Activists beyond Borders

Advocacy Networks in International Politics

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Preface

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Chapter 1

Transnational Advocacy Networks
in International Politics: Introduction

World politics at the end of the twentieth century involves, alongside states, many nonstate actors that interact with each other, with states, and with international organizations. These interactions are structured in terms of networks, and transnational networks are increasingly visible in international politics. Some involve economic actors and firms. Some are networks of scientists and experts whose professional ties and shared causal ideas underpin their efforts to influence policy.1 Others are networks of activists, distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation.2 We will call these transnational advocacy networks.

Advocacy networks are significant transnationally and domestically. By building new links among actors in civil societies, states, and international organizations, they multiply the channels of access to the international system. In such issue areas as the environment and human rights, they also make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles. By thus blurring the boundaries between a state’s relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens

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1 Peter Haas has called these “knowledge-based” or “epistemic communities.” See Peter Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination, special issue, International Organization 46 (Winter 1992), pp. 1–36.

2 Ideas that specify criteria for determining whether actions are right and wrong and whether outcomes are just or unjust are shared principled beliefs or values. Beliefs about cause-effect relationships are shared causal beliefs. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds., Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 8–10.
and states have to the international system, advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty. To explore these issues, we first look at four historical forerunners to modern advocacy networks, including the antislavery movement and the campaign for women's suffrage, and we examine in depth three contemporary cases in which transnational organizations are very prominent: human rights, environment, and women's rights. We also refer to transnational campaigns around indigenous rights, labor rights, and infant formula. Despite their differences, these networks are similar in several important respects. The centrality of values or principled ideas, the belief that individuals can make a difference, the creative use of information, and the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns.

Scholars have been slow to recognize either the rationality or the significance of activist networks. Motivated by values rather than by material concerns or professional norms, these networks fall outside our accustomed categories. More than other kinds of transnational actors, advocacy networks often reach beyond policy change to advocate and instigate changes in the institutional and principled basis of international interactions. When they succeed, they are an important part of an explanation for changes in world politics. A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services. Such networks are most prevalent in issue areas characterized by high value content and informational uncertainty. At the core of the relationship is information exchange. What is novel in these networks is the ability of nontraditional international actors to mobilize information strategically to help create new issues and categories and to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments. Activists in networks try not only to influence policy outcomes, but to transform the terms and nature of the debate. They are not always successful in their efforts, but they are increasingly relevant players in policy debates.

Transnational advocacy networks are proliferating, and their goal is to change the behavior of states and of international organizations. Simultaneously principled and strategic actors, they "frame" issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encour-


6 With the "constructivists" in international relations theory, we take actors and interests to be constituted in interaction. See Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), who argues that "states are embedded in dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in that world. States are socialized to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live" (p. 2).
We refer to transnational networks (rather than coalitions, movements, or civil society) to evoke the structured and structuring dimension in the actions of these complex agents, who not only participate in new areas of politics but also shape them. By importing the network concept from sociology and applying it transnationally, we bridge the increasingly artificial divide between international and national realms. Still, social science theories did not dictate our choice of “network” as the name to be given to the phenomena we are studying. The actors themselves did: over the last two decades, individuals and organizations have consciously formed and named transnational networks, developed and shared networking strategies and techniques, and assessed the advantages and limits of this kind of activity. Scholars have come late to the party.

Given our enterprise, it should be clear that we reject the separation common in our discipline between international relations and comparative politics. Moreover, even liberal theories of international relations that recognize that domestic interests shape states’ actions internationally, and that states are embedded in an interdependent world where nonstate actors are consequential, cannot explain the phenomena we describe. Robert Putnam’s “two-level game” metaphor has taken liberal theorists some distance toward seeing international relations as a two-way street, in which political entrepreneurs bring international influence to bear on domestic politics at the same time that domestic politics shapes their international positions. But however valuable its insights, even this two-way street is too narrow, implying a limited access to the international system that no longer holds true in many issue areas.

Instead, we draw upon sociological traditions that focus on complex interactions among actors, on the intersubjective construction of frames of meaning, and on the negotiation and malleability of identities and interests. These have been concerns of constructivists in international relations theory and of social movement theorists in comparative politics, and we draw from both traditions. The networks we describe in this book participate in domestic and international politics simultaneously, drawing upon a variety of resources, as if they were part of an international society. However, they use these resources strategically to affect a world of states and international organizations constructed by states. Both these dimensions are essential. Rationalists will recognize the language of incentives and constraints, strategies, institutions, and rules, whereas constructivists and social constructionists will be more comfortable with our stress on norms, social relations, and intersubjective understandings. We are convinced that both sets of concerns matter, and that recognizing that goals and interests are not exogenously given, we can think about the strategic activity of actors in an intersubjectively structured political universe. The key to doing so is remembering that the social and political contexts within which networks operate at any particular point contain contested understandings as well as stable and shared ones. Network activists can operate strategically within the more stable universe of shared understandings at the same time that they try to reshape certain contested meanings.

Part of what is so elusive about networks is how they seem to embody elements of agent-and-strucure simultaneously. When we ask who creates networks and how, we are inquiring about them as structures—as patterns of interactions among organizations and individuals. When we talk about them as actors, however, we are attributing to these structures an agency that is not reducible to the agency of their components. Nonetheless, when we sometimes refer to networks as actors in this book, we do not lose sight of the fact that activists act on behalf of networks.

Our approach to these transnational interactions must therefore be both structural and actor-centered. We address four main questions: (1) What is a transnational advocacy network? (2) Why and how do they emerge? (3) How do advocacy networks work? (4) Under what conditions can they be effective—that is, when are they most likely to achieve their goals?

When we started this book, the realm of transnational social movements and networks was still an almost uncharted area of scholarship, both theoretically and empirically, and thus required a style of research aimed at the discovery of new theory and patterns. Because few existing theories attempted to explain the transnational phenomena we are studying, we could not rely on standard social science methods for hypothesis testing. Social scientists recognize that generating theory and formulating hypotheses require different methods from those for testing theory. Our approach thus resembles what sociologists call “grounded theory,” which is the most systematic attempt to specify how theoretical insights are generated through qualitative research. While doing the research for

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7 For an impressive effort to systematize liberal international relations theory, see Andrew Moravcsik, "Liberalism and International Relations Theory," Harvard University Center for International Affairs, Working Paper no. 92-6, revised April 1993. Liberal institutionalists since Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), have taken complex interdependence as axiomatic in the development of regime theory.


this book, we first explored these new patterns of interaction inductively, by studying the histories of particular networks involved in transnational campaigns. Because cross-national and cross-cultural activism are intensely context-sensitive, we cast a wide net in our search for intervening variables between values and advocacy and between advocacy and its (apparent) effect. Nevertheless, looking comparatively across regions and issue areas, we found striking commonalities in how and why networks emerged, and in the strategies they adopted. Although we eventually found that theoretical work on domestic social movements has a great deal to say about how transnational advocacy networks function, we did not begin with this assumption. Out of our observed commonalities we generated some initial arguments about why networks emerge and under what conditions they can be effective. In the tradition of grounded theory, we used additional comparative cases to further explore and refine our initial arguments. In each of our cases we refer to issues where networks exist and where networks do not exist, and we explore both successful and unsuccessful networks and campaigns.

International and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a prominent role in these networks, in some cases inspired by an international voluntarism that is largely unaccounted for in international relations theory. Social scientists have barely addressed the political role of activist NGOs as simultaneously domestic and international actors. Much of the existing literature on NGOs comes from development studies, and either ignores interactions with states or is remarkably thin on political analysis.11 Examining their role in advocacy networks helps both to distinguish NGOs from, and to see their connections with, social movements, state agencies, and international organizations.

We examine transnational advocacy networks and what they do by analyzing campaigns networks have waged. For our purposes, campaigns are sets of strategically linked activities in which members of a diffuse principled network (what social movement theorists would call a “mobilization potential”) develop explicit, visible ties and mutually recognized roles in pursuit of a common goal (and generally against a common target). In a campaign, core network actors mobilize others and initiate the tasks of structural integration and cultural negotiation among the groups in the network. Just as in domestic campaigns, they connect groups to each other, tout resources, propose and prepare activities, and conduct public relations. They must also consciously seek to develop a “common frame of meaning”—a task complicated by cultural diversity within transnational networks.12 Activist groups have long used the language of campaigning to talk about focused, strategically planned efforts. International campaigns by environmental and conservation organizations, for example, have traditionally had a topical focus (saving furry animals, whales, tropical forests), whereas human rights campaigns have focused on either a country (the Argentina campaign) or an issue (torture).13

- Analysis of campaigns provides a window on transnational relations as an arena of struggle in ways that a focus on networks themselves or on the institutions they affect does not. In most chapters we also consider noncampaigns—issues that activists identified as problematic, but around which networks did not campaign. This focus on campaigns highlights relationships—how connections are established and maintained among network actors, and between activists and their allies and opponents. We can identify the kinds of resources that make a campaign possible, such as information, leadership, and symbolic or material capital.14 And we must consider the kinds of institutional structures, both domestic and international, that encourage or impede particular kinds of transnational activism. Here we draw from several traditions. Thomas Risse-Kappen’s recent work argues that domestic structures mediate transnational interactions. By domestic structures he means state structure (centralized vs. fragmented), societal structure (weak vs. strong), and policy networks (consensual vs. polarized).15 Similarly, social movement theorists agree that understanding the political context or “opportunity structure” is key both to understanding a movement’s emergence and to gauging its success. Assessing opportunity structure can be an exercise in comparative statics—looking at differential access by citizens to political institutions like legislatures, bureaucracies, and courts—or it can be viewed dynamically, as in changes in formal or informal political power relations over time. We agree with Sidney Tarrow on the need to combine the more narrowly institutional version

11 Although development journals (especially World Development) routinely include articles discussing the role of NGOs, political science journals do not, nor have many political scientists been a part of such discussions in the development community. See David Korten, Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda (Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1990).


with a dynamic approach. Finally, a focus on campaigning lets us explore negotiation of meaning while we look at the evolution of tactics; we can recognize that cultural differences, different conceptions of the stakes in a campaign, and resource inequalities among network actors exist, at the same time that we identify critical roles that different actors fill. Campaigns are processes of issue construction constrained by the action context in which they are to be carried out: activists identify a problem, specify a cause, and propose a solution, all with an eye toward producing procedural, substantive, and normative change in their area of concern. In networked campaigns this process of "strategic portrayal" must work for the different actors in the network and also for target audiences.

What Is a Transnational Advocacy Network?

Networks are forms of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange. The organizational theorist Walter Powell calls them a third mode of economic organization, distinctly different from markets and hierarchy (the firm). "Networks are 'lighter on their feet' than hierarchy" and are "particularly apt for circumstances in which there is a need for efficient, reliable information," and "for the exchange of commodities whose value is not easily measured." His insights about economic networks are extraordinarily suggestive for an understanding of political networks, which also form around issues where information plays a key role, and around issues where the value of the "commodity" is not easily measured.

In spite of the differences between domestic and international realms, the network concept travels well because it stresses fluid and open relations among committed and knowledgeable actors working in specialized issue areas. We call them advocacy networks because advocates plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition. Advocacy captures what is unique about these transnational networks: they are organized to promote causes, principles, ideas, and norms, and they often involve individuals advocating policy changes that cannot be easily linked to a rationalist understanding of their "interests."

Some issue areas reproduce transnationally the webs of personal relationships that are crucial in the formation of domestic networks. Advocacy networks have been particularly important in value-laden debates over human rights, the environment, women, infant health, and indigenous peoples, where large numbers of differently situated individuals have become acquainted over a considerable period and developed similar world views. The more visionary among them have proposed strategies for political action around apparently intractable problems; this potential has been transformed into an action network.

Major actors in advocacy networks may include the following: (1) international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations; (2) local social movements; (3) foundations; (4) the media; (5) churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, and intellectuals; (6) parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations; and (7) parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments. Not all these will be present in each advocacy network. Initial research suggests, however, that international and domestic NGOs play a central role in all advocacy networks, usually initiating actions and pressing more powerful actors to take positions. NGOs introduce new ideas, provide information, and lobby for policy changes.

Groups in a network share values and frequently exchange information and services. The flow of information among actors in the network reveals a dense web of connections among these groups, both formal and informal. The movement of funds and services is especially notable between foundations and NGOs, and some NGOs provide services such as training for other NGOs in the same and sometimes other advocacy networks. Personnel also circulate within and among networks, as relevant players move from one to another in a version of the "revolving door."

Relationships among networks, both within and between issue areas, are similar to what scholars of social movements have found for domestic activism. Individuals and foundation funding have moved back and forth among them. Environmentalists and women's groups have looked at the history of human rights campaigns for models of effective international institution building. Refugee resettlement and indigenous people's rights are increasingly central components of international environmental

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16 Sidney Tarrow, "States and Opportunities: The Political Structuring of Social Movements," in Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements, pp. 41-61. By political opportunity structure he means "consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements...The most salient kinds of signals are four: the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, the availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites" (p. 34, italic in original).


activity, and vice versa; mainstream human rights organizations have joined the campaign for women's rights. Some activists consider themselves part of an “NGO community.”

Besides sharing information, groups in networks create categories or frames within which to generate and organize information on which to base their campaigns. Their ability to generate information quickly and accurately, and deploy it effectively, is their most valuable currency; it is also central to their identity. Core campaign organizers must ensure that individuals and organizations with access to necessary information are incorporated into the network; different ways of framing an issue may require quite different kinds of information. Thus frame disputes can be a significant source of change within networks.

Why and How Have Transnational Advocacy Networks Emerged?

Advocacy networks are not new. We can find examples as far back as the nineteenth-century campaign for the abolition of slavery. But their number, size, and professionalism, and the speed, density, and complexity of international linkages among them has grown dramatically in the last three decades. As Hugh Heclo remarks about domestic issue networks, “if the current situation is a mere outgrowth of old tendencies, it is so in the same sense that a 16-lane spaghetti interchange is the mere elaboration of a country crossroads.”

We cannot accurately count transnational advocacy networks to measure their growth over time, but one proxy is the increase in the number of international NGOs committed to social change. Because international NGOs are key components of any advocacy network, this increase suggests broader trends in the number, size, and density of advocacy networks generally. Table 1 suggests that the number of international nongovernmental social change groups has increased across all issues, though to varying degrees in different issue areas. There are five times as many organizations working primarily on human rights as there were in 1950, but proportionally human rights groups have remained roughly a quarter of all such groups. Similarly, groups working on women’s rights accounted for 9 percent of all groups in 1953 and in 1993. Transnational environmental organizations have grown most dramatically in absolute and relative terms, increasing from two groups in 1953 to ninety in 1993, and from 1.8 percent of total groups in 1953 to 14.3 percent in 1993. The

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<td>Human rights</td>
<td>33 30.0%</td>
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<td>8 7.3%</td>
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<td>Women's rights</td>
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<td>Development</td>
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<td>Ethnic unity/Group rts.</td>
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<td>Esperanto</td>
<td>11 10.0%</td>
<td>18 12.8%</td>
<td>28 15.3%</td>
<td>41 11.8%</td>
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Although the networks discussed in this book represent only a subset of the total number of networks, these include the issue area of human rights, percentage share of groups in such issue areas as international law, peace, ethnic unity, and Esperanto, has declined.

22 Data from a collaborative research project with Jackie G. Smith. We thank her for the use of her data from the period 1983-93, whose results are presented in Jackie G. Smith, “Characteristics of the Modern Transnational Social Movement Sector,” in Jackie G. Smith, et al., eds., Transnational Social Movements and World Politics: Solidarity beyond the State (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming 1997), and for permission to use her coding form and codebook for our data collection for the period 1953-73. All data were coded from Union of International Associations, The Yearbook of International Organizations, 1948-05 (published annually).

