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Transnational NGOs and Local Struggles

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Over the last two decades global integration has accelerated. The volume of foreign direct investment, trade, and capital movements has grown exponentially. At the same time, changes in communications technology and cheaper travel have led to the growing compression of time and space (Giddens, 1999). The changes associated with economic globalization have had a profound influence on societies, social classes and individuals. For some, contact with the global economy is manifested primarily through growing levels of trade and investment. For others, it comes mainly through the implementation of structural adjustment policies. While the long-term consequences of these transformations remain deeply contested in the extant literature, much of the currently available data suggests that at least for the time being many of these changes have had a deep and negative influence on many socio-economic classes (Rodrik, 1997; Hurrell and Woods, 1999; Mittleman, 2000; Milanovic 2005). In particular, in many developing countries, social inequalities have grown and many have struggled to survive in the new economic environment.

At the same time, however, other changes associated with globalization have afforded these often marginalized social groups new opportunities to more effectively make their voice heard and press their claims. In particular, changes in communications technology and the growth in the number of transnational Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have allowed these marginalized groups to form alliances across borders thereby strengthening their local bargaining position. By linking these groups to new resources,

expertise and media outlets, these transnational organizations have allowed the marginalized to engage their governments more effectively. They have also provided new sources of leverage by bringing international attention to particular problems. Often such transnational connections have been especially crucial in cases where the local political landscape is highly repressive. These new transnational formations have tackled issues as varied as the environment, women's rights, small arms trade, trade in conflict diamonds and labor rights to name just a few.

Literature on transnational social movements and transnational NGOs, however, has not paid sufficient attention to the potential costs that international support of local movements and organizations can carry. While there have been numerous critiques leveled at transnational NGOs, from their lack of accountability to their promotion of Global North's political agenda, studies have paid less attention to how international NGO engagement may alter local conflict dynamics. The one exception is literature that examines international humanitarian intervention in conflict areas and how such intervention may contribute to conflicts rather than facilitate their resolution.

In this paper I will argue that international engagement in local life inevitably affects the local social and political dynamics. This of course is mostly by design. Whether it is another state, an international organization or an NGO, most actors intervene because they are interested in influencing outcomes, relationships and structures. For many if not most NGOs this engagement is tied to the promotion of social justice issues. Thus they tend to see their own missions in terms of 'doing good.' I will argue, however, that NGOs have not given sufficient thought to the potential negative and harmful side effects

of their interventions. Yet, because NGO intervention shifts and redistributes resources it often deeply affects local political and social dynamics sometimes in unexpected and unforeseen ways. Because the potential negative side-effects of 'doing good' can be long-lasting and be felt long after the NGO has left, the harmful consequences need to be explored more systematically in the future in order to ensure that activities that aim to promote social justice do just that.

In this paper I will discuss a number of case studies as a way of illustrating the variety of unintended and harmful side-effects of international intervention. I will also suggest some other ways in which international engagement can affect local social and political dynamics in a manner that may either contribute to conflicts or result in a less socially just situation. Clearly, transnational NGOs have engaged in many laudable activities and have improved the living conditions of large numbers of people. At the same time, such international intervention can be all the more effective if the costs and negative impacts are recognized and taken into account when planning such interventions. In concluding section of this paper, I will suggest possible avenues for future research that would enhance our knowledge of when and under what circumstances and through what mechanisms well intentioned international intervention may lead to unintended harmful outcomes.

Transnational NGOs

In the last couple of decades transnational movements and networks have expanded their reach. The number of non-governmental organizations has also grown significantly. By 2002 there were about 37,000 NGOs (UNDP Human Development Report, 2002).

