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8
non-governmental organizations and non-state actors

jeremi suri

The field of modern international history has traditionally focused upon the study of states. Research on the origins of various wars and the expansion of European empires has, quite naturally, led scholars to examine the archival records of prime ministers, presidents, foreign ministers and other high-ranking state officials in considerable depth. This state-centred work is valuable and it will surely remain at the heart of the field. States, however, are not the only influential and important actors on the international stage. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-state actors (NSAs), the subjects of this chapter, have also received, and will continue to receive, considerable scholarly attention.

NGOs and NSAs are frequently depicted as offering oppositional alternatives to state power.[1] This is not necessarily the case. NGOs are institutionalized groupings of people and resources, often from multiple societies, operating outside the direct authority of any particular government or collection of governments. Individuals, not nations, are generally the constituent elements of an NGO. They organize around a wide array of issues – from human rights activism to sports enthusiasm, from the spread of scientific knowledge to business profit-seeking. NGOs (such as Amnesty International and the US-China Business Council) are distinguished from inter-governmental organizations (including the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization, and many others) that are comprised of states and reflect the wishes of collected opinion among state leaders. NGOs can oppose state policies, but they can also (and often do) work cooperatively with states. They are, in this sense, international institutions working in parallel with the prime ministers, presidents and foreign ministers who dominate national newspaper headlines.[2]

NSAs are less organized and often less multinational than NGOs. They are, as Thomas Friedman has put it, 'Super-empowered individuals' or small groups that operate with little state control.[3] NSAs rarely challenge states explicitly, but they use their resources to affect policies, perceptions and behaviour across societies. NSAs derive their influence from some combination of independent wealth, public prestige, popular following and private connections. Like NGOs they can pursue a wide range of aims and interests.

As entities operating in parallel with states, NGOs and NSAs share many of the complex motivations that observers have long recognized in national governments. NGOs and NSAs can pursue high-minded idealistic goals and they can also advocate realist programmes that serve the interests of their specific organizations. They can operate democratically by consensus or they can autocratically reflect the whims of a select few. Most significantly, they can pursue peace and stability, or they can embrace goals that include violence and brutality. This latter point requires some elaboration because it runs against the common assumption that NGOs and NSAs, by definition, contribute to international peace.[4] One must keep in mind that the world of NGOs is populated not only by do-gooders, but also by extremists, zealots and even terrorists. Peter Bergen, among others, has made the alarming point that Al-Qaeda is a very effective NGO, utilizing a global range of resources and interests to evade state controls. By extension, one might also conclude that Osama bin Laden is an NSA, by virtue of his wealth and public appeal in some communities.[5]

Most scholars who write about NGOs and NSAs believe in the overall virtues of these organizations in protecting human rights, advancing environmental awareness, promoting economic justice and advocating various other liberal-minded concerns. This is, of course, a fair judgement. Nonetheless, one must not assume that NGOs and NSAs *necessarily* serve these worthy purposes. Quite the contrary, NGOs and NSAs are malleable entities that sometimes contribute to the elements of warfare so common in international relations. Once again, this is evidence for the proposition that NGOs and NSAs act in parallel with, and not as alternatives to, the system of relations between states.

international society

What, in practice, does it mean to say that NGOs and NSAs act in parallel with the system of intra-state relations? This question has motivated scholars to reconceptualize what we mean when we speak of the modern

'international system'. States remain the central actors, but they no longer serve as the exclusive agents of change. Power now appears much more fluid, diffusing beyond prime ministers, presidents and foreign ministers to include activists, intellectuals, and businesspeople. Change also depends less narrowly on the global balance of military and economic might. Ideas, images, and cultural assumptions now deserve serious consideration in conjunction with the traditional, and still crucial, assessments of material capabilities.

The 'international system', in this reconceptualized scheme, is really an 'international society'. This latter term draws theoretical grounding and inspiration from the work of the Australian scholar, Hedley Bull. Writing in 1977, Bull recognized that while the realm of international relations was anarchical because it lacked an overarching authority structure, it was also orderly because of common understandings that guided daily intercourse among states and peoples.[6] Drawing a cogent analogy with domestic society, Bull pointed to the unlegislated but still widely recognized standards of behaviour for interpersonal interactions that make the peaceful functioning of everyday life possible. These standards evolve over time, and they are disseminated by the intermediary non-state institutions (including social clubs, activist groups, leisure organizations and religious institutions) that many associate with the term 'civil society'.[7] Force and wealth are prominent parts of local life, but they are not predominant. We live in societies, rather than anarchies or tyrannies, because of the rich complexity of the relations that order everyday behaviour.

