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WORKING PAPERS ON
TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS

THE RISE AND FALL OF TRANSNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY: THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SINCE 1839

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Working Paper CUTP/003

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This is a work in progress. Feedback welcome.

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Introduction

Three years before the outbreak of the First World War, a prominent American academic and diplomat, Paul S. Reinsch, claimed that 'the barren ideal of no war, no patriotism, no local interest, has given way to a potent centripetal force…cosmopolitanism is no longer a castle in the air, but it has become incorporated in numerous associations and unions world-wide in their co-operation.'[1] Similarly, in the post-Cold War era it has been claimed that transnational (or global) civil society may provide 'an answer to war'.[2] Much of the evidence provided in this paper suggests that there are reasons to be as cautious about such claims today as a century ago.

This paper is an early step in an endeavour to explore the history of transnational civil society. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it will suggest that transnational civil society may not have developed following a course of linear progress. Instead, the paper will offer an outline history that suggests that transnational civil society rises and falls in waves.

The paper begins with an introduction to what is meant by transnational civil society and a discussion of the possible ways of tracing its historical evolution. It then provides an assessment of the principal factors that have affected the development of transnational civil society. Thirdly, the paper offers an outline history of transnational civil society highlighting the different ways in which it has arguably 'risen' and 'fallen' over time. The paper concludes with a brief assessment of arguments surrounding the future trajectory of transnational civil society.

1. Defining and measuring 'transnational civil society'

It is only recently – in the period since the end of the Cold War – that the term 'transnational civil society' and the bolder term 'global civil society' have entered popular usage in academic literature on international politics. As Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor have argued, the meaning of these

[1] Paul S. Reinsch, *Public International Unions: Their Work and Organization: A Study In International Administrative Law* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1911), pp. 2, 4.
[2] Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

terms is 'subject to widely differing interpretations.'[3] Nevertheless, most definitions refer to 'uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values'[4] that is non-governmental and not for profit.[5] Whereas '*global* civil society' involves activities that 'straddle the whole earth, and…have complex effects that are felt in its four corners,'[6] the less ambitious concept of '*transnational* civil society' (which is the focus of this paper) refers to non-governmental non-profit collective action that *transcends national boundaries* but does not necessarily have global reach. The key actors in transnational civil society are international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), i.e. international organizations that are neither profit-making nor instruments of government,[7] as well as internationally-orientated national non-governmental organizations. A distinction is often made between international non-governmental organizations that exist simply to provide services to their members and issue-oriented international non-governmental organizations, which are the principal focus in studies of transnational civil society and therefore this paper too.

In order to gain an understanding of how transnational civil society has evolved, it is necessary to think about how the phenomenon can be measured. The task of measuring transnational civil society is as problematic as the issue of definition, since the variety of factors that potentially need to be taken into account is considerable. Much of the existing literature on transnational civil society has focused on one major unit of assessment: the number of (issue-oriented) international non-governmental organizations that exist.[8] This unit of

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[3] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 'Introducing Global Civil Society,' in Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3.

[4] London School of Economics and Political Science Centre for Civil Society, 'What is Civil Society?,' http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm (last accessed on 15 December 2006).

[5] Jan Aart Scholte, *Global Civil Society: Changing the World?* (Coventry: Centre for the Study of Globalization and Regionalization (CSGR), University of Warwick, 1999), pp. 2-3.

[6] John Keane, *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8.

[7] Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-National Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997). The original definition of an international non-governmental organization adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations was much broader: 'any international organization which is not established by intergovernmental agreement.'

[8] See, for example, Kathryn Sikkink and Jackie Smith, 'Infrastructures for Change: Transnational Organizations, 1953-93,' in Sanjeev Khagram, James Riker and Kathryn Sikkink (eds.), *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 24-44.

assessment appears to support the proposition that transnational civil society has been following a path of linear progress. According to one source, whereas up to 1854 only six INGOs had been founded, by the turn of the century this figure had reached 163, and by 1945 over a thousand INGOs had been established.[9] By 2007 it was claimed that there were over 60,000 INGOs in the world.[10]

Beyond pointing out the increasing number of international non-governmental organizations that have been founded, those who claim that transnational civil society has been following a path of linear progress also highlight its apparent contribution towards significant recent international developments. For instance, transnational civil society is said to have played an important role in bringing the Cold War to an end, has contributed towards the redefinition of development and security to include humanitarian concerns, and has helped facilitate international agreements such as the 1987 Montreal Protocol and the 1997 Ottawa Landmines Convention.

