. The only time a personal aspect intrudes is in her disclosure of her long history working on and off for the US government in foreign aid, an experience which definitely influenced her work, and is evident in her detailed analysis of US foreign aid, the longest chapter. Her ability to separate ideological arguments from her analysis of foreign aid is especially admirable considering the current intense debate about foreign aid. This

book was written in 2006, published in 2007, an interesting time for foreign aid, as the US' "War on Terror" has increased the levels of aid in general and also specifically for democracy-building and conflict prevention. She refers to the current state of domestic politics and foreign aid, especially in trying to illuminate the current influences as well as those of the future, and potential policy implications. It is important to remember, however, that this book was written before the current economic crisis hit, and the economic downturn's pressure on domestic budgets may null her predictions for increasing amounts of aid. Despite this drawback, I would recommend this book to those interested in domestic politics' effect on foreign policy. Her book is especially useful because it advances beyond the classic debate over where aid goes and how it affects the receiver, instead focusing on the roots of aid giving, beginning with the aid givers and their constituents. Her research on the influence of the domestic sphere on foreign aid adds a new dimension that should not be overlooked when discussing foreign aid.

Carol Lancaster's meticulous analysis of domestic factors influencing aid-giving in the US, Japan, France, Germany, and Denmark shows how complicated foreign aid is, and emphasizes looking beyond the stated purposes of aid to see the overlapping influences that change over time. She ends by stressing this diverse and changing nature of the purposes of foreign aid, the overarching theme of her book: "Its purposes will continue to be mixed—with human betterment at its core, but with diplomatic goals still important, especially to the United States and other governments aspiring to leadership roles in the world. New and at present unforeseeable purposes are likely to be added as the pace of technological change—especially information technologies—accelerates and as the world of many-to-many evolves. For all that, domestic political forces—themselves increasingly influenced by trends be-

yond their borders—will remain key factors in the future of foreign aid."

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