Fishnets, internets and catnets : globalization and transnational collective action

FISHNETS, INTERNETS AND CATNETS:
GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONAL COLLECTIVE ACTION

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Introduction[1]

A Fishy Story[2]

Hidden behind the headlines on the savage conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the summer of 1994, a conflict was roiling the waters of the Bay of Biscay. It pitted Spanish fishermen against their French and British competitors over fishing rights, with environmental issues and questions of national sovereignty in the background. As *The European* described it:

> Spanish tuna fishermen sailed home ... after a two-day battle with their French counterparts some 700 km. off Spain's northwestern coast of Galicia. The Spanish brought back a captured boat [the *Gabrielle*] they claim will support allegations that the French violate fishing quotas and methods.[3]

The conflict was one that was becoming familiar in these days of depleted stocks of Atlantic fish; the Spanish tuna men accused the French of using nets bigger than those permitted by European Union regulations, while the French

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[1] The original version of this paper was first delivered at the Tenth Anniversary Conference of the Historical Studies Program of the New School for Social Research, March 1995, the Fernand Braudel Center, SUNY-Binghamton and at Harvard's Center for International Affairs. In revised form, it was delivered to the Conference on the Past and Future of Collective Action in Amsterdam in June 1995. This version was first delivered to the Seminar on Social Movements and Social Change in a Globalizing World, University of Michigan. I am grateful to David Blatt for suggesting the current title. For comments on one or another of the three versions, I wish to thank Giovanni Arrighi, David Blatt, Matt Evangelista, Doug Imig, Peter Katzenstein, Michael Kennedy, Bert Klandermans, Mark Lichbach, Frances Fox Piven, Beverly Silver, Charles Tilly, Dan Thomas, Deborah Yashar and Mayer Zald. I am also grateful to Margaret Keck, with whom my exchanges of views have, I hope, sharpened the argument presented here.

[2] I draw here upon the narrative of this episode from Tarrow 1995: 225-28.

[3] "Spanish Fishermen Seize French Boat in Tuna War," *The European*, July 22-28, 1994, p. 6. For a somewhat hysterical narrative from the French side, see "Les pêcheurs de l'île d'Yeu témoignent de la violence de l'agression espagnole," *Le Monde* 21 July 1994, p. 18. For a more detached Spanish version of the same affair, see "La guerra del bonito: A puerto con el botín," *El País*, 25 July 1994, p. 20.

insisted that their nets were legal and environmentalists wrung their hands at the growing threat to the world's oceans. In Paris, the government demanded the immediate restitution of the *Gabrielle* and sent its navy to capture a Spanish ship and tow it to a French port.[4] As the ships of the two nations manoeuvered dangerously on troubled waters, a war of words heated up between their capitals. "On a sea that is a diminishing source of food, two logics, and even two Europes, face one another," wrote *Le Monde's* correspondent; "The French logic of high productivity vs. the Spanish logic of protecting employment" (*Le Monde*, 29 July 1994, p. 26). In Madrid the government wrung its hands at its uncontrollable fishermen and protested the state piracy carried out by the French.

Whatever its legal basis, the French manoeuver seemed to work. In Galicia, the tuna men who had made off with the *Gabrielle* were convinced by their authorities to return her; and in Brussels, Spain's agriculture and fisheries minister met with his French counterpart, who agreed that EU inspectors would henceforth be allowed to initiate checks of French nets.[5] By the end of the month, the French had agreed to limit the length of their nets to the 2.5 km set down in the European Commission's regulations. The tuna war seemed to be over.[6]

But now a new storm blew up over the Bay of Biscay. Not trusting their government's willingness to defend their interests, an armada of *boniteros* blockaded the ferries of the Cantabrian coast and -- just for good measure --

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[4] See "La armada francesa captura un barco de España en represalia por el conflicto pesquero", *El País,* 25 July 1994, p. 20, for the Spanish side of the story, and "Le conflit entre pêcheurs espagnols et français semble s'apaiser," *Le Monde*, 22 July, 1994, for the French version.

[5] Alberta Sbragia points out that the decision to allow EU inspectors to monitor net sizes was an important extension of the European Commission's authority. This politically sensitive step may have been taken because the dispute occurred (and can be expected to recur) outside of the territorial jurisdiction of any one country. I am grateful to Professor Sbragia for her comments on this episode.

[6] See "Le conflit entre pêcheurs espagnols et français semble s'apaiser," *Le Monde*, 22 July, 1994, p. 13 and "L'accord entre les professionnels de l'île d'Yeu et Jean Puech n'a pas calmé les courroux des pêcheurs espagnols," *Le Monde*, 28 July 1994, p. 17.

blocked the French port of Hendaye too.[7] In early August, they were back on the high seas -- this time hacking off the nets of two British boats and an Irish one with their propellers. Like the French boats, the British and the Irish ones were accused of using nets that were longer than the EU's statutory limit of 2.5 km.[8] (With typical British phlegm, Whitehall claimed that *their* nets were environmentally friendly: though longer than 2.5 km. limit set by the EU, they made up for it with huge holes designed to let the dolphin through, while the apparently less intelligent tuna were caught.)[9]

Now the environmental organization Greenpeace jumped into the fray, sending a ship to inspect the British and French nets. The French -- who have a long and violent relationship with this transnational movement -- attacked its vessel with water cannon and a stun grenade, accusing it of attempting to cut the nets of French trawlers. The Greenpeace activists denied it, claiming that they were only trying to record whether the French ships were taking endangered species, like dolphins. Neutral among the contestants, Greenpeace later poured oil on troubled waters by reporting that Spanish vessels in the Mediterranean were using nets that were easily as long as the British and French ones in the Bay of Biscay.[10] While the fishermen of three nations muttered about nosy environmentalists, Greenpeace went to the European Commission with its complaint.[11]

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[7] "Atun contra Europa," *El País*, 1 August 1994, p. 8; and "Des chalutiers espagnols bloquent le port d'Hendaye," *Le Monde*, 27 July 1994, p. 17.