Increasing numbers of these NGOs are engaged in and form alliances with other civil society organizations across state borders. By some estimates by the late 1990s 25,000 NGOs could be classified as international (Paul, 2000). These organizations are engaged in a variety of activities, are of different size and have differing global reach.   Some are engaged in long-term development work, others in humanitarian assistance, yet others focus primarily on advocacy, frequently maintaining only short-term relationships with local organizations.   In recent years, this range of activities has greatly expanded and many NGOs have formed more complex relationships with governments and international organizations (Kaldor, Anheier and Glasius, 2003).[1]

While the work that NGOs are engaged in is complex, it is useful to disaggregate their activities into two very broad categories. The first category includes transnational NGOs that focus explicitly on affecting global public policy. The second includes transnational NGOs whose focus is primarily on work in particular locales. This distinction is of course more fluid with many transnational NGOs engaged in both types of activities or shifting the focus of their activities over time and/or across issue areas. The first category might include such transnational action as the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief, the Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds or the Save the Dolphin campaign. The second category would include such organizations as the RUGMARK campaign to eliminate child labor in the

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[1] Along with an increase in the number of transnational NGOs, which I discuss in this paper, there has also been a growth in the number of transnational social movements.   For an examination of the growth, dynamics and influence of transnational social movements, see for example, Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald, 2000; O'Brein, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000; Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler, Pieterse, and Roseneil, 2001;Smith and Johnson 2002; Mayo 2005.

carpet industry in Nepal, India and Pakistan. Although part of the groups efforts focuses on convincing international carpet traders and distributors to ensure that the carpets sold on the global markets are not made by children, much of the groups' efforts have focused on ensuring that children pulled out of carpet-making factories are provided with education and if necessary alternative employment opportunities. Similarly, Save the Children Alliance works in over 100 countries, designing and implementing programs to improve the lives of children. Amnesty International, an organization working to end repression and abuse of human rights, has offices in over 70 countries. Although Amnesty is highly visible internationally, its primary focus is on pressuring governments engaged in human rights violations with the goal of changing their policies. It is this latter group that I will focus on in this paper.

Among the most significant factors affecting the expansion of NGOs activities and functions has been the emergence of neoliberal economic ideology with its emphasis on reducing the state's role in the economy. As the state has restructured and limited its responsibilities in many welfare provision areas, these activities have been increasingly subcontracted out to various NGOs (Gideon, 1998; Lindenberg, 1999; Scholte and Williams, 2000). Supporters of this expansion of NGOs activities see in this development a means of strengthening civil society and promoting more democratic and accountable governance structures (Kaldor, 2003; Roberts, 2005).

The growth in the number and importance of transnational NGOs has generated a heated debate concerning the role that NGOs do and should play. The emergence of transnational networks and the growing linkages between NGOs in different countries,

has led some analysts to argue that what we may be witnessing is the emergence of a global civil society (Sikkink, 1995; Keane, 2003). Moreover, although economic globalization may have had a negative impact on the living standards of many social groups, other changes associated with globalization have created new opportunities for marginalized groups to make their voice heard and shape the course of the policies that affect their lives. As Brysk notes, "conventionally powerless people have used global symbolic and normative reconstructions of international forces to transform their own lives and to pioneer new forms of politics" (Brysk, 2000:2).

Through such transnational connections local groups gain access to financial resources, expertise and international media exposure. These transnational connections can be especially effective when the local groups exist in a highly repressive context with few possibilities open for organizing and mobilizing without incurring extremely high costs. By forging these linkages, local groups rely on their international allies to put pressure on repressive regimes. As Sikkink and Keck point out, this boomerang effect can serve to push through significant changes at the local level (Sikkink and Keck, 1998). Guidry, Kennedy and Zald in fact argue that, "globalization brings important new resources to the mobilizational efforts of (local) movements. Globalization also modifies and in many cases amplifies the ability of national movement organizations to frame their claims in terms that resonate beyond territorial borders, thereby allowing national organizations to obtain resources from abroad" (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald, 2000: 3).

