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052184570X - The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism

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The Marketing of Rebellion

How do a few political movements challenging Third World states become global causes célèbres, whereas most remain isolated and obscure? *The Marketing of Rebellion* rejects the common view that needy groups readily gain help from selfless nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Even in the Internet age, insurgents face a Darwinian struggle for scarce international resources – and, to succeed, they must aggressively market themselves. To make this argument, Clifford Bob systematically compares two recent movements that attracted major NGO support, Mexico’s Zapatista rebels and Nigeria’s Ogoni ethnic group, against similar movements that failed to do so. Based on primary document analysis and more than 45 interviews with local activists and NGO leaders, the author shows that support goes to the savviest, not the neediest. *The Marketing of Rebellion* develops a realistic, organizational perspective on social movements, NGOs, and “global civil society.” It will change how the weak solicit help, the powerful pick clients, and all of us think about contemporary world politics.

Clifford Bob is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Graduate School of Social and Public Policy at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He specializes in transnational politics, social movements, human rights, and ethnic conflict. His published work includes articles in *Foreign Policy*, *Social Problems*, *International Politics*, *American Journal of International Law*, *Journal of Human Rights*, and *PS: Political Science & Politics*.

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INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

CLIFFORD BOB

Duquesne University



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Acknowledgments

My debts in this project are great. First, I thank the many activists I interviewed from various movements and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They gave me extraordinary access to their viewpoints and files even as most accepted my offer to maintain their anonymity in this book. If I have achieved my goal of writing a realistic explanatory account of transnational networking, this is in large measure due to the openness of my sources. If my view is more skeptical of movements and NGOs than most existing scholarship, this is a tribute to their highly strategic approaches. I believe that transnational movements and NGOs offer valuable counterpoints to a global politics dominated by state and corporate interests. Yet to help these alternative actors reach their promise, one must take an unsentimental view of their operations. It is not enough to extol them as “moral” forces while refusing to scrutinize their interactions with each other and the public. I seek to offer a critical yet constructive perspective that not only illuminates these important interactions for scholars but also helps the local movements seeking aid and the NGOs distributing it.

Friends and mentors contributed much to this project. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where the book started as a doctoral thesis, I thank the late Myron Weiner for his enthusiasm and broad learning, Stephen Van Evera for his generative skepticism and championship of clear writing, and, most important, Daniel Kryder for his encouragement, strategic advice about theses, books, and jobs, and knowledge of the social movements literature. All of them read early versions of the manuscript and gave me detailed comments. Friends and faculty members also provided generous feedback and encouragement when the book was in its earliest stages. I thank Karen Alter, Eva Bellin, Amy Gurowitz, Brian Hanson, Richard Joseph, Daniel Lindley, Richard Samuels, Frank Schwartz, Taylor

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Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies conference on “Rethinking Social Science Research on the Developing World in the 21st Century.”

Foreign Policy magazine published a brief version of my arguments under the title “Merchants of Morality” as the cover story in its March/April 2002 issue. In their zeal to market the magazine, however, the senior editors distorted the article’s argument with cover photographs and language, as well as a summary blurb in the table of contents, that I had no hand in writing or designing. These did not reflect my findings, most importantly by implying that local movements “bull[y]” their way to international support. I was informed of the cover less than a week before the issue began circulating and did not see the blurb until I received a printed copy of the magazine. The issue was later one of three that *Foreign Policy* submitted in winning a 2003 National Magazine Award for Editorial Excellence. Ironically, then, the editors’ “spin” on my arguments may have helped the magazine win this prestigious award. I hope this book will clarify my views.

The financial support of several institutions has been critical to the completion of this project. I thank the Smith Richardson Foundation International Security and Foreign Policy Junior Faculty Program, the United States Institute of Peace, the John F. Kennedy School of Government’s Human Rights Initiative, the Albert Einstein Institution, the Harvard-MIT MacArthur Transnational Security Program, and the Social Science Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies.

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