[8] See "Navy moves in to stop tuna war 'wolf packs'", *The Times*, 5 August 1994, p. 1, and "Los boniteros españoles rompen redes ilegales a barcos británicos e irlandeses," *El País*, 8 August 1994, p. 21.

[9] See "Navy moves in to stop tuna war 'wolf packs'", *The Times*, 5 August, p. 1.

[10] See "Dos meses de tensión y de incidentes," *El País*, 22 August 1994, p. 21.

[11] Though Greenpeace took its complaint to Brussels, it was never a central actor in the drama and was dismissed by most of the principals. A Cornish fishing representative summed up the feeling of all three sides when he sniffed; "I don't see what any of this has got to do with them. They've got rich parents so I suppose they can afford to waste time going out to Biscay Bay for no

Six months later, Spanish fishermen were back in the news, fishing for halibut across the Atlantic outside Canada's self-declared 200-mile limit. The Canadians had called for a ban on fishing off the Grand Banks to allow badly depleted fish stocks to be renewed, but the Spanish paid them no heed. Finding a Spanish vessel just outside the 200-mile limit, the Canadian navy seized it and towed it into the harbor of St. John's, to the cheers and rotten tomatoes of the assembled fisherfolk. The Spanish responded by sending warships to the area, while the European Union voted to break off all political contacts with Canada and threatened trade sanctions if the Canadians did not desist.[12]

Given coverage in all four national media, the story of the tuna wars was redolent with folkloric images of sputtering French officials, archaic Spanish ships, tight-lipped British sailors and jeering "Fundy" fishermen. One British columnist even evoked the image of Sir Francis Drake calmly playing bowls on shore as he waited for an armada of Spanish tuna boats to appear off the cliffs of Dover. The Spanish saw themselves as men of iron sailing ships of wood, using their traditional "*artes*" to catch tuna, and defending the fish population from the massive French and British drift netters. The claim would have had more substance were it not for the fact that the Spanish, with 400 vessels to the 50 French and 11 British, take in more tons of tuna than all the other fleets combined.[13]

But beneath the folkloric surface of the tuna war, serious issues were at stake: the preservation of dwindling sea stocks; the protection of a Spanish industry that directly or indirectly employs 800,000 people; the power of a supranational institution -- the European Commission -- to interfere in people's

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obvious reason." See "Rainbow warrior attacked," *The Times*, 7 August 1994, pp. 1- 2.

[12] See "Canada Fishing Dispute Grows," *The Guardian Weekly*, 19 March, 1995, p. 1, "Canadians Cut the Nets of Spain Ship," *New York Times*, 28 March 1995, p. A13 and "When They Talk About Fish, the Mellow Canadians Bellow", *New York Times*, 31 March 1995, p. A11.

[13] See "Net losses from the Battle of Biscay," *The Times*, 5 August 1994, p. 14, and Editorial, *The Times*, 5 August, 1994, p. 17.

lives; and the apparent helplessness of national governments to protect them. This tempest was not hatched in a teapot but in the cauldron of an increasingly global economy. *The Guardian* editorialized:

> This is not just about Canadian fishing interest versus EU fishing interests any more than last year's fishing conflict between Britain and Spain was just a little local difficulty between friends....These conflicts must be seen as part of a global crescendo of warning that there is a global problem of overfishing, rapidly approaching crisis proportions."[14]

I.   Globalization and Social Movements

For students of collective action and social movements, episodes like the one described above raise important questions. On the one hand, the tale is reminiscent of the great tradition of social movements in the West: in its repertoires, in the role of pre-existing social networks and in the targeting of institutions:

First, though the site of the conflict was the high seas, the Spanish sailors used a well-known tactic from the modern repertoire of contention -- sequestering another social actor to force action to be taken to rectify their claims. They might even have learned it from Spanish workers who blocked their managers in their offices in response to the loss of jobs threatened by their government's industrial restructuring policy during the 1980s.[15]

Second, like the narratives of most social movements, the story involved previously-organized networks of social actors within professional and territorial

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[14] *Guardian Weekly*, 19 March, 1995, p. 12.

[15] See Wozniak 1991. The transfer of forms of collective action from one sector to another is one of the cardinal features of modern cycles of protest. On this point, see Tarrow 1994: ch. 2, and Tilly 1995: ch. 2.

categories -- "catnets", in Charles Tilly's words (1978). The Spanish fishing communities were historically well-organized, socially-integrated, and framed their claims around community and professional interests. The Newfoundland fishing communities were just as solidary, as hundreds of locals turned out to jeer the Spanish sea captain as he came to court in St. John's.

Third, the Spanish used the strategy of targeting political institutions to advance their claims against other social actors. At least since the rising parliamentarization of protest in Britain in the late eighteenth century, states have been the central fulcrums of collective action, even when claim-makers make demands against other social actors (Tilly 1995: ch. 2). Although the so-called "new" social movements seemed, for a time, to have foresworn politics (Melucci 1988), they too ultimately turned from "expressive" to "instrumental" actions aimed at their national states (Kriesi *et al.* 1995).

But alongside these tried and true artifacts of social movement theory, there is a new and disconcerting aspect to episodes like the tuna war; the conflict between private citizens of the four countries crossed national boundaries and was triggered by the acts of an international institution -- the European Union. Not only that: the struggle was also a *performance* -- albeit an unusual one -- for the benefit of an international audience. It was an example of what some observers think is becoming a fixture of collective action as the world approaches the year 2000 -- *transnational collective action*. From the peace campaigns that spread across Europe and the United States in the 1980s (Rochon 1988), to the environmental movement which links Green parties and movements to one another across national boundaries (Dalton 1994), to the non-governmental associations which work to protect human rights from Australia to Latin America, scholars see transnational activism spreading across the world (Brysk 1993; J. Smith 1994; Yashar forthcoming).

But there is a puzzle in the relationships described in the story: collective action crossed national lines, but it was *domestic* actors and *national* associations

that began the cycle of conflict and national *states* whose efforts were needed to end it. With the exception of Greenpeace and the European Commission, in fact, all of the actors were national. And although the resolution of the conflict was crafted in the framework of the EU, it was the Spanish, French and British governments that agreed to allow EU inspectors onto their boats. Transnational movements? Or the extension into transnational public space of the actions of national collective actors triggered?