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around which the largest number of international nongovernmental social change organizations has organized. Together, groups working on human rights, environment, and women’s rights account for over half the total number of international nongovernmental social change organizations.

International networking is costly. Geographic distance, the influence of nationalism, the multiplicity of languages and cultures, and the costs of fax, phone, mail, and air travel make the proliferation of international networks a puzzle that needs explanation. Under what conditions are networks possible and likely, and what triggers their emergence?

Transnational advocacy networks appear most likely to emerge around those issues where (1) channels between domestic groups and their governments are blocked or hampered or where such channels are ineffective for resolving a conflict, setting into motion the “boomerang” pattern of influence characteristic of these networks (see Figure 1); (2) activists or “political entrepreneurs” believe that networking will further their missions and campaigns, and actively promote networks; and (3) conferences and other forms of international contact create arenas for forming and strengthening networks. Where channels of participation are blocked, the international arena may be the only means that domestic activists have to gain attention to their issues. Boomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target is a state’s domestic policies or behavior; where a campaign seeks broad procedural change involving dispersed actors, strategies are more diffuse.

The Boomerang Pattern

It is no accident that so many advocacy networks address claims about rights in their campaigns. Governments are the primary “guarantors” of rights, but also their primary violators. When a government violates or refuses to recognize rights, individuals and domestic groups often have no recourse within domestic political or judicial arenas. They may seek international connections finally to express their concerns and even to protect their lives.

When channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their state from outside. This is most obviously the case in human rights campaigns. Similarly, indigenous rights campaigns and environmental campaigns that support the demands of local peoples for participation in development projects that would affect them frequently involve this kind of triangulation. Linkages are important for both sides: for the less powerful third world actors, networks provide access, leverage, and information (and often money) they could not expect to have on their own; for northern groups, they make credible the assertion that they are struggling with, and not only for, their southern partners. Not surprisingly, such relationships can produce considerable tensions.

On other issues where governments are inaccessible or deaf to groups whose claims may nonetheless resonate elsewhere, international contacts can amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena. The cases of rubber-tappers trying to stop encroachment by cattle ranchers in Brazil’s western Amazon and of tribal populations threatened by the damming of the Narmada River in India are good examples of this.23

Activists beyond Borders

Political Entrepreneurs

Just as oppression and injustice do not themselves produce movements or revolutions, claims around issues amenable to international action do not produce transnational networks. Activists — "people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals" — do. They create them when they believe that transnational networking will further their organizational missions—by sharing information, attaining greater visibility, gaining access to wider publics, multiplying channels of institutional access, and so forth. For example, in the campaign to stop the promotion of infant formula to poor women in developing countries, organizers settled on a boycott of Nestlé, the largest producer, as its main tactic. Because Nestlé was a transnational actor, activists believed a transnational network was necessary to bring pressure on corporations and governments. Over time, in such issue areas, participation in transnational networks has become an essential component of the collective identities of the activists involved, and networking a part of their common repertoire. The political entrepreneurs who become the core networkers for a new campaign have often gained experience in earlier ones.

The Growth of International Contact

Opportunities for network activities have increased over the last two decades. In addition to the efforts of pioneers, a proliferation of international organizations and conferences has provided foci for connections. Cheaper air travel and new electronic communication technologies speed information flows and simplify personal contact among activists.

Underlying these trends is a broader cultural shift. The new networks have depended on the creation of a new kind of global public (or civil society), which grew as a cultural legacy of the 1960s. Both the activism that swept Western Europe, the United States, and many parts of the third world during that decade, and the vastly increased opportunities for international contact, contributed to this shift. With a significant decline in air fares, foreign travel ceased to be the exclusive privilege of the wealthy. Students participated in exchange programs. The Peace Corps and lay missionary programs sent thousands of young people to live and work in the developing world. Political exiles from Latin America taught in U.S. and European universities. Churches opened their doors to refugees, and to new ideas and commitments.

Obviously, internationalism was not invented in the sixties. Religious and political traditions including missionary outreach, the solidarity traditions of labor and the left, and liberal internationalism have long stirred action by individuals or groups beyond the borders of their own state. While many activists working in advocacy networks come out of these traditions, they tend no longer to define themselves in terms of these traditions or the organizations that carried them. This is most true for activists on the left who suffered disillusionment from their groups' refusal to address seriously the concerns of women, the environment, or human rights violations in eastern bloc countries. Absent a range of options that in earlier decades would have competed for their commitments, advocacy and activism through either NGOs or grassroots movements became the most likely alternative for those seeking to "make a difference."

Although numerous solidarity committees and human rights groups campaigned against torture and disappearances under Latin American military regimes, even on behalf of the same individuals they employed different styles, strategies, and discourses, and understood their goals in the light of different principles. Solidarity organizations based their appeals on common ideological commitments—the notion that those being tortured or killed were defending a cause shared with the activists. Rights organizations, in principle, were committed to defending the rights of individuals regardless of their ideological affinity with the ideas of the victim. One exception to this ideal involved the use of violence. Amnesty International, for example, defended all prisoners against torture, summary execution, or the death penalty, but it would adopt as its more visible and symbolic "prisoners of conscience" only those individuals who had not advocated violence.

Although labor internationalism has survived to the present, it is based mainly on large membership organizations representing (however imperfectly) bounded constituencies. Where advocacy networks have formed around labor issues, they have been transitory, responding to repression of domestic labor movements (as in labor support networks formed around Brazil, South Africa, and Central America in the early 1980s).

26 The constant dollar yield of airline tickets in 1995 was one half of what it was in 1966, while the number of international passengers increased more than four times during the same period. Air Transport Association home page, June 1997, http://www.airtransport.org/data/traffic.htm. See James Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 12, 15.
27 See Sidney Tarrow, "Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frames: Con-
Advocacy networks in the north function in a cultural milieu of internationalism that is generally optimistic about the promise and possibilities of international networking. For network members in developing countries, however, justifying external intervention or pressure in domestic affairs is a much trickier business, except when lives are at stake. Linkages with northern networks require high levels of trust, as arguments justifying intervention on ethical grounds confront the ingrained nationalism common to many political groups in the developing world, as well as memories of colonial and neocolonial relations.

How Do Transnational Advocacy Networks Work?

Transnational advocacy networks seek influence in many of the same ways that other political groups or social movements do. Since they are not powerful in a traditional sense of the word, they must use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies. The bulk of what networks do might be termed persuasion or socialization, but neither process is devoid of conflict. Persuasion and socialization often involve not just reasoning with opponents, but also bringing pressure, arm-twisting, encouraging sanctions, and shaming. Audie Klotz’s work on norms and apartheid discusses coercion, incentive, and legitimation effects that are often part of a socialization process.  

Our typology of tactics that networks use in their efforts at persuasion, socialization, and pressure includes (1) information politics, or the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact; (2) symbolic politics, or the ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away; (3) leverage politics, or the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence; and (4) accountability politics, or the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles.

A single campaign may contain many of these elements simultaneously. For example, the human rights network disseminated information about human rights abuses in Argentina in the period 1976–83. The

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29 Klotz, Norms in International Relations, pp. 152–54.

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo marched in circles in the central square in Buenos Aires wearing white handkerchiefs to draw symbolic attention to the plight of their missing children. The network also tried to use both material and moral leverage against the Argentine regime, by pressuring the United States and other governments to cut off military and economic aid, and by efforts to get the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to condemn Argentina’s human rights practices. Monitoring is a variation on information politics, in which activists use information strategically to ensure accountability with public statements, existing legislation and international standards.

The construction of cognitive frames is an essential component of networks’ political strategies. David Snow has called this strategic activity “frame alignment”: “by rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective.” 31 “Frame resonance” concerns the relationship between a movement organization’s interpretative work and its ability to influence broader public understandings. The latter involve both the frame’s internal coherence and its experiential fit with a broader political culture. 32 In recent work, Snow and his colleagues and Sidney Tarrow, in turn, have given frame resonance a historical dimension by joining it to Tarrow’s notion of protest cycles. 33 Struggles over meaning and the creation of new frames of meaning occur early in a protest cycle, but over time a given collective action frame becomes part of the political culture—which is to say, part of the reservoir of symbols from which future movement entrepreneurs can choose. 34

Network members actively seek ways to bring issues to the public agenda by framing them in innovative ways and by seeking hospitable venues. Sometimes they create issues by framing old problems in new ways; occasionally they help transform other actors’ understandings of their identities and their interests. Land use rights in the Amazon, for example, took on an entirely different character and gained quite different allies viewed in a deforestation frame than they did in either social justice or regional development frames. In the 1970s and 1980s many states decided for the first time that promotion of human rights in other countries was a legitimate foreign policy goal and an authentic expression of national interest.

34 Tarrow, “Mentalities,” p. 197.
This decision came in part from interaction with an emerging global human rights network. We argue that this represents not the victory of morality over self-interest, but a transformed understanding of national interest, possible in part because of structured interactions between state components and networks. This changed understanding cannot be derived solely from changing global and economic conditions, although these are relevant.

Transnational networks normally involve a small number of activists from the organizations and institutions involved in a given campaign or advocacy role. The kinds of pressure and agenda politics in which advocacy networks engage rarely involve mass mobilization, except at key moments, although the peoples whose cause they espouse may engage in mass protest (for example, those ousted from their land in the Narmada dam case).23 Boycott strategies are a partial exception. Instead of mass mobilization, network activists engage in what Baumgartner and Jones, borrowing from law, call "venue shopping," which relies "more on the dual strategy of the presentation of an image and the search for a more receptive political venue."24 The recent coupling of indigenous rights and environmental issues is a good example of a strategic venue shift by indigenous activists, who found the environmental arena more receptive to their claims than human rights venues had been.

A. Information Politics

Information binds network members together and is essential for network effectiveness. Many information exchanges are informal—telephone calls, E-mail and fax communications, and the circulation of newsletters, pamphlets and bulletins. They provide information that would not otherwise be available, from sources that might not otherwise be heard, and they must make this information comprehensible and useful to activists and publics who may be geographically and/or socially distant.25

23 Gerhards and Rucht, "Mesomobilization," details the organizational efforts to prepare demonstrations and parallel meetings to coincide with the 1988 meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Berlin. This was by far the largest mass action in conjunction with the multilateral development bank campaign, which began holding meetings and demonstrations parallel to the banks’ annual meetings in 1986. Interestingly, the authors seem not to have been aware of the existence of a transnational campaign of which this action was a part. On Narmada, see Medha Patkar, "The Struggle for Participation and Justice: A Historical Narrative," pp. 157–78; Anil Patel, "What Do the Narmada Tribals Want?" pp. 179–200; and Lori Udall, "The International Narmada Campaign: A Case of Sustained Advocacy," pp. 201–50, in Toward Sustainable Development? ed. Fisher.


25 Rosenau, Turbulence, p. 199, argues that "as the adequacy of information and the very nature of knowledge have emerged as central issues, what were once regarded as the petty quarrels of scholars over the adequacy of evidence and the metaphysics of proof have become prominent activities in international relations."

Introduction

Nonstate actors gain influence by serving as alternate sources of information. Information flows in advocacy networks provide not only facts but testimony—stories told by people whose lives have been affected. Moreover, activists interpret facts and testimony, usually framing issues simply, in terms of right and wrong, because their purpose is to persuade people and stimulate them to act. How does this process of persuasion occur? An effective frame must show that a given state of affairs is neither natural nor accidental, identify the responsible party or parties, and propose credible solutions. These aims require clear, powerful messages that appeal to shared principles, which often have more impact on state policy than advice of technical experts. An important part of the political struggle over information is precisely whether an issue is defined primarily as technical—and thus subject to consideration by "qualified" experts—or as something that concerns a broader global constituency.

Even as we highlight the importance of testimony, however, we have to recognize the mediations involved. The process by which testimony is discovered and presented normally involves several layers of prior translation. Transnational actors may identify what kinds of testimony would be valuable, then ask an NGO in the area to seek out people who could tell those stories. They may filter the testimony through expatriates, through traveling scholars like ourselves, or through the media. There is frequently a huge gap between the story’s original telling and the retellings—in its sociocultural context, its instrumental meaning, and even in its language. Local people, in other words, sometimes lose control over their stories in a transnational campaign. How this process of mediation/translation occurs is a particularly interesting facet of network politics.26

Networks strive to uncover and investigate problems, and alert the press and policymakers. One activist described this as the "human rights methodology"—"promoting change by reporting facts."27 To be credible, the information produced by networks must be reliable and well documented. To gain attention, the information must be timely and dramatic. Sometimes these multiple goals of information politics conflict, but both credibility and drama seem to be essential components of a strategy aimed at persuading publics and policymakers to change their minds.

The notion of "reporting facts" does not fully express the way networks strategically use information to frame issues. Networks call attention to issues, or even create issues by using language that dramatizes

26 We are grateful to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing for this point.

and draws attention to their concerns. A good example is the recent campaign against the practice of female genital mutilation. Before 1976 the widespread practice of female circumcision in many African and a few Asian and Middle Eastern countries was known outside these regions mainly among medical experts and anthropologists. A controversial campaign, initiated in 1974 by a network of women's and human rights organizations, began to draw wider attention to the issues by renaming the problem. Previously the practice was referred to by technically "neutral" terms such as female circumcision, clitoridectomy, or infibulation. The campaign around female genital "mutilation" raised its salience, literally creating the issue as a matter of public international concern. By renaming the practice the network broke the linkage with male circumcision (seen as a personal medical or cultural decision), implied a linkage with the more feared procedure of castration, and reframed the issue as one of violence against women. It thus resituated the practice as a human rights violation. The campaign generated action in many countries, including France and the United Kingdom, and the UN studied the problem and made a series of recommendations for eradicating certain traditional practices.

Uncertainty is one of the most frequently cited dimensions of environmental issues. Not only is hard information scarce (although this is changing), but any given data may be open to a variety of interpretations. The tropical forest issue is fraught with scientific uncertainty about the role of forests in climate regulation, their regenerative capacity, and the value of undiscovered or untapped biological resources. Environmentalists are unlikely to resolve these questions, and what they have done in some recent campaigns is reframe the issue, calling attention to the impact of deforestation on particular human populations. By doing so, they called for action independent of the scientific data. Human rights activists, baby food campaigners, and women's groups play similar roles, dramatizing the situations of the victims and turning the cold facts into human stories, intended to move people to action. The baby food campaign, for example, relied heavily on public health studies that proved that improper bottle feeding contributed to infant malnutrition and mortality, and that corporate sales promotion was leading to a decline in breast feeding. Network activists repackaged and interpreted this information in dramatic ways designed to promote action: the British development organization War on Want published a pamphlet entitled "The Baby Killers," which the Swiss Third World Action Group translated into German and retitled "Nestlé Kills Babies." Nestlé inadvertently gave activists a prominent public forum when it sued the Third World Action Group for defamation and libel.

Nongovernmental networks have helped legitimize the use of testimonial information along with technical and statistical information. Linkage of the two is crucial, for without the individual cases activists cannot motivate people to seek changed policies. Increasingly, international campaigns by networks take this two-level approach to information. In the 1980s even Greenpeace, which initially had eschewed rigorous research in favor of flashy media events, began to pay more attention to getting the facts right. Both technical information and dramatic testimony help to make the need for action more real for ordinary citizens.

A dense web of north-south exchange, aided by computer and fax communication, means that governments can no longer monopolize information flows as they could a mere half-decade ago. These technologies have had an enormous impact on moving information to and from third world countries, where mail service has often been slow and precarious; they also give special advantages of course, to organizations that have access to them. A good example of the new informational role of networks occurred when U.S. environmentalists pressured President George Bush to raise the issue of gold miners' ongoing invasions of the Yanomami indigenous reserve when Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello was in Washington in 1991. Collor believed that he had squelched protest over the Yanomami question by creating major media events out of the dynamiting of airstrips used by gold miners, but network members had current information faxed from Brazil, and they countered his claims with evidence that miners had rebuilt the airstrips and were still invading the Yanomami area.

