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# A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs

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This article provides a “top-down” explanation for the rapid growth of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the postwar period, focusing on two aspects of political globalization. First, I argue that international political opportunities in the form of funding and political access have expanded enormously in the postwar period and provided a structural environment highly conducive to NGO growth. Secondly, I present a norm-based argument and trace the rise of a pro-NGO norm in the 1980s and 1990s among donor states and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which has actively promoted the spread of NGOs to non-Western countries. The article ends with a brief discussion of the symbiotic relationship among NGOs, IGOs, and states promoting international cooperation.

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Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have proliferated in number and become increasingly influential players in world politics in the past three decades.<sup>1</sup> With the rise in number and activeness of these new non-state actors in recent years, there is now also a burgeoning literature dealing with NGOs in several academic disciplines and subfields including political science, sociology, and anthropology. To date, most studies have focused primarily on the role of international NGOs (INGOs) and NGOs, either in terms of policy outcomes or the functions that they perform. In contrast to such studies, this article seeks to understand the more fundamental question of why these globally active groups have emerged in the first place.

To the extent that the literature has explicitly examined the sources of NGO growth, much of it has relied on “bottom-up” explanations that depict NGO formation as a societal response to socio-economic factors, the new information revolution and/or the decline of the state. In the early studies of transnational actors, for example, political scientists argued that democracy, economic development and integration in the global economy were the key factors behind increasing numbers of NGOs (Nye and Keohane 1972; Skjelsbaek 1972). More recently, sociologists have also used a similar set of socio-economic variables—per capita GNP, levels of trade, and enrollment in secondary education—to predict the emergence and growth of INGOs (Boli, Loya, and Loftin 1999). Other writers have pointed to the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Union of International Association's *Yearbook of International Organizations*, international NGOs increased in number from 985 in 1956 to 14,000 in 1985, and nearly 21,000 in 2003.

decline of the state and the increasing borderless nature of activism because of the revolution in information and telecommunication technology as the main reasons for the growth of INGOs (Lipschutz 1992; Mathews 1997).

In recent years, however, an alternative and more top-down, structural approach has also started to emerge in the literature. This article calls attention to and further develops these new approaches to present a top-down theory for NGO emergence and growth. In contrast to the general image of NGOs as a societal force rising to challenge or replace the state from below, I argue that it is impossible to understand the explosive growth of NGOs in the past several decades without taking into account the ways in which states, international organizations, and other structures have actively stimulated and promoted NGOs from above. Rather than simply emerging as the result of bottom-up sociological and technological forces, INGOs and NGOs have also emerged and grown in large part because of top-down processes of *political* globalization, i.e., the globalization of political structures, institutions, and Western liberal democratic values.

The article is divided into three main sections that examine the diverse ways in which political globalization processes have supported the growth and spread of NGOs to all corners of the globe. First, building on social movement and strong state theory, I examine the ways in which the expansion of institutions of global governance over time has produced new *international political opportunities* for NGOs that have spurred their growth. In particular, the article analyzes how the growth of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international regimes, and changing state policies in the West have offered opportunities to NGOs for resource mobilization and political access, two important factors behind NGO growth. Secondly, turning to constructivist and sociological institutional arguments, I trace the emergence and promotion by IGOs and certain activist states of a new pro-NGO *international norm* from the 1980s that, I argue, has put “top-down” pressure on states to support and include NGOs in both international and national politics. This international normative promotion of NGOs has given NGOs legitimacy and political space in many countries that previously suppressed NGOs and is one of the reasons for the spread of NGOs from the West to other parts of the world. Thirdly and finally, I conclude the article with a more general discussion of the complex, symbiotic relationship between states, IGOs and NGOs. In this section I move beyond the top-down and bottom-up dichotomy and explore the ways in which mutual interests and functional interdependence among states, IGOs and NGOs have encouraged their collective growth.

### **International Political Opportunities and the Growth of NGOs**

Although there is as yet no clearly articulated “top-down” theory of NGO emergence and formation, recent work done by political scientists and sociologists on social movements and advocacy networks provide the underpinnings for such a theory. Using the concept of political opportunity structure (POS) from social movement theory and extending it to international and transnational politics, I argue that two components of POS—expanding opportunities for resource mobilization and political access—are the crucial variables that have spurred on the growth of NGOs and their spread from the industrialized West to other parts of the world. As international institutions and regimes have expanded to handle new global issues, they have increasingly promoted NGOs as their service providers and advocates, and in the past two decades an explosion of new international opportunities for funding and participation of NGOs has created a structural environment highly conducive to NGO growth.

From a theoretical standpoint, my argument builds heavily on insights and models from social movement theory and strong state theory used to explain the emergence and expansion of protest and citizen activism at the national level. Emphasizing the structural conditions under which social movement and voluntary

organizations form, these theories call attention to the incentives provided by the state and the larger “POS” that either constrain or encourage activism (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). The most relevant POS variables for understanding the emergence of social movement and citizen organizations appear to be those most directly related to the ability of such groups to form and mobilize resources such as legal regulations, funding opportunities, and access to influential political actors and institutions. Social movement theorists comparing levels of social movement organizations across industrialized countries, for example, have found that countries with more open political structures have tended to have higher levels of citizen movement groups (Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1996). Similarly, the work of “strong state” theorists such as Jack Walker, Theda Skocpol, and others has shown that expanding political opportunities in the form of new financial patrons, state subsidies, and greater access at the legislative and federal levels were the driving force behind the explosive growth of citizen-led public interest groups in the United States in the late 1960s to the 1980s (Walker 1991; Berry 1999; Skocpol 1999). Finally, scholars of the nonprofit sector have also found that legal structures, the availability of state and foundation funding, and access to political institutions also greatly influence the size and type of nonprofit organizations found in a given country (Salamon and Anheier 1998).

Extending these arguments to the international level, *international* political opportunities and POS also provide a top-down structural environment that may either encourage or constrain the emergence and growth of NGOs. While most scholars of transnational advocacy networks and social movements have focused on how domestic and international POS interact to either aid or hinder movement goals (della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002:17–20), several have directed attention to transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) and have used the concept of POS to examine the larger international political context in which NGOs have flourished. Social movement scholars such as Jackie Smith and Florence Passy argue that the rise of IGOs has stimulated the growth of TSMOs by providing new political opportunities at the international level such as access to new arenas for political action, international elite allies, and other resources such as legitimacy and international media attention (Passy 1999; Smith 2000).

In a similar vein, sociological institutionalists have also tied the growth of INGOs to the expansion of the international system and argued that the growth of INGOs is both a product and a source of world culture. In their contribution to a major collaborative research project on INGOs and world culture, John Boli and George Thomas suggest top-down diffusion processes when they interpret correlations of INGO foundations with various indicators of world development as evidence that INGOs “emerged in tandem with the universalization of the state. . . [and] grew concomitantly with the incorporation of peripheral regions into the interstate system and world economy” (Boli and Thomas 1999:30). In addition to finding a correlation between IGO and INGO formation in general (Boli and Thomas 1999:28–29), other collaborators in this research project have found strong correlations between IGO formation and INGO growth in specific areas of politics such as the environment (Meyer et al. 1997) and women’s issues (Berkovitch 1999). Boli and Thomas, however, are careful to keep the causal arrows multi-directional—INGOs are not only top-down reflections of world culture embodied in IGOs, they are also bottom-up creators and diffusers of world culture (Boli and Thomas 1999:19, 34–48).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sociological institutionalists have made various arguments regarding INGO growth. Meyer et al. (1997) and Berkovitch (1999) suggest a more top-down process with IGOs and international regimes spurring on INGO growth. In this part of my article, I am referring mainly to these insights. Other work by Boli, Loya, and Loftin (1999:76) attributes INGO emergence more to socio-economic and domestic political factors which are less straightforwardly top down.

