1

Introduction

It is 1920 in the port of Hamburg when a young man boards the steamer *Leviathan*, bound for New York. Moishke Tarabeur has left his *shtetl* in what was then Poland and is now Belarus. Kletsk has been caught in the war between Poland and the new Soviet state, settled when the border was established just east of town. In the 1920s it was one of hundreds of mostly Jewish towns in the Pale of Settlement between Warsaw and Moscow. It had a flourishing cattle trade but not yet the major shoe factory that would develop under Soviet rule. Its 3,000-odd Jews worshiped in seven synagogues, alongside Catholic and Orthodox churches and a mosque for the Tatar minority.

The Jews of Kletsk were mainly occupied in trade in the center of town, but there were few sources of employment for young people and virtually no public services. Through mutual aid and charity, the community provided itself with schools, but neither its residents nor their neighbors had a health service, and there was no hospital for miles. Like thousands of others, Moishke left home to escape poverty, disorder, and the anti-Semitism that invariably follows a popular uprising in this part of the world.

In 1928, by now naturalized with the "American" name of Morris, he traveled home to see his family and seek a bride. He carried with him remittances for family members and money from his New York fraternal organization to provide the town with a health clinic. Greeted like a prince by his Kletzker neighbors and friends, he stayed on for nine months. By the time he left Kletzk, the clinic was up and running, and he returned to New York with a sheaf of photos to show his landsmen the medical marvels that their hard-earned cash had brought their hometown.

Morris's activism didn't end with transferring remittances to Kletzk. In the 1930s he became an officer of the Kletzker Association in New York

City. Soon after, working as a candy salesman, he became active in his labor union, the Teamsters, and then in organizations working to get Jews out of Europe before Hitler's hordes descended. At war's end he worked with international aid agencies to locate Kletzker survivors in Europe's displaced persons camps. By the late 1940s, he was collecting money to help resettle displaced persons in Palestine and, by gradual extension, to fund the illegal arms purchases that helped the settlers establish the state of Israel. Morris never thought of himself as an activist, but as the global context changed from Jewish emigration to war and genocide to national renewal, he imperceptibly transformed into what I call, in Chapter 3, a "rooted cosmopolitan."

Transnational Activism

I begin this chapter with the story of my father's transformation from provider of private remittances to diaspora nationalist not only because I know it well but because it illustrates many of the facets of transnational activism we will encounter in this book.

First, it shows how even prosaic activities, like immigrants bringing remittances home to their families, take on broader meanings when ordinary people cross transnational space. Most studies of transnational politics focus on self-conscious internationalists; we will broaden that framework to include people like my father whose brand of unselfconscious transnationalism has become increasingly common in today's world.

Second, even as they make transnational claims, these activists draw on the resources, networks, and opportunities of the societies they live in. Their most interesting characteristic is how they connect the local and the global. In today's world, we can no more draw a sharp line between domestic and international politics than we can understand national politics in the United States apart from its local roots.

Finally, transnational activism is transformative: just as it turned my father from a provider of immigrant remittances into a diaspora nationalist, it may be turning thousands today from occasional participants in international protests into rooted cosmopolitans. That transformation could become the hinge between a world of states and one in which stateness is no more than one identity among many: local, national, and transnational.

My book argues that individuals who move into transnational activism are both constrained and supported by domestic networks; that in making this move they activate transitional processes between states and

international politics; and that when they return home, they bring with them new forms of action, new ways of framing domestic issues, and perhaps new identities that may some day fuse domestic with international contention.

That raises the three main questions that the book addresses:

- To what extent and how does the expansion of transnational activism change the actors, the connections among them, the forms of claims making, and the prevailing strategies in contentious politics?
- Does the expansion of transnational activism and the links it establishes between nonstate actors, their states, and international politics create a new political arena that fuses domestic and international contention?
- If so, how does this affect our inherited understanding of the autonomy of national politics from international politics?

Identifying and tracing the processes that link the domestic to the international level of activism is the major methodological strategy of the book; placing these processes in a more general framework of internationalization is my major ambition; asking whether these processes and this framework are effecting a fusion between the local and the global is the major question it raises.

Here I limit myself to laying out three of the book's premises: that transnational activism has a history; that it is more than a reflex against globalization; and that it is shaped by changes in the opportunity structure of international politics. I argue that while globalization provides incentives and themes for transnational activism, it is internationalism that offers a framework, a set of focal points, and a structure of opportunities for transnational activists.

