

to the changes in their environment. Group dynamics may take a back seat and become a salient factor only when external forces, such as battlefield outcomes, threaten survival. Christia's book claims its spot in an emerging cottage industry of micro-level civil war studies initiated by the groundbreaking studies of Stathis Kalyvas (*The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 2006) and Jeremy Weinstein (*Inside Rebellion*, 2007). (For further discussion, see Sidney Tarrow's "Inside Insurgency: Politics and Violence in an Age of Civil War," *Perspectives on Politics* [September 2007]: 587–600). With attention to the causal mechanisms at work, recent studies (e.g., Jason Lyall, "Are Co-Ethnics More Effective Counter-Insurgents?" *American Political Science Review* 104 [February 2010]: 1–20) brought context back into the study of civil wars in the international relations field by drawing from historical and sociological accounts. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* further shows that international relations theory is alive and can work along with other social science traditions to explain civil war processes.

### **Hunger in the Balance: The New Politics of**

**International Food Aid.** By Jennifer Clapp. Ithaca, NY:

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— William A. Munro, *Illinois Wesleyan University*

In this sweeping assessment of the global food aid regime, Jennifer Clapp sets out to do three things. The first is to map shifts in the regime from one driven by donor states' interests and designed as a surplus disposal mechanism to one oriented towards recipients' needs and defined in terms of emergency assistance. The second is to show that these shifts have been occasioned not by the growing influence of humanitarian norms emanating from international institutions – as some constructivists and institutionalists have argued – but by domestic economic interests and political coalitions within donor states, working through locally specific institutional arrangements. The third is to capture the political conflicts between powerful donors that have marked these shifts; even as food aid has become a multilaterally organized humanitarian enterprise, it remains dependent on individual donors to supply food aid resources and cannot transcend conflicts of interest between them. Consequently, food aid has not been *depoliticized* but *repoliticized* in ways that may actually imperil its ability to effectively address the needs of the hungry poor.

Clapp's assessment is persuasive, timely, and sobering. The central tension in conflicts over food aid is the move towards "untied" aid (i.e. aid that is not necessarily sourced in donor-produced commodities but may be provided in cash to buy locally or regionally produced (LRP) food). As Clapp notes, the argument for untying food aid is compelling; it is more cost-effective and efficient than providing donor-grown commodity crops, and it allows

better food choices for the poor. But its uptake among donors has been uneven with the largest and most influential donor – the United States – remaining staunchly resistant. This is because powerful economic interests that support tied aid (agribusiness, the shipping industry, and food-aid-delivery NGOs that benefit from monetization) have been able to trump the state's interest in cost-saving through effective Congressional lobbying. While most other major donors have untied their food aid in the last decade (Japan is a noteworthy exception), they have done so, Clapp argues in brief but pithy country analyses, because their policy-making institutions are development-oriented (rather than assistance-oriented) and relatively insulated from societal pressures, domestic economic interests that support tied aid have become sufficiently weakened, and state interests have shifted towards untying aid for cost-saving or humanitarian reasons. The United States and the European Union (EU) have become the chief antagonists in debates about untying food aid.

This new politics of food aid cannot be disentangled from broader developments in the global agrifood system, notably the development of new agricultural biotechnologies, the negotiation of agricultural trade rules within the WTO, and the effects of systemic price volatility in global agricultural markets which drove the 2007-2008 food price spikes. Clapp analyzes each of these issues in detail. As she notes, the controversy over whether genetically modified food (GMOs) should be disbursed to needy African countries with scant regulatory capacity catalyzed the politics of untying aid nicely. On the one hand, it strengthened the argument for LRP or monetary aid. The EU, African governments, and environmental NGOs argued strongly that tied aid, including GMOs sourced mainly from the United States, lay at the heart of the problem. On the other hand, it increased pressure from U.S. lobbies to keep international markets open for U.S. products. Thus, it inexorably politicized food aid.

Food aid also became a bargaining chip in negotiations over agricultural trade rules. The EU sought to impose strict rules on food aid on the argument that U.S. practices of tied aid, monetization, and concessional sales had the same effect as trade-distorting export subsidies. The United States, on the other hand, wanted to maintain the flexibility of its food aid system, established in the 1950s as an export-promotion program and largely unchanged since. The ensuing impasse helped to stall trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization's Doha round.