Taken together, these various theories provide a general framework for a structural, top-down explanation of the rise and global spread of NGOs. Just as the emergence of the nation-state and periods of state-building at the national level stimulated the growth of new forms of citizen activism and organization in the industrialized West (Tilly 1984; Tarrow 1996), the creation of new international institutions and their rapid growth in the postwar period have stimulated NGO growth worldwide by providing new political opportunities and incentives to organize. More specifically, as the international system has expanded over time it has increasingly offered two types of international opportunities that are also crucial factors for the growth of citizen groups at the national level: (1) resources in the form of grants, contracts and other kinds of institutional support (food aid, transportation costs, technical assistance, etc.) and (2) political access to decision-making bodies and agenda-setting arenas. The globalization of the state described by Boli and Thomas, thus, has been an internationalization of two key opportunities provided to citizens in democratic industrialized states.

While these two factors have been mentioned by various scholars, they have not been systematically analyzed or incorporated into a larger theory of NGO formation. The rest of this section explores the evolutionary growth of these two international political opportunities and documents how changes in the international system and its growth over time have tended to promote both service and advocacy NGOs.

#### *International Programs and the Rise of Patrons of Global Civil Society*

NGOs would not be able to survive without material resources. While private donations from individuals have been an important source of funding for many nonprofit groups, scholars of the nonprofit sector have found that grants and subsidies from the state, foundations, and other elite institutions have played an essential and critical role in the development of the nonprofit and voluntary sector (Walker 1991; Salamon 1995). For example, the United States, the world leader in terms of numbers of service and advocacy nonprofits, is also one of the world leaders in state support of the nonprofit sector (Salamon 1995), and the rise of nonprofit groups in America in the 1960s and 1970s was heavily funded by institutional “patrons of political action” such as the government and private foundations (Walker 1991; Berry 1999).

States and other institutional patrons have also been important players at the international level and have been major funders of NGOs. From their inception in the early postwar years, many UN agencies have included NGOs as “partners” and contractors of services in their programs. The universe of international sponsors of NGOs, however, has expanded dramatically in the past two decades and now includes not only IGOs but also a complex collection of governmental, quasi-governmental and private organizations. By my own rough estimate, by the late 1990s there was somewhere between \$6 and \$8 billion per year of external funding for NGOs fueling the growth of NGOs and their spread to non-Western parts of the globe.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The United Nations (UN) system*

Several UN agencies have had long ties with NGOs and UN activities provided important stimuli for increased NGO activities following World War II in the mid-1940s to the 1960s (Smith 1990). In the area of relief and refugee assistance, for example, there were close funding and working relations between NGOs and

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<sup>3</sup> This is a conservative figure based on the following estimated funds: \$2 billion from the UN system; \$1.5 billion from EU sources; \$2–3 billion from bilateral aid agencies; and \$1–1.5 billion from public and private foundation sources.

the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the 1940s; when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, its founding statute specified that it would provide assistance to refugees through private agencies, and during its early years it relied heavily on NGOs for service provision (Curti 1963; Smith 1990; UNHCR 2000:194). Other UN agencies that have included NGOs in their programs as project implementers since their early years are the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Education, Science, and Culture Organization (UNESCO), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Curti 1963:570–592; Smith 1990:76).

Compared with levels of cooperation in the 1950s and 1960s, however, UN support of NGOs since the 1980s has grown exponentially and now includes not only funding for implementation of UN projects but funding for attendance to UN conferences, NGO training and “capacity building” programs, and support for NGO networking. By the late 1990s, UN agencies were providing more than \$2 billion a year on NGO programs. Table 1 documents the growth of NGO partnership programs sponsored by UN agencies in the 1980s and 1990s.

A substantial amount of the new funding for NGOs has gone to service NGOs that work as subcontractors for UN projects. In terms of quantity, the largest amount of UN direct support for NGOs has been in the area of humanitarian relief and assistance. From the mid-1980s, as budgets of UN agencies specializing in this area, such as UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP), rose significantly, the amount of funds and goods channeled through NGOs also grew dramatically. By the mid- to late-1990s, \$1.5–2.2 billion worth of UNHCR and WFP annual aid relief was implemented by NGOs. In addition to its heavy reliance on large Western NGOs, UNHCR also started to make conscious efforts to use Southern NGOs, at times going so far as creating local NGOs to implement its programs in the field (Donini 1996: 94–95). WFP, with its links to over 1,100 NGOs and an operating budget of \$1.8 billion in the late 1990s, has been a major multilateral source of growth in INGO/NGOs specializing in humanitarian crises.

In the area of international development, several UN agencies also started in the 1980s and 1990s to more actively turn to NGOs as development “partners.” Two good examples of this sudden new official interest in NGOs are the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank. After decades of more or less ignoring NGOs, both UNDP and the World Bank setup a variety of programs to support the growth of NGOs in the late 1980s and 1990s. These programs included funding of NGO projects, funding and training for NGO attendance at UN conferences, material and technical support for development of national and international NGO internet networks, training at numerous workshops, and organizational support for a variety of “capacity building” programs (see Table 1.). At the World Bank, efforts were also made to increase NGO inclusion in Bank-financed projects, and the Bank claims that NGO participation in these projects increased from 6% of all projects from 1973–1988 to 30% of all projects in the early 1990s to 50% of all projects in the late 1990s (World Bank 1996, 2001a). These programs have benefited not only service NGOs, but also advocacy NGOs as well, with hundreds of NGOs from developing and transition countries getting financial support to attend the various UN world conferences in the 1990s.

In addition to programs at these older UN agencies, new UN agencies and new jointly-run UN programs were set up in the 1990s that included collaboration with NGOs. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), a jointly administered fund set up in 1991, has funded international environmental projects involving thousands of NGOs. Other new UN programs established in the 1990s that include NGO participation are the UN International Drug Control Program, the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, the UN Joint Program on HIV/AIDS, and the Partnership for Poverty Reduction (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. UN Funding and Support Programs for INGOs and NGOs

<i>UN Agency</i>	<i>NGO or Civil Society Support Programs</i>
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Since 1948: Funding of NGO as program implementers Since 1989: Work with NGOs in the area of child protection, child labor, children in armed conflicts and disabled children
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Since 1951: Funding of NGOs as program implementers 1993: Partnership in Action (PARinAC). Consultations, technical support and capacity building programs for NGOs. 1989-94: International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Funds for NGOs. 1997: NGO Fund for NGOs in Eastern Europe and the CIS.
World Food Program (WFP)	Inclusion of INGO/NGOs as WFP's main implementing partners
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	Since 1980s: People's Participation Program, fund for NGOs
UN Commission on Human Rights	Funds to enable NGO participation at UN meetings and human rights projects: 1981: UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture 1985: UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations 1991: Voluntary Trust on Contemporary Forms of Slavery 1995: Voluntary Fund for Indigenous People 1998: Assisting Communities Together
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Since 1969: Funding of NGOs as program implementers
World Bank	Since 1970s: Inclusion of NGOs in Bank-financed projects 1983: Grant programs and special funds for NGOs (e.g., Special Grant Program, Grants for Capacity Building, Population and Reproductive Health Capacity Building Program, the Institutional Development Fund, and the Post-Conflict Trust Fund) 1990s: NGO projects funded by Bank-financed Social Funds 1990s: Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use 1990s: Training and networking programs for NGOs
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Since 1979: Funding of NGOs as program implementers Mid-1980s: Special Program for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification 1987: The Extended Cooperation Program (ECP) and IFAD/NGO Fund
UN Development Program (UNDP)	Late 1980s: NGO grant and support programs (Partners in Development Program I and II; World Summit on Social Development Program; Environment and Development Program; Learning Group on Empowerment and Participation; Global Program; Environment and Social Sustainability Program; Indigenous Knowledge Program) 1990s: Development Program for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America (PRODERE) 1992: Sustainable Development Networking Program 1996: Civil Society for Poverty Reduction program in Sub-Saharan Africa
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	1990s: Funding for international environmental projects 1990s: Small Grants Program for NGOs
UN International Drug Control Program (UNDCP)	1990s: Inclusion of NGOs as project implementers, fundraisers, project formulators, and policy advocates. 1990s: Training and networking programs for NGOs
Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty	An interagency program set up at the Conference on Hunger and Poverty in 1995 includes IFAD, FAO, WFP, the World Bank, the European Commission, and NGOs Community Empowerment Facility provides grants for NGOs Networking projects