Historical Transnationalism

Even in the heyday of development of the consolidated national state, students of social movements have found abundant evidence of transnational activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998; J. Smith 2004a). It operated through two familiar mechanisms, diffusion and mobilization from above, and it revealed itself through the widespread adoption of similar forms of collective action.

The most familiar mechanism was the *diffusion of movements across borders*. From the Reformation, which swept across Europe through the missionary work of Protestant "saints" (Walzer 1971), to the antislavery movement that spread from England to France, the Netherlands, and the Americas

(Drescher 1987), to the diffusion of anarchism by missionaries like Enrico Malatesta (Joll 1964: 175), to the spread of nationalism through colonialism, print, and the railroad (Anderson 1991), the transnational diffusion of collective action is a familiar process. Recent episodes of ethnic conflict (Sambanis 2004: 270), the transmission of Ghandian nonviolence (Chabot 2002), and the spread of xenophobic nationalism (Rydgren 2004: 478–9) show that such diffusion has intensified in our era.

International mobilization is a second classical mechanism for transnational collective action. The campaign that made the First of May an international workers' holiday was transmitted to Europe from the American eight-hour-day campaign through the Socialist International. Esperanto, the movement to create an international language, was spread by the international Esperanto Society (Kim 1999). In the wake of the Italian war for independence, Henry Dunant founded the International Red Cross, which created chapters around the world (Finnemore 1999). And it was through Lenin's "Twenty-one Points" that the Comintern welded together an international movement from its center in Moscow. The process continues today in the spread of political Islam to Europe and Asia from the Middle East (Kepel 2002: chs. 4 and 8).

Both of these processes were observable through the *adaptation of the forms and the framing of collective action* – what I have elsewhere called "modularity" (Tarrow 1998). Looking west in the name of an imagined similarity between the Middle Kingdom and the French Old Regime, Chinese revolutionaries styled themselves Jacobins (Anderson 1991). Looking east, Italian Communist leader Antonio Gramsci saw parallels between southern Italian peasants and the rural masses who rallied to the Bolscheviks in 1917 (Tarrow 1967). Closing the circle, his successors in the 1960s extraparliamentary left saw themselves the urban heirs of Maoism, born in the rural vastness of China (Tarrow 1989). We will find new forms of modularity in the global justice and antiwar movements today.

So What's New?

If diffusion, international mobilization, and the modularity of protest are familiar from the history of transnational mobilization, skeptics may ask, What is new and different about the contemporary wave of transnational activism? We could answer simply that there is more of it, that it involves a broader spectrum of ordinary people and elites, and that it extends to a wider range of domestic and international concerns. All of this is true

and will emerge from this book. But what is most striking about the new transnational activism is both its connection to the current wave of globalization and its relation to the changing structure of international politics. The former, I argue, provides incentives and causes of resistance for many (although not all) transnational activists; but the latter offers activists focal points for collective action, provides them with expanded resources and opportunities, and brings them together in transnational coalitions and campaigns.

Globalization and Contention

In recent decades, rapid electronic communication, cheaper international travel, diffusion of the English language, and the spread of the "script" of modernity (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1987) have facilitated transnational activism. Many observers add a fifth and more general claim: that globalization is responsible for the rise of transnational activism.

Although globalization is a powerful source of new actors, new relationships, and new inequalities, as an orienting concept for understanding transnational activism it leaves much to be desired. Philip McMichael (2005: 587) sees globalization as a process, an organizing principle, an outcome, a conjuncture, and a project. Peter Katzenstein sees "*globalization* as a process that transcends space and compresses time" and highlights the emergence of new actors and novel relations in the world system. He also sees it referring to "new 'transborder' spaces that are encroaching on traditional, territorial forms of social and political life" (Katzenstein 2005: 1.2). McMichael's and Katzenstein's concepts are rich and broad; I prefer a narrower concept of globalization, one that focuses on the *increasing volume and speed of flows of capital and goods, information and ideas, people and forces that connect actors between countries* (Keohane 2002b: 194). This definition has the virtue of parsimony and of allowing us to pose as a question globalization's impacts on transnational contention.

The equation between globalization and contention that we find in much of the literature on "global social movements" says both too much and too little: it says too little because it leaves out the intervening processes that lead people to engage in contentious politics; it says too much because a great deal of the transnational activism we find in the world today cannot be traced to globalization. The international structure of power is indeed changing in important ways that affect contentious politics but not in ways that reduce to the simple equation "globalization leads to resistance."