International society reflects many of the same qualities found in domestic society, according to Bull. The very idea of the 'nation', and the assumption of self-determination for a people that it carries, is a common understanding that guides international interactions in the contemporary world. Of course, this was not always the case. Ideas about the nation became global with the spread of largely European concepts and images in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[8] Similarly, the language of democracy and human rights reflects a constellation of ideas and images that spread to influence international behaviour during the twentieth century.[9] Common understandings have crucially shaped the structure and application of material capabilities in the international system.

For those who reject assumptions about the nation, democracy, and human rights, alternative common understandings have evolved to order opposition. 'International communism' in the twentieth century and 'radical Islamism' in the early twenty-first century provide social networks for organized activism at the international level. These visions have forged

bonds between individuals from various corners of the globe, and they have transformed the basic ways in which peoples interact with one another. International communism and radical Islamism have benefited from extensive state support, but they are, fundamentally, manifestations of a pluralist international society that defies state dominance.

International society has functioned with extraordinary richness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because intermediary institutions, particularly NGOs and NSAs, have played a widespread role in building common understandings – sometimes for better, sometimes for worse – across states. NGOs and NSAs enrich international relations largely through epistemic and cultural means. They reframe the accepted applications of state power. They influence how individuals define their allegiances. Most significantly, they socialize citizens to think of themselves as more than just members of a state. Identification with an international human rights community, for example, need not run against one's national patriotism. It does, however, encourage individuals to demand more from government policies. Evocations of the 'national interest' have remained persuasive in the contemporary international system, but they have also become less sufficient for the satisfaction of citizens who see themselves as part of an international society.

NGOs and NSAs have contributed to what Hedley Bull and Adam Watson identify as the expansion of international society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[10] A set of European and American assumptions about how states and peoples should interact with one another extended to other continents through both the imperialist arms of various empires and the growth of NGOs and NSAs that included missionary societies, banking trusts and scientific consortia. The spread of European-style law, medicine and education during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a particularly clear manifestation of the parallel role NGOs played with state endeavours. Governments in Britain, France and eventually Germany and the United States funded the implantation of these institutions overseas to shore up their economic and strategic interests. The individuals and organizations that actually carried out these endeavours, however, operated with a large degree of independence from the centres of state power. The lawyers, doctors and educators who found themselves in China during the late nineteenth century, for instance, sought to build a set of common understandings with local populations that would not necessarily follow state dictate.[11] International associations of professional experts grew during this period for just this purpose, with an explicit emphasis on their non-governmental qualities.

The successes of these non-governmental endeavours in expanding international society are evident in developments after the early twentieth century. Local elites drew on the common understandings and non-governmental institutions that Europeans exported to assert their independence as nations. The Congress Party in India, for example, was populated by Indians who had been professionally trained and now belonged to various international professional associations. Local activists were able to turn international society against its state sponsors because government leaders in London, Paris, Berlin and Washington could not control the flow of ideas and images in NGOs. Professional associations, in particular, gave men like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru the skills, prestige and world-wide networks to mobilize common understandings for their purposes.

Activists like Gandhi and Nehru also transformed the substance of these common understandings. Recipients of an exported European framework for international society, they operated through non-governmental channels to revise the ideas and images that circulated across the globe. They often began by challenging racial, class and economic discrimination within their professional associations and other international organizations. This then gave them a firm foundation for a broader public articulation of demands for ideological change. By the middle of the twentieth century, activists in former colonial territories had shattered assumptions about the legitimacy of imperialism and racism by drawing, at least in part, on the non-governmental networks and common understandings that imperialism first offered to them. The assumptions underpinning international society evolved, as Bull predicted, due to the opportunities that its expansion provided for the work of NGOs and NSAs populated, in part, by non-Europeans.[12]

The history of NGOs and NSAs is a history of international society that touches on crucial developments in diplomacy, imperialism and ultimately decolonization. Conceptually, attention to NGOs and NSAs has widened the webs of agency and causality in scholarly analyses of international relations. Empirically, the study of NGOs and NSAs has added a more diverse cast of characters to explanations of global change.

the origins of modern ngos and nsas

In many ways, the history of NGOs and NSAs long precedes the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since at least the period of the Roman Empire, mercenaries, merchant associations, and banking enterprises have operated across wide territorial terrain with little government regulation.