The central role of information in these issues helps explain the drive to create networks. Information in these issue areas is both essential and dispersed. Nongovernmental actors depend on their access to information to help make them legitimate players. Contact with like-minded groups at home and abroad provides access to information necessary to their work.

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43 Female genital mutilation is most widely practiced in Africa, where it is reported to occur in at least twenty-six countries. Between 85 and 114 million women in the world today are estimated to have experienced genital mutilation. World Bank Development Report 1993: Investing in Health (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 50.


broadens their legitimacy, and helps to mobilize information around particular policy targets. Most nongovernmental organizations cannot afford to maintain staff people in a variety of countries. In exceptional cases they send staff members on investigation missions, but this is not practical for keeping informed on routine developments. Forging links with local organizations allows groups to receive and monitor information from many countries at a low cost. Local groups, in turn, depend on international contacts to get their information out and to help protect them in their work.

The media is an essential partner in network information politics. To reach a broader audience, networks strive to attract press attention. Sympathetic journalists may become part of the network, but more often network activists cultivate a reputation for credibility with the press, and package their information in a timely and dramatic way to draw press attention.43

Activists frame issues by identifying and providing convincing explanations for powerful symbolic events, which in turn become catalysts for the growth of networks. Symbolic interpretation is part of the process of persuasion by which networks create awareness and expand their constituencies. Awarding the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize to Maya activist Rigoberta Menchu and the UN’s designation of 1993 as the Year of Indigenous Peoples heightened public awareness of the situation of indigenous peoples in the Americas. Indigenous people’s use of 1992, the 500th anniversary of the voyage of Columbus to the Americas, to raise a host of issues well illustrates the use of symbolic events to reshape understandings.44

The 1973 coup in Chile played this kind of catalytic role for the human rights community. Because Chile was the symbol of democracy in Latin America, the fact that such a brutal coup could happen there suggested that it could happen anywhere. For activists in the United States, the role of their government in undermining the Allende government intensified the need to take action. Often it is not one event but the juxtaposition of disparate events that makes people change their minds and act. For many people in the United States it was the juxtaposition of the coup in Chile, the war in Vietnam, Watergate, and the Civil Rights Movement that gave birth to the human rights movement. Likewise, dramatic footage of the Brazilian rainforest burning during the hot summer of 1988 in the

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44 Brysk, “Acting Globally.”
insofar as networks can demonstrate that a state is violating international obligations or is not living up to its own claims, they hope to jeopardize its credit enough to motivate a change in policy or behavior. The degree to which states are vulnerable to this kind of pressure varies, and will be discussed further below.

Accountability Politics

Networks devote considerable energy to convincing governments and other actors to publicly change their positions on issues. This is often dismissed as inconsequential change, since talk is cheap and governments sometimes change discursive positions hoping to divert network and public attention. Network activists, however, try to make such statements into opportunities for accountability politics. Once a government has publicly committed itself to a principle—for example, in favor of human rights or democracy—networks can use those positions, and their command of information, to expose the distance between discourse and practice. This is embarrassing to many governments, which may try to save face by closing that distance.

Perhaps the best example of network accountability politics was the ability of the human rights network to use the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords to pressure the Soviet Union and the governments of Eastern Europe for change. The Helsinki Accords helped revive the human rights movement in the Soviet Union, spawned new organizations like the Moscow Helsinki Group and the Helsinki Watch Committee in the United States, and helped protect activists from repression. The human rights network referred to Moscow’s obligations under the Helsinki Final Act and juxtaposed these with examples of abuses. In an illustration of the boomerang effect, human rights activist Yuri Orlow said, “We do not have the means to reach our government. My appeal to Brezhnev probably got as far as the regional KGB office... The crucial question is what means are there for a Soviet citizen to approach his own government, other than indirectly through the governments of other countries.”

Domestic structures through which states and private actors can be held accountable to their pronouncements, to the law, or to contracts vary considerably from one nation to another, even among democracies. The centrality of the courts in U.S. politics creates a venue for the representation of diffuse interests that is not available in most European democra-

cies. It also explains the large number of U.S. advocacy organizations that specialize in litigation. The existence of legal mechanisms does not necessarily make them feasible instruments, however; Brazil has had a diffuse interests law granting standing to environmental and consumer advocacy organizations since 1985, but the sluggishness of Brazil’s judiciary makes it largely ineffective.

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS DO ADVOCACY NETWORKS HAVE INFLUENCE?

To assess the influence of advocacy networks we must look at goal achievement at several different levels. We identify the following types of stages of network influence: (1) issue creation and agenda setting; (2) influence on discursive positions of states and international organizations; (3) influence on institutional procedures; (4) influence on policy change in “target actors” which may be states, international organizations like the World Bank, or private actors like the Nestlé Corporation; and (5) influence on state behavior.

Networks generate attention to new issues and help set agendas when they provoke media attention, debates, hearings, and meetings on issues that previously had not been a matter of public debate. Because values are the essence of advocacy networks, this stage of influence may require a modification of the “value context” in which policy debates take place. The UN’s theme years and decades, such as International Women’s Decade and the Year of Indigenous Peoples, were international events promoted by networks that heightened awareness of issues.

Networks influence discursive positions when they help persuade states and international organizations to support international declarations or to change stated domestic policy positions. The role environmental networks played in shaping state positions and conference declarations at the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro is an example of this kind of impact. They may also pressure states to make more binding commitments by signing conventions and codes of conduct.

The targets of network campaigns frequently respond to demands for policy change with changes in procedures (which may affect policies in the future). The multilateral bank campaign, discussed in Chapter 4, is largely responsible for a number of changes in internal bank directives mandating greater NGO and local participation in discussions of projects. It also opened access to formerly restricted information, and led to the establishment of an independent inspection panel for World Bank


projects. Procedural changes can greatly increase the opportunity for advocacy organizations to develop regular contact with other key players on an issue, and they sometimes offer the opportunity to move from outside to inside pressure strategies.

A network's activities may produce changes in policies, not only of the target states, but also of other states and international institutions. Explicit policy shifts seem to denote success, but even here both their causes and meanings may be elusive. We can point with some confidence to network impact where human rights network pressures have achieved cutoffs of military aid to repressive regimes, or a curtailment of repressive practices. Sometimes human rights activity even affects regime stability. But we must take care to distinguish between policy change and change in behavior; official policies regarding timber extraction in Sarawak, Malaysia, for example, may say little about how timber companies behave on the ground in the absence of enforcement.

We speak of stages of impact, and not merely types of impact, because we believe that increased attention, followed by changes in discursive positions, make governments more vulnerable to the claims that networks raise. (Discursive changes can also have a powerfully divisive effect on networks themselves, splitting insiders from outsiders, reformers from radicals.) A government that claims to be protecting indigenous areas or ecological reserves is potentially more vulnerable to charges that such areas are endangered than one that makes no such claim. At that point the effort is not to make governments change their position but to hold them to their word. Meaningful policy change is thus more likely when the first three types or stages of impact have occurred.

Both issue characteristics and actor characteristics are important parts of our explanation of how networks affect political outcomes and the conditions under which networks can be effective. Issue characteristics such as salience and resonance within existing national or institutional agendas can tell us something about where networks are likely to be able to insert new ideas and discourses into policy debates. Success in influencing policy also depends on the strength and density of the network and its ability to achieve leverage. Although many issue and actor characteristics are relevant here, we stress issue resonance, network density, and target vulnerability.

**Issue Characteristics**

Issues that involve ideas about right and wrong are amenable to advocacy networking because they arouse strong feelings, allow networks to recruit volunteers and activists, and infuse meaning into these volunteer activities. However, not all principled ideas lead to network formation, and some issues can be framed more easily than others so as to resonate with policymakers and publics. In particular, problems whose causes can be assigned to the deliberate (intentional) actions of identifiable individuals are amenable to advocacy network strategies in ways that problems whose causes are irredeemably structural are not. The real creativity of advocacy networks has been in finding intentionalist frames within which to address some elements of structural problems. Though the frame of violence against women does not exhaust the structural issue of patriarchy, it may transform some of patriarchy's effects into problems amenable to solution. Reframing land use and tenure conflict as environmental issues does not exhaust the problems of poverty and inequality, but it may improve the odds against solving part of them. Network actors argue that in such reframing they are weakening the structural apparatus of patriarchy, poverty, and inequality and empowering new actors to address these problems better in the future. Whether or not they are right, with the decline almost everywhere of mass parties of the left, few alternative agendas remain on the table within which these issues can be addressed.

As we look at the issues around which transnational advocacy networks have organized most effectively, we find two issue characteristics that appear most frequently: (1) issues involving bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, especially when there is a short and clear causal chain (or story) assigning responsibility; and (2) issues involving legal equality of opportunity. The first respond to a normative logic, and the second to a juridical and institutional one.

Issues involving physical harm to vulnerable or innocent individuals appear particularly compelling. Of course, what constitutes bodily harm and who is vulnerable or innocent may be highly contested. As the early failed campaign against female circumcision shows, one person's harm is another's rite of passage. Still, campaigns against practices involving bodily harm to populations perceived as vulnerable or innocent are most likely to be effective transnationally. Torture and disappearance have been more tractable than some other human rights issues, and protesting torture of political prisoners more effective than protesting torture of common criminals or capital punishment. Environmental campaigns that have had the greatest transnational effect have stressed the connection between protecting environments and protecting the often vulnerable people who live in them.

We also argue that in order to campaign on an issue it must be converted into a "causal story" that establishes who bears responsibility or guilt. But the causal chain needs to be sufficiently short and clear to make the case convincing. The responsibility of a torturer who places an electric prodd to a prisoner's genitals is quite clear. Assigning blame to state leaders for the actions of soldiers or prison guards involves a longer
causal chain, but accords with common notions of the principle of strict chain of command in military regimes.

Activists have been able to convince people that the World Bank bears responsibility for the human and environmental impact of projects it directly funds, but have had a harder time convincingly making the International Monetary Fund (IMF) responsible for hunger or food riots in the developing world. In the latter case the causal chain is longer, more complex, and much less visible, since neither the IMF nor governments reveal the exact content of negotiations.

An example from the Nestlé Boycott helps to illustrate the point about causal chains. The boycott was successful in ending direct advertising and promotion of infant formula to mothers because activists could establish that the corporation directly influenced decisions about infant feeding, with negative effects on infant health. But the boycott failed to prevent corporations from donating infant formula supplies to hospitals. Although this was the single most successful marketing tool of the corporation, the campaign’s longer and more complex story about responsibility failed here because publics believe that doctors and hospitals buffer patients from corporate influence.

The second issue around which transnational campaigns appear to be effective is increased legal equality of opportunity (as distinguished from outcome). Our discussions of slavery and woman suffrage in Chapter 2 address this issue characteristic, as does one of the most successful transnational campaigns we don’t discuss—the anti-apartheid campaign. What made apartheid such a clear target was the legal denial of the most basic aspects of equality of opportunity. Places where racial stratification is almost as severe as it is in South Africa, but where such stratification is not legally mandated, such as Brazil and some U.S. cities, have not generated the same concern.

**Actor Characteristics**

However amenable particular issues may be to strong transnational and transcultural messages, there must be actors capable of transmitting those messages and targets who are vulnerable to persuasion or leverage. Networks operate best when they are dense, with many actors, strong connections among groups in the network, and reliable information flows. (Density refers both to regularity and diffusion of information exchange within networks and to coverage of key areas.) Effective networks must involve reciprocal information exchanges, and include activists from target countries as well as those able to get institutional leverage. Measuring network density is problematic; sufficient densities are likely to be campaign-specific, and not only numbers of “nodes” in the network but also their quality—access to and ability to disseminate information, credibility with targets, ability to speak to and for other social networks—are all important aspects of density as well.

Target actors must be vulnerable either to material incentives or to sanctions from outside actors, or they must be sensitive to pressure because of gaps between stated commitments and practice. Vulnerability arises both from the availability of leverage and the target’s sensitivity to leverage; if either is missing, a campaign may fail. Countries that are most susceptible to network pressures are those that aspire to belong to a normative community of nations. This desire implies a view of state preferences that recognizes states’ interactions as a social—and socializing—process. Thus moral leverage may be especially relevant where states are actively trying to raise their status in the international system. Brazilian governments since 1988, for example, have been very concerned about the impact of the Amazon issue on Brazil’s international image. President José Sarney’s invitation to hold the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil was an attempt to improve that image. Similarly, the concern of recent Mexican administrations with Mexico’s international prestige has made it more vulnerable to pressure from the human rights network. In the baby food campaign, network activists used moral leverage to convince states to vote in favor of the WHO/UNICEF codes of conduct. As a result, even the Netherlands and Switzerland, both major exporters of infant formula, voted in favor of the code.

**Thinking about Transnational Politics**

By focusing on international interactions involving nonstate actors, we follow in the tradition of earlier work in transnational politics that signaled the emergence of multiple channels of contact among societies, and the resultant blurring of domestic and international politics. The network concept offers a further refinement of that work. Both the Keohane and Nye collection and the various analyses of the “new transnationalism” lump together relations among quite distinct kinds of transnational actors: multinational corporations, the Catholic church, international scientific organizations, and activist groups. All

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51 See Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*.


53 The only factor that many of these transnational relations share is that all operate across national borders, and all are characterized by purposeful actors (at least one of which is a non-state agent). See Risse-Kappen, “Introduction,” *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In*, p. 8.
these relations can be characterized as forms of transnational networks, but we distinguish three different categories based on their motivations: (1) those with essentially instrumental goals, especially transnational corporations and banks; (2) those motivated primarily by shared causal ideas, such as scientific groups or epistemic communities; and (3) those motivated primarily by shared principled ideas or values (transnational advocacy networks).

These different categories of transnational networks correspond to different endowments of political resources and patterns of influence. In transnational relations among actors with instrumental goals, we would expect economic resources to carry the most weight; in epistemic communities, technical expertise and the ability to convince policymakers of its importance counts most. Like epistemic communities, transnational advocacy networks rely on information, but for them it is the interpretation and strategic use of information that is most important. Influence is possible because the actors in these networks are simultaneously helping to define the issue area itself, convince target audiences that the problems thus defined are solvable, prescribe solutions, and monitor their implementation. Thus transnational advocacy networks are distinctive in the centrality of principled ideas; their strategies aim to use information and beliefs to motivate political action and to use leverage to gain the support of more powerful institutions.

Without assuming that political interactions in the international system are reducible to domestic politics writ large, we have drawn extensively on insights developed in studies of domestic politics. American political science has been especially attentive to theories of group formation and behavior. However, both pluralist and elitist theories classify issue areas narrowly either by economic sector or by government policy clusters. By extending the use of issue area to principled issues

54 See Haas, ed., Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination. Theorists of epistemic communities exclude activist groups from their definition, seeing epistemic communities mainly as groups of scientists, limited to more technical issues in international relations. M. J. Peterson, in “Whalers, Cetologists, Environmentalists, and the International Management of Whaling,” International Organization 46 (Winter 1992), pp. 149, 155, distinguishes actors in epistemic communities from scientists, who are “not constrained by canons of reasoning” and who frame issues in simple terms, dividing the world into “bad guys” and “good guys.”


56 Methodologies and software for analyzing networks are discussed in David Kroke and James H. Kuklinski, Network Analysis. Sage university papers series. Quantitative applications in the social sciences, no. 28 (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1982). It is important to note that, in the context of the development of formal networks, the high speed of communication and the ease of access to information, the problem of how to identify and analyze networks has been a major challenge.


