

Charitable Foundations and American Diplomacy

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Abstract: In American society exists numerous large foundations, they are influenced by the Christian charity, or the value of democracy and freedom of religion,. These foundations actively carry out various forms of international aid activities, involving medical, health, agriculture, education, culture, and many other areas, which elevates America's international image and has important impact on foreign policy, known as the United States diplomatic “silent partner”. Although these foundations and the United States government’s main benefit is consistent, they still have a considerable degree of independence, which can’t be fully called the tools of the United States government.

1. Introduction

The United States is the country with the most complete foundation system in the world. The influence of its’ foundations are so large that other countries can hardly match it. The foundation not only plays a huge influence on the domestic politics, economy, education, science and technology, religion and other aspects of the United States, but also plays a significant role in the formulation and implementation of the foreign policy of the United States.

American foundations are numerous, a small fraction of which do international work, but their impact is significant. Most of these foundations work for the purpose of promoting the civilization and happiness of mankind, promoting international cultural communication, which embody the “manifest destiny” of the puritans and the burden of “white” thought; At the same time, they work hard to strengthen American democracy and actively expand its influence to the world, consolidating America's leading position in the world. This thesis takes the Carnegie, Rockefeller and ford foundations as examples discussing the complicated relationship between charitable foundations and American diplomacy from the perspectives of the motives, history and status of their involvement in diplomacy.

2. Christian Charitable Tradition and Belief in American Values

The charitable foundation involved in the diplomatic, both from the influence of the traditional Christian charity, and belief in American values and democracy have obvious correlation, when these factors with foundation elite of idealism and specific combination of political situation, the outgoing impulse is particularly conspicuous. The value tradition in American politics and diplomacy is the confluence of classical tradition and Christian tradition, the former is mainly derived from Greek political thought, while the latter is the product of Christian religious heritage and Christian social and political ethics. Among them, the influence of Christian tradition on American behavior is huge, and the influence on charitable thought and behavior is almost decisive. The influence of religion is evident in the fact that Rockefeller, a deeply religious Baptist, had already given away a large amount of money before the foundation was established, and Frederick gates, who recommended Rockefeller's foundation, was also a famous priest. “Religion is the mother of charity,” said Henry Allen Moe, who made such a penetrating analysis of the relationship between religion and charity.

Moreover, the puritans who traveled across the ocean to the American continent had a strong religious passion and sense of mission. They called themselves “the chosen people of god”, hoping to build a “city upon a hill” that could serve as a model for the world. In the early 20th century,

American foreign policy gradually from “isolationism” to “international”, provides the foundation of colony and semi-colony has broad a huge world stage, at the same time, with the strength of strong, Americans have the realization of its religious material foundation and more open field of vision, thus American philanthropy is not limited to the United States a country and all over the world, in order to realize the universality of religion, in the world “the dissemination culture, increase knowledge, promote the understanding and benefit mankind”, which is understandable.

Most of the people who were able to set up foundations were the rich, who benefited from the liberal economy of American capitalism and who were the faithful supporters of American liberal democracy. They set up their foundations to heal divisions among the classes, to placate revolutionary impulses, and to preserve the institutions, traditions, and ideas that made them successful. So while their philanthropy tends to benefit the underprivileged in society, they represent the very mainstream of the American elite: a belief in free competition and the survival of the fittest, but also a belief that the rich have a duty to help their less fortunate brothers out of poverty and reduce the number of low-class people who are left out.

Before the WWII, the purpose of the international work of American foundations was relatively simple, which could be said to be “charity for charity's sake”. They cooperate with the foreign policy of the United States intentionally or not. They not only fund the research on international issues and foreign policies at home, but also carry out a variety of cultural communication work abroad, vigorously promote American values, and have a positive impact on the protection of the overseas interests of the United States.

3. Rockefeller Foundation and Diplomacy

In the United States, charitable foundations of political influence, and their influence on foreign policy is mostly indirect, achieved by providing funding to other types of social organizations, especially think tanks and NGOs that have a direct influence on government decisions. But in addition, charitable foundations have also directly funded a large number of medical, health, population, food, education, cultural exchanges and other projects abroad aimed at improving the living standards of citizens in developing countries, which have played an important role in establishing a good international image of the United States and demonstrating its cultural soft power.