Christianity, of course, began as a transnational non-governmental movement within the Roman Empire: Jesus Christ was a particularly influential NSA. As in the contemporary international system, premodern NGOs and NSAs served a variety of idealistic, commercial and violent purposes. Christian martyrs, wealthy merchants, and seafaring pirates all harnessed the resources of various societies to operate in parallel with officially constituted governments.

Recognition of this lineage is important for understanding the origins of modern NGOs and NSAs. They are ancient forms of association that the modern world inherited and transformed in ways that reflect crucial changes in the nature of international relations. In particular, many observers fail to recognize that the growth of secular state power in the aftermath of the French Revolution spurred the growth of NGOs and NSAs. With the disappearance of the many 'free cities', sacred territories and open spaces that had played crucial roles as buffers between powerful governments, new institutions were needed to mediate between contending and expanding states. Following this functionalist logic, organizations formed, often with the encouragement of states, to fill the void in international society. Many began as inter-governmental organizations, such as the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, created among the government representatives at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to assure free navigation along the strategic waterway linking France, the Netherlands and the German states of Baden, Bavaria, Hesse, Nassau and Prussia. As Paul Schroeder has shown, the Congress system created in the decades after the Napoleonic Wars emphasized inter-governmental cooperation in Europe through a variety of mechanisms, including summitry, arbitration and an emerging body of international law.[13]

Inter-governmental cooperation in an era of state expansion also centred on technical matters – sanitation, postal delivery, cable communications, seafaring standards, and many other concerns where common understandings benefited all of the most powerful European governments. The Superior Council on Health, for instance, (founded in 1838) brought European governments and the Ottoman Empire together for the purpose of preventing the spread of communicable diseases across state boundaries.[14] In later years, similar inter-governmental bodies came into existence for technical cooperation on numerous issues that were at least tacitly recognized as transnational concerns. Paul Kennedy has aptly referred to institutions regulating technical cooperation, especially in naval affairs, as the 'invisibles' of power in the nineteenth century, which built upon international consensus rather than the exertions of unilateral

state authority. Kennedy shows that British merchants and government leaders made very effective use of inter-governmental endeavours to bolster international stability and the strength of their empire during this period.[15]

The flowering of intergovernmental cooperation in the nineteenth century legitimized and encouraged the activities of NGOs and NSAs. This was most true around these technical issues where, by the second half of the nineteenth century, NGOs were often more active than inter-governmental groups. The most famous example is provided by the formation of the International Red Cross. This was a private endeavour, initially begun by the Swiss doctor Jean Henri Dunant. His call for a global body that would offer impartial health services to victims of war and natural disaster received widespread non-governmental support from individuals in various states. The First Geneva Convention signed by twelve nations (not including the United States) in 1864 offered protection to medical facilities and personnel aiding the wounded in war; it also recognized the Red Cross as a neutral group. The non-governmental nature of the Red Cross ensured that it would gain wide access to war victims throughout the next century and a half, despite the political prejudices of combatants. The Red Cross has also become a trusted evaluator of attacks on civilians because of its independence from state controls.[16]

NGOs and NSAs operating in technical fields provided the kind of impartial knowledge and assistance that could not possibly come from states competing against one another in the international system. This impartial knowledge was vital for the formation of agreed standards of behaviour in war and peace. In this sense, the common understandings that Hedley Bull identified as at the core of international society gained support through NGOs and NSAs (as well as inter-governmental organizations) for utilitarian reasons. States learned that they were all better off with non-governmental organizations functioning in technical areas.

The growth of cosmopolitanism among a wider group of educated citizens also made the formation and management of NGOs and NSAs possible in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the expansion of European states, particularly in Asia and Africa, more men and women than ever before possessed knowledge of cultures other than their own. International awareness came from first-hand experience overseas and, more often, from information circulated through the scholarly and public press. The emerging cosmopolitanism of the late nineteenth century encompassed the growth of basic skills necessary for NGOs and NSAs

to operate: familiarity with foreign languages; understanding of foreign points of view; and, perhaps most importantly, recognition of issues that interested influential people across societies.[17]

The growth of cosmopolitanism was not a development exclusive to Europe. The experience of foreign contact for non-Europeans created a foundation for non-governmental endeavours across a truly global landscape. Already in the early nineteenth century non-European governments, like the Ottoman Sultanate, participated in inter-governmental organizations like the Superior Council on Health. By the middle of the century, however, the growing connections between Europeans and non-Europeans made it possible for citizens in different parts of the globe to come together in the pursuit of their chosen ends.