TABLE I. (Contd.)

<i>UN Agency</i>	<i>NGO or Civil Society Support Programs</i>
UN Joint Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	A collaborative effort of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank and NGOs set up in 1996. It helps NGOs get funding, provides technical assistance and promotes NGOs in its public relations efforts.
Partnership for Poverty Reduction	An inter-agency project started in 1996 by the World Bank Institute, the Inter-American Foundation and UNDP that promotes private-public partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sources: www.fao.org (accessed 11/28/99); www.gefweb.org (accessed 3/21/01); GEF Digest, Fall 1999; www.ifad.org (accessed 4/21/01); www.ifad.org/popularcoalition/main\_cef.htm (accessed 4/25/01); www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/other.htm (accessed 11/28/99); www.undcp.org (accessed 11/28/99); www.undp.org/csopp/CSO/NewsFiles/partners.htm (accessed 4/24/01); www.unhchr.ch (accessed 4/19/01); www.unhcr.ch (accessed 4/24/01); www.wfp.org (accessed 4/23/01); www.worldbank.org (accessed 4/24/01); www.worldbank.org/ppr/english/about.html (accessed 4/24/01); World Bank (1999) *World Bank-Civil Society Relations. Fiscal 1999 Progress Report*. Washington: World Bank.

*The European Union (EU)*

Another intergovernmental organization that dramatically increased its support of NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s was the EU. In addition to the individual bilateral aid programs of each EU member state, the EU has had its own separate foreign assistance program since the 1960s. EU funding for NGOs started in the mid-1970s with a small co-financing program that had a budget of 2.5 million ecu (approximately \$3.2 million). From the 1980s, the absolute and relative amount of EU foreign aid channeled through NGOs increased rapidly, and by 1995, it had skyrocketed to an estimated \$1.0 billion, accounting for somewhere between 15% and 20% of all EU foreign aid (Randel and German 1999). The two programs that have provided the most direct and abundant material support for NGOs are the NGO co-financing program and the humanitarian aid program. As Figure 1 graphically illustrates, funds for these two programs rose dramatically in the late 1980s and 1990s. Most dramatic was the rise in funding for humanitarian aid; by the mid-1990s about half of all funding of the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and most of the refugee work done by other Directorate-Generals was implemented by NGOs (Randel and German 1999:267). In addition to this, a

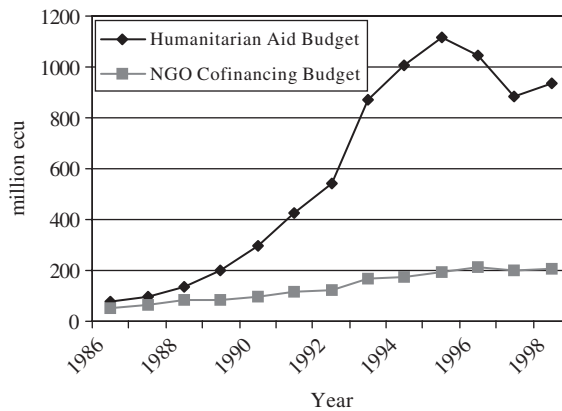


FIG. 1. Rise of European Union Humanitarian and Nongovernmental Organizations Aid, 1986–1998  
 Source: Cox and Chapman (1999:31)



considerable portion of EU food aid—another fairly large portion of the EU foreign aid budget—was handled by NGOs.

While the most substantial in size, EU humanitarian aid and NGO co-financing programs represent only several of more than 40 different EU budget lines that now include funding to NGOs (Randel and German 1999:274). In 1998, a partial listing of budget lines of EU programs that provide funding to NGOs listed 31 separate budget lines and a total of 1.7 billion ecu in potential NGO funding (European Commission 1998). As several Directorate-Generals handle these programs and because there is no consolidated data on the amount of funding that is actually given to NGOs, it is hard to estimate the total amount of funding that the EU now channels through NGOs. A conservative estimate would be \$1 billion, but the figure could be as high as \$2–3 billion. While most of this funding goes to service NGOs, a portion of it has supported advocacy NGOs in the area of human rights, the environment and other areas.

#### *Bilateral aid agencies*

In addition to IGOs, Western democratic states have also been important sponsors of NGOs. The rise of NGOs in industrialized countries, particularly service groups that specialize in the area of international development and humanitarian crises, has paralleled state policies and growing budgets in the area of foreign aid (Smith 1990). As numerous international development specialists have noted, the sudden explosion in the number of NGOs occurred precisely as the overall level of state funding of NGOs increased in the 1970s–1990s (Hulme and Edwards 1997). Data available from the OECD, for example, shows that the percentage of total OECD official aid channeled through NGOs rose from 1% in 1975 to 3.6% in 1985 to 5% in 1994 (Edwards and Hulme 1996:961).

Although state support for NGOs began as early as the 1950s and 1960s, bilateral aid agency funding for NGOs conspicuously increased in the 1980s and 1990s. The first surge in funding for NGOs came in the 1980s and was part of a move by the bilateral donor community toward finding more “people participatory” forms of aid (Cernea 1988; Brown and Korten 1991). This surge of funding for NGOs was followed by an even larger one in the 1990s, as the end of the Cold War and a new wave of democratization in many countries inspired bilateral aid donors to promote the growth of “civil society” (Carothers 1999:207–254). All told, in the 1990s bilateral agencies from OECD countries accounted for several billion dollars of annual funding for NGOs with a few countries—the United States, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the Nordic countries—taking the lead and channeling between 10% and 25% of their total annual foreign assistance through NGOs (Smillie and Helmich 1999).

While most of this government support of NGOs has gone to service NGOs working in the areas of international development and humanitarian crises, substantial amounts of state funding have also supported advocacy NGOs. Aid for democratization, for example, includes a “civil society aid” component that funds advocacy NGOs working to promote democracy, transparency, anti-corruption, human rights, citizen rights, labor organization and civic engagement in transitioning countries (Carothers 1999; Ottaway and Carothers 2000). In 2002, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) “Civil Society Funds” provided \$207 million to hundreds of advocacy NGOs in 57 countries.<sup>4</sup> In addition to democracy aid, some states—Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Nordic countries—have also funded advocacy NGOs working in the areas of development, HIV/AIDS, the environment, population and women’s issues, indigenous people’s rights, and peace-building (Steen 1996:151; Van Rooy 1999:

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of USAID funds for civil society in democracy aid, go to [www.dec.org/partners/ardb/index.cfm?fuseaction=report.subdirective&subdirective=civilsociety](http://www.dec.org/partners/ardb/index.cfm?fuseaction=report.subdirective&subdirective=civilsociety).