Others, however, are highly critical of the way NGOs have structured their activities and their growing prominence in the development debate. There are a number

of distinct although related critiques that emerge from the literature. Some note that the expansion of NGOs activities should not be seen as evidence of their superior ability to deliver services, but rather as evidence that the state has been abdicating its traditional responsibilities. Furthermore, unlike government agencies, NGOs' accountability is often a problem. To whom are NGOs accountable? Is it to the donor community or the local community with which NGOs work? (Jordan and Van Tuijl, 2000; Clark, 2001)

Related to the issue of accountability is the problem of goal-setting. In other words, who determines the activities and goals that an NGO will pursue? To what extent does the local community have a voice in setting these goals? According to whose standards is the success of NGOs activities measured? A number of critics of NGOs activities have noted that these organizations are frequently responsible to and pursue the agenda of their donors rather than of the communities in which they work. This means the agenda and goals that an NGO is pursuing may be only tangentially related to the goals of the local community (Jones Luong and Weinthal, 1999). Some critics in fact argue that international NGOs rather than assisting local communities, may be doing more harm by taking the initiative out of local hands and handing it over to unaccountable international entities. Thus, local groups become less able to develop, mobilize and affect real structural change in environments characterized by oppression and exploitation. More radical critics go even further to argue that "the checkbook, sweat-shop free purchasing, or feel-good participation in rallies for many well intentioned people represent a window to ease conscience pangs while maintaining earth abusive living standards." (Bendana, 2002) A recent UN report noted that many developing

countries see NGOs as a way for the Global North to push its agenda on them (UN, 2004).

Finally, some studies point out that it is wrong to associate NGOs only with liberal, democratic and progressive causes. The political agendas that NGOs pursue are varied and some of them push narrow and intolerant worldviews. Furthermore, as Paul points out, "while some NGOs are fiercely independent, others are known as the creatures of governments, businesses or even criminal interests. Some have hundreds of thousands of members around the world while others speak for only a handful of people." (Paul, 2000; Halliday, 2001)

While acknowledging this debate on the nature and activities of NGOs, I focus in this paper on a different aspect of NGO work. Looking exclusively at NGOs that most would agree seek to promote social justice, I explore how these good intensions and actions may have mostly unanticipated negative side-effects and consequences. Some of these dynamics have been suggested by studies of humanitarian NGOs involvement in conflict areas. It is now widely recognized within the humanitarian NGO community that there is no such thing as a neutral intervention in a conflict area. Although as Anderson points out many NGOs see themselves as having 'purity of motivation,' and have often defined themselves as 'apolitical,' the reality of humanitarian intervention in conflict settings is much different (Anderson, 2001). Aid provided to civilians can be captured by militias thus making them more capable of continuing the fight. Inadvertently, aid agencies may favor one ethnic group over another thereby further fueling the conflict. Often distinguishing between civilians and combatants is extremely

difficult and therefore it is not clear where and to whom aid should be distributed. Many NGOs of course do not work in conflict settings and thus face different sets of challenges in how to go about fulfilling their mission. Nonetheless, Anderson points to an issue that all NGOs, regardless of the environment in which they work, should take seriously – it is naïve to think that outside intervention can be neutral and apolitical (Duffield, 2001).

Transnational NGOs and Local Conflicts

Many transnational NGOs care deeply about issues of social justice. Many focus directly on challenges that the processes of economic globalization have posed for the poor and the marginalized. Various human rights organizations, for instance, have established links with Indian communities throughout Latin America thereby facilitating their quest to gain a political voice within their societies, a voice that all too often was stifled. Likewise, numerous labor organizations have mounted international campaigns on behalf of sweatshop workers and against child labor. For example, international involvement has been deep in the long-standing attempts by the Ecuadoran banana workers to establish trade unions as well as in the campaign to institute a code of conduct for multinational corporations.

Transnational NGOs involvement in these various campaigns often profoundly influences local processes of change. In fact, the very success of most NGOs is measured by its ability to affect positive change. But the consequences of NGO involvement are more complex. By providing resources whether financial, informational, expertise or other, they are also affecting the patterns of conflict and contention between the groups that they are supporting and the actors they engage, whether the state or various private

entities. These influences are often unexpected and have unintended consequences. Despite the possibility of these unintended consequences, the problem has been given relatively little attention in the extant literature.

