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978-0-521-14544-2 - The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics

Clifford Bob

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The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics

Human rights, environmentalism, and global justice: these transnational movements today face fierce opposition from networks of conservative activists promoting contrary aims. In this groundbreaking book, Clifford Bob analyzes the clashes, proposing a new model of global policy making – and unmaking. This highlights the battle of networks, marked by exclusionary strategies, negative tactics, and dissuasive ideas. Bob first investigates the fight over gay rights, in which a coalition of religious conservatives, the “Baptist-burqa” network, confronts human rights groups at the United Nations and in such countries as Sweden, Romania, and Uganda. Next, he examines conflicts over gun control, pitting firearms enthusiasts against disarmament and safety advocates in the UN, Brazil, and elsewhere. Bob’s provocative findings extend beyond the culture wars. With its critical conclusions about norms, activists, and institutions, this book will change how campaigners fight, analysts study international issues, and all of us think about global politics.

Clifford Bob is Raymond J. Kelley Endowed Chair in International Relations and professor of political science at Duquesne University. His first book, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*, won the 2007 International Studies Association Best Book Award and was named a “Top Book of 2006” by *The Globalist*. His edited volume, *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, was released in 2009, and he has published widely in political science, sociology, law, and policy. His scholarly interests include human rights, globalization, and nongovernmental organizations. He holds a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a JD from New York University, and a BA from Harvard University.

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Preface

For more than twenty years, climate change has divided citizens around the world. The conflicting sides have formed broad networks. They have advanced their goals in local, national, and international institutions. They have sought to convince the public and policy makers of their contrary views. At the same time, the factions have spared no effort to attack their foes – for methodological errors, scientific misconduct, and worse. Apparent milestones, like the Kyoto Protocol or the Copenhagen Summit, have in fact been mere way stations in an ongoing war. Basic matters – from the degree of warming, to its causes, to possible remedies, to their effects – remain contested.

This protracted battle over a matter portrayed as vital to the world's survival – or the economy's prosperity – is hardly unique. In issue after issue within countries and internationally, similarly discordant stories could be told. The death penalty, poverty alleviation, nuclear power, humanitarian intervention – these and countless others involve zealous activists persistently jousting over current decisions, future policies, and past interpretations.

This book concerns such disputes, proposing a way of understanding them and their outcomes. My primary focus is transnational: nonviolent conflict crossing national borders and international institutions. In this, I focus on the important but

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understudied operations of right-wing activists. Equally, I analyze their continuous clashes with human rights, environmental, and social justice groups – not only the rivals' efforts to sway decision makers, but also their strategic attacks on one another. In particular, I highlight fights over gay rights and gun control at the United Nations and in countries such as Brazil, Romania, Sweden, and the United States.

The argument I make, however, applies more broadly, to any number of political issues, both domestic and international, as well as the many connections between. In the Introduction and especially in the Conclusion, I discuss the scope of my argument. For now, it is useful to note that I do not confine it to the left-right rift, notwithstanding the first part of this book's title. That ideological division encompasses much, but it by no means exhausts the sources of contention in contemporary society.

In this book, I hope to convey the fervor, invention, and antagonism I have observed. I have written it not only to advance political science, but also to inform activists and the broader public. The issues are too hot and the personalities too intriguing to leave to specialists alone. This has posed certain problems for the research. For one thing, to what extent can the parties to the conflicts be trusted to have provided me with accurate information? This problem occurs in much political research. But because of the emotions boiling around gay rights and gun control, partisans invariably suspect their opposite numbers of deceit. I have been skeptical too and have sought throughout to base my analysis on evidence beyond what I am told or given.

As a second problem indicative of the passions involved, I have been sucked into the vortex myself, not just as an observer, but as an unasked-for bit player. For instance, in interviewing leaders of Brazil's pro-gun coalition, *Pela Legítima Defesa* (PLD), I used my trusty if antiquated cassette tape recorder, as I do when permitted in all interviews. Unexpectedly, my interviewees turned the tables and upped the ante. They trained the latest pocket-sized, tripod-mounted, digital video-recorder on me, so that both of us would have a record of the interview. Two days later, a description of my visit, complete with photos, appeared on a PLD blog under

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the Portuguese title, “North American Expert Visits Brazil to Learn How We Won the 2005 Referendum.”

A similar thing happened when I interviewed a leader of the Romanian Alliance for Families (ARF), a group defending “traditional families.” Days later, he informed me by e-mail that the group’s upcoming newsletter would note my 2009 book, *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, which, among other chapters, includes one by a prominent and openly lesbian scholar on the promotion of gay rights among human rights NGOs. A few weeks later, ARF quoted a broad passage from the book’s introduction in a commentary submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Without meaning to and admittedly in minor ways, I have therefore been inserted into these conflicts myself – a “risk” that all social scientists investigating controversial contemporary issues face.