Whatever the meaning of events like these, scholars of social movements have become increasingly aware of them. In fact, with the enthusiasm characteristic of this specialty, some have gone so far as to posit the appearance of a "transnational civil society" (Garner 1994; Rudolf 1996). International relations scholars have been equally keen to understand these phenomena, with some arguing that they signal a new era of global turbulence and instability (Rosenau 1990). Within both fields, others have been more cautious, regarding actions that cross national boundaries in essential continuity with inherited social movement practice (Tarrow 1993), or defining the new phenomena as transnational issue networks, rather than as true social movements (Keck and Sikkink 1994; Risse-Kappen and Schmitz 1995). On the outcome of this debate hinges more than a new wrinkle in the history of collective action and international relations theory, for if transnational movements are taking shape, they challenge the continued autonomy, sovereignty and control by the national state over its own territory and the potential of citizens to construct fields of action outside their political communities. It is to contribute to this debate and to bringing together the (usually distinct) perspectives of social movement and international relations theory that this paper is aimed.

In the first part of the paper, I will outline what I take to be the "strong" version of the emerging transnational movement thesis and its implications for the future of social movements. I will then inject a few critical notes about the theory and put forward a more cautious one, based on a theoretical hierarchy of types of transnational interactions. I will argue that much of what passes for transnational

movements are actually cases of three more familiar trends: nation-to-nation diffusion of collective action -- sometimes followed by the construction of new intra-national movements; transnational political exchange between actors already rooted in distinct national settings; and the growth of transnational issue networks, often built around international organizations or institutions. I will close with a question: is there a dynamic relationship among these forms of transnational collective action, such that the more traditional forms of transnational diffusion and exchange may develop into increasingly powerful transnational networks and movements?

II.   Globalizing Conflict

What are the forces that support the thesis of transnational collective action? To appreciate what is at stake, we can compare it to the collective action world of the eighteenth century, when the national social movement was born. This was a world in which print capitalism and the growth of interest associations converged to provide a matrix for the diffusion and sustenance of collective action; in which modular forms of contention like the mass petition, the march and demonstration, grew up around the consolidating national state; and in which generalized collective action frames, like rights and equality, knit together coalitions of interest and opportunity to mount collective action in sustained interaction with the state.[16]

Over the two centuries that followed, these features of social movements remained largely stable; but they have recently been challenged by the thesis of

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[16] Even casual readers of the historical collective action literature will recognize my debt to Charles Tilly, whose *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758 - 1834* (Tilly 1995) condenses many of his teachings on the subject, and to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991) from whom I derived the concept of "modularity". My own conclusions on the development of the national social movement can be found in Tarrow 1994: Part One.

transnational social movements. The first part of this thesis relates to the globalization of the world economy and its attendant system of global communications; the second to the possibilities that these changes open up for transnational collective action; the third that -- knit together by international institutions and transnational social movements -- something resembling a transnational civil society is developing.

A.	*The Sources of Globalization*

Kevin Robins writes:

> The development of the world economy has a long history, dating from at least the sixteenth century, and is associated with the economic and imperial expansionism of the great powers. By globalization we refer to a more advanced stage of this process of development (1995:345).

In the popular version of the theory, sometime around the end of World War Two, assisted by the liberalization of international trade and the appearance of a new economic hegemon, a global economy began to develop. Its most basic aspect, writes Robins, was a shift to a world "in which all aspects of the economy -- raw materials, labour information and transportation, finance, distribution, marketing -- are integrated or interdependent on a global scale" (Ibid.). Moreover, "they are so on an almost instantaneous basis....The forces of globalization thereby tend to erode the integrity and autonomy of national economies (ibid.)

Robins' insistence on the "instantaneous" expression of integration and interdependence takes us to the second element of the thesis: the appearance of global communications structures that weave core and periphery of the world system closer together. Print capitalism, railroads and imperialism had a similar effect in the 18th and 19th centuries (Anderson 1991); but they worked infinitely more slowly and lacked the immediacy of the telephone, the fax machine, the

internet and global television (Featherstone 1990; Harvey 1989). Television, writes Michael O'Neil, "joins people living great distances from one another in time and space by immediately shared experiences, expanding the number of vicarious interactions between people beyond all previous limits" (1993: 35, 47). Decentralized and private communications technologies accelerate this growth, providing individuals and groups with independent means of communication (Frederick 1995; Ganley 1992).

The result of this growth in worldwide economics and global communications is that citizens of the North and West and those of the East and South have been brought closer together, making the former more cosmopolitan and the latter more aware of their inequality. As Giovanni Arrighi writes, through globalization, the East and South have "internalized elements of the social structure of the West and North but have not internalized their wealth" (Arrighi 1991: 40). The most spectacular expression of this cognitive and physical integration is the widespread immigration from the East and South to the West and North; with the consequence that global cities have developed into microcosms "in which to observe the growing dualism between the world's rich and poor and the encounter of global cultures" (Robins 1995: 345; Castells 1994). But it has also made it possible for western environmentalists and human rights advocates to speak the same language and work around the same goals as their counterparts in the third world.

These structural changes in economics, communications and population movement have a cultural concomitant: that we live in a culturally more unified universe, one in which young people dress the same, ride the same skateboards, play the same computer games and listen to the same rock music. One result is to "destroy the cultural isolation in which misunderstanding ferments but, often at the same time, intensifies perceptions of difference that increase social antagonisms and promote social fragmentation" (O'Neil 1993: 68). Another is to create perceived chains of economic and social impact between different parts of the globe. Not only does what happens in Frankfurt or Tokyo have profound

economic effects on workers and peasants in Bombay and Benin; the workers and peasants in Bombay and Benin *know that it does* and have the cognitive tools to attribute the causes of their dissatisfactions to their extra-national origins. And this takes us to the second part of the thesis -- transnational collective action.