How may NGOs affect local social and political dynamics? They do so by shifting resources and therefore the balance of power between social groups. Social groups that previously may have had few resources available are now better able to confront their more powerful opponents. This might mean, for example, that a conflict between a particular social group and the state may become more visible, more acrimonious, potentially more violent (although not always) and more prolonged. Indeed in many cases, bringing a conflict to a head, exposing the injustices and exploitation of marginalized groups might be the only way of addressing the underlying problems and therefore exactly the "right" thing to do. Nonetheless, exploring how these transnational connections interact with conflict dynamics at the local level is, I argue, crucial if such international engagement and activities is to have a positive long term impact on the societies in which this activity takes place. This is important because the engagement is likely to affect the patterns of interaction between the marginalized group and the state or other social actors (after all, this is the point of such engagement) not only during the duration of such engagement but potentially long after such engagement ceases. It is also important because a transnational NGO that provides resources to oppressed groups thus facilitating their ability to confront their oppressors might have few tools at its disposal to provide meaningful assistance if the confrontation results in heightened repression and violence.

Engagement might lead to a variety of outcomes. It might spark an overt conflict where only latent conflict previously existed. It might prolong a conflict that has been already in progress by providing more resources to one of the parties to the conflict. Or it might lead to a quicker resolution of a conflict in progress also because of the shift in resource availability. Furthermore, the very attempt by local groups to seek international allies may have far-reaching consequences of the conflict dynamics. The involvement of international activists may also in some circumstances make accomplishing goals of local groups more difficult.

The presence of international actors may for instance deepen divisions within a community because not everyone will agree what role, if any, international actors should play. Local groups may also have greater difficulty in coordinating their actions in pursuit of their common goals because they will see each other as competitors for scare international resources. Alternatively, international NGOs lacking good knowledge of local conditions may funnel support to groups that have less experience and fewer community linkages while bypassing groups better positioned to affect change (see Maney, 2000: Hrycak, 2002). Groups may also become dependent on donors and donors' agendas which in some circumstances may discourage mobilization that could threaten exploitative status quo. In other circumstances, association with a foreign donor might discredit a local group which comes to be seen as lacking in nationalist credentials (Pratt, 2004). The very success of a transnational NGO campaign might also create new challenges and conflicts in its wake. For example, the success of some anti-sweatshop campaigns and union organizing has resulted in multinationals moving their operations

from one location to another where fewer restrictions on their activities exist. Thus, while well-intentioned, such campaigns might result in pushing workers into the ranks of the unemployed and even deeper poverty.

The end of an engagement can also affect these patterns of conflict through similar mechanisms by shifting of resources this time away from groups which may continue to be relatively marginalized within their societies. This too can have profound consequences for the relationship between social groups and the state. For instance, it may well mean that many of the gains that have been achieved during period of engagement are withdrawn. Another more troubling possibility is that once the resources and the media spotlight that international alliances bring disappear, the marginalized group may find itself under new wave of attack. In particular, the subordination of a mobilized group may now require the deployment of more repressive tactics by the state or other social actors who found the marginalized groups' increased demand-making threatening. Such transnational connections may also create problems of legitimacy for local groups whose loyalties may come to be questioned by others within their community.

Cases of International Involvement

The following examples illustrate just some of the problems that might emerge as a consequence of transnational NGO involvement in local contexts. Here I will focus on three cases of such involvement to highlight the diversity of potential negative side-effects that can result from such international engagement. These examples point to just

some of the potential side effects and they are clearly not an exhaustive treatment of the possible unintended, negative consequences.

In the last couple of decades the issue of sweat-shop labor has gained much international attention. The changes associated with economic globalization have resulted in profound changes in the way goods and services are produced. Rather than employing the Fordist model of production, where a product was designed and manufactured in one factory, the new production structure is much more decentralized and dispersed. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have become truly global, often locating their headquarters, their marketing, their research and development and their production facilities in different countries across the globe. Sectors as diverse as electronics and customer service, car manufacturing and clothing industry have been affected by these changes.