Although INGO numbers and the apparent impact of transnational civil society are the two principal means of gauging transnational civil society cited in the existing literature, both measures may be misleading. For instance, an expansion in the number of international non-governmental organizations may represent fragmentation of transnational civil society into smaller INGOs rather than growth. As for the apparent impact of transnational civil society on recent developments, the relative contribution to these developments of transnational civil society compared with other factors is very difficult to ascertain. Furthermore, transnational civil society's influence on major developments in world politics is far from new: for instance transnational non-governmental activism contributed to the abolition of the slave trade in the nineteenth century and to the foundation of the League of Nations and the United Nations Organization in the first half of the twentieth century.

An examination of alternative methods of evaluating the evolution of transnational civil society reveals that the development of this phenomenon may be more complex than has traditionally been portrayed. One alternative method

[9] G. P. Speeckaert, *Les 1978 Organisations Internationales Fondées depuis le Congrès de Vienne* (Brussels: Union of International Associations, 1957), viii.
[10] Source: Union of International Associations.

of evaluating the development of transnational civil society is to assess the number of INGO foundations and dissolutions per annum. As John Boli and George Thomas have noted, although the total number of INGOs has increased overall since the nineteenth century, the number of INGOs founded each year dropped considerably at the time of the First World War, and after recovering in the 1920s dropped again at the time of the Great Depression and Second World War. In the case of the number of INGO dissolutions per annum, there were sharp increases during the two World Wars and the Great Depression.[11]

Further methods of evaluating the development of transnational civil society reveal a still more complex evolutionary path. A much-neglected but important consideration is the extent of popular participation in transnational civil society. There are many different ways that popular participation in transnational civil society may be assessed. One option is to examine the proportion of the world's population represented in global campaigns, for instance through membership of an organization in a campaigning coalition or through signing a transnational petition. In the case of both of these measures, participation in the main transnational civil society campaigns in the present era is arguably less substantial than in campaigns that took place more than seventy years ago.[12] The argument that transnational civil society has been following a path of linear progress must therefore be called into question.

2. Explaining the evolution of transnational civil society

The third section of this paper will provide a narrative of how transnational civil society has arguably risen and fallen in waves since the mid-nineteenth century. This section of the paper will briefly introduce some of the main factors that help to explain why transnational civil society may have evolved in this way. These factors can be split into five categories: technological; economic; social; external political; and internal political. As will become apparent from the next section of

[11] John Boli and George Thomas, *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations Since 1875* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 23-4.
[12] For a comparison of the scale of participation in contemporary campaigns with those that took place between the two World Wars, see section 3 of this paper and Thomas Richard Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament between the Two World Wars* (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007), 159-60.

this paper, many of the factors that have in some ways contributed towards the expansion of transnational civil society have in other ways contributed also towards its decline.

Technological developments are amongst the most commonly cited reasons for the alleged expansion of transnational civil society in the post-Cold War era: cheap air travel and telecommunications, mobile telephones, and the internet are all said to be making the post-Cold War world a smaller place. Similarly the emergence of transnational civil society in the mid-nineteenth century was facilitated by innovations such as the steamship and electrical telegraphy.

The global economy is another factor influencing the development of transnational civil society: periods of economic globalization such as the late nineteenth century and the present era appear to correlate with periods of an expanding transnational civil society. Conversely, periods of global economic decline, such as the Great Depression, coincide with a downturn in transnational civil society activities. As for social factors, demographic changes such as urbanization, and psychological changes such as the development of 'global consciousness,' are said to facilitate the growth of transnational civil society.