Activists beyond Borders

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contained in the literature on "new social movements." 60 Most important, however, over the last decade social movement theory has increasingly focused on the interaction between social structural conditions and action, on the social context of mobilization, and on the transformation of meanings among activists and among mass publics that make people believe they can have an impact on an issue.

As cognitive and relational aspects of these theoretical approaches have come to the fore, their potential utility for studying transnational group activities becomes much greater. By disaggregating national states into component—sometimes competing—parts that interact differently with different kinds of groups, we gain a much more multidimensional view of how groups and individuals enter the political arena. Focusing on interactive contexts lets us explore the roles of values, ideas, and different kinds of information and knowledge. As Heclo argues, "network members reinforce each other's sense of issues as their interests, rather than (as standard political or economic models would have it) interests defining positions on issues." 61 These theoretical approaches travel well from domestic to transnational relations precisely because to do so, they do not have to travel at all. Instead, many transnational actors have simply thrown off the fiction of the unitary state as seen from outside. 62

TOWARD A GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY?

Many other scholars now recognize that "the state does not monopolize the public sphere," 63 and are seeking, as we are, ways to describe the sphere of international interactions under a variety of names: transnational relations, international civil society, and global civil society. 64 In these views, states no longer look unitary from the outside. Increasingly

62 Douglas Chalmers takes this idea the furthest, arguing that many of these international actors should now be viewed simply as "internationalized domestic actors," and their international resources as political resources like any other. See "Internationalized Domestic Politics in Latin America: The Institutional Role of Internationally Based Actors," unpublished paper, Columbia University, 1993.

dense interactions among individuals, groups, actors from states, and international institutions appear to involve much more than re-presenting interests on a world stage.

We contend that the advocacy network concept cannot be subsumed under notions of transnational social movements or global civil society. In particular, theorists who suggest that a global civil society will inevitably emerge from economic globalization or from revolutions in communication and transportation technologies ignore the issues of agency and political opportunity that we find central for understanding the evolution of new international institutions and relationships.

One strong globalization thesis is "world polity theory" associated with the sociologist John Meyer and his colleagues. For Meyer world cultural forces play a key causal role in constituting the state's characteristics and action. 65 World polity researchers have shown conclusively that states with very different histories, cultures, and social and political structures all came to adopt similar conceptions of what it means to be a state and what it means to be a citizen, regardless of patterns of institutional development. Yet in attributing so much to transnational diffusion, they remain silent on the sources of world culture except to argue that it originates from the modern Western tradition. In their view, international NGOs are not actors, but "enactors" of world cultural norms; the role of the International Olympic Committee is functionally the same as that of Greenpeace or Amnesty International. 66

We lack convincing studies of the sustained and specific processes through which individuals and organizations create (or resist the creation of) something resembling a global civil society. Our research leads us to believe that these interactions involve much more agency than a pure diffusionist perspective suggests. Even though the implications of our findings are much broader than most political scientists would admit, the findings themselves do not yet support the strong claims about an emerging global civil society. 67 We are much more comfortable with a conception of transnational civil society as an arena of struggle, a fragmented and contested area where "the politics of transnational civil society is centrally


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Introduction
about the way in which certain groups emerge and are legitimized (by
governments, institutions, and other groups). 68

PRINCIPLES, NORMS, AND PRACTICES

In his classic work *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull made no bones
about the fact that in talking about international society he was talking
about a society of states. Such a society of states exists, he believed,
"when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and
common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive them-

68 Andrew Hurrell and Ngaire Woods, "Globalisation and Inequality," *Millennium* 24:3

69 Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2d ed. (New York:

70 Ibid., p. 4.

71 Ibid., p. 4.

72 See, e.g., Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, pp. 22–25; Kloetz, *Norms in Inter-

73 See Kloetz’s discussion in *Norms in International Relations of U.S. activists’ successful
re-framing of apartheid as an issue of racial equality, which linked domestic civil rights activity
with their campaign around South Africa.

means, to see norms in action we have to examine the actions of indi-
viduals and groups in historical contexts. Norms and practices are mu-

74 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

75 See, e.g., Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wes-
ley, 1979), pp. 05–96; F. H. Hinsley, Sovereignty, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Goldstein and Keohane, pp. 235–64.
constantly reinforced through the practices of states, and by the practices of nonstate actors.

Traditionally, as stated by the World Court, the doctrine of state sovereignty has meant that the state “is subject to no other state, and has full and exclusive powers within its jurisdiction.” It is a core premise that “how a state behaved toward its own citizens in its own territory was a matter of domestic jurisdiction, i.e., not anyone else’s business and therefore not any business for international law.” Similarly, how states disposed of the resources within their territories or regulated the development of their economies were at least theoretically sovereign affairs. Much international network activity presumes the contrary: that it is both legitimate and necessary for states or nonstate actors to be concerned about the treatment of the inhabitants of another state. Once granted that cross-border and global environmental problems mean that economic activities within one nation’s borders are of legitimate interest to another or others, the frontiers of legitimate interest have been fuzzy—and contested. Transnational advocacy networks seek to redefine these understandings; we ask whether and when they succeed.

Because many of these campaigns challenge traditional notions of state sovereignty, we might expect states to cooperate to block network activities. The ideas that environmental, indigenous, women’s and human rights networks bring to the international arena impinge on sovereignty in several ways. First, the underlying logics of the “boomerang” effect and of networks—which imply that a domestic group should reach out to international allies to bring pressure on its government to change its domestic practices—undermine absolute claims to sovereignty. Second, by producing information that contradicts information provided by states, networks imply that states sometimes lie. NGOs often provide more reliable sources of information to international organizations, but by acting on that information, especially when it explicitly contradicts state posi-

76 Alexander Wendt stresses that sovereignty is an institution that exists “only in virtue of certain intersubjective understandings and expectations; there is no sovereignty without an other.” He argues that sovereignty norms are now so taken for granted that “it is easy to overlook the extent to which they are both presupposed by and have an ongoing artifat of practice.” “Anarchy Is What States Make It,” pp. 412–13. Still, even critics of standard views of sovereignty are so concerned with exposing how the discourse of sovereignty is constructed and maintained that they often ignore how conceptions of the state are evolving. See also Richard Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematic,” Millennium 17.2 (1988): 227–61.


Chapter 4 looks at the development of advocacy networks around third world environmental issues, focusing particularly on the issue of tropical deforestation. It looks at two concrete instances of deforestation, in Rondônia in the Brazilian Amazon and in Sarawak, Malaysia, each of which was inserted into a different global campaign (the multilateral development bank campaign and tropical timber campaign, respectively). In both cases, how the ideas and practices of transnational actors fit into domestic political contexts is key to the analysis. These cases illustrate the difficulty of frame negotiation, where networks bring together actors with different normative and political agendas. Chapter 5 looks at a comparatively new network, the international network on violence against women, and focuses especially on the negotiations of meaning that were part of the network’s emergence. Finally, in the conclusions, we turn to the question of impact: how effective have these networks been in meeting the goals they set for themselves, and what are the effects of their practices in international society?

Chapter 2

Historical Precursors to Modern Transnational Advocacy Networks

When we suggest that transnational advocacy networks have become politically significant forces in international relations over the last several decades, we immediately face a series of challenges. First, where we see links among activists from different nationalities and cultures, others may see cultural imperialism—-attempts to impose Western values and culture upon societies that neither desire nor benefit from them. Are “moral” campaigns just thinly disguised efforts by one group to gain its interest and impose its will on another? Next, some question the novelty of these phenomena. After all, internationalism in various forms has been around for a long time. Finally, still others ask about significance—have these campaigns ever produced any important social, political, or cultural changes? On what basis do we attribute such changes to network activists’ work, rather than to deeper structural causes?

A look at history can give us greater purchase on these questions. In this chapter we examine several campaigns that cast light on the work of modern transnational advocacy networks. They include the 1833–65 Anglo-American campaign to end slavery in the United States, the efforts of the international suffrage movement to secure the vote for women between 1888 and 1928, the campaign from 1874 to 1911 by Western missionaries and Chinese reformers to eradicate footbinding in China, and efforts by Western missionaries and British colonial authorities to end the practice of female circumcision among the Kikuyu of Kenya in 1920–31. For each of these campaigns, we pay attention to comparable “noncampaigns” or related issues around which activists did not organize. In the
Suffragists sometimes argued that educated and cultured women had a better claim to the vote than uneducated, immigrant men or former slaves. Activists saw the victim as an unproblematic "other" who needed their assistance, and the reformers rarely recognized their own paternalism. Although some freed blacks like Frederick Douglass played prominent roles in the transatlantic campaign, for the most part the "victims" of slavery were absent from the movement. The frequent inability of reformers to transcend their historical setting, however, does not undermine the significance of the challenges they made to dominant social and political orders or their contributions to political transformation. This "pure" advocacy model breaks down at the point where the intended beneficiaries of advocacy campaigns play a significant role in carrying them out. When suffragists were confronted with their second-class status in the antislavery conferences, they began to adapt the advocacy model on their own behalf. The result superimposes many of the tactical advantages of an advocacy network on a solidarity model that assumes a community of fate. This conceptual boundary will prove throughout the cases we explore in the book to be one of the richest sites of negotiation between interest and identity.

Chapter 3

Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America

We can trace the idea that states should protect the human rights of their citizens back to the French Revolution and the U.S. Bill of Rights, but the idea that human rights should be an integral part of foreign policy and international relations is new. As recently as 1970, the idea that the human rights of citizens of any country are legitimately the concern of people and governments everywhere was considered radical. Transnational advocacy networks played a key role in placing human rights on foreign policy agendas.

The doctrine of internationally protected human rights offers a powerful critique of traditional notions of sovereignty, and current legal and foreign policy practices regarding human rights show how understandings of the scope of sovereignty have shifted. As sovereignty is one of the central organizing principles of the international system, transnational advocacy networks that contribute to transforming sovereignty will be a significant source of change in international politics.

large countries with traditions of jealously guarding sovereign prerogatives. Both have poor human rights records, although human rights violations in Argentina during the military government's 1976-80 "dirty war" were much more serious than in Mexico. The international human rights network worked intensively on Argentina, contributing to improved practices by the early 1980s. The network did not focus on Mexico, however, and endemic abuses continued throughout the 1980s. Only after the network concentrated international attention on Mexico after 1987 did the Mexican government begin to address human rights violations.

EMERGENCE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS IDEA AND THE NETWORK

The history of the emergence of the human rights network is the story of the founding, growth, and linking of the organizations in the network. The values that bind the actors together are embodied in international human rights law, especially in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This body of law justifies actions and provides a common language to make arguments and sets of procedures to advance claims. How these international human rights norms and regimes emerged in the UN has been discussed at length elsewhere and does not need to be repeated here. What is often missed, however, is how nongovernmental organizations helped spur state action at each stage in the process.

The entities that make up the current transnational human rights advocacy network include the following: (1) parts of intergovernmental organizations, at both the international and regional level; (2) international NGOs; (3) domestic NGOs; (4) private foundations; and (5) parts of some governments. The most important organizations for human rights in Latin America include the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UN Committee on Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Amnesty International, Americas Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America, domestic NGOs like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Academy of Human Rights in Mexico, and the Ford Foundation as well as the European foundations that fund international and domestic human rights NGOs.

Before 1945 none of these organizations existed. In 1961, when Amnesty International was founded, most still either did not exist, or, in the case of the foundations, had not yet begun to pay attention to human rights. But even before the modern networks emerged, key individuals and NGOs advanced the idea that human rights should be an international concern.

In Chapter 1 we mentioned the different traditions justifying actions by individuals or groups outside the borders of their own state: religious beliefs, solidarity, and liberal internationalism. None of these is a homogeneous category, and in some of the cases we consider in this book, individuals and groups from each of these three traditions participate together in a single campaign. Nevertheless, the logic of each tradition is distinct, and certain issues will separate one form of internationalism from the others. The activists discussed in Chapter 2 were motivated primarily by their religious beliefs, but most modern human rights activists have had a more secular inspiration.


Lawyer-diplomats first introduced and promoted the idea of internationally recognized human rights in the interwar period, and lawyers have continued to play a central role (in contrast with precursor campaigns where religious leaders predominated). Chilean jurist Alejando Alvarez, Russian jurist and diplomat Andre Mandelstam, and Greek jurist and diplomat Antoine Frangulis first drafted and publicized declarations on international rights of man as part of their work with non-governmental legal organizations—the American Institute of International Law, the International Law Institute, and the International Diplomatic Academy.

At the same time, a Jewish lawyer from Poland named Raphael Lemkin began a personal struggle to develop international law against racial massacres. Until Lemkin came up with the word "genocide" after the

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4. Mandelstam drafted a text of a "Declaration of the International Rights of Man" which the plenary session of the International Law Institute adopted in October of 1929. He later published articles and a book on the subject, and taught human rights courses in Geneva and the Hague. Two networks of NGOs, the International Federation of Leagues for the Defense of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and the International Union of Associations for the League of Nations, endorsed the principles of the declaration in 1931 and 1933. Frangulis introduced an international human rights resolution in the League of Nations in 1933, but it received scant support from countries already in the midst of the crisis leading to German withdrawal from the League. This section draws heavily on Burgers, "The Road to San Francisco," pp. 450-59, as well as an interview with Burgers in the Hague, Netherlands, 13 November 1993.
Second World War, there was no word for the phenomenon in any language. Influenced as a boy by the massacre of Armenians in Turkey, he became convinced that the Nazis would carry out parallel outrages against Jews. In 1933, at a conference sponsored by the League of Nations in Madrid, Spain, Lemkin proposed that an international treaty should be negotiated making "destruction of national, religious, and ethnic groups" an international crime akin to piracy, slavery, and drug smuggling. “Lemkin’s proposal met with howls of derision in which the delegates of Nazi Germany took the lead.”

Although liberal internationalism animated much human rights work, it is noteworthy that the jurists responsible for inserting the idea into early twentieth-century global debates came from countries at the periphery of the European system rather than at its cultural core. Both Frangulis and Mandelstam were political refugees, the former from the Greek dictatorship, the latter from the Bolshevik regime, and they saw in human rights a means of protecting individuals from the repressive practices of their own governments. Wilsonian idealism and the high hopes for the League of Nations died a crashing death, however, with the advance of fascism in the late 1930s. The desire to build a new mentality and create new legal mechanisms that could avert a new continental war could not counter resurgent nationalism in Europe.

An alternative source of internationalism in the early twentieth century was the tradition of solidarity that developed in trade union and socialist movements. These movements began by denying the relevance of the nation-state for workers, espousing a simple cosmopolitanism that fell before the decisions by most socialist parties to support their governments in the First World War. Despite this setback, the idea of international working-class solidarity remained a core value of the left throughout most of the twentieth century. It inspired thousands of young Communists and a considerable number of others to risk (and lose) their lives in Spain in the 1930s. The Spanish Civil War also inspired liberal intellectuals who were stunned by the collapse of democratic ideals and institutions in the face of the fascist advance.

Apart from these few examples, policymakers and intellectuals paid almost no attention to the concept of human rights before the Second World War. Although many were deeply concerned with democracy and freedom, they did not use the language of human rights to defend them. British author Herbert George Wells was an exception. Almost single-handedly he reinserted the idea of an international bill of rights into the international arena during the debate over war aims at the beginning of the Second World War. Breaking with the religious motivations of nineteenth-century reformers and campaigners, Wells, a socialist and student of T. H. Huxley, championed the rationalist and scientific ideas of the period. As early as 1897 Wells had called for a “rational code of morality,” asking, “are we not at the present time on a level of intellectual and moral attainments sufficiently high to permit of the formulation of a moral code . . . on which educational people can agree?”