Higher education offers the best example of this cosmopolitanism in action. In place of the eighteenth century 'Grand Tour' – whereby wealthy European aristocrats paraded through the classical ruins of Greece, Rome and elsewhere to develop their credentials as members of a cultured elite – the mid nineteenth century witnessed the development of institutions for serious global study, with transnational student bodies. China, Japan and India – three societies with a very small European presence in prior centuries – became the sites for heavy investment in new educational institutions, including medical schools, military academies and universities. These institutions combined Western pedagogy with local support among native groups intent on modernizing their societies. Governments contributed to education but the schools, like the famous Yale-in-China academy, were overseen by individuals and organizations operating with little state regulation. (The same can be said for foreign companies operating in China, Japan, India and other societies at the time.)

In Europe and the United States preparations to sponsor new educational institutions overseas were matched with the beginnings of a foreign student presence in places like Oxford, Paris, Berlin and Boston. The foreign student population remained small until the twentieth century, but it comprised a group of mostly young men who served as conduits for new debates about social and political change. Chinese students who travelled to Europe, the United States and Japan, for example, played a crucial role in bringing ideas about democracy, liberal-capitalism and Marxism to their homeland. Operating as *de facto* NSAs, intellectuals like Liang Qichao and Li Dazhao established circles of informal study and political organization around themselves when they returned to China from periods of study abroad. Foreign study made non-governmental organization for reform, and even revolution, possible. Transnational revolutionary movements, especially communism, acted

as NGOs bringing foreign ideas and organizational structures to countries like China.[18]

International education in the middle of the nineteenth century encouraged elite young men and women from both Western and non-Western countries to cooperate as they had never done before. This cooperation took many forms, from the formation of Red Cross chapters around the world to the spread of communist parties outside of Europe. International education made non-governmental communication and organization possible on a nearly global scale. It provided the prerequisite for what I will call the first golden age of NGOs and NSAs.

the first golden age of ngos and nsas

The years between 1880 and 1914 marked this first golden age of NGOs and NSAs. During this period their international presence grew exponentially, as their numbers increased from approximately five in 1850 to about 330 at the outbreak of the First World War.[19] They also became more global, extending their reach in ever-larger numbers to Asia, Latin America and Africa. Most significantly, NGOs and NSAs became prominent influences on government policies and public opinion. Observers began to speak of something called 'world opinion', reflecting the allegedly homogenizing influence of NGOs and NSAs on citizen perceptions around the globe.[20]

NGOs and NSAs benefited from the same trends that contributed to the growth of international business during this period. Improved transportation and communications technologies, including the railroad and the telegraph, made it possible for individuals to share information across great distances with unprecedented speed and safety. Activists in different societies could become better acquainted with one another, helping to form organizational cultures that allowed NGOs to function. Instead of relying on a small list of core principles, non-governmental groups could collaborate with more consistency over the details of their programmes. Members of NGOs could now feel 'close' to their distant colleagues.

The increased speed of communications was a particularly important contributor to NGO and NSA growth. Individuals residing in different countries could now coordinate their daily activities, update one another on immediate developments, and efficiently disseminate messages to a large public audience. Newspapers, drawing on telegraphed reports, were particularly valuable for publicity.[21] Better dissemination made NGOs and NSAs more effective at propagating their positions; better coordination

allowed NGOs and NSAs to adjust them to the foreign policy agendas of the most powerful states.

