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## *The New Transnational Activism*

*The New Transnational Activism* is a broad-ranging study that follows the paths of transnational activists through a variety of processes between the local and the global. From labor organizers to immigrant activists, from environmentalists to human rights campaigners, from global justice protesters to Islamist militants, it shows how ordinary people gain new perspectives, experiment with new forms of action, and sometimes emerge with new identities through their contacts across borders. The book asks how and to what extent transnational activism changes domestic actors, their forms of claims making, and their prevailing strategies. Does it simply project the conflicts and alignments familiar from domestic politics onto a broader stage, or does it create a new political arena in which domestic and international contentions fuse? And, if the latter, how will this development affect internationalization and the traditional division between domestic and international politics?

Sidney Tarrow is Maxwell M. Upson Professor of Government and Professor of Sociology at Cornell University. Tarrow's first book was *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (1967). In the 1980s, after a brief foray into comparative local politics, he returned to social movements with a collaborative volume with B. Klandermans and H. Kriesi, *Between Structure and Action* (1988); then to a reconstruction of the Italian protest cycle of the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Democracy and Disorder* (1989). His most recent books are *Power in Movement* (Cambridge, 1994, 1998); with Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge, 2001); with Doug Imig, *Contentious Europeans* (2001); and with Donatella della Porta, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (2005). Tarrow is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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***Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics***

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## Advance Praise for *The New Transnational Activism*

“The global justice movement, anti-Iraq war protests, Al Qaeda, Eurostrikes, globalized ethnic diasporas, insider/outsider coalitions of local activists with international advocacy groups, transnational alliances and cross-border collaborations of the global human rights network, and the international diffusion of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions – throughout the social sciences, many are now studying the actors, relationships, forms, and strategies behind today’s transnational activism.

“Tarrow takes aim at these now extensive literatures on globalization and on transnational protest – and he hits the bull’s-eye. By offering the counterintuitive idea that transnational contentious politics still revolves around sovereign states – their domestic structures and the international institutions they have created – Tarrow makes a seminal contribution to this growing field. Deploying a rich matrix of case materials, conceptual distinctions, and theoretical arguments, he brings such unmatched conceptual and substantive richness to so diverse a theoretical and empirical literature that everyone else is disappointing. I am tempted to say that he is the only one here really worth reading – certainly the only one who will be read 20 years from now.

“Jewish sages emphasized that there are four types of students: the sponge absorbs everything, the funnel passes everything, the strainer retains the sediment and lets the fine wine pass, and the sifter retains the wheat and lets the chaff pass. Tarrow’s strength is wisdom and judgment. He sifted through the growing literature on transnational activism, retained the important parts, and then erected a new political process theory of world politics. His approach to transnational contention represents the next major theoretical challenge to the fields of international relations and comparative politics.”

– Mark Lichbach, University of Maryland

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**SIDNEY TARROW**

*Cornell University*



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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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*For Morris,  
Quiet Activist*

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>List of Figures</i>	xii
<i>Preface and Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Part One Structure, Process, and Actors</i>	
<b>2 INTERNATIONALISM AND CONTENTION</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3 ROOTED COSMOPOLITANS AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISTS</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>Part Two The Global in the Local</i>	
<b>4 GLOBAL FRAMING</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>5 INTERNALIZING CONTENTION</b>	<b>77</b>
<i>Part Three Transitional Processes</i>	
<b>6 DIFFUSION AND MODULARITY</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>7 SHIFTING THE SCALE OF CONTENTION</b>	<b>120</b>
<i>Part Four The Local in the Global</i>	
<b>8 EXTERNALIZING CONTENTION</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>9 BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL COALITIONS</b>	<b>161</b>

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978-0-521-85130-5 - The New Transnational Activism  
Sidney Tarrow  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

Contents

*Part Five Transnational Impacts at Home and Abroad*

10	TRANSNATIONAL IMPACTS ON DOMESTIC ACTIVISM	183
11	TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM AND INTERNATIONALIZATION	201
	<i>Glossary</i>	221
	<i>Sources</i>	225
	<i>Index</i>	249



Tables

3.1	Size and Geographic Dispersion of Transnational Social Movement Organizations	<i>page</i> 45
5.1	Occupational and Nonoccupational Protests against the European Union, 1984–97	91
5.2	Protests by Farmers and Other Occupational Groups against the European Union, 1984–97	92
5.3	Internalized and Transnational Contentious Action against the European Union, 1984–97	93
5.4	Targets of Internalized European Protests, 1984–97	94
7.1	Social Fora Appearing in an Internet Search, by World Region, 1999–2004	133
8.1	Three Forms of Externalization	149
10.1	Estimated Number of Regular and “Historical” Truth Commissions, by World Regions, 1974–2002	191