In recent years, the apparel and footware industry in particular has gained much international notoriety. This industry has come to increasingly rely on subcontracting production to local manufacturers. Thus, companies like Nike and Gap do not own their production facilities but rather place orders with local producers. The working conditions in many of these local factories are extremely poor, with workers expected to work long hours, with few if any benefits, for low wages and often in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. The poor conditions in these sweat-shops have galvanized growing opposition in the global North with various anti-sweat-shop movements forming on college campuses and with North-based labor organizations establishing campaigns to improve the working conditions in these maquiladoras. These international campaigns

have registered some successes. In particular, many of the MNCs involved in apparel and footware production have agreed to abide by a code of conduct and to establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these new rules. The code of conduct covers such issues as prohibitions against child labor, maximum work weeks, forced labor, wage levels, harassment and abuse among others (DeWinter, 2001).

At the same time, a number of labor organizations have turned their attention to providing workers within these industries with the necessary tools that would enable them to demand that their rights within the workplace be respected regardless of the presence of international monitoring. In particular, by providing financing, expertise and legal assistance these transnational labor organizations aim to establish local trade unions. Labor organizations, which many studies indicate have been profoundly and negatively influenced by economic globalization, are devising new and innovative strategies for forging transnational linkages in order to step the decline of union influence and work against the polarization between workers of the global North and global South, polarization sparked by global economic competition (Gordon and Turner, 2001).

On the one hand, it is hard to quibble with the need to improve working conditions in the factories and sweat-shops of the global South (and global North). Yet, even such campaigns can have negative repercussions for those that are designated as their beneficiaries. Let me illustrate the potential problem drawing on a study of labor organizing in the Phillips Van Heusen maquiladora in Guatemala.

Labor Organizing at the Phillips Van Heusen Maquiladora

The Guatemalan workers movement has confronted state repression through much of its history. During periods of military rule, unions were disbanded outright. Even in those periods when the military withdrew from politics and union organizations re-emerged, their repression continued. During the 1970s the developmental policies pursued by the Guatemalan state underwent significant changes, with a greater emphasis placed on the development of non-traditional export industries. In time, this led to the emergence of the maquiladora industry which produced apparel primarily for the US market. Most of these factories, like similar factories in other parts of the world, relied on young women workers who worked long hours and were paid little. Guatemalan workers sought to organize to improve their working conditions but had little success. Workers at the PVH factory faced similar conditions of low pay and poor treatment by factory supervisors and like workers in other factories they organized resistance. In 1992 the state recognized their union (The Sindicato de Trabajadores de Camosa (STECAMOSA). However, the union remained unable to affect change at the plant. Not being able to win any concessions from the firm's management, the union turned to the International Garment Workers Secretariat (ITGLWF) for assistance.

The ITGLWF provided training in organizing strategies and employing new tactics, such as consumer action. With its newfound strength the union filed a petition for contract negotiations with the Guatemalan Labor Ministry. The struggle to begin the negotiations was long and difficult. In addition to ITGLWF, Human Rights Watch and the US embassy also became involved, lending additional support to the workers' cause.

Finally in August 1997 a new contract agreement was reached between PVH workers and their employer.

In other words, the establishment of relationships with international NGOs allowed the workers at the maquiladora to accomplish their goal of negotiating a better contract with their employer. This was possible because the involvement of international NGOs shifted resources towards the maquiladora workers and the publicity generated by the Human Rights Watch investigation and the pressure by the US embassy pushed the Guatemalan government to reconsider its opposition to facilitating contract negotiations. Unfortunately the story does not have a happy ending.   Only months later, the PVH closed down the factory, leaving 500 workers without jobs three weeks before Christmas (This account is based on Armbruster-Sandoval, 1999).