International peace activists were the most successful failures of this period. The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 proved that they never managed to outlaw armed conflict, but their ideas had undermined many of the traditional assumptions about military force. During the second half of the nineteenth century, a growing cohort of prominent aristocrats and intellectuals from Europe and other continents assembled for nearly annual 'Universal Peace Congresses', designed to outline alternatives to war among states. In 1892 the International Peace Bureau (IPB) was founded by Peace Congress participants to coordinate various anti-war efforts in different countries. The IPB's offices in Berne, Switzerland, worked to disseminate proposals for disarmament and international cooperation. The IPB also organized various attempts to lobby government figures, including Tsar Nicholas II of Russia.[22]

The creation of the Nobel Foundation in 1900 and the award of the first annual Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 contributed considerable money and prestige to NGO peace efforts. Alfred Nobel, the Swedish engineer and chemist who invented dynamite, had amassed a personal fortune that allowed him to act as an NSA on behalf of international peace activism. On his death he endowed what would become the most coveted award in this field, often given to NGOs and their leaders. In 1901 Jean Henri Dunant (the founder of the Red Cross) and Frédéric Passy (the founder of the first French peace society) shared the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1902 Élie Ducommun and Charles Albert Gobat, both Secretaries-General of the IPB, received the award. This was an extraordinary case where an NSA authored a mechanism for enriching and empowering NGOs. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize became a widely publicized event, drawing the attention of citizens across the globe to international disarmament and humanitarian assistance efforts.[23]

NGO and NSA peace activism between 1880 and 1914 provided an internationalist counter-balance to the forces of nationalism and imperialism that also grew in strength during this period. Akira Iriye has pointed out that, if anything, heightened rivalries between states drove individuals from various parts of the world to push ever harder for cooperative alternatives. Scientists, lawyers, academics, doctors and others reached out to one another across societies. They participated in a proliferation of international congresses and associations designed to exchange knowledge and create a culture of mutual assistance, rather than competition. Most significantly, internationalists acting through the new webs of NGOs and NSAs created many avenues for permanent interaction among diverse peoples, which operated with consistency despite fluctuating rivalries among states. Iriye points to the international interactions of the late nineteenth century as a source of cultural internationalism that bridged geographic, ethnic, and linguistic barriers. A single international 'civilization' began to come into existence, including not only Europeans, but also citizens of the United States, Japan, India and other parts of Asia, Latin America and Africa.[24]

Scholars have been wary of using the term 'civilization' in recent years, for fear of the assumptions about Western superiority that are often attached to it. Iriye's extensive work on NGOs and NSAs, however, illustrates that the common understandings emerging in international society during the late nineteenth century reflected Western influence, but not complete domination. Japan, in particular, played an increasingly prominent role in the work of NGOs and NSAs engaged in peace advocacy, civilian assistance and knowledge sharing. Western concepts and prejudices (including racism) did indeed continue to exert disproportionate influence on the operations of international organizations through the second half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, NGOs and NSAs offered a more open and democratic environment for non-European peoples than the traditional instruments of diplomacy.[25]

Similarly, groups often excluded from political representation also asserted their membership in a common international civilization through the use of NGOs and NSAs. The most enduring example of this phenomenon is the international women's movement that mobilized female social and political activists from at least four continents before the First World War. As mostly male professionals assembled in a proliferating number of international conferences, so too did women. In 1878 the first international women's congress – the Congrès International du Droit des Femmes – met in Paris. This conference gave rise to a regular series of women's assemblies and the formation of the International Council of Women (ICW) in 1888. The ICW became an umbrella organization for coordination among newly formed national non-governmental women's councils. In addition, it served as the initial foundation for a proliferation of NGOs that argued for peace, children's welfare and women's rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The NGOs formed soon after the creation of the ICW included the International Alliance of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Leila Rupp has shown that these NGOs constructed a new consciousness across societies that was both internationalist and feminist. The two reinforced one another, providing local women's activists with international legitimacy and women from distant countries with

a common transnational bond. The internationalism of the women's movement in the early twentieth century also offered a basis for coalitions with other NGOs that contributed to a general shift in the common understandings of social justice within international society.[26]

If feminist NGOs made the personal political for international society, so more explicitly cultural NGOs elevated the significance of personal consumerism within it. The proliferation of 'World's Fairs' in the late nineteenth century showcased national industrial and intellectual accomplishments by appealing to a common embrace of 'progress' among the citizens of the world. International cooperation appeared to offer abundance, sophistication and prosperous living to the masses that attended the expositions in Paris, Chicago and other cities. Like the conferences among scholars and other professionals, the World's Fairs contributed to a sharing of reform ideas and the collaboration of activist organizations across societies. Nations were represented at the World's Fairs, but so were NGOs involved in peace activism, social justice and scientific exchange.[27]