112–13).<sup>5</sup> Since the early 1970s, Canada has provided funding for advocacy NGOs to participate in major UN global conferences (Van Rooy 1997:95–96, 99–100).

*Quasi-governmental foundations and political foundations*

State funds have also found their way to NGOs through quasi-governmental and political foundations. Once again, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that the majority of these organizations began to devote a substantial portion of their grants to NGOs and other “civil society organizations.”

Among the most well-known quasi-governmental foundations are the regionally focused foundations funded by the U.S. government: the Asia Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, the African Development Foundation, and the Eurasia Foundation.<sup>6</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, all of the regional foundations started to support civil society groups as a main element of their programming, and by the mid-1990s, the combined grants budgets of these foundations exceeded \$100 million, much of which went to NGOs. In 1999, for example, these foundations disbursed more than 1,000 grants for projects involving both service and advocacy NGOs for projects ranging from development to election monitoring (Reimann 2001:165).

Political foundations in North America and Europe dedicated to promoting democracy worldwide have also supported the work of service and advocacy NGOs. Now an integral part of the larger foreign policy project of Western governments to support democracy in developing countries, most political foundations were established in the past 20 years and were modeled on the older German political foundations. Centered on a major political party, German political foundations were set up in the early postwar period to encourage democracy in Germany. Over time the foundations gradually expanded their focus to promoting democracy overseas. By the 1990s, more than half of the \$450 million spent by the five major German political foundations was devoted to overseas programs, much of it funding NGOs working in the area of human rights and democratic development (Smillie and Helmich 1993; DAC 1998; Phillips 1999).

In the 1980s and 1990s, political foundations solely focused on the international promotion of democracy were set up in other Western countries. In the United States, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and two party-affiliated foundations—the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republic Institute (IRI)—were set up by Congress in 1983 with the specific mandate of strengthening democracy around the world. Following the NED, new political foundations were set up in Canada and Europe, such as the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Canada, the Westminster Foundation in the United Kingdom, the Olaf Palme International Center and the Swedish International Liberal Center in Sweden, and the Karl Renner Institute in Austria. Since their establishment in the 1980s and early 1990s, these political foundations have funded thousands of advocacy and service NGO projects in the area of human rights, democratization, and civil society development (Carothers 1999; Phillips 1999:81; Reimann 2001:165).

*Private foundations*

Finally, private foundations have also become an increasingly important elite ally of NGOs. Although there were several foundations that funded NGOs in the area of

<sup>5</sup> The Netherlands and Germany have provided funding to advocacy INGOs such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, as well as religious and development NGOs that partake in advocacy activities. In Canada, several development NGOs that are very active in advocacy also receive substantial support from the Canadian government (Van Rooy 1999:112–113). In both Sweden and Norway, advocacy NGOs are often completely dependent on the government for funding (Steen 1996).

<sup>6</sup> These foundations are “quasi-governmental” in the sense that they have been regularly funded by the government, have state officials on their board, and/or were setup through acts of legislation that have made them subject to public review and management.

international development in the 1970s, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that more widespread funding of both service and advocacy NGOs by foundations began (Keck and Sikkink 1998:98–99). After steadily increasing in the 1980s, private foundation grants for international projects skyrocketed in the 1990s (The Foundation Center 1997, 2000; Renz 1998). In the United States, private foundation grants for international projects rose to an estimated \$996 million in 1994 and \$1.6 billion in 1998, signifying an increase of 51% from 1990 levels (The Foundation Center 1997, 2000; Renz 1998).

Table 2 lists the larger American private foundations that fund NGOs. On their own, these 14 foundations spent more than \$1.1 billion in 1999–2000 on international programs and projects, and made 2,139 grants to NGOs and transnational NGO networks for projects in the areas of international development, human rights, security, the environment, gender issues, and civil society development. If one adds to this list the many other foundations around the world, such as the Open Society foundations, that have provided funding to NGOs, it is clear that private foundations are now important financial sponsors of NGO activities worldwide.

Foundations have been a particularly important source of funding for advocacy NGOs, especially in the United States where many advocacy NGOs are hesitant to accept funding from the state. Historically, this makes sense since private foundations were also the main financial supporters in the United States of new citizen advocacy groups that emerged and became active in national politics in the 1960s and 1970s (Walker 1991; Jenkins 1998; Berry 1999). Recent support in the past two decades by foundations of advocacy NGOs operating transnationally or in foreign countries, thus, is an international extension of a pattern of postwar American politics of elite-sponsored citizen activism at the national level. The foundations listed in Table 2 have been major funders of advocacy NGOs (both Northern and Southern), and 63% of the grants made by the top 12 foundations in this table were grants that funded projects involving one or more advocacy NGOs. The areas in which foundation funding is most prevalent—the environment, security and peace, human rights, development, population, health, and women’s issues—are precisely the areas where advocacy NGOs have flourished.

TABLE 2. Funding of NGOs by Selected American Foundations, 1999–2000

<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Number of Grants (Year)</i>	<i>Total International Funding</i>
Alton Jones Foundation	69 grants (1999)	\$16.6 million
Carnegie Corporation	21 grants (2000)	\$7.3 million*
Ford Foundation	600 grants (2000)	n.a.
Gates Foundation	51 grants (2000)	\$701 million*
Global Fund for Women	354 grants (2000)	\$4 million
Hewlett Foundation	91 grants (2000)	\$60 million*
Kellogg Foundation	73 grants (2000)	\$40 million
MacArthur Foundation	112 grants (2000)	\$36 million*
Mott Foundation	215 grants (1999)	\$27 million
Packard Foundation	156 grants (2000)	\$42 million
Rockefeller Brothers Fund	87 grants (2000)	\$9 million*
Rockefeller Foundation	195 grants (2000)	\$142 million
Turner Foundation	56 grants (1999)	\$4 million
Wallace Global Fund	59 grants (2000)	\$5.7 million
Total	2139 grants	\$1.1 billion

\*Figures include multi-year grants.

Sources: [www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org), [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org), [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org), [www.carnegie.org](http://www.carnegie.org), [www.rockfound.org](http://www.rockfound.org), [www.wajones.org](http://www.wajones.org), [www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org), [www.rb.org](http://www.rb.org), [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org), [www.turnerfoundation.org](http://www.turnerfoundation.org), [www.wgf.org](http://www.wgf.org), [www.packfound.org](http://www.packfound.org), [www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org). All sites accessed in May 2001.

*Expanding Political Access at the International Level*

The second important factor behind the growth of NGOs is political access and the evolution of the international system of governance as a larger, more complex and inclusive set of organizations, regimes, and gatherings. Greater numbers of opportunities for political access and participation in international policy-making processes has inspired the formation of new groups and has given them the chance to survive as organizations since access to decisionmakers can provide groups the influence and legitimacy they need to justify and/or maintain their existence. This is particularly the case for advocacy NGOs, and, here again, parallels to the rise of citizen groups at the national level are illuminating. In the United States, for example, the rapid rise in number of national level advocacy groups in the 1960s and 1970s took place in the context of the growth of federal government bodies and programs, corresponding new government citizen participation programs, sharp increases in the number of House and Senate committees and subcommittees, and legal changes that made it easier for public interest groups to participate in policy-making processes (Walker 1991; Berry 1999; Skocpol 1999).