Let us begin with what we know about globalization's effects on transnational activism. Since the mid-1990s, a number of changes linked to global economic integration have combined to expand and extend its reach:

- The neoliberal economic orthodoxy summarized in the term "Washington Consensus" began to bear bitter fruit in the collapse of the Asian "tigers" and in the increasingly evident inequalities between North and South.
- The international institutions that enshrine neoliberalism – the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and, with some countertendencies, the European Union – began to take on a more central role as targets of resistance.
- Transnational campaigns and movement organizations like People's Global Action and ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens) have grown out of this dynamic.
- New electronic technologies and broader access to them have enhanced the capacity for movement campaigns to be organized rapidly and effectively in many venues at once.
- Countersummits and boycotts of big corporations have added to the repertoire of protest.

These are major changes. But students of domestic movements long ago determined that collective action cannot be traced directly to grievances or social cleavages (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1999), even vast ones like those connected to globalization. Acting collectively requires activists to marshal resources, become aware of and seize opportunities, frame their demands in ways that enable them to join with others, and identify common targets. If these thresholds constitute barriers in domestic politics, they are even higher when people mobilize across borders. Globalization is not sufficient to explain when people will engage in contentious collective action and when they will not.

Moreover, while the most spectacular protest campaigns in recent years have targeted global economic injustice, many of the most successful campaigns have had more to do with struggles against dictatorship, hegemony, the abridgment of human rights, and demands for democracy. The links from globalization to contentious collective action are not as direct or as encompassing as many advocates and activists suppose.

Nor does combating globalization automatically give rise to "global social movements." For Charles Tilly (2004b: 3–4), a "social movement" is "a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target

authorities" that uses a well-hewn contentious repertoire on the part of people who proclaim themselves to be worthy, unified, numerous, and committed. Other analysts would add the need for a durable network structure and at least the rudiments of a collective identity (della Porta and Diani 1999). Even if we do not accept all of these definitional requirements, the term "global social movements" cannot be used to describe every incident of transnational contention.

For one thing, forming transnational social movements is not easy. Sustaining collective action across borders on the part of people who seldom see one another and who lack embedded relations of trust is difficult. For another, repertoires of contention grow out of and are lodged in local and national contexts. Even more difficult is developing a common collective identity among people from different cultural backgrounds whose governments are not inclined to encourage them to do so. If this was true in the 1990s, the wave of national chauvinism and the reaction to it since September 11, 2001, has – if anything – led to a greater embrace of national identities.

Readers may wonder why I have gone to such lengths to underscore the difficulties of organizing sustained, durably networked, and self-identified global social movements around the countersymbol of globalization. There are two main reasons. First, I want to establish at the outset that social movements are only one form along a spectrum of types of contention that we examine in this book. Reducing them all to "global social movements" makes good grist for activists but not for serious analysis. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), labor movements, transnational coalitions, and elements of international institutions are important actors, even if their actions are not obviously "social movement" actions. Second, if globalization is not new, and if it has only a partial connection to contentious politics, we need to look elsewhere to explain the outpouring of contention across borders in the past decade. This takes us to the major orienting concept of this book – internationalism – and its relation to opportunities for collective action.

Internationalism as Opportunity Structure

Although globalization is a source of claims and a frame for mobilizations, it is internationalism – and particularly the *complex* form of internationalism that I describe in the next chapter – that channels resistance to globalization, offers a focal point for resistance to it, and provides opportunities for

the formation of transnational coalitions and movements. If globalization consists of increased flows of trade, finance, and people across borders, internationalism provides an opportunity structure within which transnational activism can emerge. As internationalization increases, it can be expected to produce both new threats and new opportunities for activism.

Internationalization has sometimes been defined as deepening interstate relations and sometimes as international economic integration. Both are essentially horizontal relationships. For example, Peter Katzenstein (2005: 1.2) writes that "internationalization . . . describes processes that reaffirm nation-states as the basic actors in the international system." As I do, he deliberately contrasts it with globalization, but by focusing on states, he limits himself to its horizontal dimension. My concept of internationalization includes three interrelated trends:

- An increasing horizontal density of relations across states, governmental officials, and nonstate actors
- Increasing vertical links among the subnational, national, and international levels
- An enhanced formal and informal structure that invites transnational activism and facilitates the formation of networks of nonstate, state, and international actors

We will find evidence of this internationalism and internationalization in institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO); in the growing tissue of intergovernmental relations that has grown up beneath the level of state-to-state negotiations (Slaughter 2004); in regional alliances and compacts like the European Union and NAFTA; in networks of informal ties among capitalists, nongovernmental organizations, and advocacy networks; and in transnational systems of migration, crime, contraband, religious activism, and political action. These venues both enable and constrain social and political activism.