B.   Transnational Collective Action

In his summary of the rapidly burgeoning literature on the effects of globalization, Robins claims only that it tends to erode the boundaries of national *economies*; but others have seen it eroding the power of the national state too. For when people see others like themselves from the other side of the world -- students, ethnic minorities, opponents of pollution or of war -- engaging in successful collective action, this may be enough to show them how to engage in similar action in their own countries. In the age of globalization, the thesis continues, not only are images of contentious politics transmitted instantaneously from country to country: so are people and their conflicts. Cheap airline tickets and porous national boundaries make it possible for movement missionaries and their potential followers to diffuse movements as diverse as Muslim fundamentalism and environmentalism around the world. "The Filipino maid in Milan and the Tamil busdriver in Toronto," observes Benedict Anderson, "are only a few sky hours away" from their homeland and seconds away by satellite telephone communication (1992: 8).

In the Beijing Non-Governmental Organization Forum on Women of September 1995, cheap airline travel and global media combined to highlight the interaction among a transnational social actor, the Chinese government, and the U.N. Fourth World Women's Conference. And at the fiftieth anniversary of the U.N., "as world leaders (have) practiced their oratory from grand podiums, their dissenters and victims, from across First Avenue, have clamored for their ears in a

sort of extended political street theater."[17] This takes us to the role of international organizations and institutions in stimulating transnational collective action.

In part in response to global economic trends since World War Two, international organizations and institutions have proliferated. Many -- like the World Bank -- have become targets for social movement protest (Kowaleski 1989; Walton 1989). Others -- like the European Union -- are not only targeted but deliberately encourage non-governmental groups with subsidies and opportunities to attend conferences and offer information and advice (Mazey and Richardson 1993a and b; Dalton 1994). As a result, around them, a host of non-governmental organizations have clustered. The *Yearbook of International Organizations* shows that 65 percent of transnational organizations active in 1993 did not even exist before 1970 (J. Smith 1994: 419). Like the national state that grew in the nineteenth century, international institutions provide new and alternative opportunities for collective action to a host of social actors but at a higher level. This takes us to the strong thesis of transnational social movements.

C.   *Transnational Social Movements: The Strong Thesis*

The thesis of transnational social movements, which I have aggregated from a number of sources, has the following general characteristics:

First, in the age of global television, whirring fax machines and electronic mail, the national political opportunity structures that used to be needed to mount collective action may be giving way to transnational ones (Pagnucco and Atwood

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[17] As the *New York Times* reported:
> The Tibetans chanted, "Shame on China!" The Cubans shouted, "Cuba sí, Castro, no!". The Kurds joined in with "Stop the Turkish fascism!" and the Pakistanis with "Go back, Bhutto!" The Belarus contingent yelled "Who is the enemy of freedom? Lukashenko!" and a mass of Tamils prodded the Sri Lankan leader bluntly, "Out! Chandrika, out!" 23 October, 1995, p. A10.

1994: 411).[18] When insurgency mounted in Central Europe in 1989, it was not primarily because local opportunities were opening up; local dissidents had hammered their heads against the walls of state socialism for several decades with little success. It succeeded largely because of an international regime -- the Helsinki Accords (Thomas 1994; 1996) -- offered a framework of opportunities for activism and because Gorbachev signalled to the ruling Communist parties of the region that they could no longer depend on the Red Army to defend them (Bunce 1991). The growth of political opportunities outside the national state is the first reason for the expansion of transnational collective action.

Second, the strong thesis holds that the national state - incubator and fulcrum of social movements in the past -- may no longer be able to constrain social movements the way it used to. In part, this is because of the declining capacity of governments to disguise what is going on from their own citizens.[19] But in part, it is because the integration of the international economy weakens states' capacity to cope with global economic trends. As determined a scholar of state-building as Charles Tilly could write in 1991: "The increasing fluidity of capital, labor, commodities, money and cultural practices undermines the capacity of any particular state to control events within its boundaries" (1991: 1).

Third, as the capacity of the state to control global economic forces declines, individuals and groups have developed greater "cathectic capacity" (Rosenau

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[18] The literature on political opportunity structure has grown too large to summarize easily. For an attempted theoretical synthesis, see Tarrow 1994: Ch.5. For an interesting application to the international peace movement, see Pagnucco and Smith 1993. For an application to new social movements in Western Europe, see Kriesi et al. 1995.

[19] The recent insurgency in Chiapas is a striking example. Almost as soon as it broke out, fax, E-mail and international television networks broadcast the news that the Mexican government was trying to suppress. Its international resonance almost (but not quite) obscured the military weakness of the insurgency and helped force the government to negotiate with its leaders. In the U.S., a Mexican discussion group of "Peacenet", a service of the Institute for Global Communications in San Francisco, was responsible for posting daily news releases of the rebellion. Similar information was circulated almost simultaneously on the Progressive Sociologist Network and on a network called "Organizing Against the Right Wing." For a schematic analysis, see "A Peasant Uprising Via Internet," *Washington Post National Weekly*, 27 Feb.-35 March 1995, p. 17.

1990), and gained access to new kinds of resources to mount collective action. Where electronic communication becomes a means for the propagation of movement information, there is a low risk empowerment of passive people all over the world -- what we may call, for short, "easy riding on the internet." And where international organizations and institutions share responsibility for certain policy areas with national and sub-national authorities, movement entrepreneurs can engage in "venue shopping" -- choosing the level in a "layered structure" that provides them with the greatest opportunities and imposes the weakest constraints.[20]

Fourth, in the furthest extension of the thesis: rising from the growth of a global economy and its attendant communications revolution; wound around the latticework of international organizations and institutions; powered by transnational social movements: something resembling a transnational civil society may be developing (Frederick 1995; O'Neil 1993). In one version of the thesis,

> Movements are changing from fairly coherent national organizations into transnational networks, with highly fragmented and specialized nodes composed of organizations and less organized mobilizations, all of which are linked through new technologies of communication (Garner 1994: 431).