The 2007-2008 global food price spikes brought these tensions into relief, and created an impetus to reform global governance mechanisms for promoting food security in the world's poorest countries. But food aid remains captive to political jockeying over tied aid, and the new conditions impose contradictory imperatives: On one hand, new trade rules create pressure for tighter constraints and discipline in food disbursement (a congenial position

for donors who have untied aid and want to count their commitments in monetary terms); on the other hand, systemically volatile food prices create pressure for flexibility to respond rapidly in fast-emerging food crises (requiring at least some commitments to be counted in the traditional terms of wheat tonnage, a position the United States supports). Moreover, food aid is countercyclical: When food prices are high, more aid is needed but donors prefer to sell commodities in the open market; when food prices are low, need declines but donors are more willing to disburse large amounts of aid. Ultimately, the food aid regime confronts a powerful contradiction – neither tied nor untied aid may effectively address the hunger vulnerability of the poor.

This is a compelling analysis. Clapp demonstrates persuasively that the regime has run its course. Reform is necessary but politically very difficult. The global food aid regime thus lies at a transitional juncture, and its prospects, as Clapp notes, must be assessed in the context of an emerging “global food security governance” framework in which “emergency” aid and “ordinary” agricultural aid are converging.

But Clapp’s tight analytical focus on the contending interests and actions of powerful states imposes its own limitations. Global food security governance today engages a substantially broader array of actors, which Clapp acknowledges but does not analyze closely. The increasingly significant role played by multilateral agencies such as the G-8’s United States-initiated Global Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition suggests that powerful players enjoy greater consensus on solutions to food security than Clapp intimates. Recipient governments have not only become more vocal participants but through their own multilateral organizations, such as the African Union’s New Partnership for African Development, have become increasingly visible “partners” in food security governance. Most particularly, Clapp effaces the rising role of non-state actors, especially large philanthropic foundations and the private sector, not only in providing food (as in the Plumpy’nut case she describes) but also in shaping policy. These developments indicate that agricultural coalitions – both domestic and transnational – are shifting in ways that Clapp’s analysis does not fully capture.

By downplaying the systemic features of the global agricultural economy, which both inform agricultural coalitions and constrain state actions, Clapp underspecifies the roots of the emerging “global food security governance” system. Nevertheless, her account is empirically rich and analytically provocative. The prospects for food security governance are indeed uncertain, and much will depend on the ways in which donors finesse the relationship between food “security” and food “aid.” New funding streams, philanthropic philosophies, and organizational assumptions are moving to the center of food

security thinking. Perhaps the most important norm driving food aid policy-making today is not its humanitarian purpose but the conviction that effective pursuit of this purpose requires private sector leadership. The international political jockeying that Clapp details is a key feature of these shifts. Clearly written and sharply argued, her book thus provides a rich contribution to our understanding of contemporary international food politics. It also offers an excellent case study in the analysis of international regimes.

**The Credibility of Transnational NGOs: When Virtue Is Not Enough.** Edited by Peter Gourevitch, David Lake, and Janice Gross Stein. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 246p. \$95.00 cloth, \$32.99 paper.

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For many analysts and policymakers, nongovernmental organizations are an attractive alternative when governments and firms fail to deliver services efficiently or fully serve the public interest. Yet as the subtitle to this edited volume claims, virtue is not enough to ensure that NGOs can shape public policy or reach underserved populations. Peter Gourevitch, David Lake, and Janice Gross Stein have brought together a number of interesting case studies that demonstrate how NGOs establish and defend their credibility, and in doing so, they have advanced a larger conversation about the ways in which NGOs, nonprofits, and other nonstate actors are able to exercise influence.

*The Credibility of Transnational NGOs* is primarily intended for a specialist audience of international relations scholars interested in nonstate actors, but should interest those who study nonprofits and interest groups as well. The volume raises a narrow but important question: Why does anybody pay attention to some transnational NGOs but not to others? In IR, recent scholarship on NGOs has struggled to unpack exactly when and how these organizations are able to define state interests and shape global policies, and this volume suggests that a first step might be to identify the relevant credible NGOs in an issue area. Credibility is “no guarantee of success,” but, as Gourevitch and Lake argue, it is necessary for NGOs seeking to bring about social change (p. 193).

What does credibility mean? For the contributors, an NGO is credible “when its statements are believable or accepted as truthful by one or more audiences” (p. 10). Unlike virtue, which is more or less a constant for NGOs (as public benefit or charitable organizations), credibility varies among NGOs. In the framing essay, Gourevitch and Lake explore three issues related to NGO credibility. First, they identify internal and external sources of credibility, focusing on the latter (pp. 13–18). NGO credibility is shaped by 1) the commonality of interests between the