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Sreeram Chaulia, *International Organizations and Civilian Protection: Power, Idea and Humanitarian Aid in Conflict Zones*. New Delhi: Viva Books. 2011. xiv +263 pp. ₹1295

One of the most disturbing trends in the post-Cold War era is the blatant misuse of international organizations, both inter-governmental (IGOs) as well as international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), for imperial penetration into independent countries of the South. India's refusal to accept humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster of 2004 and Myanmar's refusal to allow humanitarian organizations to enter the country to assist the earthquake victims of 2008 are some indications that politicians and diplomats are aware of the trend. However, the scholars seem to be too caught up in their blinkered vision of restrictive theoretical paradigms to capture adequately the degeneration of humanitarian organizations (HOs) and to expose the nexus between them and imperialism. Sreeram Chaulia should be commended for his attempt to fill this gap in exiting literature by providing a powerful political critique of humanitarian organizations in conflict zones. He has been quite successful in shattering 'the myths about inherent nobility of humanitarianism'; at the same time, he highlights the imperative of HOs to connect with self-organized local activists to bring about protection and justice which, according to the author, is an important factor in facilitating durable peace and security in war zones.

At the outset, the author states that the work is not only an investigation but also an attempt to contribute to the theory of International Relations. Its core purpose is to lay emphasis on 'decolonising collective international organizations so that they can champion the dignity of the human person' (p. 10). He also maintains that the book is a problem-driven rather than a theory-driven work. The central puzzle driving his work is the variation in the mainstreaming of civilian protection by humanitarian inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations in conflict zones. He investigates this puzzle through a qualitative, structured, and focussed comparison of five major humanitarian organizations operating in the conflict zones of Sri Lanka and the Philippines during 2003–2008.

The author highlights that one of the international responses to humanitarian crises has been to urge humanitarian IGOs and INGOs to mainstream civilian protection into their projects and programmes in conflict areas. Even if an international

organization does not have protection in its mandate, it has been urged specifically by the United Nations to engage in a proactive role in defending civilians and local activists in conflict areas. The author uses the explanatory powers of the various rationalist as well as constructivist approaches to gain insight into the differing behaviours of HOs in carrying out the task of civilian protection. Chaulia seeks to answer whether the behaviour of international humanitarian organizations towards civilians is driven by material pressures and the inducement (power) of donors, the host state and violent non-state actors or by the internal culture of these organizations and their bureaucratic ideas.

A strong empirical element is provided through comparative case studies of Sri Lanka and the Philippines, where the author conducted 300 field interviews and conversations between 2003 and 2008. Above all, the work has drawn from the author's experience as a civilian peacekeeper working for Nonviolent Peaceforce (a new INGO) in the two countries. The author examines the working of five major international HOs, which were active in Sri Lanka and the Philippines over a five-year period, 2003–2008. He has taken a balanced representation of two IGOs, two INGOs and one hybrid. They are: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Save the Children and OXFAM-GB. He has investigated these HOs to see whether they respond to cultural 'ideas' prevalent within the organization, or whether they respond to the more material realities of 'power'.

In Sri Lanka, the author found that UNICEF was proactive in protecting civilians, followed by ICRC, OXFAM-GB, Save the Children and UNDP. In the Philippines, however, it was OXFAM-GB that topped the list, followed by ICRC, the Save the Children, UNICEF and UNDP.

Chaulia not only explains the behaviour of each of the five humanitarian organizations from different theoretical perspectives of 'power' and 'idea', but also carries out the dyad comparison between the highest and lowest rank organizations in each country to highlight the cause of variations in their behaviour. He also makes a comparison of the HOs across the two countries.

While explaining why UNICEF is more proactive in civilian protection as compared to UNDP in Sri Lanka, the author is of the view that both UN organizations enjoy roughly the same amount of material pressure and inducements from donors, host-state and non-state actors. The pressure on UNICEF was milder from states and donors. Further, UNDP is more co-opted and silenced by the Government of Sri Lanka than UNICEF. The author concludes that 'the gap in pressures and inducements is not that marked to be causing the two UN agencies to be at polar ends of the proactiveness scale' (p. 69).