In a similar fashion, over the postwar period there has also been a general trend at the international level toward greater openness of international institutions to NGOs in terms of points of access, opportunities to participate in policy-making and implementation processes, and collaborative efforts. As mentioned earlier, this increasing access to IGOs over time has been in part a result of the expansion and the growing complexity of the international system, as the number of new international bodies, agreements, and programs have increased. Increases in the number of NGOs active in the area of human rights, the environment and women's issues, thus, have occurred only after the number of IGOs and treaties dealing with these issues rapidly increased in the postwar period (Meyer et al. 1997; Berkovitch 1999). The rest of this section examines the UN system and how an increase in number of access points for NGOs has provided a stimulus for organizing at the international level.

*Fitting NGOs into the UN system: Official status and formal inclusion*

The UN Charter formally provides for NGO participation in the form of consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Article 71 of the UN Charter allows ECOSOC to "make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence," and by the late 1960s, a three-tiered status system was set up which categorized NGOs by their degree of relevance to ECOSOC activities. Article 71 has provided NGOs with several important political opportunities such as formal international recognition and accreditation for participating in UN international conferences. Article 71 also provided the basic model and benchmark for NGO participation used by several other UN agencies when they were established (Charnovitz 1997:253). Although not all UN organizations included NGOs when they were originally set up, over time nearly all UN agencies and affiliated institutions have come to provide NGOs formal and informal opportunities to access decisionmakers and participate in policy debates. Table 3 lists the type of institutional access NGOs have at various UN departments and agencies.

Over time, opportunities for NGOs to participate in UN politics have increased, and this expansion of access has provided incentives to organize and act at the international level. Initially, in the 1940s and 1950s NGO official participation at the UN was limited to ECOSOC, the UN Department of Public Information, and the other UN agencies with close working ties with NGOs such as UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO. With the growth of UN bodies over time, opportunities for institutional participation at the UN also increased. In the 1970s, new UN bodies were created in the areas of environment, agriculture and population — e.g., the

TABLE 3. Institutional Access for NGOs at the UN

<i>UN Body</i>	<i>Type of NGO Access or Participation</i>
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (established (est. 1945)	Available since the mid-1940s, consultative status with ECOSOC allows NGOs to participate in ECOSOC meetings and those of its subsidiary bodies
ECOSOC Commissions (est. 1947–1990s)	NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status have access to the following ECOSOC commissions: Commission on Human Rights, Commission on Population and Development, Commission for Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Human Settlements and Commission on Sustainable Development
UNICEF (est. 1948)	Consultative status for NGOs available since 1950; in 1990s, observer status at meetings of UNICEF's Executive Board
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (est. 1951)	NGOs participate as observers in UNHCR's Executive and Standing Committees. A UNHCR/NGO Consultation occurs prior to UNHCR Executive Committee meetings. In the 1990s, Partnership In Action program increases consultation
World Health Organization (WHO) (est. 1946)	NGOs may apply for formal status with WHO, which allows them to send observers to WHO meetings and conferences
Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (est. 1945)	NGOs can apply for formal status with FAO and attend FAO executive sessions, experts meetings, technical conferences and seminars
ILO (est. 1919)	The ILO set up a Special List of NGOs in 1956 to establish relations with NGOs other than workers' organizations
UNESCO (est. 1945)	Formal accreditation and status for NGOs was set up in 1960. UNESCO conducts regular consultations with NGOs
World Food Program (WFP) (est. 1962)	NGOs attend WFP Executive Board meetings as observers. WFP conducts an annual WFP–NGO Consultation
Department of Public Information, (UN Secretariat) (est. 1946)	Formal association status with DPI available to NGOs since 1968
UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (est. 1969)	NGOs can apply for accreditation with UNFPA. In the 1990s, an NGO Advisory Committee and the NGO/Civil Society Theme Groups set up to include more NGO input
UNEP (est. 1970)	Close ties exist between UNEP, the Environmental Liaison Center (an NGO network based in Nairobi) and other NGOs
UN Nongovernmental Liaison Service (est. 1975)	A joint project set up by several UN agencies to disseminate information and foster dialogue between the UN and NGOs
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (est. 1977)	NGOs participate as observers of the IFAD Governing Council. Since 1990, IFAD has held annual consultations with NGO partners
World Bank (est. 1944)	In 1982, the NGO Consultative Committee was set up as a regular dialogue process for the World Bank and NGOs. NGOs are on numerous sectoral committees that provide advice to the Bank and input into Bank policy papers
UN Development Program (UNDP) (est. 1966)	Since the 1990s, NGOs participate in UNDP Executive Board meetings. Consultations and policy dialogues with NGOs are set up at the regional level
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN Secretariat) (est. 1991)	NGOs are core members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the central humanitarian policy-making body in the UN system
UN General Assembly (UNGA) (est. 1945)	Since the 1990s, NGOs can apply for special accreditation as an observer for UNGA special sessions that are follow-ups to international conferences and UN initiatives
Global Environmental Facility (est. 1991)	NGOs are part of GEF's system of regional "focal points" representatives. NGOs have 10 representative seats at the GEF Council and there are regular consultations with NGOs

TABLE 3. (Contd.)

<i>UN Body</i>	<i>Type of NGO Access or Participation</i>
World Trade Organization (WTO) (est. 1995)	NGOs can get observer status at plenary sessions of WTO Ministerial Conferences. There are regular briefings by WTO for NGOs and informal Secretariat-NGO dialogues
Inter-Agency Learning Group on Participation (est. 1995)	This inter-agency group was set up to “advance the mainstreaming of participatory development” at IGOs. It includes UNDP, World Bank, UNIFEM, GEF, UNICEF, bilateral donor agencies, private foundations, and NGOs
Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty (est. 1995)	This UN-NGO initiative aims to mobilize resources and networks to address rural poverty. Participating IGOs include IFAD, FAO, WFP, World Bank and European Commission
UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (est. 1996)	This was the first UN program to include NGO representatives on its governing body as full participants
Global Urban Partnerships (est. 1997)	Launched by the World Bank, this inter-agency initiative on urban development includes IGOs, national and local governments, donor agencies, business and NGOs
The Global Compact (est. 1999)	This inter-agency initiative targets human rights and includes: the Secretary-General, High Commissioner for Human Rights, ILO, UNEP, UNDP, business, labor and NGOs
Other UN bodies	Consultative status is granted to NGOs by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

*Sources:* United Nations (1998); [62]UNHCR (2000); [www.gefweb.org/participants/Focal\\_Points/NGO/ngo.html](http://www.gefweb.org/participants/Focal_Points/NGO/ngo.html); [www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/docs96/review.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/docs96/review.htm); [www.ifad.org/popularcoalition](http://www.ifad.org/popularcoalition); [www.ilo.org/public/english/comp/civil/ngo/reIngios.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/comp/civil/ngo/reIngios.htm); [www.ngosatunicef.org/committee.html](http://www.ngosatunicef.org/committee.html); [www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/subsidiary.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/subsidiary.htm); [www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/other.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/other.htm); [www.un.org/partners/civil\\_society/ngo/ngosdpi.htm](http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/ngo/ngosdpi.htm); [www.undp.org/csopp/igp.htm](http://www.undp.org/csopp/igp.htm); [www.undp.org/csopp/scpolicy.htm](http://www.undp.org/csopp/scpolicy.htm); [www.unglobalcompact.org/gc/unweb.nsf](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/gc/unweb.nsf); [www.worldbank.org/html/fpd/urban/urb\\_part/urb\\_part.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/html/fpd/urban/urb_part/urb_part.htm); [www.wto.org/english/forums\\_e/ngo\\_e/ngo\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngo_e.htm). All web sites accessed in April and May 2001.