In 1939, recognizing that war was coming, Wells wrote that “if many of us are to die for democracy we better know what we mean by the word.” He launched a spirited public debate and effort to draft a new declaration of the rights of man that would clarify the war aims of the Allies by expressing “the broad principles on which our public and social life is based.” Wells sent the declaration to many people, including President Roosevelt, Gandhi, and Nehru (all of whom sent him reactions), and Jan Christiaan Smuts, prime minister of South Africa, who later drafted the preamble of the UN Charter.

Franklin Roosevelt incorporated this concern with human rights as part of the postwar order into his “Four Freedoms” State of the Union speech in January 1941. The concept of a world founded upon essential freedoms—freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—was in part an outgrowth of his New Deal beliefs. Yet Roosevelt’s concern for the international dimension of human rights was stimulated by the war and by a need to articulate war and peace aims that would set the Allies apart from Nazi Germany and the Axis powers. Roosevelt was a friend of H. G. Wells, and was a

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8 Korey, “Raphael Lemkin,” p. 46.

9 Like Lemkin, Mandelstam was not involved in protection of Armenians in Turkey in 1915, where he had been posted as a Russian diplomat; Frangulis was concerned about the persecution of Jews in Germany. Burgers, “The Road to San Francisco,” p. 455.


14 Ibid., p. 428.


member of the International Diplomatic Academy, which had actively studied and promoted the cause of international human rights under the leadership of Frangulis and Mandelstam.\textsuperscript{18} It is likely that these were among the sources he turned to as he formulated his “Four Freedoms” speech.

An explosion of intellectual, governmental, and nongovernmental activity followed upon the Wells campaign and Roosevelt’s speech. This was a crucial moment of collaboration in creating a new postwar order, one of the pillars of which was to be the international protection of human rights. The U.S. domestic campaign for postwar international organization and the intense cooperation between the State Department and citizens’ groups in this period can only be understood in the light of the administration’s fear of a repeat of the U.S. failure to ratify the Versailles Treaty. For this reason, congressional and nongovernmental leaders were well represented in the official U.S. delegation to the 1945 conference in San Francisco that established the United Nations, and in addition the U.S. government invited 42 nongovernmental organizations to serve as consultants to the U.S. delegation in San Francisco.

THE INTER-AMERICAN TRADITION OF SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

In Latin America there was a strong tradition of support for international law as a means by which weaker countries might contest the interventions of the more powerful, especially the United States. But while legalism had primarily been used to support concepts of sovereignty and nonintervention, international law also supported the promotion of human rights and democracy, which involved recognizing limits to the doctrine of absolute sovereignty and nonintervention. Until the Second World War this tension was resolved in favor of nonintervention. Nevertheless, support for the idea of protecting human rights through international or regional mechanisms has a long history in the region.\textsuperscript{19} After the First World War most Latin American states joined the League of Nations and accepted the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The regional legalist tradition found expression in the American Institute of International Law, founded in 1915 by Alejandro Álvarez with the sponsorship and financial support of the Carnegie Endowment for Intern-

\textsuperscript{18} Interview with Jan Herman Burgers, the Hague, Netherlands, 13 November 1993.


national Peace. Although the institute’s main goals were codification of existing international law and promotion of principles of nonintervention, its members did not see a contradiction between nonintervention and the protection of individual liberties.\textsuperscript{20} Although after the Second World War Latin American states increasingly made commitments and paid lip service to human rights, nonintervention was still the “touchstone” of the inter-American system.\textsuperscript{21} Nevertheless, this legal tradition led Latin American states to support human rights language in the UN Charter, and to draft and pass the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man at the Bogotá Conference in 1948, months before the UN passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Latin American countries attended the San Francisco conference and became charter members of the new United Nations Organization. They participated in drafting the human rights language that became the normative underpinning of all future network activities. These normative commitments, however, did not lead to regional efforts to promote human rights until the 1970s, when the regional and international human rights network emerged.

THE UN CHARTER AND BEYOND

At the San Francisco conference, NGOs played a pivotal role in securing the inclusion of human rights language in the final UN charter. NGOs representing churches, trade unions, ethnic groups, and peace movements, aided by the delegations of some of the smaller countries, “conducted a lobby in favor of human rights for which there is no parallel in the history of international relations, and which was largely responsible for the human rights provisions of the Charter.”\textsuperscript{22} NGOs found allies for their efforts in a number of Latin American nations, especially Uruguay, Panama, and Mexico.\textsuperscript{23} The Mexican delegation, known for its spirited defense of nonintervention, nevertheless


argued that the Dumbarton Oaks proposals "contain a serious hiatus in
regard to the International Rights and Duties of Man, respect for which
constitutes one of the essential objectives of the present war." What is
striking about the legislative history of the human rights language in the
UN charter and in the inter-American system is how much the key Latin
American delegations participated in, embraced, and furthered the
human rights cause. This contribution later undermined Latin American
dictators' claims that human rights policies and pressures were an intolerable
intervention in their internal affairs.

The charter itself testifies to the success of efforts by NGO lobbyists
and Latin American delegations. The original Dumbarton Oaks proposal
had only one reference to human rights; the final UN Charter has seven,
including the key amendments proposed by the NGO consultants and
Latin American states. It lists promotion of human rights among the basic
purposes of the organization, and calls upon the Economic and Social
Council (ECOSOC) to set up a human rights commission, the only
commission specifically mandated in the charter.

The U.S. record at San Francisco on human rights issues was mixed. It
supported the effort to include human rights language in the charter, but
opposed references to economic human rights. Together with the two
other key governmental actors, the USSR and the United Kingdom, the
United States also wanted to limit possible infringement on domestic jurisdic-tion. Although the human rights provisions had no teeth at this
erly stage, states were wary of their sovereignty implications.

As a result, the charter mandate on human rights is weaker than many
NGOs desired, calling only for promoting and encouraging respect for
human rights, rather than assuring or protecting them. Though NGO
consultants and a handful of Latin American states spoke eloquently at
San Francisco for a more far-reaching vision of international human
rights, that alternative vision, which called upon the UN to actively pro-
tect rights and provide the institutional machinery to do so, would have
to wait another forty years to materialize. Still, by assigning institutional
responsibility for human rights to the General Assembly and ECOSOC and
by specifically recommending the creation of a human rights commis-sion, the charter paved the way for all subsequent human rights actions
within the UN system.

24 "Opinion of the Department of Foreign Relations of Mexico Concerning the Dumbo-
ton Oaks Proposals for the Creation of a General International Organization," 23 April 1945,
27 Report of Rapporteur, Subcommittee 1/11/A (Farid Zeineddine, Syria), to Committee
705.

The very first human rights treaty adopted by the UN was the Conven-
tion on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, passed
on 9 December 1948, one day before the UN approved the comprehen-sive
Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As with some later human
rights treaties, the genocide convention owed a special debt to the work
of one individual, Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin came as a refugee to the
United States in 1941, carrying with him documentary evidence of the
policies of racial massacre the Nazis were inflicting on the Jews. In 1944
he published a book in which he coined the word "genocide" by combing
the Greek word for race or tribe with the Latin word for killing. In the
Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, where he introduced the new word and
helped conduct seminars for the staff on the principles and background
of the Nazi party and the administration of the German government
under the Nazis. The authors of the indictment incorporated the new
word into their document as part of their discussion of crimes against hu-
manity, and it was used repeatedly during the trial. Although the word
was not included in the court’s judgment and sentence, it had already
begun to gain wide currency. On 20 October 1946, a week after the Allies
executed ten high Nazi officials and generals, a New York Times story carried
the headline "Genocide is the New Name for the Crime Fastened on the
Nazi Leaders." The Times gave Lemkin full credit for coining and popular-
izing the term.

While in Nuremberg, Lemkin learned that the Nazis had killed forty-
nine members of his family in concentration camps, death marches, and
the Warsaw ghetto. He channeled his despair into a single-minded cam-
paign to "inscribe into international law the crime and punishment of
genocide." At the new UN he lobbied the ambassadors of the United
States, France, Britain, Panama, Cuba, and India to sponsor and support
a resolution declaring genocide an international crime. Because the
ambassadors thought the resolution would be more effective if introduced
by smaller powers, Panama, Cuba, and India sponsored the original reso-lution. Lemkin then researched and drafted supporting statements in
several languages for thirty different ambassadors, and lobbied for its
passage. The secretariat of the Human Rights Division consulted Lemkin
when preparing the first draft of the treaty, and "the influence of his ideas

28 Lemkin, Axis Rule, p. 79.
29 Robert Storry, The Final Judgment: Pearl Harbor to Nuremberg (San Antonio: Naylor,
30 Victor H. Bernstein, Final Judgment: The Story of Nuremberg (New York: Boni and Gaer,
32 Korey, "Raphael Lemkin," p. 47.
is very marked. When the UN approved the treaty unanimously, Lemkin referred to it as "an epitaph on my mother’s grave." It was to be his great disappointment that the United States, the first government to sign the treaty, failed to ratify it. The Senate’s failure to ratify the genocide treaty was a signal of troubled times ahead for human rights in U.S. foreign policy. In the United States liberal internationalism had peaked in the immediate postwar period, giving way to a generation of liberal realists who saw only the hope of balancing clashing interests. International human rights norms were subordinated to anticommunism during the Cold War.

With the advent of détente in the early 1970s came a more propitious environment for taking human rights seriously. The brutal 1973 coup in Chile, one of Latin America’s oldest democracies, was a watershed event in the creation of the Latin American human rights network, but it had such an impact because some parts of the network were already in place to document, frame, publicize, and dramatize the event.

The first human rights organization to gain wide international recognition was Amnesty International. Formed in the 1960s, Amnesty International (AI) made some key tactical choices that served to frame and strategically portray human rights issues for its membership and eventually for policymakers and the public. By focusing on specific individuals whose rights were violated, rather than on abstract ideas, AI emphasized that victims of human rights abuses were individuals with names, histories, and families. This led to strong identification between the victim and the public. Second, AI chose to work on a small range of gross violations of human rights, including political imprisonment, torture, and summary execution. Although this focus emerged from the liberal ideological tradition of the Western countries where the human rights movement began, the rights were embodied also in international norms and treaties around which there was a broad international consensus. Third, to maintain balance, AI selected one urgent case from the first world, one from the second world, and one from the third world each month for a special postcard campaign. It thus protected itself from accusations that it was using human rights to pursue a broader political or ideological agenda of the right or left. AI’s tactical innovations, later adopted by many other organizations.

34 Korey, "Raphael Lemkin," pp. 45, 47.
36 This discussion is developed further in Kathryn Sikkink, "The Origins and Continuity of Human Rights Policies in the United States and Western Europe," in Ideas and Foreign Policy, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 139-79.

Human Rights Networks

members in the network, heightened the network’s ability to raise the salience of the issue, make it resonate with the public, and attract the widest possible support.

Amnesty served as a training ground for human rights activists around the world. Mexican activist Mariclaire Acosta recalls,

Obviously, my whole training, my whole human rights perspective, everything comes from Amnesty. It seems like all of these first and second generation Amnesty International people are like a little mafia. We all knew each other and loved each other dearly. And now we are spread all over the world doing other human rights work. It was like a star that exploded. It became a galaxy in many ways. People are either doing academic work in human rights or moving on to start their own NGO, or working for indigenous people rights, land rights, children’s rights, and women’s rights. I think Amnesty was wonderful, because it really trained a whole set of people all over the world to become conscious of human rights.

International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs)

The nongovernmental actors that promoted the idea of internationally protected human rights in the 1940s did not constitute a transnational advocacy network. Few organizations specialized in human rights, and those that did lacked the dense and constant information flows that characterize modern networks. Although some organizations are much older, in the 1970s and 1980s human rights NGOs proliferated and diversified (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). Human rights organizations also formed coalitions and communication networks. They developed strong links to domestic organizations in countries experiencing human rights violations. As these actors consciously developed linkages with each other, the human rights advocacy network emerged.

Coupes and repression in such countries as Greece, Chile, Uruguay, Uganda, and Argentina increased global awareness about human rights violations. Membership in organizations such as AI in Europe and the United States grew and new organizations were created. The U.S. section

38 Interview with Maclaire Acosta, Washington, D.C., 3 December 1993.
of AI, for example, expanded from 3,000 to 50,000 members between 1974 and 1976.41 (The experience of human rights organizations parallels a more general growth in international nongovernmental organizations in the postwar period.)42 Between 1983 and 1993 the total number of international human rights NGOs doubled, and their budgets and staffs grew dramatically.43 The organizations that focused explicitly on human rights violations under both right-wing and left-wing governments, such as AI and the Human Rights Watch committees, grew most rapidly, suggesting that the power of the human rights idea was partly the result of a certain principled neutrality.

The network grew in the south as well. In the 1970s and 1980s domestic human rights organizations appeared throughout Latin America, increasing from 220 to 550 between 1981 and 1990.44 Chilean organizations that were formed to confront government repression, especially the Catholic church’s human rights office, the Vicaria de Solidaridad, became models for human rights groups throughout Latin America and sources of information and inspiration for human rights activists in the United States and Europe. A handful of visionary leaders within the human rights movement—such as Pepe Zalaquett, the exiled Chilean lawyer who later became the chairman of the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International, and Aryeh Neier, the strategist and fundraiser behind the phenomenal growth of the Watch committees—sensed its potential, conceived strategies, and attracted a generation of exceptional young leaders to the network. The work of these “political entrepreneurs” was fundamental to the emergence and growth of the network in the early years.

Some attention should be given to the personal stories behind the dramatic growth of the human rights network on Latin America. Many Latin American activists got involved in international human rights work when they went into exile. Pepe Zalaquett, the son of Lebanese immigrants in Chile, had worked in the agrarian reform program of the Allende government. After the coup in 1973 he tried to help friends who

42 See Table 1 in Chapter 1, and also Bjell Skjødtbø, “The Growth of International Nongovernmental Organizations in the Twentieth Century,” International Organization 25 (Summer 1971): 420–42.
43 Two separate coding efforts based on organizations listed in the Yearbook of International Organizations confirm this growth. See Table 1, Chapter 1, Information on staff and budget changes based on information from interviews with staff of U.S. human rights organizations.

suffered from the repression, and eventually joined the Vicaria de Solidaridad. The Pinochet government imprisoned Zalaquett in 1975, and expelled him from Chile in 1976. When he settled in the United States, Amnesty International USA elected him to its board of directors, and later he was elected to the international executive committee of AI, eventually becoming its elected chair from 1979 to 1982. He stepped down from the board to serve as deputy executive director of the organization from 1983 to 1985, before he was allowed to return to Chile in 1986.45 In these various incarnations Zalaquett inspired a generation of new activists, many of whom mention him as one of the individuals they most admired. Ann Blyberg, who served for many years on the board of directors of Amnesty USA, remembers Zalaquett as one of a group of people she met in AI who drew her to the issue.

These are people who have a sense of life, and are drawn to human rights because it is a way to live life most fully. With these people, you get an incredible sense of how rich it is to be alive. It is a joie de vivre. They have an incredible sense of humor. . . . Pepe Zalaquett was so full of life, so interested, so engaged in many things. He personified why it was important to struggle for human rights. If you are not driven by formal religious commitment, or by ideological commitment, then what is it that drives you? I met people who were so extraordinarily alive, it was stunning. . . . And after [my son] Jonah was born, you think about how you would feel if you lost a child. How is it possible with all this pain the world hasn’t stopped turning, and yet these people are so alive? Somehow they reaffirm that life is important.46

Citizens in the United States and Europe became involved with human rights because they spent time living and working in Latin America. Some, such as Joe Eldridge, came to the human rights movement through their involvement in the church. “My father always said that we were children of God. My motivation fundamentally emerges from a religious perspective. Having been given life, I believe we are called to do things that edify life. We are choosing a path that leads to death or life. We must make decisions that move in the direction of affirming life.”47

Eldridge was sent by the Methodist church as a missionary to Chile. He arrived the week after Salvador Allende had been elected president. Although he received a political education in Chile, human rights was not yet part of his political vocabulary. “Human rights entered my vocabulary on September 11, 1973, when it was suddenly denied to one-third of the Chilean population. That was a watershed. That defining moment

45 Telephone interview with José Zalaquett, September 1993.
has sustained my vision of what abuses of human rights are about. It has driven me.  
At the end of October 1973 Eldridge came back to the United States to try to explain to his compatriots what was happening in Chile. “I vented my fury. I went around on a soapbox. I honed the message.” Around this time, concerned church people, academics, and activists had founded a small NGO office in Washington, D.C., called the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). When the first director left, the Methodist church offered to pay Eldridge’s salary as director. He now had an institutional foothold in Washington. “I really learned the limits of indignation, and how to put it in a language that Washington can digest.” He paired up with a former businessman, Bill Brown, and together they formed an “odd couple” on Capitol Hill lobbying for human rights in Latin America. Brown convinced Eldridge to give up the poncho and sandals and to wear a suit when he went to meet with people in Congress. Eldridge served as director of WOLA from 1974 until 1986, and saw human rights become an integral part of the policy debate in Washington.