*Figures*

2.1 Six Processes of Transnational Contention	<i>page</i> 33
4.1 A Descriptive Model of Global Framing of Domestic Contention	63
4.2 Austerity Protests by Year, 1976–91	66
4.3 Supranational and National Attachments: European Union Countries, 1995–2003	71
5.1 A Descriptive Model of Internalization	81
5.2 Frequency and Percentage of Western European Contentious Events Provoked by European Union Policies and Institutions, 1984–97	87
6.1 Three-Year Moving Average of Number of Suicide Bombing Attacks, 1983–2002	100
6.2 Alternative Pathways of Transnational Diffusion	105
7.1 A Descriptive Model of Scale Shift	123
7.2 Social Fora, 2004, and PCI Members, 1984, Italy	134
8.1 The Boomerang Model	146
8.2 A Composite Model of Externalization	148
9.1 A Typology of Forms of Transnational Coalitions	167
10.1 The Domestic Impact of Transnational Activism	187

## *Preface and Acknowledgments*

From the “battle of Seattle” to the movement against the Iraq war, the extraordinary international protests of the late 1990s and the early years of the new century suggest that something is new on this planet of ours. We are witnessing, if not a full-blown global civil society or an integrated transnational polity, at least a trend toward new forms and new levels of transnational contention. It was to reconcile my growing sense that new actors are appearing with my belief that states remain the fundamental framework for contentious politics that I decided to write this book. It is dedicated to the task of identifying those actors, trying to understand their relationships, and charting their impact on domestic and international politics.

Those who have followed my work in the past may wonder that someone who linked social movements so closely to the modern national state would now see them in transnational terms. If the world has changed, social scientists must be prepared to understand it. Besides, the forms of transnational activism that I examine in this book do not float above the earth but are shaped by states’ domestic structures and by the international institutions that they have created. Although it has been made before, I hope to specify this argument through attention to the processes that link “the local with the global.”

In my book I argue that the most effective transnational activists are “rooted cosmopolitans” – people who grow up in and remain closely linked to domestic networks and opportunities. The converse is also true: if there are structural effects of transnational activism, they are found primarily in the transformation of domestic politics and society. Whether these trends are producing a fusion of domestic and international politics is the big question that lies at the heart of these issues. I turn to it at the end of the book.

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I did not come to these views all at once or all on my own. With Doug Imig I began to examine transnational contention in Western Europe. In our project on European contention, we found nonstate actors reaching beyond their borders but employing domestic resources, networks, and opportunities to do so. I thank him and the other authors of *Contentious Europeans* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) for helping me to see the interaction of the national and the transnational in the emerging European polity.

Two major grants took me from my home turf in Western Europe to the broader field of transnational contention: a grant from the National Science Foundation for research on transnational collective action,<sup>1</sup> and a grant from the Ford Foundation for research on grass-roots activists and international institutions. I thank Lisa Jordan of the Ford Foundation for her confidence that a social scientist whose roots were in Ithaca, New York, could understand the global problems she has dealt with as both an activist and foundation executive.

It was while I was a member of the “contentious gang” at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences that the project advanced beyond its European origins. Shepherded by the gentle hand of Doug McAdam, watched over by the bemused eye of Bob Scott, and funded by the Mellon Foundation, Ron Aminzade, Jack Goldstone, McAdam, Elizabeth Perry, Charles Tilly, and I, along with a talented group of graduate fellows, explored new ways of examining contentious politics. Three collaborative books and the series Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics emerged from that project. The center remains at the core of my intellectual debts, and my stints there are the source of my warmest memories of collegial collaboration.

If this book adds to our knowledge of transnational politics, it is in large part due to the help of colleagues whom I must thank as virtual collaborators. They are Donatella della Porta, Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, Mark Lichbach, Doug McAdam, David S. Meyer, Kathryn Sikkink, Jackie Smith, and Charles Tilly. Lance Bennett, Valerie Bunce, Antonina Gentile, Mary Katzenstein, Margaret Levi, and Susan Tarrow also read every word – some of them twice – and I thank them for their collegial devotion. I also received advice on international relations – some of which I have even followed – from Matthew Evangelista, Peter Gourevitch,

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[More information](#)

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## **Preface and Acknowledgments**

and Hans Peter Schmitz and help from my friends David Laitin and Nicolas Sambanis. I thank them all for their patience and their advice. Many other colleagues read and commented on parts of the manuscript and are owed sincere thanks.

At Cornell, a group of young scholars shared their expertise in the field of transnational contention. They are Mark Anner, Evelyn Bush, Kelly Dietz, Devashree Gupta, Jai Kwan Jung, Javier Lezaun, Eunyun Park, and Ion Bogdan Vasi. Jennifer Gomez, Sharon Sandlin, and Judy Virgilio helped make up for my slim organizational talents with their administrative abilities, while Melanie Acostavalle, Marwan Hanania, Angela Kim, Dana Perls, and especially Doug Hillebrandt worked progressively on bibliography, office administration, and making sure my books got back to the library. I especially want to thank the Russell Sage Foundation, its dedicated president and vice-president, Eric Wanner and Madge Spitaleri, and especially Kari Hodges and the rest of the hardworking staff there who provided me with a year in which I could work in contentment on this book.

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