III.   The Weakness of the Strong Thesis

This strong thesis is bold, exciting and full of profound implications for both the future of social movements and for the international system. To begin with, few of its advocates employ a rigorous or consistent definition of social movements;

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[20] As Bert Klandermans notes, commenting on an earlier version of this paper:
"With the increasing number of political layers involved in the definition and implementation of a policy, the choice of one's adversaries becomes less obvious and therefore more a matter of social construction" (1995: 5).

second, history suggests that many of the properties they associated with the global economy of the 1990s predate it -- in some cases by a century or more; and, third, research on domestic social movements teaches that the macrostructural and cultural factors used to support the thesis are not sufficient to produce social movements.

A.   *Problems of Definition*

If we define all forms of transnational non-governmental activity as social movement activity, then of course we will find much evidence of it in the world today. But if the term is used to signify sustained sequences of collective action mounted by organized collective actors in interaction with elites, authorities and other actors in the name of their claims or the claims of those they represent,[21] then the structural and cultural conditions associated with globalization will not be sufficient on their own to produce transnational social movements.

As theorists as diverse as Mancur Olson and Charles Tilly have argued, the existence of a common interest and of collective incentives are insufficient to produce such sustained collective action (Olson 1967; Tilly 1978). In the geographic dispersion of potential constituents of transnational movements, the heterogeneity of their national opportunity structures and the absence of common social networks connecting them to one another, both history and social movement theory suggest that transnational activism is neither entirely new and has many hurdles to overcome in order to produce true social movements.

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[21] This is a synthesis of the definitions proposed by Kriesi et al. 1995, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, Tarrow 1994 and Tilly 1995.

B.   *What History Teaches*

The historical reasons to be cautious about the strong transnational movement thesis can be summarized in two points:

In the first place, although the world economy has become increasingly integrated in recent decades, the phenomenon itself is hardly new. We need only look at Hobsbawm's *Age of Empire* to recall that, on the centenary of the French and American revolutions, the world had already become "genuinely global" (1987: 13). The telegraph linked Europe, America and Europe's overseas colonies with instant communications and long distance transportation became available to many. Railroads were both reducing space and exploding traditional notions of time long before cheap air travel, fax machines and television were knitting people together in a global village.[22]

In the second place, even before the age of empire, social movements in very similar forms and with similar goals were diffused across boundaries through word of mouth, immigration, proselytism and transnational movement organizations. Antislavery -- perhaps the first successful modern transnational movement -- began in Britain in the late 18th century and spread in the early 19th through the unlikely combination of movement missionaries, colonial administrators and the British navy (Sikkink 1995; Drescher 1987).

Paradoxically, it was nationalism that was the most modular movement of all. The idea that states implied homogeneous nations -- however historically flawed and socially constructed -- spread from West to East and from North to South through print, steamships, railroads and especially colonialism. If the overthrow of an Austrian ruler could be read about by Javanese nationalists, as Benedict Anderson points out, then emperor-overthrow became thinkable in

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[22] Hobsbawm gives one illustration: in 1879, almost 1 million tourists visited Switzerland, 200,000 of them Americans; the equivalent of more than one in twenty of the entire US population at its first census (1987:14).

Indonesia as well as in Central Europe (1990:32, 80).

How different were these early movements from the trajectory of the most powerful transnational movements of today? For example, consider Islamic fundamentalism: it began in Iran and Afghanistan, moving on to Egypt, the Sudan, and Mindanao and, ultimately, to the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the attack on the secular government of Algeria.[23] Diffusion was similarly rapid and widespread for the Christian base communities that developed in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, though they had far less lethal consequences. The ideas of Liberation Theology spread across Latin America by a core of missionaries and by the printed word, using the international organization of the Catholic Church (Levine,ed. 1986; Levine and Stoll 1996; C. Smith 1991).

Not only movement diffusion, but the *rate* of diffusion also developed rapidly in previous cycles of collective action. Analysts of the global media revolution have often argued that it is the rapidity of communication that makes our world qualitatively different than the world of the past. But as Jeremy Popkin points out, even in the eighteenth century revolutions, there was a "tremendous acceleration in the rhythm of communication and the resulting sense that events themselves were proceeding more rapidly" (1995: 22). For example, the sudden shift to daily newspaper production in France in 1789 may have increased people's sense that history was speeding up and that -- since they were at the center of it -- they could reshape the world (1995: 23). Why is this any different than the instantaneous transmission of televised images across the globe today? It is not the speed of communication that seems to matter in these episodes as much as the sense of participants that history is moving rapidly and that they are in a position to make history.

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[23] See the paper by Rudolf which argues that "religious communities are among the oldest of the transnationals".

C.   *Lessons from Social Movement Theory*

These examples are reinforced by what the past three decades of social movement research have taught us about the conditions in which social movements form. That is; it is not only when the macrostructural or cultural conditions are conducive to mobilization, but where indigenous resources and opportunities come together that interests and incentives turn into concerted collective action. None of these movements would have gotten very far if they had not had indigenous traditions, institutions and opportunities to build on. In particular, research has shown that movements take root among pre-existing social networks in which relations of trust, reciprocity and cultural learning are stored.[24]

This is the thesis that Charles Tilly developed when he placed "organization" in a triangular relationship with interest and collective action in his "mobilization model" (1978: 57). In examining what kinds of groups are likely to mobilize, he paid attention to both the *categories* of people who recognize their common characteristics, and to *networks* of people who are linked to each other by a specific interpersonal bond, than to formal organization (1978: 62). The resulting idea of "catnets", which Tilly adopts from Harrison White (n.d.), stresses a group's inclusiveness as "the main aspect of group structure which affects the ability to mobilize" (1978: 64).

Tilly wasn't alone. James Scott must have implicitly understood what Tilly explicitly outlined when he chose the term "resistance" -- rather than social movements -- to designate the individual acts of resentment he found in repressive landlord/ peasant systems (1986). Anthony Oberschall put the same point

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[24] The most accessible sources on the centrality of social networks to movement mobilization are: Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, Gould 1991 and 1995, Fernandez and McAdam 1989, Jackson 1960, Macy 1991, Knoke 1990, McAdam 1982 and 1988a and b, Oberschall 1973, Pinard 1971, Rosenthal, et al 1985 and Wellman 1988.

typologically when he called attention to the links -- communal, associational or absent -- in a population (1973: 125-35), arguing that groups with weak internal structures rarely mobilize at all. Doug McAdam advanced a similar idea when he showed how the recruitment of Freedom Summer volunteers grew out of their participation in pre-existing social networks (1988a). Social networks provide the interpersonal trust, the collective identities and the social communication of political opportunities that are needed to galvanize individuals into collective action and to coordinate it into a social movement.