Domestic NGOs  
Unlike the international NGOs that work on human rights violations in other countries, domestic NGOs focus on violations in their home countries. The number and capability of such domestic organizations vary enormously by country and by region. Latin America has more domestic human rights NGOs than do other parts of the third world. A 1981 directory of organizations in the developing world concerned with human rights and social justice listed 220 such organizations in Latin America, compared to 145 in Asia and 213 in Africa and the Middle East. A 1990 directory lists over 550 human rights groups in Latin America; some countries have as many as sixty. An international “demonstration effect” was observed in Latin America during the decade of the 1980s, as the activities and successes of early human rights organizations inspired others to follow their example.

Many Latin America human rights activists became involved in networks as a result of their personal experience living under repressive regimes. Estela Barnes de Carlotto, president of the Argentine organization called the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, first became involved in 1977 when Argentine security forces “disappeared” first her husband and later her daughter, Laura Carlotto. Her husband reappeared twenty-five days later, after Estela had paid a ransom of $9,000 to a private individual with contacts to repressive groups, but her daughter never reappeared. Shortly before she disappeared, Laura had told her mother that she was two months pregnant. What made the case unusual was that the military returned Laura’s bullet-ridden body to the family, claiming that she had been killed in a confrontation with the military after trying to run a road block. Two people later contacted Estela, however, and told her that they had been imprisoned with her daughter in one of the secret concentration camps, and that she had given birth to a baby boy before she was “transferred” (the Argentine military euphemism for murder). Hoping to locate her grandson, Estela joined the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who were just beginning to make international contacts. The Grandmothers modeled themselves after another human rights group in Argentina, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, made up of the mothers of disappeared people. The Grandmothers had all lost grandchildren or pregnant daughters to state repression. Both groups demonstrated weekly in the central plaza in Buenos Aires, the Plaza de Mayo, demanding the return of their loved ones.

When they kidnapped my daughter, I didn’t know anything about Amnesty International, or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, or the United Nations. We began to learn about these organizations through people in Argentina that had an international vision, like Emilio Mignone. He told us “you have to petition the OAS; you need to send letters to Amnesty.” We didn’t send letters directly to these places because we knew that they wouldn’t arrive if they were addressed to Amnesty International, so we always took advantage when someone traveled abroad to send letters.

The Grandmothers traveled to Europe, the United States, and Canada to denounce human rights violations in Argentina and to seek international solidarity.

The Grandmothers were also searching for international scientific assistance to answer some burning questions. In some cases, like that of the Carlotto family, they did not have actual proof that their daughter had given birth. In addition, even if they thought they had located a grandchild in an orphanage or with another family, they had no way of establishing paternity. The Grandmothers believed that foreign scientists

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could help them. Through an Argentine activist in the United States they first made contact with Eric Stover, the staff person for the human rights program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Stover helped put them in contact with Mary-Claire King of the University of California, who told them of a specific blood test that could be used to establish grandparent paternity even without information about the parents. Also through Eric Stover the Grandmothers learned about forensic techniques that, through the exhumation and analysis of cadavers, could determine whether their daughters had given birth.

The AAAS arranged a scientific delegation to Argentina in 1984, after redemocratization, formed by Stover, King, and Clyde Snow, a forensic anthropologist, as well as a forensic odontologist, a forensic pathologist, and two other doctors. This was the first time the team had applied their several skills to cases of human rights violations and mass murder. The task was herculean because most of the bodies had either been dropped into the ocean or were buried in mass graves. Estela Carlotto asked Snow to exhume the body of her daughter Laura, one of the few cases where the body had been returned to the family. “After the exhumation, Clyde Snow came to me and said, ‘Estela, you are a grandmother.’” He knew that Laura had given birth because there were distinctive marks in the bones of the pelvis. He was also able to tell Estela that her daughter had been assassinated at a distance of about thirty centimeters, which directly contradicted the military’s story of a shootout at a roadblock. Given the direction of the bullets, it appeared that Laura had been shot in the back of the head at close range. Snow also told Estela that while it was clear her daughter had taken care of her teeth and they were in good shape, in the period before her death they had deteriorated, which suggested that she had been detained and could not take care of them. Combined with the testimony of witnesses who had seen Laura in secret prisons, Snow’s information was sufficient for Estela to include the case of her daughter’s murder in the request for the United States to extradite ex-general Carlos Guillermo Suarez Mason, who had been in charge of the region where Laura was held. Meanwhile, grandparents gave blood which was analyzed by Dr. King, and in some cases she was able to establish the grand-paternity of adopted children who were later returned to their grandparents.

None of the investigations happened without trauma and conflict. When the AAAS team first arrived, some of the human rights organizations refused to cooperate with them. Some were distrustful of any group from the United States because of the U.S. government’s complicity with repression in Latin America. Others, especially the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, believed that the Argentine government owed them an official explanation of the whereabouts of their children, and argued that to accept information from any unofficial source was to relieve the government of responsibility.

Political stances of organizations and political histories of activists affected the configuration of human rights networks. Despite considerable collaboration, human rights organizations had to capture political space in advocacy networks for an approach that many schooled in a leftist solidarity tradition condemned as apolitical. This was especially true for Latin America, where human rights violations came in the main (though not exclusively) from right-wing regimes. Clearly, not all the relationships forged between international or foreign organizations and domestic organizations protecting the rights of oppressed peoples originated within the human rights tradition; the solidarity framework was a second main pattern for international advocacy among NGOs. Although both involve relationships between oppressed peoples and those in a position to support them, there are important conceptual differences. Individuals are endowed with rights; communities are the repositories of solidarity. Solidarity involves a substantive dimension that rights-based activism does not, that is, support based on a conviction of defending a just cause. Human rights appeals, on the other hand, raise the more procedural claims that violations of personhood or of recognized civil or legal norms and procedures are always unacceptable, whatever the victim’s beliefs.

As defined, these are ideal types; between the two positions are many who see the defense of human rights as the best way to protect the lives of the people whose ideas they defend. Outside of the core activists in these campaigns, moreover, few would have recognized such a distinction. Nonetheless, for the core activists, transnational solidarity campaigns presume an ideological affinity that transnational human rights advocacy explicitly does not. Solidarity and human rights groups have often worked together, and some groups have tried to incorporate both traditions. Thus the Chile solidarity committees and the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) could join Amnesty International to denounce human rights violations in Chile or El Salvador. On other issues, however, human rights groups and solidarity groups broke ranks. For example, when human rights organizations began to denounce violations in Cuba, in Nicaragua under the Sandinista government, or by the Frente Faribundo Marti in El Salvador, the solidarity movement remained silent.

Parts of Intergovernmental Organizations (IOs)

Before 1948 no intergovernmental organizations focused on human rights; by 1990 twenty-seven included human rights as a significant part

50 Cohen Salama, Tumbas anónimas, p. 120.
of their work. The larger INGOs have UN consultative status, which is the formal accrediting procedure allowing them to participate in UN debates and activities. Set up after the Second World War, both the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on the Protection of Minorities became more dynamic in the 1970s under the influence of new rules giving them broader latitude to investigate complaints, and under pressure from INGOs, the Carter administration, and some European governments. The Human Rights Committee began to function in 1976, providing yet another arena for human rights debate and activism in the UN system. These three organs hold periodic meetings that facilitate contact among the groups and individuals that form the human rights network, and have become focal points for network activity. In Geneva, the government representatives of the “like-minded” countries of the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Canada meet with representatives of human rights NGOs, and with UN representatives of the Human Rights Center to develop and pursue common strategies for human rights work.

Theo C. Van Boven, a Dutch diplomat known for his strong support of human rights, was appointed director of the UN Center for Human Rights in 1976 and steered it to a higher-profile role. Van Boven worked very closely with NGOs—too closely, according to his critics, among whom the Argentine government was the most vehement. Van Boven defended his close relations with NGOs. “It was thanks to them, in fact, that we could carry on our work, because I’ve always claimed that 85 percent of our information came from NGOs. We did not have the resources or staff to collect information ourselves, so we were dependent. They did a lot of work which we should do at the UN” For Van Boven, the personal testimonies he listened to week after week from victims, family members and human rights organizations left him feeling both “more radical” and sometimes “very hopeless.” NGOs provided the UN Center with concrete information on human rights violations, and also helped draft language for UN declarations and treaties. Amnesty International, for example, was deeply involved in the drafting process for the UN Convention against Torture. 


Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions 1235, passed in 1967, and 1593, passed in 1970, authorized the commission to review communications and investigate complaints that appear to reveal a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights.

The Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights were substantially drafted by 1954, but not approved by the General Assembly and opened for signature until 1966. The two covenants reached the required number of adherents for entry into force in 1976.

Interview with Theo C. Van Boven, Maastricht, the Netherlands, 8 November 1993.

In the early 1980s, the Soviet Union, the U.S. government under Ronald Reagan, and the Guatemalan and Argentine governments all attacked Van Boven and the Human Rights Center. “They were fighting against you, not openly, but behind your back, when it came to staff issues, finance and so on, trying to hit you there or to cut off things here, which is difficult to find out where and how it’s being done. When certain decisions are made to cut your budget or not to renew people whose work is important to you…” A week after Van Boven made a very strong statement against recent massacres in various countries including Guatemala and El Salvador, a telegram arrived terminating his contract. But this did not end the UN’s growing involvement in promoting human rights. When the Commission on Human Rights was blocked from conducting a full investigation of Argentine practices, it created a special working group on disappearances. Through this group it could monitor the Argentine situation as well as work on Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries where the practice of disappearances was widespread.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS), established in 1959, was reorganized and strengthened in 1979 when the American Convention on Human Rights entered into force. The reorganized commission became more active in promoting human rights in the region, especially in its influential 1980 report on human rights in Argentina. In the early 1990s the OAS took some significant steps to alter traditional understandings of sovereignty and nonintervention. At the OAS General Assembly in Santiago in 1991 all thirty-four member states declared “their firm political commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and representative democracy” and instructed the secretary general to convene a meeting of the permanent council “in the case of any event giving rise to the sudden or irregular interruption of a democratic government.” This “Declaration of Santiago” provided the legal and procedural basis for the rapid deployment of a military coup in Haiti and in Panama, and put the OAS in the forefront of international organization efforts to promote democracy.

Foundations and Funders

A handful of private and public foundations have provided funding for human rights organizations. Foundations may be the most autonomous of all the actors in the network. Intergovernmental actors depend on the consensus of their governmental members, and most NGOs...
are financially dependent upon membership and foundations. Foundations, however, have independent incomes, and are formally accountable only to self-perpetuating boards of trustees. Peter Bell has argued that the Ford Foundation acted as an “entrepreneur of ideas.” Nonetheless, foundations cannot implement their own ideas, but must seek and support other organizations that can.

The most important United States foundation for human rights issues in Latin America has been the Ford Foundation, but a number of European funders have also played key roles, especially European church foundations. In addition, official development assistance agencies and semipublic foundations in Canada, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and the United States have also funded human rights NGOs.

Before 1975 the big U.S. foundations hardly ever funded international human rights work. From 1977 to 1987, however, such grantmaking grew dramatically, both in numbers of grants and in their total dollar amount. (See Figure 2) In 1968 the Ford Foundation was by far the largest foundation in the United States. One-fifth to one-quarter of the Ford budget has been spent on international activities. In the 1960s and 1970s it had focused on strengthening state administrative capacities in developing countries. Funding human rights activities initially ran against the grain of previous grantmaking priorities, since human rights work was often viewed as attacking the state rather than strengthening it. The impetus for the human rights funding within Ford came from the field offices in Latin America, influenced by political events and ideas in the region.

For years, Ford had supported individual academics conducting social science research. When repressive governments in Latin America fired many of these individuals from their jobs in government or in universities, Ford helped to relocate them abroad or to set up independent research centers in their own countries, thus getting to human rights concerns by way of academic freedom. But even this policy was contentious both within the foundation and between the foundation and the U.S. government.

William Carmichael, Harry Wilhelm, and Peter Bell were key actors in the decision to engage Ford more directly with human rights. Carmichael and Bell worked in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s and witnessed the impact of repression there. Carmichael “cared passionately about human rights” and “fanned the HR flame” in the foundation. Peter Bell arrived in Brazil shortly after the military coup in 1964. At that time Ford was helping to develop graduate education and research, and Bell broadened the focus beyond the natural sciences and economics to support the other social sciences. He explained how he became involved in individual cases of social scientists who were objects of repression.

At the time of my arrival in Brazil, there were virtually no Brazilians with graduate training in political science. Indeed, the discipline hardly existed in the country. The Foundation made a grant to a promising group at the Federal University of Minas Gerais to form Brazil’s first department of

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political science. I was attending a conference of leading social scientists from around the world which the new department had organized. One of the young professors, Bolivar Lamouner, a Brazilian graduate student who had been doing research for his master’s thesis at UCLA, approached me. He said that he had planned to return to UCLA a few days earlier but that he had arrived at the airport to find that his visa to the United States had been canceled. He had been told to go back to the U.S. consul to correct the situation, and he asked me to accompany him and to vouch for his status at UCLA—which I did.

At the consulate itself, the consul insisted on seeing us separately rather than together. When Bolivar emerged from the meeting, he was crestfallen. I then went in to be told that Bolivar had been denied a visa. When I asked why, I was told that he was “the real thing.” I asked what that meant, and the consul said that Bolivar was “deep red.” I met Bolivar in the anteroom, and we went down the elevator without saying a word to one another. As we emerged, members of the Brazilian secret police grabbed him and took him prisoner. I tried to accompany Bolivar, but was pushed out of the way. I went back up to the consulate, and was told to mind my own business. The next day, a well-placed Brazilian at the conference was able to locate where Bolivar was being held. Many of the conference and I boarded a bus for the city and asked very politely to see the prisoner. Two months later he was released without any charges having been made and (thanks to the support from the UCLA faculty and others) allowed immediately to resume his studies in the U.S.

The role that I had played in this affair seemed very minor to me. All I had done was what any decent person would do. I was surprised therefore that the person in charge of the Foundation’s office in Brazil recommended to our regional director in New York that I be reprimanded or worse. He felt that I had stuck my neck out in an ‘un-Foundation-like’ way. Fortunately, he was only answered by a cable from the director, congratulating me on my conduct. As word of the incident spread around Brazil, it seemed to do the Foundation no damage. In fact, it opened new doors to us and appeared to deepen trust in our work.69

Later in 1969 the Brazilian government clamped down on some distinguished social scientists and removed them from their jobs in state and federal universities. The blacklisted intellectuals, led by sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was to author the seminal text on dependency theory, decided to form a think tank, the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAF), which would allow social scientists who had lost their jobs to stay in Brazil at an independent research center. Carmichael and Bell recommended that Ford fund the new center. At this

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62 Peter Bell, “Speech to the Incoming Students,” Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, 10 September 1984, p. 4-6.