The political influences on the evolution of transnational civil society may be divided into external and internal factors. External political factors such as democratization, interstate peace, the emergence of transnational political issues, the growth of intergovernmental organizations, and the development of international law and norms have arguably facilitated the expansion of transnational civil society. Other external political factors such as nationalism, on the other hand, have arguably had the reverse effect.

Amongst the most interesting of the factors influencing the development of transnational civil society are the characteristics of transnational civil society itself. The degree of unity and co-ordination of civic associations, the nature of their objectives, and the consequences of their actions can all contribute in different ways both towards the expansion of and towards the decline of transnational civil society. The contribution of these 'internal political' factors to the development of transnational civil society will be central to the examination of the phenomenon's evolution in the next section of this paper.

3. The evolution of transnational civil society

Although transnational civil society arguably has a very long history,[13] this suggested outline of its development will begin in the nineteenth century, when the first international non-governmental organizations of the modern era were founded. The first such organization is said to be Anti-Slavery International, established in 1839, and one of the most significant early transnational civic campaigns is the transnational network that, according to Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'succeeded first in helping create abolition as a pressing political issue in the United States, and then, when the issue ultimately contributed to war, became a critical factor in preventing British recognition of the South.'[14]

By the turn of the century, transnational civil society had expanded beyond the anti-slavery movement to include temperance (the International Order of Good Templars was founded in 1852), labour rights (the International Workingmen's Association was established in 1864), peace (the International Peace Bureau was created in 1891), and women's suffrage (the International Alliance of Women was formed in 1902). A peak of activity was arguably reached at the time of the Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907, at which the technique of lobbying intergovernmental conferences was pioneered.

As the previous section of this paper outlined, a variety of technological, economic and social developments in the nineteenth century facilitated the emergence of transnational civil society in this period. Together, these factors contributed towards what Akira Iriye has described as a nascent 'global consciousness.'[15]As Paul Reinsch argued in 1911:

> The most important fact of which we have become conscious in our generation is that the unity of the world is real. The most remote regions are being made accessible. The great economic and financial system by

[13] Transnational religious organizations such as the Quakers, for instance, pre-date the analysis in this paper.
[14] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 45, 51.
[15] Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 9.

> which the resources of the Earth are being developed is centralized. The psychological unity of the world is being prepared by the service of news and printed discussions, by which in the space of one day or week the same events are reported to all the readers from Buenos Aires to Tokyo, from Cape Town to San Francisco. The same political dramas evoke our interest, the same catastrophes compel our sympathy, the same scientific achievements make us rejoice, the same great public figures people our imagination. That such a unity of thought and feeling is drawing after it a unity of action is plainly apparent. Our destiny is a common one.[16]

At the same time, the emergence of intergovernmental organizations and the increasing number of intergovernmental conferences provided greater political opportunities for transnational civic action. National-level developments also facilitated transnational associational activity: for example the consolidation of the nation-state in Europe provided the infrastructure for the development of national branches of transnational civic organizations.

However, to portray the development of transnational civil society in the nineteenth century as following a path of continuous progress would be misleading. For instance, there were peaks of such activity at the time of the anti-slavery campaign and at the Hague conferences. More significantly, by the end of this period, transnational civic activity was greatly disrupted by the onset of the First World War. INGO foundations and the volume of transnational non-governmental meetings diminished considerably after 1913, while INGO dissolutions rose sharply. Some of the factors that had previously worked to facilitate transnational civil society acted on this occasion in the opposite direction. The rise of the nation-state, for instance, had not only provided the context within which domestic civil society could flourish: it also provided a locus for the nationalistic forces that contributed towards the First World War. More interestingly, transnational civil society itself arguably contributed towards its own demise at this time. For instance, Michael Howard in his classic work on *War and the Liberal Conscience* states:

[16] Reinsch, *Public International Unions*, 3.