This is not a unique case. The mobility of capital and the fact that MNCs in the apparel and footware industries do not own the factories in which their products are made, means that they have great flexibility in changing the location of their subcontractors. Thus a successful campaign to improve working conditions in a sweatshop may lead to the factory closing down and shifting its production elsewhere, away form either the glare of media publicity or away from a newly organized workforce. Rather than facing daily poor working conditions in maquiladoras, workers may find themselves faced with unemployment and even greater poverty.

Spektra Workers' Petition

A different scenario involving workers and transnational NGOs unfolded in Matamoros, Mexico.   The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which went

into effect on January 1, 1994, provided workers with new mechanisms to seek legal remedies for their concerns. The mechanisms were spelled out in the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC). Among its other requirements NAALC required that Mexico, Canada and the United States establish National Administrative Offices to facilitated the implementation of NAALC. In July 2000, current and former workers at the U.S.-owned Spektra plant filed a petition with the US National Administrative Offices (US NAO) located within the Bureau of International Labor Affairs of the Labor Department.

The petition alleged that the company was violating Mexican labor laws and that the working conditions at the factory had resulted in a range of illnesses and ergonomic disorders. The petition came after years of workers' unsuccessful attempts to address safely problems at the factory undertaken in the 1990s. The change in tactics away from demanding inspections from various Mexican institutions to filing a petition with a US institution was prompted by the involvement of an American NGO with extensive contacts in the health and legal communities. The US NAO accepted the petition. Workers traveled to a hearing and representatives of US NAO came to Spektra to conduct interviews with workers.

Despite this flurry of activity, neither the NAO nor the NGO that facilitated the filing of the petition in the first place ever informed workers what decision, if any, the US NAO took regarding their petition. Not only did conditions at Spektra not improve but workers reported that they had deteriorated even further. Workers no longer complained, however, because in the wake of the petition filing, those who did complain were fired.

Moreover, workers stopped going to the local clinic to seek medical attention for work-related illnesses and injuries since this was also likely to result in dismissal. As Simon notes, "the workers ended up feeling doubly corrupted, a feeling made more acute by the NGO announcement had undertaken the petition largely to prove that the NAFTA side accords were never intended to work." (This account is based on Simon, 2005)   In other words, the involvement of an international NGO did not facilitate the resolution of Spektra's workers problems and may have contributed to the further deterioration of the workers working conditions.

Just as campaigns to promote better conditions for workers in the developing world have become more frequent, issues of human rights more broadly have also received much attention from various transnational NGOs. Some of these like Amnesty International have a long history, large membership and presence in over 70 countries. Others, like Human Rights Watch have come to be known and respected for their extensive investigations, reporting and advocacy work.   The activities and prominence of these and other human rights NGOs are a reflection of the growing international acceptance of human rights norms and the expectation that all members of the international community should abide by them (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 1999). Despite the prominence of these norms of course, many states continue to violate them or have little institutional capability to ensure that human rights laws are respected (Ayoob, 2001). The existence of the norms and international NGOs working to promote them has nonetheless given hope to many groups whose rights continue to be violated that they may seek redress of these wrongs by turning to allies outside of their state borders for

assistance and support. In other words, they hope that the boomerang effect that Sikkink and Keck have theorized will indeed work in their case. Yet, both the search for international support and international involvement may have a variety of outcomes, not all of them positive for the local groups.

The Ogoni Minority Movement

The case of Nigeria's Ogoni minority movement's attempt to attract the attention of international human rights NGOs illustrates how international involvement may have unintended consequences locally. This is not to suggest that international human rights organizations are responsible for the repression of the Ogoni by the Nigerian regime. What it does suggest is that the dynamic between local groups and their potential international champions is complex and may in some instances lead local groups to shift the framing of their problems in a way that enables them to achieve international cooperation. However, the very shifting of the frame may also contribute to the increased local repression of the group (This account is based on Bob, 2002).

The Ogoni minority resides in Nigeria's Niger River Delta. The areas, which has seen demands for greater political autonomy for years, has also been the site of multinational corporations drilling for oil. This oil extraction has caused extensive environmental damage. In the 1990s the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) emerged as the main organization championing political autonomy for the region. Although initially the movement attracted little international support, eventually such prominent international NGOs as Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth came to champion their cause.