63 Interview with Peter Bell, New York City, 20 March 1992.


65 Interview with William Carmichael.
rights and women's organizations, to work on a common NOVIB funding strategy for the future. NOVIB also actively encourages contact among the groups it funds (its "partners") in different parts of the world.

**Networks and Governments**

Most governments' human rights policies have emerged as a response to pressure from organizations in the human rights network, and have depended fundamentally on network information. For this reason it is hard to separate the independent influences of government policy and network pressures. Networks often have their greatest impact by working through governments and other powerful actors. In the United States the earliest governmental group to work actively on human rights was the House Subcommittee on International Organizations under the chairmanship of Donald Fraser (D-Minn.). Beginning in 1973 this subcommittee held a series of hearings on human rights abuses around the world. The main witnesses providing human rights information in these hearings were representatives of human rights NGOs. Although human rights policy began to form in the U.S. Congress three years before Jimmy Carter was elected president, Carter administration officials gave it a higher profile, and, by lending the weight of the United States to that of progressive European countries in the UN, spurred action in international forums. Under Carter the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs sought contacts with and information from NGOs, which continued to influence executive policy making even during the Reagan and Bush administrations.

Network influence within European states centered on foreign affairs and development cooperation ministries. Several European governments set up human rights advisory committees that included NGOs such as Amnesty International, as well as ministers, parliamentarians, and scholars. In some countries the overlap between individuals in government and NGOs is significant. For example, in 1995 both the queen and the foreign minister of the Netherlands were members of AI. Indeed, Dutch policy makers claim difficulty in remembering which hat they are wearing at a particular meeting—academic, member of a leading human rights NGO, member of the NGO governmental advisory board, or government delegate to an intergovernmental organization.

Often, network interactions with government bureaucracies have been mutually reinforcing but not congenial. The U.S. annual human rights reports provide a clear example. Because State Department officials did not want to offend foreign officials or undermine other policy goals, early reports were often weak. The State Department reports, however, did serve as a focal point for human rights groups, which created annual public events by issuing responses to the reports. The reports and counterreports attracted press coverage, and the critiques held the State Department to higher standards in future reporting. In turn, domestic human rights organizations in repressive countries learned that they could indirectly pressure their governments to change practices by providing information on abuses to human rights officers in U.S. embassies for inclusion in the U.S. annual country reports.

The link to government is simultaneously the most powerful and the least dependable aspect of the work of the network, as it often depends on the individuals occupying key posts. Many human rights activists considered Patricia Derian, assistant secretary of state for human rights during the Carter administration, part of the human rights network in the sense that she shared many of their values, and she and her staff were in frequent communication with them. When Reagan took office and Elliot Abrams replaced Derian, the human rights office in the State Department dropped out of the network. Without linkages to governments institutionalized through NGO advisory committees, such changes in personnel can dismantle productive relationships.

The section above discusses the growth and change of each of the parts of the human rights network in the 1970s and 1980s. Each new human rights organization reinforces a reconceptualized view of state sovereignty in which international scrutiny of domestic human rights practices is not only legitimate but necessary. To demonstrate the impact of the network in practice, we need to look at the effectiveness of these pressures in specific cases.

**Argentina**

Even before the military coup of March 1976, international human rights pressures had influenced the Argentine military's decision to cause political opponents to "disappear," rather than imprisoning them or exe-

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cutting them publicly. The technique led to the widespread use of the verb "to disappear" in a transitive sense. The Argentine military believed they had "learned" from the international reaction to the human rights abuses after the Chilean coup. When the Chilean military executed and imprisoned large numbers of people, the ensuing uproar led to the international isolation of the regime of Augusto Pinochet. Hoping to maintain a moderate international image, the Argentine military decided to secretly kidnap, detain, and execute its victims, while denying any knowledge of their whereabouts.

Although this method did initially mute the international response to the coup, Amnesty International and groups staffed by Argentine political exiles eventually were able to document and condemn the new forms of repressive practices. To counteract the rising tide of criticism, the Argentine junta invited AI for an on-site visit in 1976. In March 1977, on the first anniversary of the military coup, AI published the report on its visit, a well-documented denunciation of the abuses of the regime with emphasis on the problem of the disappeared. Amnesty estimated that the regime had taken six thousand political prisoners, most without specifying charges, and had abducted between two and ten thousand people. The report helped demonstrate that the disappearances were part of a deliberate government policy by which the military and the police kidnapped perceived opponents, took them to secret detention centers where they tortured, interrogated, and killed them, then secretly disposed of their bodies. Amnesty International's denunciations of the Argentine regime were legitimized when it won the Nobel Peace Prize later that year.

Such information led the Carter administration and the French, Italian, and Swedish governments to denounce rights violations by the junta. France, Italy, and Sweden each had citizens who had been victims of Argentine repression, but their concerns extended beyond their own citizens. Although the Argentine government claimed that such attacks constituted unacceptable intervention in their internal affairs and violated Argentine sovereignty, U.S. and European officials persisted. In 1977 the U.S. government reduced the planned level of military aid for Argentina because of human rights abuses. Congress later passed a bill eliminating all military assistance to Argentina, which went into effect on 30 September 1978. A number of high-level U.S. delegations met with junta members during this period to discuss human rights.

Early U.S. action on Argentina was based primarily on the human rights documentation provided by AI and other NGOs, not on information received through official channels at the embassy or the State Department. For example, during a 1977 visit, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance carried a list of disappeared people prepared by human rights NGOs to present to members of the junta. When Patricia Derian met with junta member Admiral Emilio Massera during a visit in 1977, she brought up the navy's use of torture. In response to Massera's denial, Derian said she had seen a rudimentary map of a secret detention center in the Navy Mechanical School, where their meeting was being held, and asked whether perhaps under their feet someone was being tortured. Among Derian's key sources of information were NGOs and especially the families of the disappeared, with whom she met frequently during her visits to Buenos Aires.

Within a year of the coup, Argentine domestic human rights organizations began to develop significant external contacts. Their members traveled frequently to the United States and Europe, where they met with human rights organizations, talked to the press, and met with parliamentarians and government officials. These groups sought foreign contacts to publicize the human rights situation, to fund their activities, and to help protect themselves from further repression by their government, and

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77 Interview with Robert Pastor, Wannoo, Massachusetts, 28 June 1990.

78 Testimony given by Patricia Derian to the National Criminal Appeals Court in Buenos Aires during the trials of junta members. "Massera sonrió y me dijo: Sabe qué paso con Poncio Pilatos...?" Diario del Juicio, 18 June 1985, p. 3; Guest, Behind the Disappearances, pp. 161–63. Later it was confirmed that the Navy Mechanical School was one of the most notorious secret torture and detention centers. Nuncius Mts: The Report of the Argentine National Commission for the Disappeared (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1986), pp. 79–84.
they provided evidence to U.S. and European policymakers. Much of their funding came from European and U.S.-based foundations.  

Two key events that served to keep the case of Argentine human rights in the minds of U.S. and European policymakers reflect the impact of transnational linkages on policy. In 1979 the Argentine authorities released Jacobo Timerman, whose memoir describing his disappearance and torture by the Argentine military helped human rights organizations, members of the U.S. Jewish community, and U.S. journalists to make his case a cause célèbre in U.S. policy circles. 80 Then in 1980 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to an Argentine human rights activist, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. Peace and human rights groups in the United States and Europe helped sponsor Pérez Esquivel’s speaking tour to the United States exactly at the time that the OAS was considering the IACHR report on Argentina and Congress was debating the end of the arms embargo to Argentina.  

The Argentine military government wanted to avoid international human rights censure. Scholars have long recognized that even authoritarian regimes depend on a combination of coercion and consent to stay in power. Without the legitimacy conferred by elections, they rely heavily on claims about their political efficacy and on nationalism. 81 Although the Argentine military mobilized nationalist rhetoric against foreign criticism, a sticking point was that Argentines, especially the groups that most supported the military regime, thought of themselves as the most European of Latin American countries. The military junta claimed to be carrying out the repression in the name of “our Western and Christian civilization.” 82 But the military’s intent to integrate Argentina more fully into the liberal global economic order was being jeopardized by deteriorating relations with countries most identified with that economic order, and with “Western and Christian civilization.”  

The junta adopted a sequence of responses to international pressures. From 1976 to 1978 the military pursued an initial strategy of denying the legitimacy of international concern over human rights in Argentina. At the same time it took actions that appear to have contradicted this strategy, such as permitting the visit of the Amnesty International mission to Argentina in 1976. The “failure” of the Amnesty visit, from the military point of view, appeared to reaffirm the junta’s resistance to human rights pressures. This strategy was most obvious at the UN, where the Argentine government worked to silence international condemnation in the UN Commission on Human Rights. Ironically, the rabidly anticommunist Argentine regime found a diplomatic ally in the Soviet Union, an importer of Argentine wheat, and the two countries collaborated to block UN consideration of the Argentine human rights situation. 83 Concerned states circumvented this blockade by creating the UN Working Group on Disappearances in 1980. Human rights NGOs provided information, lobbied, government delegations, and pursued joint strategies with sympathetic UN delegations. 

By 1978 the Argentine government recognized that something had to be done to improve its international image in the United States and Europe, and to restore the flow of military and economic aid. 84 To these ends the junta invited the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for an on-site visit, in exchange for a U.S. commitment to release Export-Import Bank funds and otherwise improve U.S.-Argentine relations. 85 During 1978 the human rights situation in Argentina improved significantly. Figure 3 shows that the practice of disappearance as a tool of state policy was curtailed only after 1978, when the government began to take the “international variable” seriously. 86 

The value of the network perspective in the Argentine case is in highlighting the fact that international pressures did not work independently, but rather in coordination with national actors. Rapid change occurred because strong domestic human rights organizations documented abuses and protested against repression, and international pressures helped protect domestic monitors and open spaces for their protest. International groups amplified both information and symbolic politics of domestic groups and projected them onto an international stage, from which they echoed back into Argentina. This classic boomerang process was executed nowhere more skillfully than in Argentina, in large part due to the courage and ability of domestic human rights organizations. 

Some argue that repression stopped because the military had finally killed all the people that they thought they needed to kill. This argument disregards disagreements within the regime about the size and nature of the “enemy.” International pressures affected particular factions within

80 The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo received grants from Dutch churches and the Norwegian Parliament, and the Ford Foundation provided funds for the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.  
81 Jacobo Timerman, Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number (New York: Random House, 1981).  
84 Guest, Behind the Disappearances, pp. 118–19, 152–53.  
85 See Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos, Los Cifras de la Guerra Sucia (Buenos Aires, 1988), pp. 16–32.
the military regime that had differing ideas about how much repression was “necessary.” Although by the military’s admission 90 percent of the armed opposition had been eliminated by April 1977, this did not lead to an immediate change in human rights practices. By 1978 there were splits within the military about what it should do in the future. One faction was led by Admiral Massera, a right-wing populist, another by Generals Carlos Suarez Mason and Luciano Menéndez, who supported indefinite military dictatorship and unrelenting war against the left, and a third by Generals Jorge Videla and Roberto Viola, who hoped for eventual political liberalization under a military president. Over time, the Videla-Viola faction won out, and by late 1978 Videla had gained increased control over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, previously under the influence of the navy. Videla’s ascendency in the fall of 1978, combined with U.S. pressure, helps explain his ability to deliver on his promise to allow the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights visit in December.

The Argentine military government thus moved from initial refusal to accept international human rights interventions, to cosmetic cooperation with the human rights network, and eventually to concrete improvements in response to increased international pressures. Once it had invited IACHR and discovered that the commission could not be co-opted or confused, the government ended the practice of disappearance, released political prisoners, and restored some semblance of political participation. Full restoration of human rights in Argentina did not come until after the Malvinas War and the transition to democracy in 1983, but after 1980 the worst abuses had been curtailed.

In 1985, after democratization, Argentina tried the top military leaders of the juntas for human rights abuses, and a number of key network members testified: Theo Van Boven and Patricia Derian spoke about international awareness of the Argentine human rights situation, and a member of the IACHR delegation to Argentina discussed the OAS report. Clyde Snow and Eric Stover provided information about the exhumation of cadavers from mass graves. Snow’s testimony, corroborated by witnesses, was a key part of the prosecutor’s success in establishing that top military officers were guilty of murder. A public opinion poll taken during the trials showed that 92 percent of Argentines were in favor of the trials of the military juntas. The tribunal convicted five of the nine defendants, though only two—ex-president Videla, and Admiral Massera—were given life sentences. The trials were the first of their kind in Latin America, and among the very few in the world ever to try former leaders for human rights abuses during their rule. In 1990 President Carlos Menem pardoned the former officers. By the mid-1990s, however, democratic rule in Argentina was firmly entrenched, civilian authority over the military was well established, and the military had been weakened by internal disputes and severe cuts in funding.

The Argentine case set important precedents for other international and regional human rights action, and shows the intricate interactions of groups and individuals within the network and the repercussions of these interactions. The story of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo is

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89 *Diario del Juicio* 1 (27 May 1985), and 9 (23 July 1985).
90 *Diario del Juicio* 25 (2 November 1985).
91 Acuña and Smulovitz, “Adjusting the Armed Forces to Democracy,” pp. 20–21.
an exemplar of network interaction and unanticipated effects. The persistence of the Grandmothers helped create a new profession—what one might call "human rights forensic science." (The scientific skills existed before, but they had never been put to the service of human rights.) Once the Argentine case had demonstrated that forensic science could illuminate mass murder and lead to convictions, these skills were diffused and legitimized. Eric Stover, Clyde Snow, and the Argentine forensic anthropology team they helped create were the prime agents of international diffusion. The team later carried out exhumations and training in Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Guatemala. Forensic science is being used to prosecute mass murderers in El Salvador, Honduras, Rwanda, and Bosnia. By 1996 the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia had contracted with two veterans of the Argentine forensic experiment, Stover and Dr. Robert Kirschner, to do forensic investigations for its war crimes tribunal. "A war crime creates a crime scene," said Dr. Kirschner, "That's how we treat it. We recover forensic evidence for prosecution and create a record which cannot be successfully challenged in court.""93

Mexico

The political and human rights situation in Mexico was quite different from that of Argentina. Mexico’s elected civilian government had been under the control of the official political party, the Institutionalized Revolutionary party (PRI), since the party was formed in 1929. Massive abuses of the kind that occurred in Argentina after the coup did not occur in Mexico, but abuses were nonetheless common.

The most serious episode occurred in October 1968, when army troops opened fire on a peaceful student demonstration in a central plaza in Mexico City, killing between three and five hundred students and wounding more than two thousand (see Preface). Although single violations of this magnitude did not recur, Mexican human rights organizations reported that approximately five hundred people disappeared in the 1970s, many in the context of a military counterinsurgency campaign against a guerrilla movement.4 The police routinely used torture to extract confessions from both common and political prisoners; prison cond-

92 Cohen Salama, Tumbas anónimas, p. 275.
95 Ibid., p. 1.
96 Statement by the Chief of the Mexican Delegation, Mr. Claude Heller, on theme 12 of the agenda in the 44th period of session of the Commission of Human Rights, Geneva, 9 March 1998, p. 1, 3 (mimeo, trans. by author).
98 Interview with Rodolfo Saverhagen (founding member of the academy), Buenos Aires, 26 October 1992.
its first five years. The 1985 earthquake in Mexico City spurred the growth of independent organizations in Mexico, and fueled concern with human rights. The discovery of the bodies of several prisoners who had apparently been tortured, during the excavation of the headquarters of the office of the Federal District Attorney General, stirred national outrage. Furthermore, when the Mexican government was paralyzed in its response to the earthquake, civil society organized and international NGOs and funders stepped in to clean up. This collaboration broke down old assumptions in Mexico that all political activity must be channeled through the state, and created new confidence in the capacity of the NGO sector.