Turning to 'ideas', Chaulia points out the 'deeply state-subservient and opportunistic culture' of the UNDP and its preoccupation with 'peace and development', ignoring the core issues related to perpetration of violence with impunity and lack of justice for the civilians (p. 73). Through his own experience of

meeting and talking with UNICEF officials, the author gathered that 'they think more proactively about making interventions that will improve the protection environment for civilians' (p. 73). He also highlights that UNICEF has protection in its mandate and its leadership is making an effort to develop the ethics of protection in the organization. Further, UNICEF has local Sri Lankan implementing partners, who are chosen specifically on the criteria of their proactiveness. The author comes to the conclusion that 'the variation in 'ideas' between the two organizations is wide enough to be causing the large gap in proactiveness towards civilian protection' (p. 77).

Unlike in Sri Lanka, UNICEF ranked second from the bottom in Philippines. The author did not find sharp difference in rationalist variables (power) between that of UNICEF and other HOs (p. 151). He concludes that UNICEF's low rank is due to its bureaucratic culture and obeisance to state sovereignty. He states that 'UNICEF may be forced by rationalist factors to be toothless, but its 'ideas' reinforce a general conservatism and distaste for change' (p. 155).

In the dyadic comparison of OXFAM-GB and UNDP, the highest and lowest in rank among the five HOs in Philippines, the author is of the view that 'the former faces lesser material demands and inducements from powerful donors, the host state and the rebel groups than the latter' (p. 123). In terms of organizational culture, identity and belief, OXFAM-GB is much more open and flexible, whereas UNDP is known for conservatism. The author concludes that both 'power' and 'ideas' account for the variations between these two organizations (p. 132).

The most striking aspect of this book is that it is an outcome of close observation of HOs at work in the field and collection of intensive field-based information. Another added value of the work is the use of explanatory powers of various theoretical approaches to explain the difference in behaviour of HOs in their proactiveness in civilian protection. Chaulia has not only carried out a comparison of how 'power' and 'idea' determine the behaviour of the HOs within and across the two countries but also traced the underlying structural factors that conditioned them to behave the way they did. He tests the explanatory power of theoretical approaches beyond the 'Third Debate' and highlights the special explanatory power of the structuralist theories of Marxism and feminism.

However, testing the explanatory power of various theoretical approaches has rendered the work theory-oriented too, without a clear explanation of the variance in behaviour of HOs. Instead of focussing on 'power' and 'idea' as independent variables, it would have been more effective if variables that are more specific had been focussed on. For instance, if a strong host state's pressure or material inducement of donors is taken as a variable, then the conclusion about the behaviour of HOs will be definite. Comparing UNICEF with UNDP, Chaulia concludes that 'the variation in 'ideas' between the two organizations is wide enough to cause a large gap in the degree of proactiveness towards civilian protection' (p. 77). Instead, the conclusion should be that the material inducement of donors and

encouragement of host states to highlight the issue of child soldiers have enabled UNICEF to adopt a more proactive role in Sri Lanka than UNDP. Similarly, in comparing the OXFAM-GB with UNDP in the Philippines, apart from variations in organizational culture, the former's ability to withstand the pressure from the United States to de-emphasize civilian protection and existence of a strong, civil society and, at the same time, weak and non-threatening non-state actors have prompted OXFAM-GB to play a proactive role.

The generalization of the behaviour of HOs from this study could be more powerful and convincing if different types of case studies had been undertaken. For instance, instead of two strong host states supported by major powers and donors, as is the case in this study, it would have been more interesting to see whether there is a difference in HOs' behaviour in two countries—in one of which a strong state is supported by major powers and donors and in the other, a strong host state is opposed by major powers and donors.

Nevertheless, this book reflects a missionary zeal to reclaim the humanism of humanitarian organizations and connect them to self-organized local activists to provide protection and justice in conflict zones. It will be useful for both scholars and activists working on conflict, peace and reconstruction.

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Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman and Steven E. Lobell (Eds), *The Challenge of Grand Strategy: The Great Powers and the Broken Balance between the World Wars*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2012. xii + 347 pp. \$99.

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Nothing has intrigued students of international politics more than the years preceding the Second World War. It has had a significant impact on the way we learn and understand the nature of international relations not only due to the humongous human costs that it entailed but also primarily because of its impact on inter-state relations of the latter half of the twentieth century, remnants of which still dominate the world order. Naturally, this period has attracted the maximum scholarly attention. For any student of international politics, E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years Crisis* is an essential text. So is A.J.P. Taylor's work on the origins of the war. In fact, the first great debate in International Relations—between the proponents of

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