UN Environment Program (UNEP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) — and all of these new organizations provided formal and informal mechanisms for INGO and NGO participation. (See Table 3.) To foster UN-NGO relations and provide support services to NGOs working with the UN, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service was set up as an inter-agency project in 1975.

It was in the mid-1980s and 1990s, however, that NGO access to many UN bodies improved significantly. First, NGO participation at UN organizations with which NGOs have been longer involved—e.g., ECOSOC, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, IFAD, and UNFPA—continued to expand and deepen in the 1990s. In addition to these traditionally NGO-friendly bodies, NGOs also gained greater access to older UN organizations that were previously closed to NGOs. Compared with limited contacts prior to the 1980s, institutional access for NGOs at the World Bank and UNDP improved dramatically in the 1990s. At UN headquarters, NGOs have found it easier since the 1990s to attend UN General Assembly (UNGA) meetings and work more with UNGA’s committees and subsidiary bodies (UN 1998). NGO-UN relations in various UN departments at headquarters also became more active with the revival of an Inter-Departmental Working Group on NGOs in 1995 and a directive in 1997 by the UN Secretary-General to all departments to designate an NGO liaison officer (UN 1998). By one count, there were 92 NGO liaison offices in the UN system by the early 1990s (Algers 1994).

In addition to these older UN bodies, in the 1990s numerous new UN bodies and inter-agency initiatives were created that specifically provided for NGO represen-

tation. These have included: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at the UN Secretariat, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Global Environment Facility, the UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Inter-Agency Learning Group on Participation, the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, Global Urban Partnerships, and the Global Compact (see Table 3). Although the WTO was initially closed off to NGO participation when it was established in 1995, it later adopted the following measures to include NGOs in its activities: granting NGO observer status at WTO Ministerial Conferences, setting up informal WTO–NGO dialogues, allowing access to WTO documents and circulating of NGO policy statements to WTO member states (WTO 2001). Thus, institutionally, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the “mainstreaming” of NGOs as participants in the international system has advanced considerably and structural incentives for organizing at the international level are now greater than they were in previous periods.

Finally, as other scholars have noted, starting in the 1970s an increase in the number of UN international conferences and expanding access for NGOs at these conferences have also spurred on the worldwide growth of NGOs (Willetts 1989; Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998). As they have increased in number and frequency over time, international conferences held by the UN have offered a greater number of international opportunities for activists to organize and have encouraged the formation of new NGOs. Between 1990 and 1996, for example, eight major world summits were held and attracted the participation of thousands of NGOs. NGO participation in these conferences was actively encouraged by the UN, with the UN Secretariat often providing institutional support for conference participation and the organization of NGO “parallel forums” (Willetts 1989). Rules and procedures for NGO participation have also become more expansive over time and allowed for more NGOs to participate in the conferences. Compared with the 1970s, when the UN conference secretariats only accepted applications from INGOs with ECOSOC consultative status and from groups with “genuinely international character” that had a demonstrable interest in the conference theme (Willetts 1996), by the early 1990s the rules for accreditation at UN conferences had loosened up to allow for participation of practically any NGO that applied (Van Rooy 1997). These changes have allowed for greater participation of NGOs from developing countries, whose numbers soared in the 1990s as more conferences were held in major cities in the developing world.

### **International Norms, Socialization, and Expanding State–Society Relations at the Domestic Level**

This increase in international opportunities for NGOs in the form of funding and political access has not occurred in an ideological vacuum, and the second part of a top-down explanation of NGO growth involves the normative promotion of NGOs by IGOs, donor states, and other members of the international community. The international system and its expansion over time have not only provided structural and material incentives for NGO growth, they have also supported the spread of NGOs from the West to other parts of the world by actively promoting a pro-NGO norm. In the past two decades, states in developing and transitional countries have been encouraged and pressured through socialization processes from above to include and foster NGOs. Although not always completely successful, these interactions have often reshaped the domestic political context for NGOs and aided their growth by expanding the POS at the national level. This second argument provides a constructivist and sociological institutional perspective on the growth of NGOs in non-Western states that builds on previous work on norms, but also adds a new twist by examining NGOs and state–NGO relations as the dependent variable.

In their work on world culture and norms, sociological institutionalists and constructivists have analyzed how states' behavior, interests, and identity are shaped by their social environment and international institutions (Finnemore 1996; Katzenstein 1996). At the macro-level, sociological institutionalists have documented the spread of world culture as a historical process in which countries become members of international organizations and move toward institutional isomorphism as they adopt standard features of the modern state such as bureaucracies and a variety of social, economic, and military policies (Finnemore 1996; Katzenstein 1996; Meyer et al. 1997). At a more micro-level, constructivists have studied norms and their global spread by examining socialization processes such as peer pressure and persuasion in which states, IGOs, NGOs, and other members of international society "socialize" states to adopt internationally appropriate behavior (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Johnston 2001). Whereas sociological institutionalists have examined the general diffusion of world culture on large numbers of states, these constructivist scholars have focused on the micro-processes of norm diffusion in one or more country case studies.

For both schools, NGOs are often featured in the norm explanation as an independent or intervening variable, either as carriers of world culture or agents of socialization that bring about norm change. In general, NGOs have been presented as societal actors that persuade, pressure and teach states new ideas, values, and practices. Thus far, however, few international relations scholars have analyzed the degree to which NGOs themselves have benefited from processes of norm diffusion. As the rest of this section shall argue, NGOs have in fact themselves been promoted from above through normatively charged rhetoric and policies, and the story of the growth and spread of NGOs to non-Western parts of the world in recent years is difficult to understand without considering such norm-centered explanations. As is true for other cases of norm diffusion and socialization, this promotion of NGOs through a pro-NGO norm has been a contested, political process that is on-going and by no means settled.

#### *The New Pro-NGO Norm*

Accompanying the new international opportunities for funding and access for NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s, NGOs were also championed by numerous international actors as the voice of the people and vehicles of private initiative. In this period, one can trace the emergence of a new pro-NGO norm that depicted NGOs as a crucial "partner" in development as well as an enforcer of good governance whose very existence was required as evidence that a state was democratic, accountable, and in some way open to the participation of citizens. Based on liberal democratic and neoliberal economic principles, this new ideology supporting NGOs was one that included both service and advocacy NGOs and set up a new international standard for states. According to the new pro-NGO norm, in order to be a properly functioning free market and democratic nation in the 1990s and 2000s, it was now necessary to have a flourishing "civil society" sector that included NGOs and other citizen-organized groups.

This new pro-NGO norm first emerged in the 1980s in international development circles and then became institutionalized within the UN system in the 1990s at UN global conferences and through new programs set up at various UN agencies. A new celebratory official promotion of NGOs first appeared in the early to mid-1980s among bilateral aid agencies and foundations as they began considering a new model to replace the state-led model of development that had dominated for two decades. Numerous official studies examining the role of NGOs in development concluded that NGOs offered an ideal alternative channel for aid because of their ability to reach poor communities directly, their cost-effectiveness, their more flexible, and innovative approach to problems, their ability to increase popular



participation in projects and their emphasis on self-help (Cernea 1988:17–18; OECD 1988; Brown and Korten 1991). This new view of NGOs reflected a paradigm shift away from a state-led development model—which was increasingly viewed as a failure—toward a neoliberal hybrid model that included “people participatory” development and private sector actors (DAC 1995; Stiles 1998). According to the new model, development would now be promoted from below, and NGOs would be the ideal vehicle for reaching and including the “people.”