A final point along these lines concerns my own positions on the issues. I have sought throughout to be objective and to keep my personal views out of my work. This has been difficult. Those who promote a “scholar-activist” model might say it is a mistake. Although I take strong stances in other settings, including op-ed pieces and public blogs, I believe it is important in works that seek to advance political science to keep one’s own politics out – or at least to try to do so. To do otherwise distorts reality and therefore does a disservice to the groups one supports.

For information and insights that made this book possible, I thank the many people I interviewed both in person and by telephone. For critical financial support, I thank the American Council of Learned Societies fellowship program. In addition, I thank Duquesne University, particularly its Faculty Development Fund, Presidential Scholarship, and late Dean Albert C. Labriola. Duquesne has been a wonderful setting for my scholarship and teaching during this project. I am grateful to my students with whom I shared chapters and from whom I received excellent feedback. I also thank my colleagues at the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts, especially in the political science department.

During the years that I worked on this book – even before I knew that I was doing so, or knew what I was doing – I was

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given the chance to present pieces that, in one form or another, have become part of it. I am grateful for invitations from: Northwestern University International Organizations and International Law Workshop; Oxford University Department of International Development; City University of New York Politics and Protest Workshop; Duke University Seminar on Global Governance and Democracy; Widener University School of Law; Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs; Brown University, Watson Institute for International Studies; American Society of International Law annual meeting; University of Maryland, Contentious Politics/International Relations Workshop; Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University; University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication; London School of Economics Centre for the Study of Global Governance; George Washington University Institute for Global and International Studies; University of Pittsburgh Social Movement Forum, Center for Latin American Studies, and International Relations Workshop; and Cornell/Syracuse Universities Workshop on Transnational Contention. For their support of me during these events, I am particularly grateful to Karen Alter, Deborah Avant, Kathy Blee, Timothy Buthe, Martha Finnemore, Kirsten A. Gronbjerg, Rodney Bruce Hall, Virginia Haufler, James Jasper, Mary Kaldor, John Markoff, David Mendeloff, Hans Peter Schmitz, Susan Sell, Andrew Strauss, and Steven M. Watt.

In addition to the helpful comments I received at all these events and at regular professional meetings, a number of individuals took the time to write critiques of my work in progress. These include Cristina Balboa, Charli Carpenter, Joerg Friedrichs, Mark Haas, Michael Hanagan, James Jasper, Kate Krimmel, Daniel Kryder, David S. Meyer, Helen Milner, Aseem Prakash, Luc Reydam, James Ron, Valerie Sperling, Andrew Strauss, Sarah Stroup, June Swinski, Sidney Tarrow, Mitchell Troup, and Elke Zuern. I am particularly grateful as well for the support of Lewis Bateman, my editor at Cambridge University Press.

Others who contributed in various ways to this book include Peter Agree, Eva Bellin, Daniel Bob, Alexander Cooley, John

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Dale, Kevin DenDulk, Eileen Doherty-Sil, Patrick Doreian, Mike Edwards, Jennifer Erickson, Archon Fung, Tamar Gutner, Fen Hampson, Giuditta Hanau Santini (without deprecation), Roger Haydon, Paul Heck, Bonnie Honig, Lisa Jordan, Pamela Martin, David McBride, James Morone, Charles Myers, Sharon Erickson Nepstad, Robert Paarlberg, Martin Packer, Leigh Payne, Daniel Posner, Lawrence Rosenthal, Richard J. Samuels, Alberta Sbragia, Frank Schwartz, Rudra Sil, Joel Swanson (the “man on the street”), Stephen Van Evera, Paul Wapner, Claude Welch, and Steven Wilkinson. At risk of pretentiousness, I also pay tribute to several works of art that have been constant companions as I wrote this book: Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, a beautiful and brilliant study of political conflict; Gustav Mahler’s First Symphony; and Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*.

Any errors that remain in the book – including my inadvertent omission of any who helped me in this project over the years – are of course my responsibility. Speaking of omissions, this book includes no bibliography, although I cite all references fully in the footnotes. A full bibliography is available at the book’s permanent Cambridge University Press Web site. This includes “active citations,” an important new idea proposed by Andrew Moravcsik, allowing readers to view at a click all or part of many of my sources, including most importantly primary sources. This should make it easier for others to detect my errors, refine my interpretations, and advance scholarship for all.

My thankfulness to my family is greatest. I hope that my years of work on conflict helped pacify me at home, but I am not so sure. In any case, I am grateful to my children, Alex and Natalie, for keeping me from becoming too serious. In particular, I will always treasure their laughing with me about a *Planet of the Apes* movie trailer about armed apes hunting “lowly terrified humans” and at me about my misadventures failing to hike up Rio de Janeiro’s Sugarloaf Mountain. I also thank my mother, Renate Bob, for deluging me with useful articles on right-wing activism from her host of left-wing listservs – and generally for being the greatest Mom one could hope for.

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Preface

Most importantly, I thank my wife, Joan Miles, who gritted her teeth through my obsession with the right wing and kept on smiling, usually. Joan has been an inspiration and sometimes a prod to my work. Both were critical to my finishing this book more or less on time. Whether she likes it or not, I dedicate this work to her, with love.