The importance of interpersonal networks in movement mobilization has obvious implications for the "strong" version of the transnational thesis. For even if objective conditions like economic interdependence, North/South relative deprivation, immigration and a global media community produce the structural and cultural preconditions for the appearance of similar movements in a variety of countries, the transaction costs of linking indigenous groups in a variety of countries into integrated networks would be difficult for any social movement to succeed at (Lichbach 1995: 159-60).[25]

D.   Contemporary Cautions

When we turn to contemporary movements, especially in the Third World, there are three additional reasons to be cautious about the strong transnational movement thesis:

First, not all prospective movements have the resources to respond to transnational forces with proportional activism.   Consider   the   labor movement: If only because capital is more mobile than labor, labor movements

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[25] In a personal communication, Lichbach argues that the transaction cost problem places the onus on political entrepreneurs and patrons. I agree, but this is what I refer to in what I call "transnational political exchange" later in this paper.

have been unable to respond effectively to the global economic interdependence that has been restructuring labor all over the world (Tilly 1994). Even in Western Europe, where the European Union would seem to encourage transnational cooperation, organized labor does not seem to have been able to match the rate of multinational business growth with cooperation across national boundaries.[26]

Second, depending on movement organizations from advanced industrial countries is not the best way for activists in Third World countries to build sustained social movements. For one thing, their links with international environmentalists are often fragile or intermittent (Macdonald, n.d.). Like the Greenpeace activists in the tuna war, the latter can go home to warm hearths when the fishermen are still on the high seas. For another, relations between actors almost always favor those with expertise and access to power over those they come to help. When Western social missionaries leave, their local allies may disperse or become vulnerable to repression.

Third, global communications can be dangerously deceptive tools for social movements to depend upon. Recall how double-edged dependence on the media was for the anti-war movement in the United States in the 1960s (Gitlin 1980). The media allowed the movement to grow more rapidly than it could have had it depended on its own organizational fabric, but dependency on the media left it without the incentive to build permanent organizations when -- as soon occurred -- the media chose to transmit less favorable images of the movement.

This is especially true of television. Because they specialize in projecting brief sound bites of dramatic action and foreshortened commentary, television newscasters provide viewers with an encouraging image of the surging crowds, courageous leaders and colorful banners in the public square; but they leave unseen the capillary work that must be done to mobilize consensus behind a social movement and sustain it once the first flush of public excitement has subsided. For

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[26] See Turner 1996. For a more positive view of European labor's integrative potential, see Visser and Ebbinghaus 1992.

all these reasons, we should seek a more cautious and more differentiated model of transnational activism than the sweeping model of transnational social movements.

IV. A Typology of Transnational Interactions

I do not wish to argue that there are no important forms of transnational collective action linked to the globalization of the world economy and fed by the communications revolution. But many of the phenomena often catalogued as results of globalization historically are really cases of transnational diffusion, and *precede* the current era of globalization; others are more recent, but are less sustained, less unified and less integrated in indigenous social networks than true social movements would be; and still others -- while they may be domestically-integrated -- are temporary mechanisms of transnational political exchange between pairs of domestic political actors in different countries.

This is why a more differentiated version of the transnational collective action thesis is a more promising route for research and theory than the strong one outlined above. Let us begin with two of the dimensions that have emerged from the discussion above: *first,* the degree to which a transnational interaction is either temporary or sustained; and, *second,* the extent to which transnational actors are integrated within indigenous social networks. The intersection of these two dimensions produces a fourfold typology of transnational collective action:

Most of the examples we have of transnational movements are actually not cases of unified social movements which cross national boundaries, but of one of the three remaining types resulting from this typology: of the diffusion of national movements across international boundaries; transnational political exchange between groups of national actors; or transnational issue networks which frequently target international institutions. I propose that they can be ordered into a hierarchy of interaction types from diffusion -- the most common and most

traditional form -- to bilateral political exchange, to transnational issue networks to true transnational movements, which are both sustained and integrated into domestic settings. In the remainder of this paper, I will illustrate these three types.[27]

Figure 1.   *A Typology of Transnational Collective Action*

**Integration in
Domestic Social Networks**

	Non-Integrated	*Integrated*
Temporary	Diffusion	Transnational political exchange
Sustained	Transnational issue networks	Transnational social movements

Time Frame:

A.   Temporary Transnationalism I: Diffusion Across Borders

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[27] There will, unfortunately, not be space to discuss the apparently transnational appearance of similar movements as the result of structural or historical factors that affect a number of countries simultaneously. For example, as Forest Colburn (1994) argues, after World War Two, internationally fashionable ideas circulated in many Third World countries, leading to similar nationalist revolutions in many countries. I am obliged to Mark Lichbach for this observation.

Most of the examples we have of transnational collective action are cases of the diffusion of either specific forms of collective action or of entire movements from one country to others. Moreover, transnational diffusion goes back to the Reformation. It is enough to recall how iconoclasm -- the destruction of images spread through England, Scotland, France and the Netherlands -- through missionaries, war and the printed word in the sixteenth century.[28]

The French revolution led to the diffusion of the symbols of liberty and nationalism throughout Europe, though it is true that many of these symbols were carried on French bayonets. By the nineteenth century, however, social movements were less dependent on the movement of arms. Research on the 1848 revolution has shown how particular forms of collective action -- like the barricade and the mass demonstration -- were adopted in virtually every country that was touched by this upheaval (Godechot 1971; Tarrow 1994). With more longterm results, by the second half of the century, Eastern European immigrants were building workers' movements in the New World, from the lower east side of Manhattan to Chile and Argentina.[29]

Once invented, the forms and symbols of the labor movement became modular; its slogans, its forms of organization -- even its festivals and holidays -- were adoptable on the other side of the world.[30] But once established, each national movement struck indigenous roots -- or connected with them -- and became largely independent of the others. The most impressive exception -- the Second

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[28] In one especially well-documented case of diffusion -- that of iconoclasm, or image-breaking, which came from England to the Netherlands, see Parker 1977: 76 - 80.