> hypnotised by the apparent transformation of warmongering capitalists into a strong force for peace, liberals and socialists in 1914 underestimated the true dangers: those arising from forces inherent in the states-system of the balance of power which they had for so long denounced, and those new forces of militant nationalism which they themselves had done so much to encourage. It was these which combined to destroy the transnational community they had laboured to create…[17]

Following the First World War, transnational civil society recovered and expanded at an unprecedented pace. The number of international non-governmental organizations founded in the 1920s was twice the number founded in the entire nineteenth century. The breadth of transnational civil society expanded, too: for example, a new international organization explicitly devoted to human rights was founded in 1922: the International League for the Rights of Man; and new humanitarian assistance organizations were created, such as the Save the Children International Union, established in 1920. Many INGOs acquired considerable mass memberships in this period: for instance, two of the principal new INGOs founded after World War I, the Interallied Federation of Ex-Servicemen and the International Federation of Trade Unions, had memberships of eight million and twenty million respectively. At the beginning of this period there is also considerable evidence for the impact of transnational civil society campaigns on major political developments such as women's suffrage and the establishment of the League of Nations.

The scale of transnational mobilization that became achievable after the First World War is particularly well illustrated by the campaign for disarmament that took place in the 1920s and early 1930s. This campaign mobilized a uniquely broad spectrum of civil society groups (from Rotary International to the Communist International!), including the world's principal labour, humanitarian, religious, students,' women's and peace organizations of the period. The campaign peaked during the World Disarmament Conference convened by the League of Nations in 1932-3, at which INGOs with a combined membership

[17] Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 72.

estimated to have been between two hundred million and a billion people lobbied delegates for a general disarmament convention. The scale of the activities that these organizations undertook is illustrated by the disarmament petition circulated by women's international organizations from 1930 to 1932, which remains the world's largest international petition in terms of the proportion of the world's population that signed it.[18]

Transnational activism on this scale was facilitated by many of the types of factors cited in the previous section of this paper. The factors include post-war economic recovery, technological developments such as the first commercial transatlantic telephone calls, and the establishment of the League of Nations, which assisted INGOs by publishing data on their activities, sending representatives to observe INGO gatherings, giving INGOs the opportunity to participate in League of Nations meetings and conferences, and printing INGO petitions in its official publications.[19] The role of the First World War was especially notable: although it had contributed towards the collapse of many of the most significant elements of pre-war transnational civil society, its brutal consequences provided a need for the creation of new humanitarian and ex-servicemen's organizations, while the wish for prevention of recurrence of such a conflict revitalized the peace movement.

From 1933 onwards, however, transnational civil society again began to decline. The Great Depression was responsible for a dramatic reduction in INGO revenues, and many organizations had to cut back on their conferences, publications and other activities. Although the rise of far right regimes in some countries provided a strong reason for anti-fascist campaigners elsewhere to increase their activities, in countries such as Germany, Japan, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal many social change INGOs were forced to close their branches. INGO membership consequently declined, and by the second half of the 1930s the rate of INGO foundations was about half that of the late 1920s, a rate that halved again with the onset of the Second World War. With the spectacular failure of large-scale transnational activism at the World

[18] For further information on this campaign, see Davies, *Possibilities of Transnational Activism*.
[19] Steve Charnovitz, 'Two Centuries of Participation: NGOs and International Governance,' *Michigan Journal of International Law*, 18:2 (1997), 220-37.

Disarmament Conference (which collapsed in 1933), INGO influence in world political affairs was also diminished.

Central to explaining this decline are three significant developments: the Great Depression, the rise of fascist governments, and the onset of the Second World War. Factors that had previously contributed towards the rise of transnational civil society were important in precipitating these developments. For instance, the League of Nations, in its attempt to implement collective security in respect of Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, disrupted efforts effectively to balance the growing power of Nazi Germany: a key moment in what Michael Howard has called the 'melancholy story of the efforts of good men to abolish war but only succeeding to make it more terrible.'[20]

As with the decline of transnational civil society at the onset of the First World War, the role of transnational civil society itself in contributing towards its own demise in the 1930s is highly significant. The transnational disarmament campaign described above, for instance, may not have succeeded in its objective of a convention for general and comprehensive disarmament, but - as Winston Churchill argued - disarmament activism in the liberal countries made them 'an easy prey' in the run-up to the Second World War.[21]