From the very beginning, the Rockefeller foundation has been very concerned about the issues of war and peace. Since the 1930s, when it began to focus on social science, international relations, economy and administration have become its three major focuses. To this end, the foundation has decided to fund long-term, independent research projects that are beyond self-interest. The first projects funded are the research division of the American foreign policy association, the American council for Pacific relations, the finance committee of the league of nations, and the Geneva research center.

Like the Rockefeller foundation, the Ford foundation supports a number of large-scale foreign policy projects, including the prestigious international institute for strategic studies in London. The institute is private and not controlled by any government. Its board of directors and staff are international, including military, academic, religious and other personnel. Its annual report on the world strategic situation has become one of the most authoritative reports internationally recognized.

Donations to health care are traditional programs of the major foundations. The Rockefeller foundation's first major initiative after its registration in 1913 was the establishment of an international department of health and the dissemination of its experience in hookworm control and public health enhancement in the southern United States. During the presidency of George Vincent (1917-1926), hookworm control spread to 62 countries on six continents and later to malaria and typhoid fever, with considerable success. At the same time, the foundation also established permanent public health institutions in other countries to engage in a wider range of public health work. The famous Peking Union Medical College Hospital and its affiliated hospitals were among the major overseas projects of the Rockefeller foundation during this period.

Along with health care, hunger and agricultural improvement have long been the focus of charitable foundations. In 1942, the Rockefeller foundation signed an agreement with the Mexican ministry of agriculture to establish an agricultural improvement research group. Originally, Mexico had to import 50% of its wheat, but later it basically became self-sufficient, which was inseparable from the long-term large-scale funding of the Rockefeller foundation.

After World War II, the United States became the world's superpower. In view of the change in its role, American elites from all walks of life agreed that the world should have a better understanding of the United States, not only to eliminate misunderstanding and reduce estrangement, but also to vigorously promote the American system and culture. To this end, congress passed a series of ACTS, including the Smith Act and the famous Fulbright act of 1948, which not only funded foreign teachers and students to study in the United States, but also sent American teachers to teach abroad. But what is less well known is that the Fulbright program was short of money to start with, so the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations generously provided the money for the first six months, followed by Ford and several other foundations, to make it work.

Education is an extension of the foundation's mission of "spreading knowledge", and it also embodies the Americanism -- the belief that one is the representative of advanced culture, and that one should educate backward regions and nations with science and reason. The Rockefeller foundation has also established scholarships to encourage foreign students to study in the United States, most of who return to work as senior government or university officials. The Carnegie foundation's educational work began in the British colonies in Africa and has continued throughout Africa since 1925, when it funded the first teachers' school in Kenya.

4. Conclusion

First half of the 20th century was eventful, is the two world wars, the second half of the cold war and the rise of the third world, the foundation in the global scope of medical aid, famine relief, improvement of agriculture, control of population and the development of the third world education public welfare charity event highlights the great humanitarian. Most of these activities are non-political and do not directly serve the country's foreign policy, so they are easy to be accepted and trusted by recipient countries. However, the existence of these activities expands the political and cultural influence of the United States.

The foundation's willingness to defend American interests dates back to the cold war, when it funded think tanks to conduct research on sensitive issues of international relations and major foreign policies, or conducted cultural exchanges abroad to promote American institutions and culture. This is consistent with their values of democratic freedom and a peaceful means to advance world peace. In general, they tend to ease rather than tense the world situation and promote mutual understanding and dialogue between the opposing sides. Since the end of the cold war, their position has become neutral again, and they do not give their views on specific policies but only study specific issues. Although they do not necessarily agree with the specific policies of the US government, their pursuit of democratic values is unwavering.

Although the foundation consciously or unconsciously acted as the "silent partner" of the United States' foreign activities in certain periods, and the senior staff of the foundation overlapped with the United States government, the foundation still had considerable independence. The foundation shall not accept the instructions of the government in the specific work, nor shall the government have the right to interfere in the daily operation of the foundation. The foundation often criticizes specific U.S. policies. The Rockefeller foundation, for example, has criticized the U.S. government's treatment of the United Nations population fund. In addition, the US government does not fully trust the foundation. It has suspected that the foundation has "un-American activities" and abused its tax-exempt status to evade taxes. So foundations are part of the American establishment, and they are aligned with the government in the general direction; It's independent of the government. It exists to save the disadvantages of the government.

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