[29] Two classical studies trace the transfer of the eastern European labor movement experience to the U.S.: Hourwich 1969 and Fraser 1991. For the influence of immigrants on the Argentinian labor movement see Del Campo 1973 and Godio et al. 1988. On the immigrant origins of the Chilean movement, see Ansell 1972 and Barria Seron 1967.

[30] The direction of diffusion could also be reversed; as is well known, May day in Europe was the result of the decision of American labor activists to support the eight-hour movement through a general strike on May 1, 1887. See Dommanget 1972 for the history of May Day.

International -- was also the most colossal failure when, in 1914, virtually every European Socialist Party broke ranks to support their national governments' war efforts.

Contemporary collective action may be diffused more rapidly than these nineteenth century movements, but it follows similar trajectories and intersections with domestic networks and cultures. Consider the Chinese students who organized a resistance movement in June 1989 so massive that it took an army to suppress them. On radio, television, through fax and videotape players, they had learned of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. If dissidents in Budapest could overthrow a regime by celebrating a reburial, why couldn't Chinese students do the same following the death of Hu Yaobang? Even the symbols they used, like the Goddess of Democracy that was rolled out onto Tienanmen Square, was designed to appeal to a global media market (Tarrow 1994).

But this would not have occurred if there had been no purely domestic sources and no opportunities to fuel the Chinese students' rebellion. On the contrary: not only were their grievances rooted in the Chinese university system and in their frustrated career prospects; the reform of Chinese state and economy had eroded the mechanisms of social control that traditionally kept student rebellion in check.[31] Nor were the symbols of their resistance wholly attributable to the global media market; as Jeffrey Wasserstrom argues, "even though technological innovations in fields such as communication are bound to have profound effects upon certain features of the political process, they do not necessarily change the structure and meaning of public expressions of discontent" (1995: 188).[32] What is certainly true, however, is that the transnational media

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[31] I refer here to the collapse of the social control functions of the student committees in Chinese universities described in an anonymous paper that can not yet be cited.

[32] Wasserstrom points out that the symbol of the Goddess of Democracy "was also reminiscent of both the figures in socialist realist monuments and representations of Chinese folk deities" (1995:212). For a view which combines the "domestic" and the "transnational" interpretations of the statue, see Calhoun 1994: 107 - 110. Also see Strand 1990 and Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990.

signalled to the Chinese students the opportunity to use forms of collective action that were succeeding elsewhere and gave them the chance to communicate their claims to an international audience.

B.   *Temporary Transnationalism II: Political Exchange*

Like transnational diffusion, political exchange across boundaries generally involves actors from different countries with ideological affinities, each of which has something to gain from the relationship and offers something to the other. Needless to say, "gains" and "losses" should not be interpreted narrowly and materially. While Brazilian rubber tappers about to lose their land desperately needed material support, the North American environmentalists who came to their assistance in the late 1980s had purposive and ideological incentives.[33]

These are not permanent arrangements. Although the groups involved have ideological affinities for one another, their alliance is generally organized around a specific issue or issue campaign; when that issue is resolved or the campaign ends, the alliance becomes latent but the groups remain. Why? Because each group has indigenous constituencies and continuing incentives for collective action within their national settings. Their existence does not depend on their transnational relationship. But because cooperation is issue-based and is not lodged in a permanent organization, transnational political exchange is hardly more stable than the diffusion of collective action across national boundaries.

Take the movement to stop the construction of the *Grande Baleine* dam in Canada, where the indigenous tribes of northern Quebec found an ally in opposing the plans of the government in the form of the American environmental

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[33] For a brief discussion of this interesting case, see Silberling 1991: 27. It gained international notoriety with the murder of the movement's leader, Chico Mendes, in 1988. Analysis of a single nation's -- Germany's -- organization for "distant issues" is provided by Rucht 1995.

movement.[34] In the late 1980s, American environmentalism was in the doldrums; its traditional agenda had been adopted and the popularity of the issue was beginning to decline. In Canada, Hydro-Québec was planning a major new dam which would flood territories claimed by the Cree indians. To assure financing for the project, the company had to gain a commitment to purchase power from across the border. Linking up with the claims of indigenous Canadian tribes both appealed to the issue public of U.S. environmentalists and gave the indigenous groups in Canada the leverage and expertise they needed to lobby American legislators.

The campaign to stop the Grande Baleine dam was not, strictly speaking, a transnational movement, but a contingent political alliance linking a pre-existing domestic community with actors from other countries. Like other such movements -- for example, in India and South America -- it drew on the technical and financial resources of a "Northern" environmental movement and on the domestic appeal of indigenous groups on the ground. Like domestic movement campaigns, it was rooted in social and political networks linked by temporary coalitions of activists (Rucht 1989); but there was no reason to sustain it once the issue which brought it into existence had passed.

C.   *Sustained Transnationalism I: Issue Networks*

But what, it may be objected, of the hundreds of transnational non-governmental associations that link citizens across the world in environmental, human rights, women's, peace and indigenous peoples' networks? The term "movement" is often attached to these linkages, but it seems more accurate to

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[34] I am drawing on the current Cornell dissertation research of Lambert Gingras (1995), to whom I am grateful for the information on which this comment is based. See his unpublished paper, "The Transnationalization of Protest: Eco-Aboriginal Politics in Hudson Bay."

classify them, with Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, as "transnational issue networks". To quote Keck and Sikkink,

> a transnational issue network includes the set of 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. They involve actors from non-governmental, governmental and intergovernmental organizations, and are increasingly present in such issue areas as human rights, women's rights, and the environment (Keck and Sikkink 1995).