In the 1990s with the end of the Cold War and the expansion of democracy aid, this general trend among donor agencies then became an all-embracing movement that glorified the importance of “civil society” and included not only service NGOs—which were the main focus of attention in the 1980s—but also the more politically active advocacy NGOs (Ottaway and Carothers 2000). Dubbed by some skeptics as the “New Policy Agenda” (Edwards and Hulme 1996), NGOs were now viewed as ideal institutions for the new mix of neoliberal economics and democratic theory promoted by the industrialized nations in the post Cold War world. On the one hand, as service providers that reached the poor, NGOs provided a safety net and an antidote to both state and market failure; on the other hand, as organizations with connections to local populations, NGOs were also seen as vehicles for democratization and a component of a thriving “civil society” that needed to be nurtured (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Ottaway and Carothers 2000). By the mid-1990s, in order to be a properly functioning modern state, it now became necessary to have a flourishing “civil society” sector.

On a separate but overlapping track, this new pro-NGO norm also appeared at the UN in the early 1990s, and during the course of the 1990s, it was institutionalized in diplomatic rhetoric and UN programming through numerous UN world conferences. At every major international conference held by the UN in the 1990s, NGOs were formally recognized in conference documents as important participants in normatively charged terms and were repeatedly described in UN conference documents in the 1990s as “partners” to the UN and member states that would help them both deliver the international goods promoted at the conference (e.g., sustainable development, human rights, women’s rights, etc.) as well as be advocates and the voice of the people. In both senses, NGOs were designated “partners” at UNCED (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Populations and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and Habitat II (1996) (Reimann 2001: 215–218).

Inclusion of NGOs as official UN partners in the various plans of action formulated at global UN conferences in the 1990s in turn led to further institutionalization and reinforcing of the pro-NGO norm at various UN agencies, which now had an official mandate to support and include NGOs in their programs. Following each conference, UN agencies responsible for implementing the conference action plan embraced the pro-NGO norm by publicizing their support of NGOs, creating new forms of UN–NGO collaboration, and promoting civil society participation in their programs with developing and transitional countries. This process was also reinforced by donor state activism within specific IGOs, with certain donor states contributing special IGO funds earmarked for NGOs and using their influence as donors to get the IGO to further incorporate the pro-NGO norm into its programming and operations.

Thus, by the mid-1990s, both the international donor community and IGOs came to embrace a new pro-NGO norm and began actively promoting the use, participation, and growth of NGOs worldwide. This top-down international promotion of NGOs largely targeted developing and transitional countries and involved socialization processes of persuading, pressuring and teaching these states to not only accept NGOs but also to nurture and foster their growth. The rest of this section examines two examples of such norm promotion.

*The Donor Movement for More Liberal NGO Legislation*

One major example of the promotion of the pro-NGO norm can be found in efforts by international donors and UN bodies in the late 1980s and 1990s to encourage states to foster NGOs at the national level through adoption of more liberal legal and fiscal regulations. By the 1990s, donors were finding that one common problem facing NGOs in many developing and transitional countries was the legal and fiscal climate for nonprofits. Difficulty to incorporate as a nonprofit, lack of tax breaks and other fiscal incentives, and tight restrictions on political activities all seemed to work against the emergence of the vibrant “civil society” promoted by the international community. In response, a movement for liberalizing laws regulating the nonprofit sector emerged in the 1990s. This movement is a good example of norm promotion as it is a clear case of donors states and IGOs attempting to “teach” states legal models from the West in order to make them more democratic and in line with international values.

These efforts first started at a more informal level and behind-the-scenes manner in the mid- to late-1980s at the World Bank and other donor organizations. In the late 1980s, for example, World Bank officials urged several Asian countries during program consultations to reduce regulations hampering the growth of NGOs (Beckman 1991) and, in one case, made the creation of legal structures for grass-roots organizations a precondition for receiving financing (Cernea 1988: 39–40). It was in the 1990s, however, that a larger and more organized international movement for liberal NGO legislation picked up greater momentum and spread worldwide. During the 1990s, the World Bank took a more visibly proactive stance and started to present itself as a consultant to developing countries on NGO legislation. Ensuring an “enabling” environment for NGOs and civil society, the Bank argued, was part of its mandate for working with NGOs (World Bank 2001b).

In 1992, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) was established in Washington, DC as a nonprofit organization dedicated to “facilitate and support the development of civil society and freedom of association on a global basis” (ICNL 2002). Funded by and working closely with bilateral and multilateral agencies, ICNL has given advice to countless governments regarding NGO legislation and has provided the legal expertise for Western donor efforts at promoting legal reform. In 1997, in collaboration with the World Bank, ICNL produced a *Handbook on Good Practices for Laws Relating to Non-Governmental Organizations*, which was distributed widely and promoted through a series of World Bank conferences focusing on legal change in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Throughout the decade, the Ford Foundation and several other major private foundations from North America, Europe, and Japan have devoted a portion of their resources toward nonprofit development and legal reform and have been active in the global diffusion of the debate on NGO legislation through conferences, studies and publications. Since the mid-1990s, the UNHCR and the Council of Europe have worked together to promote legal reform for NGOs in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (UNHCR 2000:201–202). In addition to these organizations, other official promoters of this movement have included the regional development banks, USAID and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

By the late 1990s, thus, a donor-led global movement for the adoption of more liberal NGO legislation was in full swing. From the early 1990s to the present, the list of countries that ICNL and international funders have advised includes 14 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 12 countries in the Asia Pacific region, 9 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, 10 countries in the newly independent states, and 7 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (ICNL 2002).

*Inclusion of INGOs and NGOs in Multilateral Aid Consultation and Policy Processes*

In addition to promoting the adoption of more favorable legal and fiscal structures for NGOs, international actors also started to promote pro-NGOs norms by using their donor position to persuade developing countries to increase channels of access for NGOs in the political and policy-making process. In the 1980s, this was done in a behind-the-scenes, informal manner by the World Bank and other UN agencies such as IFAD during their dialogues with governments when they would suggest NGO inclusion in IGO-funded projects and in the development planning process in general (Uvin 1996:165). In the 1990s, such efforts became the formal policy of many bilateral aid agencies and IGOs as part of the goal of promoting “people participatory” forms of development, governance, and conflict resolution. Since the new pro-NGO conventional wisdom of the 1990s was that few solutions to global problems would succeed without the input and participation of “civil society,” the international donor community and IGOs began actively advocating the inclusion of NGOs in policy-making processes at the national, local, and regional levels. The process was one of socialization in which international actors sought to “teach” developing and transition countries to become more participatory by engaging with their societies and opening up political space for greater influence of NGOs.

In the early to mid-1990s, for example, the incorporation by UN agencies of a “people participatory” approach to conflict resolution in Central America led to the greater inclusion of NGOs in the policy-making process at various levels of politics and to the subsequent growth of NGOs. UN peacebuilding and postwar reconstruction programs in the region, such as the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) and the Development Program for Refugees, Displaced and Repatriated Persons in Central America (PRODERE), are examples of top-down IGO programs that have “taught” states to accept NGOs as partners and critics. Both programs grew out of UN efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s to reconstruct conflict-torn societies after an initial phase of cease-fires, elections, and human rights monitoring. CIREFCA was a UN-led forum “process” in which governments of seven Central American states discussed in consultation with NGOs the reconstruction and development programs they would be presenting for funding to international donors. Since CIREFCA’s decision-making process explicitly mandated NGO participation, it led to greater support by states in the region of more community-level projects, higher levels of communication between governments and NGOs, and NGO regional networking (UNHCR 2000).