Students of social movements will recognize in my concept of internationalism an extension of the theory of political opportunities that grew out of research on domestic social movements (Tilly 1978; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998). That theory was specified in the framework of local and national politics and largely ignored contention that moves beyond borders. It was also static and focused excessively on contentious forms of collective action (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: ch. 1). I argue in Chapter 2 that internationalism both makes the threats of globalization more visible and offers resources, opportunities, and alternative targets for

transnational activists and their allies to make claims against other domestic and external actors.

In other words, internationalism today is *complex*, horizontal and vertical, offering a wide range of venues for conflict and reconciliation and allowing activists to leapfrog over the simple dichotomy of "two-level games." In Chapter 2 I draw on both the social movement and international relations traditions to understand how domestic nonstate actors bring new issues to the international agenda and how these issues are processed and refract into domestic politics. I also argue for a more dynamic approach to transnational activism, one that identifies the major processes that it sets in motion and specifies them through their constituent mechanisms.

I am not the first to discern an increasingly complex structure of internationalism in today's world. In the 1950s Karl W. Deutsch and colleagues (1957) already looked at the North Atlantic area as a potential community. In the 1970s Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2001 [1979]) wrote of the "complex interdependence" they saw developing in world politics; in the mid-1990s Thomas Risse-Kappen and his collaborators (1995) described a new transnational politics that reaches deep into domestic structures; in the same decade, Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield, and Ron Pagnucco (1997) developed a similar argument about the interrelations between global institutions and social movement actors. At the turn of the new century, Robert O'Brien and his collaborators (2000) wrote of the "complex multilateralism" that they saw emerging in relations among states and international institutions, James Rosenau (1997, 2003) insisted on the permeable walls between domestic and international politics, and Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2002) wrote of the "multilevel governance" in the European Union. If my book advances on these formulations, it will do so by examining the political processes that compose internationalism. My central argument is that there is no single core process leading to a global civil society or anything resembling one, but – as in politics in general – a set of identifiable processes and mechanisms that intersect with domestic politics to produce new and differentiated paths of political change.

Available Resources

These are no small tasks, but there are resources available on which to draw. In the social movement field, my book draws most centrally on recent work in the "political process" tradition (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), but it extends that tradition from its national moorings into international

society. From the international relations field, it is in debt to work begun by Deutsch and colleagues (1957) on North Atlantic integration; to work on transnational politics by Keohane and Nye (1971); and to research on the links between domestic structures and transnational politics (Katzenstein 1976; Risse-Kappen 1995).

It also builds on more-recent work in transnational politics and international institutions:

- At the broadest level it draws on the work of political economists with a wide-ranging Marxist perspective, who emphasize global capitalism, countermovements, and the shift of conflict from the local to the global level; on students of international political economy who have tried to specify the links between domestic actors and international institutions; and on new institutional sociologists.[1]
- It draws on the work of anthropologists and students of public opinion who are beginning to track the impact of global trends on local actors.[2]
- It also draws on studies of international protest events, which offer extensive surveys of demonstrators, and on studies of social movement organizations that focus on the most dynamic actors in these events.[3]
- It builds on the work of scholars of international politics who have provided information on transnational advocacy networks and on that of students of international institutions who have provided data on how nonstate actors interact with international financial institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the WTO.[4]

[1] For broadly Marxian and post-Marxian political economy perspectives, see Arrighi and Silver 1999; Evans 2005; McMichael 1996; Silver 2003; and Walton and Seddon 1994. For a synthesis of the best American work on international political economy, see Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1999. The work of new institutional sociologists is best reflected in the work by Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1987; Boli and Thomas 1999; and Soysal 1994.

[2] For new anthropological perspectives, see Edelman 1999; Graeber 2002; Hannerz 1996; Kearney 1995; and Merry 2003a and b, 2004. For public opinion research on global attitudes, see Norris 2000 and Jung 2005. For evidence on elite responses to globalization, see Rosenau et al., forthcoming.

[3] For studies of international protest events, see della Porta and Mosca 2003; Levi and Murphy 2004; Lichbach 2003; J. Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997; J. Smith 2002a and b; and Verhulst and Walgrave 2003. On transnational social movements, see della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2000; and della Porta and Tarrow 2005.

[4] A major statement from the international relations perspective was Keck and Sikkink 1998, followed closely by Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999, and by Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002. Major statements on international institutions is Cox and Jacobson 1973 and Martin and Simmons 1999. The interaction of activists with international institutions is examined by J. Fox and Brown 1998; O'Brien et al. 2000; Scholte and Schnabel 2002; and Stiles 2000. For a useful review of these sources, see Price 2003.