How did the Ogoni manage to change international NGOs lack of interest in their cause? And what were the consequences of this international attention? In his study of the movement, Clifford Bob suggests that the primary reason for the international NGOs change of heart was that the Ogoni movement quite deliberately, after initially failing to gain support, reframed the way they presented their cause to the international community. In particular, the movement began presenting their cause as one of environmental rather than political rights. The change in framing was deliberate. Initially MOSOP presented their cause as one of violated minority rights and economic injustice. But transnational NGOs found this framing unconvincing. Not only did MSOP fail to document human rights violations despite its arguments that the Ogoni were victims of genocide, but it was also unclear whether MOSOP had broad-based support among the Ogoni. MOSOP therefore changed its tactics and the framing of their cause.

MOSOP embarked on actively mobilizing the Ogoni in order to credibly claim widespread support within their community. It also began to present their cause as a fight against environmental devastation that oil drilling by Shell had brought to the region and de-emphasized the ethnic and political components of the struggle. The strategy worked although not quite the way MOSOP intended. International NGOs like Greenpeace and Amnesty International did become involved and the Ogoni cause gained international notoriety. However, the change in tactics also promoted a violent response from the Nigerian regime. MOSOP leaders were either arrested or forced to flee and thousands of MOSOP supporters were killed. Despite international outcry, nine MOSOP leaders, including the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa were executed. Thus, while MOSOP campaign and

the international support and attention it generated did lead to changes in Shell Oil

policies in the Ogoni region, the change in tactics and strategies by MOSOP aimed

specifically at attracting international attention led to even harsher repression by the

regime. As Bob points out,

> The prospect of transnational support may encourage movements to take actions
> that are risky or counter-productive at home. Because support often hinges on a
> movement conforming itself to the interests, concerns, and tactics of organizations
> from very different political environments and because these supporters usually
> have little at stake in distant conflicts, movements may act in ways inappropriate
> to their domestic opportunity structure.. when repression strikes, [movement
> leaders] will usually face it alone – or with levels of international support that will
> not halt the depredations of ruthless foe (Bob, 2002: 409).

Conclusion

While studies of transnational NGO activities and campaigns have multiplied in

recent years and although some of these studies point to the contention that proceeds and

that results from NGO involvement, there is a need for more systematic exploration of

the link between transnational NGO campaigns to the local conflict dynamics. That these

links can be significant and often unintended by the NGOs are noted by analysts who

have looked at the activities of humanitarian NGOs providing aid and assistance to

peoples living within conflict zones. Although these organizations have gone into

conflict areas with the best of intentions, their very activities can and unfortunately

sometimes do inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of the very conflicts that have

led to the humanitarian emergencies in the first place. What the analysts of humanitarian

NGOs activities in war zones have alerted us to is that by intervening in a conflict-

situation, third parties, whether intentionally or not, alter the balance of power on the

ground between either the contending factions or the factions and the society within which they exist.

This paper only noted some of the possible consequences of international NGO involvement in local political struggles. We can anticipate that because different issues affect different interests of state and elite groups they are likely to generate different responses from these groups and the state. Future research should further explore how these patterns play out across different issue areas. Can we discern patterns in the way international intervention affects local political and social dynamics? Do these patterns differ depending on the type of intervention, the issue area or the broader political, economic and social environment in which intervention takes place?   And if so, how do they differ? The answers to these questions are of more than theoretical importance. By understanding how the engagement of international NGOs affects local relationships, processes and conflicts, the NGO community may be better able to design their activities and programs in a way that minimizes the harmful side-effects of their interventions.

What are the implications for the activities of NGOs? Should other NGOs engage in the same kind of soul searching that humanitarian NGOs did?   I believe the answer is yes.   While practitioners may well want to undertake an ethical assessment of their interventions, scholars can provide them with the analytical tools to make these assessments by more systematically exploring the linkages between transnational NGOs and local conflict dynamics.

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