The next stage began when the international human rights NGOs first addressed the Mexican situation. With the wave of re-democratization in the hemisphere, human rights had improved in many countries that previously had been targets of the network. Network members could now focus attention on more ambiguous situations involving endemic violations under formally elected governments. The first reports by an international nongovernmental human rights organization came when Americas Watch released a 1984 report on Mexico’s treatment of Guatemalan refugees, and Amnesty International issued a 1986 report on rural violence in Mexico. (When the AI researchers first visited Mexico they found no human rights official in the government or human rights NGO to contact.) Although these reports upset the Mexican government because they breached its carefully cultivated image as a defender of human rights, government practices did not change.

Change did begin after 1988, however, when a changed domestic and international political context made human rights a more salient issue. The split of the ruling party, PRI, before the 1988 presidential election, led to a political challenge from the left in the form of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Then in 1990 Mexico initiated discussions with the United States and Canada on a free trade agreement. Both of these situations made the Mexican government more sensitive to charges of human rights violations.

In 1990 Americas Watch issued a seminal report on human rights conditions in Mexico. After noting the Mexican government’s careful cultivation of its pro-human rights image, the report documented killings, torture, and mistreatment by the police during criminal investigations; disappearances; election-related violence; violence related to land disputes; abuses against independent unions; and violations of freedom of the press—all abuses that, the report argued, had become institutionalized in Mexican society. The Americas Watch report received coverage in the U.S. and Mexican press and attracted significant attention in Washington, where the initial negotiations for the North American Free Trade Agreement were under way.

Until 1990 the U.S. Congress had never held hearings on human rights in Mexico. Yet a few months after the Americas Watch Report was issued, such hearings took place in the subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations and on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the House of Representatives. In addition to testimony from the State Department, the subcommittees heard testimony from AI and Americas Watch.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights did not accept any Mexican cases until 1989–90, when it took on three. Brought by members of a major opposition party, the National Action party (PAN), all three alleged that the PRI was responsible for electoral irregularities. The Mexican government adopted a rigid position that if a “State agreed to submit itself to international jurisdiction with respect to the election of its political bodies, a State would cease to be sovereign,” and that any commission conclusion on elections would constitute an intervention, according to the OAS Charter.

Given that the American Convention on Human Rights guaranteed the right to vote and be elected, the IACHR asserted the admissibility of the complaints and its own competence to decide issues related to elections. Taking into account the Mexican government’s ratification of the American convention, its failure to express reservations at that point with regard to the issue of elections, and the shared understandings and practices of other states in the region, the IACHR concluded that the Mexican position was unfounded, and it recommended that the Mexican government reform its internal electoral law to make effective the political
rights of the convention. In other words, the IACHR underscored a quite different interpretation of sovereignty from that of the Mexican government, which it justified by reference to the shared understandings and practices of other states in the region, and to previous Mexican government actions that created precedents constraining its future options.

Under pressure from the IACHR, domestic political parties, and human rights organizations, and in response to the widespread allegations of fraud in the 1998 elections, the Mexican government entered into negotiations with political parties in 1999, and began to modify electoral laws and procedures.

In June 1990 the Mexican government created the National Commission on Human Rights. The administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari was concerned that Mexico might be subject to heightened scrutiny from both the U.S. administration and Congress in the context of future free trade negotiations and subsequent ratification debates. Both President Salinas and his successor, Ernesto Zedillo, have been sensitive to Mexico’s external image and to the international repercussions of domestic human rights complaints, sometimes taking preemptive measures to project the image of their concern with human rights. Engaging in electoral reform and creating the National Commission on Human Rights defused the issue by making it appear that the Mexican government had its problems under control.

That Mexico’s national commission was a response to international pressure is underscored by the timing of its creation, and by the fact that its reports were published simultaneously in Spanish and English and shipped via international express mail to representatives of key human rights organizations in the United States. Three events converged shortly before the commission’s creation. Norma Corona Sapien, a leading human rights activist, was murdered on 21 May 1990 after spearheading an investigation that concluded that federal judicial police were responsible for earlier killings. Also in May 1990, the IACHR rendered a decision finding Mexico in violation of the OAS American Convention on Human Rights. Finally, the Americas Watch report came out in June, just days before Salinas and President George Bush were to announce their intention to begin negotiations for a U.S.-Mexican free trade agreement. To pre-

empt negative publicity about Mexican human rights practices, President Salinas established the National Human Rights Commission four days before the meeting with Bush.

Although the commission has been criticized for lacking sufficient independence from the government to serve as a watchdog agency, evidence suggests that in many cases it has been an effective advocate for human rights. Since its formation the Mexican government has approved procedures to prevent the use of evidence from confessions in trials, a practice which had led to routine use of torture during interrogation after arrests. Also, the commission has investigated and denounced conditions in some of the country’s worst prisons.

During the peasant uprising in Chiapas in 1994 it became clear that the government could no longer control information as it had in 1968. The guerrillas, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), “demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of the international press and other transnational actors.” The press and domestic and international NGOs monitored the conflict closely, and electronic mail became one of the main mechanisms through which the EZLN communicated with the world. Faced with a much greater perceived threat to national security than the students had posed in 1968, the Mexican government acted with much greater restraint and opted for a political solution in Chiapas because it was now “accountable to constituencies beyond its borders” which had “raised the political costs of repression.” The events in Chiapas in turn “opened up a window of opportunity for domestic and foreign actors in favor of democracy,” by forcing the government to engage in more significant electoral reform.  

In summary, we can divide the Mexican case into three historical stages, each of which provides some evidence for our argument that ad-

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109 According to Denise Dresser, “foremost among the priorities of Salinas’s foreign policy is the avoidance of diplomatic conflicts that might sabotage Mexico’s shared economic interests with the U.S.” “Mr. Salinas Goes to Washington: Mexican Lobbying in the United States,” conference paper 62, presented at the research conference, “Crossing National Borders: Invasion or Involvement,” Columbia University, 6 December 1991. p. 5.
112 Ellen Lutz discusses the commission’s “hard-hitting recommendations in over 300 cases,” many of which included cases that have been the focus of NGOs. “Human Rights in Mexico,” p. 80.
116 Ibid., pp. 334–35.
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Advocacy networks helped improve human rights practices. During the first stage, in 1968–69, the massacre of students in Mexico City provoked no sustained international response because the international human rights network did not yet exist. Even high levels of mobilization among students worldwide at that time did not produce any significant show of solidarity with their Mexican counterparts. During the second stage, from 1970 to 1988, lower-level endemic human rights abuses continued. Although the human rights network emerged during this period, it did not work on Mexico, and there was no condemnation of these practices, nor did the situation change. In the third stage, from 1988 to 1994, the international network in collaboration with recently formed domestic human rights groups, provoked a relatively rapid and forceful response from the Mexican government, contributing to a decline in human rights violations and a strengthening of democratic institutions.\(^{17}\)

Conclusions

In this chapter we have argued that international human rights pressures can lead to changes in human rights practices, helping to transform understandings about the nature of a state’s sovereign authority over its citizens. Although the cases of Argentina and Mexico are not sufficient to confirm this argument, the contrast between them provides substantiation for it and suggests it is worth further study.\(^{18}\) The international human rights network has not always been effective in changing understandings or practices about human rights. In Latin America, for example, network activities failed to stem massive violations in Guatemala in the 1970s and 1980s, and endemic abuses in Colombia in the 1990s; elsewhere we might point to China and Cambodia. The central question then becomes, under what conditions can the international human rights network be effective? The cases suggest some possible answers.

In both Mexico and Argentina nongovernmental actors documented violations and raised global concern about them. Later, international and regional organizations produced reports building upon early NGO inves-

\(^{17}\) Some observers give international pressures little credit for promoting democracy in Mexico, failing to take into account the international pressures and domestic changes in the post-1989 period that are the basis of the argument presented here. See, e.g., Lorenzo Meyer, “Mexico: The Exception and the Rule,” in Abraham F. Lowenthal, ed., Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America: Case Studies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 93–110.

\(^{18}\) Cases similar to Argentina might include Uruguay and Chile. Mexico is unique, both for the lack of attention it received on human rights issues initially and for the rapidity of its subsequent response. Other cases of semidemocratic governments where international pressures have led to change include the Dominican Republic during the 1978 elections and, more recently, Paraguay.

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 Investigations. NGOs also provided the information that served as the basis for altered governmental policies. Because domestic human rights NGOs are a crucial link in the network, where these groups are absent, as in Mexico initially, international human rights work is severely hampered.

Could foreign government pressure and domestic political pressure have changed human rights practices without the involvement of the advocacy network? In both cases foreign governments placed pressure on human rights violators only after nongovernmental actors had identified, documented, and denounced human rights violations, and had pressured foreign governments to become involved. Because repression in Argentina was secret, and the junta diplomatically skilled, the truth about human rights abuses there probably would have remained hidden without the detailed documentation and diffusion of information by the international network. In contrast to Chile, where television crews and embassy officials could attest to the scale of violations, uncovering the Argentine government’s responsibility for disappearances required an intensive effort by many parts of the network working collectively, without which foreign governments could not have exerted diplomatic pressure on the Argentine government. The first such pressures followed the release, nearly a year after the coup, of the AI document detailing the Argentine government’s responsibility for the practice of disappearances.

In the case of Mexico, foreign governments failed to notice endemic human rights abuses there for almost two decades. Here we have an especially clear contrast between the situation before and after the network existed, and before and after it took up the Mexican case. When the network did not exist, there was virtually no international response to the massacre of students in 1968. Until the network began to work on Mexico the human rights situation there remained unknown internationally. Only after the nongovernmental organizations within and outside Mexico began to document human rights abuses and alert the press and policymakers (and only within the context of the free trade negotiations), did the Mexican government improve its human rights practices.

A network’s existence and its decision to focus on abuses in a particular country is a necessary but not sufficient condition for changing human rights practices. Many argue that human rights pressures would not be effective against strong states that can impose significant costs on the states that pressure them. Network activists admit that they have been less effective against states that superpowers consider important to their national security interests: countries such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, China, and Pakistan.\(^{19}\) The vulnerability of the target state is thus a key factor in network effectiveness.

\(^{19}\) Interview with Michael Posner, New York City, 19 March 1992.
One aspect of target vulnerability is the availability of leverage. The United States and European countries provided Mexico and Argentina substantial amounts of military and economic assistance and trade credits. In the case of Mexico, in addition, the United States and Canada were negotiating a free trade agreement that the Mexican government believed was necessary for further economic development. This gave the network many avenues for leverage, which it used quite skillfully, lobbying its several governments to limit, condition, or cut aid, and arguing against trade credits or agreements until human rights goals were met.

What is often missed in the debate over the apparent “failure” of human rights policy in China is that virtually none of the classic military and economic levers exist. As a result, the human rights network has been forced to advocate a fairly drastic policy of revoking “most favored nation” (MFN) trading status. Even the most forceful efforts to constrain Latin American military regimes never resorted to this mechanism, and there is no consensus in the United States over the use of MFN for human rights purposes. Furthermore, human rights and democracy leaders in China have been divided on the question of limiting trade for human rights purposes because many believe that increasing China’s economic openness would ultimately stimulate political openness. The Chinese case is negative substantiation for the argument presented here: a weak, repressed, and divided domestic movement, combined with little possibility for leverage politics, constitutes exactly the conditions under which we would not expect successful human rights pressures.

But small or weak countries that are vulnerable targets will not necessarily be more amenable to international network pressures. Haiti and Guatemala, for example, resisted international human rights pressures for a longer time than did larger countries like Mexico and Argentina. In the realm of human rights, it is the combination of moral and material pressure that leads to change. Transforming state practices has come about from linking principled ideas to material goals: military aid, economic aid, and trade benefits. Significant material pressure may be ineffective, however, where leaders are unconcerned with the normative message. Pressures are eventually most effective against states that have internalized the norms of the human rights regime and resist being characterized as pariahs. Although this is difficult to ascertain, certain aspects of national identity or discourse may make some states vulnerable to pressures. In the case of Argentina, a liberal tradition, a national identity focused on European culture, and military justification of repression as a defense of “Western and Christian civilization” made it more difficult for the government to ignore criticism of international actors. Recently some Asian states have successfully resisted international human rights pressures by attempting to create a new national identity linked to traditional beliefs—the so-called Asian values—which rejects the rights discourse by countering values that stress communities rather than individuals and duties rather than rights. Most Latin American countries, with a longer liberal tradition, have a harder time articulating a legitimate counter-discourse to the discourse of human rights.

Effective human rights networking does not imply a simple victory of norms over interests. The networks were influential within states because they helped to shape a reformation of how national interest was understood at times when global events were calling into question traditional understandings of sovereignty and national interest. Especially during a period of profound global flux, foreign policymakers are often uncertain not only about what the national interest is, but also about how best to promote it. Advocacy networks have served effectively as carriers of human rights ideas, inserting them into the policy debate at crucial moments when policymakers were questioning past policy models.

A realist approach to international relations would have trouble attributing significance either to the network’s activities or to the adoption and implementation of state human rights policies. Realism offers no convincing explanation for why relatively weak nonstate actors could affect state policy, or why states would concern themselves with the internal human rights practices of other states even when doing so interferes with the pursuit of other goals. For example, the U.S. government’s pressure on Argentina on human rights led Argentina to defect from the grain embargo of the Soviet Union. Raising human rights issues with Mexico could have undermined the successful completion of the free trade agreement and cooperation with Mexico on antidrug operations. Human rights pressures have costs, even in strategically less important countries of Latin America.

In liberal versions of international relations theory, states and nonstate actors cooperate to realize joint gains or avoid mutually undesirable outcomes when they face problems they cannot resolve alone. These situations have been characterized as cooperation or coordination games with particular payoff structures. But human rights issues are not easily modeled as such. Usually states can ignore the internal human rights practices of other states without incurring undesirable economic or security costs.

In the issue of human rights it is primarily principled ideas that drive change and cooperation. We cannot understand why countries, organizations, and individuals are concerned about human rights or why countries respond to human rights pressures without taking into account the

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role of norms and ideas in international life. Jack Donnelly has argued that such moral interests are as real as material interests, and that a sense of moral interdependence has led to the emergence of human rights regimes. For human rights, as for the other issues in this book, the primary movers behind this form of principled international action are international networks.


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CHAPTER 4

Environmental Advocacy Networks

Environmental advocacy networks differ in important respects from the human rights networks discussed in the preceding chapter. For one thing, they are not as clearly “principled.” Though environmentalism has a strong ethical dimension, in the traditional anthropocentric sense of “stewardship” or in biocentric claims in the name of an earth ethic, actors in environmental advocacy networks may invoke professional norms or interests as well as values. Environmentalism is less a set of universally agreed upon principles than it is a frame within which the relations among a variety of claims about resource use, property, rights, and power may be reconfigured. A good example, discussed below, is the environmentalist campaign around secure land use rights for traditional forest dwellers. When network actors have different medium- or long-term agendas, networks can become sites for negotiating over which goals, strategies, and ethical understandings are compatible. Because transnational advocacy networks normally involve people and organizations in structurally unequal positions, this negotiation is always politically sensitive.

Since environmentalists are often talking about public goods such as clean water or air rather than recognized “rights,” they have a harder time giving their campaigns a human face—and must choose whether to do so. Environmental issues are treated in a wide range of institutional arenas. How activists frame an environmental conflict may determine its institutional location as well as the receptivity of target audiences. Urban pollution issues are often framed in terms of public health; Brazilian rubber tappers recast a land conflict into one over forest conservation. Despite its obvious disadvantages, jurisdictional confusion rewards entrepreneurship; venue shifting is especially common in this issue area.