There is considerable evidence to support the argument that transnational civil society has recovered impressively since the end of World War Two. According to Kathryn Sikkink and Jackie Smith, the number of INGOs promoting social change goals sextupled between 1953 and 1993.[22] At the same time, the geographical spread of transnational civil society has expanded, with a doubling in the proportion of INGO headquarters located outside Europe. The breadth of INGO activities has also increased, with the emergence of the transnational environmentalist movement from the late 1960s and the rapid growth of the development aid sector from the 1980s onwards. As for the impact of transnational civil society, the Cold War era witnessed the success of the European federalist movement, and transnational social movements played

[20] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, 130.
[21] For the argument that disarmament activism contributed to slowness in anti-fascist rearmament, see Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 5 (London: Heinemann, 1976), 696.
[22] Sikkink and Smith, 'Infrastructures for Change,' 30.

a role in bringing the Cold War to an end.[23] Successful transnational campaigns in the post-Cold War era include those for the banning of landmines, for developing countries' debt reduction (Jubilee 2000), and against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

The many factors that help to explain this recovery of transnational civil society since 1945 include technological developments such as jet aeroplane travel, cheap global telecommunications, and the internet. Economic developments have also been important, such as globalization and the increasing number of transnational corporations, which have provided new targets for transnational activism. As for political developments, one of the most significant is the foundation of the United Nations, which – like the League of Nations – was to work closely with INGOs and granted many of them 'consultative status.' Another influential political development is decolonization, which facilitated the growth of domestic civil society in formerly suppressed parts of the world and which brought to the fore 'Third World issues' such as economic development. Further important issues that have emerged in the post-war era include climate change, HIV and increasing migration flows, which governments are unable to tackle on their own and which transnational non-governmental organizations have made a focus of their activities. The spread of democratic institutions in the post-war era has also been important, and even the Cold War arguably helped transnational civil society by contributing towards the 'long peace' after 1945 and by creating global challenges such as the threat of nuclear annihilation. Conversely, the end of Cold War is said to have been the critical event in facilitating the accelerated growth of transnational civil society in the last two decades.[24]

However, it should be noted that - just as in the period leading up to the First World War - transnational civil society activities in the post-Second World War era have arguably developed in waves, with periods of particularly concentrated activity such as in the years 1945, 1968 and 1989.[25]

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[23] Disarmament campaigners arguably helped bring the Cold War to an end from above, while anti-Communist movements in central and eastern Europe arguably helped bring the Cold War to an end from below.

[24] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society*, 114.

[25] On these peak periods, see Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kelly (eds.), *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

More importantly, and contrary to conventional opinion, it can be argued that in some respects transnational civil society has failed fully to recover from the mid-century shocks of the Great Depression, Second World War and Cold War. For instance, popular participation in post-Cold War campaigns such as Jubilee 2000 and the Global Call to Action against Poverty has actually arguably been less substantial as a proportion of the world's population than was participation in the campaign for disarmament of the 1920s and 1930s.[26] In addition, transnational civil society today suffers from splits that were absent prior to the Cold War, such as the division of the international trade union movement between the International Trade Union Confederation and the World Federation of Trade Unions.

4. The future trajectory of transnational civil society

It has become commonplace in the contemporary literature on transnational civil society to assume that the apparent growth of the phenomenon in the present era will continue. Transnational communications are faster and cheaper than they have ever been before; the process of economic globalization has continued apace; and transnational problems requiring global solutions such as climate change have become increasingly apparent. All of these factors seem to suggest that there will be a greater role for transnational civil society in the future than at present.

However, there are also many reasons not to be so optimistic. For instance, many of the factors that have arguably contributed towards transnational civil society's post-World War Two revival may also have the reverse effect. For example, decolonization has not only provided the opportunity for transnational civil society to spread all over the world, in so doing it has also stimulated the creation of transnational associational organizations at a purely regional level and enabled the perception of a North-South divide. Another development – the growth of national civil society in parts of the world where it was previously insignificant – not only provides the building blocks for

[26] See Davies, *Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, part five.

transnational associational activity in these places, it may also contribute towards nationalism, just as it had in Europe in the nineteenth century.