How do these networks differ from true social movements and why are they often confused with movements? Part of the confusion results from two different uses of the term "network": issue networks and social networks. While some scholars are coming to believe that cyberspace provides the resources for networks to form across wide bands of space (Wellman and Gulia 1995), there would seem to be a clear difference between Keck and Sikkink's concept of *issue* networks and the interpersonal *social* networks that social movement researchers have detected at the foundation of domestic social movements.[35]

Keck and Sikkink's issue networks are primarily discursive in content, they are "distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation", and "at the core of the relationship [among their components] is information exchange". "They mobilize information strategically so as to gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments" (1995: 1). Issue networks lack the categorical basis, the continual interpersonal relations, and the exposure to similar opportunities and constraints that social movement scholars have found in domestic social networks. They are closer to the "epistemic communities" detected by students of international relations and the

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[35] I believe that this is so even though Keck and Sikkink derive their definition of the term "network" from the work of J. Clyde Mitchell, who was writing about domestic networks (1973: 23). Clearly, more clearing of conceptual underbrush needs to be carried out among scholars of social networks and issue networks.

policy networks studied by specialists in American politics.

D.   Sustained Transnationalism II: Transnational Social Movements

These remarks are not meant to deny that there are such phenomena as transnational social movement organizations. We saw an example of one of the most successful of them -- Greenpeace -- in the tuna war at the outset of this discussion. The European and American peace movement of the 1980s was a second such phenomenon. Islamic fundamentalism is a third. But the conditions necessary to produce a social movement that is, at once, integrated within several societies, unified in its goals, and capable of sustained interaction with a variety of political authorities are hard to find combined in the same movement.

Greenpeace developed out of a congeries of domestic movements that were similarly motivated and had a few highly visible targets: companies which engaged in oceanic pollution; states which threatened the planet with nuclear testing. Similarly, the peace movement of the 1980s grew out of an international issue which had produced an unusual degree of transnational consensus against the policies of an American President who appeared to be threatening the planet with his administration's arms buildup. And Islamic fundamentalism was rooted in one of the oldest transnational institutions in the world with domestic networks of religious schools and mosques in which to root itself. These were special conditions which provided activists with unusual opportunities and incentives for integrated mobilization and sustained contentious politics in a number of different opportunity structures. But they are not reproduced each time a transnational interaction occurs among non-governmental actors.

Was the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 a transnational social movement? Certainly its near simultaneity indicates that organized collective actors were taking sustained action against similar regimes in the name

of similar sets of goals. Aided by the Human Rights protocol in the Helsinki accords, some of the dissidents had developed ties across national borders in the preceding years (Thomas 1994, 1996). But the phenomenon was more a case of rapid cross-border diffusion based, in part, on the development of a transnational issue network, than an integrated social movement. Its simultaneity and the similar forms it took owed as much to the transnational uniformity of the stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe than it did to the mutual contacts and collective action frames developed by its activists. Transnational state socialist regimes with a single center of power in Moscow or elsewhere are not likely to appear very often.

V.   Is There a Growing Transnational Dynamic?

That there are many transnational cases of diffusion, political exchange, issue networks and movements growing out of the globalization of the world economy and the thickening of transnational ties should be obvious from the wealth of examples presented above. But before concluding that a transnational civil society is being constructed, we need to look more closely at the *kinds* of linkages that are developing and whether they are cumulative and dynamic. For example, the growing web of E-mail networks that are traversing the world may excite the attention of those with easy access to computers, for their obvious capacity to reduce transaction costs and transmit information across national lines; but they do not promise the same degree of crystallization, of mutual trust and collective identity that the interpersonal ties among the founders of nineteenth century socialism did or that Islamic fundamentalism does today. Whether they will produce enduring social movements it is too soon to tell.

The trends that some have seen creating a world of transnational movements are only in their infancy and may be cumulative. So I want to close, not with a conclusion, but with a few questions that students of transnational

collective action will need to confront about the dynamics of transnational collective action:

First, does the new technology of global communication and cheap international travel change the *forms* of movement diffusion or only the speed of its transmission, compared to the movements of the past? Before concluding that the world is entering an unprecedented age of global movements, we will need to look at movements in the past -- and this is where comparatively bold historical studies come in. Otherwise, as Pizzorno once wrote, "at every upstart of a wave of conflict we shall be induced to think that we are at the verge of a revolution; and when the downswing appears, we shall predict the end of class conflict" (1978: 291).

Secondly, can it be said that integrated social movements can span continents in the absence of an integrated interpersonal community at both ends of the transnational chain? And -- an even stronger claim -- that such communities can be *created* with resources borrowed from abroad? In the course of the 19th century and most of ours, local social networks were the essential armature of social movements. Although we have examples of immigrant chains creating new movements where immigrants arrived, these movements soon grew roots in their native soil and rapidly cut themselves off from their origins in Europe. Those who are convinced of the strong thesis need to show that impersonal cyberspace networks or travel between countries can not only stimulate new movements (eg. transnational diffusion), but will also maintain the transnational tie as part of their underlying social network.[36]

Third, will the new power of international movements lead to benevolent forms of "people's power," as writers like O'Neil seem to think (1993: ch. 4)? Or will

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[36] There was evidence for interpersonal diffusion in the 1960s, when a largely peaceful protest repertoire spread to West Germany from the American New Left. But Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht saw as agents of this transition a group of West German students who had studied in the U.S. and carried the message *personally* back to Europe in 1968. Once founded, the West German New Left went off in directions radically different than the movements of the 1960s in the U.S.

nineteenth century?[38]

Already, states have evolved transnational strategies and transnational organizations to ferret out the most dangerous sources of international turbulence. And states are encouraging some movements -- like the European environmental movement -- to take their claims to transnational institutions like the European Union (Dalton 1994), while they inhibit the EU from dealing with others, like the Anti-nuclear movement. States in the late twentieth century can make more than war; they can make transnational organizations and institutions to combat and socially control social movements. If this is the case, then the national state and the national social movement will be with us for a long time to come.

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[38] Needless to say, they may react differently to each -- which is one reason we need to proceed with a more differential analysis than the "strong thesis" provides. For example, even repressive regimes may respond less repressively to transnational issue networks than they do to transnational movements, since the former are less likely to provide resources to domestic dissident groups.

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