PRODERE was a development program with national programs for reconciliation and reconstruction in six Central American countries that ran from 1990 to 1995. For each national program, PRODERE promoted NGO participation by encouraging the establishment of local economic development agencies (LEDA). Comprised of both government and NGO representatives that would set economic development strategies for the program, LEDA provided a new mechanism for consensus-building, reconciliation and new forms of citizen participation that helped bring about more cooperative state–society relations (Lazarte, Hofmeijer, and Zwanenburg no date). PRODERE also set up Local Health Systems and Human Rights Systems, which included representation of NGOs and local groups, leading to the inclusion by the state of members of society it had historically shut out. These new bodies also helped legitimize the NGOs and other local groups involved and led to new understandings of the development process among state actors (Sollis 1996:198–199). In addition to providing NGOs access to the policy-making process, PRODERE also promoted a better regulatory environment for NGOs and was key in helping NGOs obtain legal papers that eventually led to the legal incorporation of 815 civil society organizations (Sollis 1996: 199; UNDP 2000:23).

### Conclusions: The Symbiotic Nature of NGO and IO Growth

In contrast to “bottom-up” accounts of NGO emergence found in the literature, this article has presented a top-down structural and normative argument that develops and empirically fleshes out theoretical insights found in recent work by sociological institutionalists, constructivists, and social movement scholars. In the past several decades an increase in funding opportunities, new avenues for political access, and the normative promotion of NGOs by donor states and IGOs have created a political and material environment ripe for NGO formation and growth. Given the billions of dollars of international funding now available to NGOs in all corners of the globe, it would have been more surprising if there had been *no* explosive growth of NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s. To fully understand the dynamics of the story presented here, however, it would be necessary to explore further the larger context of political globalization and its relationship to societal activism. Although this paper has focused on the top-down aspects of political globalization, the growth of NGOs and their relation to the expansion of IGOs in the past half-century present complex causal relationships that defy simple characterizations.

The remainder of this article, thus, moves beyond a top-down approach to suggest a more multi-directional one emphasizing the symbiotic relationship among states, IGOs and NGOs. To begin with, the creation of new opportunities for NGOs discussed in this article has itself been a multi-directional process involving both activism from “above” by states and IGO officials eager to promote NGOs, as well as activism from “below” by NGOs lobbying for funding and political access. The creation of opportunities for NGOs, in other words, has been a two-way process, with states and IGO officials taking the lead in some cases and NGOs in others.

Secondly, and more importantly, the emergence of these new opportunities for NGOs is probably not best understood as a process solely driven either by the state from above *or* by society from below, but rather as part of the ongoing process of political globalization which has involved a *symbiotic* relationship of mutual growth and interdependence among states, IGOs and NGOs. The simultaneous growth of IGOs and NGOs over time has been an interactive and mutually reinforcing process: the creation of new international institutions (in some cases in response to NGO actions) has led to the creation of new international opportunities for NGO formation and growth, which in turn has led to new and more complex systems of international governance. One of the reasons that states and IGOs have increasingly promoted NGOs is that they themselves have benefited from the advocacy and services of NGOs as the world has moved toward greater international regulation of global problems.

This symbiotic relationship is based on both mutual goals shared by NGOs, states and IGOs, as well as functional compatibilities arising from demands associated with the growth of international institutions of governance. In terms of common goals, NGOs, leading states, and IGOs often broadly share the same general goal of promoting new forms of transnational governance to solve global problems. This common goal has led them to frequently work with one another to create and maintain international institutions and interventionist foreign policies meant to aid nations suffering from a wide variety of social, economic, and political problems.

In addition to common goals, these symbiotic relationships are also based on institutional and functional interdependencies. As this article has shown, NGOs rely on states and IGOs for both material resources and political access without which few organizations could achieve their goals or survive for very long. Whether they like it or not, NGOs are often dependent on the support and cooperation of states, IGOs and other elite actors. States and IGOs, on the other hand, have also become increasingly reliant on NGOs to achieve their goals. Following a functional logic similar to neoliberal institutional theories on international cooperation, NGOs

offer one attractive solution for solving problems of cooperation, especially as the number of international regimes has grown and problems themselves have become more complex.

Exactly how have states and IGOs depended on NGOs for solving global problems? Here the literature on NGOs provides a wealth of answers through its highlighting of the various roles and strategies of NGOs: service provision, agenda setting, information gathering and analysis, monitoring of agreements, lobbying and pressuring states to reach and ratify agreements, and the mobilization of public opinion and media attention (Gordenker and Weiss 1996; Raustiala 1997). All of these functions performed by NGOs have been system-supporting ones that have often served states and IGOs well. This has been particularly true as there is little support among states for a very strong "world government" or centralized international state with big budgets, staff and extensive field operations and capabilities. Lacking a strong infrastructure for international governance, both states and IGOs have increasingly had to rely on NGOs to fill in institutional gaps and help them achieve their stated goals.

Just a few examples make these functional compatibilities quite clear. In the area of international development and humanitarian crises, service NGOs have become the contractor of choice for both donor states and IGOs as previous development models and developing states themselves have been judged as failures. Wary of giving too much to governments in the developing world, unwilling to greatly expand the UN's operational capacity, and not always willing to expand their own bureaucratic and operational infrastructure, donor states have turned to service NGOs as a solution for implementing aid and providing relief in humanitarian crises.

Advocacy NGOs, on the other hand, have been crucial players in the creation and maintenance of international regimes and have helped states overcome coordination and information problems inherent in achieving international cooperation. In the regime formation stage, NGOs have often helped states set up new international institutions by providing new "focal points" for cooperation through their agenda-setting activities, by helping states solve information problems through policy and technical expertise, and by bringing about conditions favorable to international cooperation through the mobilization of public support and the lobbying of key states needed to reach a viable agreement. Once new regimes are set up, advocacy NGOs have become indispensable to their implementation and maintenance because in practice most international agreements rely on self-reporting by states and the UN machinery for monitoring and implementation is understaffed, underfunded, and often unable to complete its mandated work on its own. As monitors and suppliers of information on compliance, NGOs fill in an important functional gap in regime maintenance that states and IGOs are either unwilling or unable to perform themselves.

For all of these reasons, the evolution of international institutions of global governance and the foreign policies of rich nations has involved a general movement over time toward greater levels of IGO-NGO and state-NGO cooperation. In this larger and evolving context, the story of the emergence, growth and worldwide spread of NGOs is a complicated one that has included bottom-up and top-down factors as well as agency and structure. Despite the symbiotic nature of state-IGO-NGO relations, however, this article has deliberately emphasized a top-down perspective for two reasons. First, although NGOs have undeniably had a hand in constructing new international opportunities, ultimately it is the decisions of states and politics among states that determine which opportunities are opened and which remain closed. NGOs are just one of several non-state actors vying for influence and resources, and they are not always successful in their goals. Second, because an important part of the story of NGO growth is the story of the spread of NGOs to non-Western parts of the world, a top-down explanation is more reflective of the international political dimensions behind the global promotion of NGOs. For

the most part, the most enthusiastic promoters of NGOs have been Western donor states and IGO officials committed to universal values promoted by the West. Non-western states, in contrast, have tended to be far more skeptical of NGOs and have often viewed the rise of NGOs in their own nations as a phenomenon promoted from “above” them by wealthy, democratic countries and IGOs. From a larger global political perspective, thus, a top-down explanation for the emergence and growth of NGOs is the most accurate.

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