Nationalism in some countries today may be far more powerful than transnational civil society: for instance, whereas the global efforts of the Jubilee 2000 coalition succeeded in acquiring just 24 million signatures to its anti-debt petition, the names of 44 million people were obtained for a Chinese petition opposing Japan's membership of the Security Council in 2005. It is possible to argue that a similar situation may exist today to the situation in the 1930s, when nationalism in Germany and Japan and the isolation of these countries from transnational civil society undermined that phenomenon. Today, nationalism in China and Islamic fundamentalism in much of the Arab world is combined with a relatively low level of liberal internationalist civic activity in both of these places, and this may pose a considerable challenge to contemporary transnational civil society.

Another factor that has contributed towards the apparent growth of transnational civil society but which may also have the reverse effect is globalization. As Geir Lundestad has argued, globalization and fragmentation 'exist in a dialectical relationship with each other…when globalization is strengthened, so is fragmentation.'[27] Thus, arguably, the growth of transnational communications technology and transport has, by bringing different peoples into closer contact with one another, made them also more aware of their differences. And economic globalization – with its negative consequences for those unable effectively to compete in the world economy – has provoked nationalistic reactions that have considerable potential to undermine transnational civil society.

More interestingly, transnational civil society itself may, as it has done before, contribute towards its own demise. For example, transnational civil society may contribute towards the fragmentary trends noted in the last two paragraphs: the growth of xenophobic and fundamentalist groups is arguably partly a defensive reaction to a perceived threat to local cultures posed by the apparently 'Western' ideals promoted by many of the predominant liberal elements of contemporary transnational civil society. INGOs that focus on the

[27] Geir Lundestad, 'Why does Globalization Encourage Fragmentation?,' *International Politics*, 41 (2004), 1.

civic and political rights of individuals, which arguably conflict with possibly more communitarian so-called 'Asian values,' may be especially likely to provoke such a reaction.

This ideational clash is exacerbated by a number of further problematic features of contemporary transnational civil society, such as the tendency for INGOs to be 'unelected and accountable only to their funders,' who are located primarily in the rich nations.[28] This problem is particularly significant in the case of humanitarian assistance organizations, where there is a very clear social divide between those on whom the organizations depend for funding and those whom the organizations claim to serve. International non-governmental organizations concerned with aid distribution have also been susceptible to accusations of being more expensive and less effective than local actors in performing the same tasks.

A further way in which transnational civil society can contribute towards its own demise is poor policy. For instance, even though one of the key factors enabling transnational civil society to reach its current position has been the process of economic globalization, numerous transnational campaigns have been undertaken by transnational civic coalitions to undermine this process despite the knock-on effect for the campaigners.

Elements of transnational civil society may also make claims to be able to achieve unattainably ambitious objectives, such as the World Social Forum's claim that 'Another World is Possible.' Claims such as this have the potential to raise to an excessive degree expectations as to what transnational civil society has the capacity to achieve, and even thereby to reverse the development of transnational civil society. The evidence of the last century indicates that transcendence of capitalism and of the state system is an unattainable ideal, as anti-capitalist idealists found after the 1917 revolution in Russia and as pacificist and pacifist idealists found in the periods preceding the two World Wars. In each of these cases, there is a strong case for arguing that the already unpleasant externalities of the normal functioning of the capitalist world economy and of the state system were made worse by the attempts of elements

[28] Sandra Halperin and Gordon Laxer, *Global Civil Society and its Limits* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 10, citing James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, 2001).

of transnational civil society to transcend them, and this worsening in turn set back transnational civil society.

In conclusion, transnational civil society has not followed a course of linear progress as much of the existing literature assumes. Instead, this paper has provided evidence to support the argument that it has risen and fallen in waves over the course of the last two centuries. The rise and fall of transnational civil society may even be a cyclical process: the factors that promote its rise are often the same as those that promote its decline, and transnational civil society itself has in the past and could in the future contribute towards its own demise.

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