The consumerist embrace of internationalism at the World's Fairs appealed to mass audiences with more leisure time and disposable income than in earlier decades. The growth of international sport is a prime example of how leisure and consumerism connected with the spread of NGOs and NSAs. Though generally under-studied by historians, athletic competition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to the growth of international society through events and organizations free from direct state control. The revival in 1896 of the Ancient Greek Olympic ideal of peaceful sporting competition was at the centre of this development. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), established in Lausanne two years earlier, saw global athletics as an alternative to state-driven warfare. The IOC sought to include as many societies as possible, on an equal footing, in the games. While athletes were identified by their state of origin, national governments did not arbitrate the events. The leadership of the IOC was comprised of a cross-section of individuals who answered not to their countries but to international Olympic ideals. The IOC was an NGO that helped organize the spread of mass sporting competition in a way that appealed to an increasingly international, rather than a local or national, audience.[28]

Many scholars have pointed to the role mass sports played in the formation of national identities and the spread of nationalist agendas.[29] This is, no doubt, true. Government leaders, business executives and citizens frequently imbued athletic prowess with assertions of group superiority. Victory in a particular Olympic competition became a source

of national pride. These assertions of nationalism, however, went hand-in-hand with a redoubled internationalism. NGOs like the IOC contributed to a proliferation of international sporting competitions that brought diverse peoples together in a peaceful and relatively egalitarian setting. NGOs contributed to broad and peaceful interaction among diverse citizens through the spectacle of shared sporting competition.

Just as internationalism and nationalism both accompanied the spread of mass sports, peace activism and war-making coexisted between 1880 and 1914. This was the first golden age for the growth and spread of NGOs and NSAs. It was also a period when their promise paled before the rising tensions between states. The very same forces that contributed to NGO and NSA growth – improved transportation and communications, industrialization, mass politics and a more global vision – also encouraged state leaders to militarize their politics.[30] Citizens grew more internationalist and nationalist at the same time, a point evidenced by the popularity of war among members of the Socialist International throughout Europe, and especially in Germany. The first golden age of NGOs and NSAs ended in the macabre trenches of the First World War, horrifying symbols of how states could now mobilize a seemingly endless supply of young men to die for king and country. Internationalist ideals seemed buried and forgotten at the Somme and Verdun.

the second golden age of ngos and nsas

Despite the horror and devastation of war, however, international society and the NGOs and NSAs that underpinned it managed to survive. The First World War was a total war in that it required the full mobilization of societies for more than four years. It also enveloped lands far from Europe, including India, China and eventually the United States. These characteristics of total war notwithstanding, the fighting did not choke off all NGO and NSA activity. Prominent peace advocates continued to travel and preach for a silencing of all guns. The International Red Cross performed yeoman's work as a respected and impartial source of aid for wounded combatants. Other NGOs, including the International Peace Bureau and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, continued to meet and lobby governments for an end to hostilities. In fact, the supporters of these NGOs grew in number as the senseless fighting continued on the battlefields.

At the end of the war, President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of international cooperation and his orphaned child, the League of Nations, ignited a desperate surge of activity among advocates of inter-

governmental and non-governmental authority.[31] The 1920s and 1930s were not, as some assume, a period of naive idealism. Men and women who had witnessed the horror of the First World War understood the limits of international cooperation. Wilson, as John Milton Cooper has shown, was one of many realists who looked to international organizations as mechanisms not for replacing states, but instead for helping them to avoid self-defeating warfare. Wilson's League of Nations was an inter-governmental body designed to foster 'collective security'. Its creation inspired and legitimized a proliferation of NGOs and NSAs seeking the same end.[32]

Despite its rejection of the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations, the United States took a leading role in the creation and support of NGOs and NSAs during the inter-war years. Common assumptions to the contrary, historians have concluded that this was not a period of American 'isolation'.[33] American businesses, philanthropic organizations, educational institutions and activists' groups became more international in their conceptualization and practice than ever before. The newly formed Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, for example, made international research a newly lucrative and prestigious part of scholarly work in the United States. Many of the future American scholars of Europe and other foreign areas would benefit from the internationalization sponsored by these NGOs.[34] The International Chamber of Commerce, formed in 1920, served as an important NGO for growing American businesses seeking new markets and partners abroad.[35] As Emily Rosenberg has shown, American international non-governmental expansion during the 1920s and 1930s served a broad coalition of economic and cultural interests in the United States.[36]

The expanded American presence in NGOs and NSAs during the inter-war years coincided with similar trends in Europe, as well as Asia and Latin America. Between 1914 and 1939 the number of international NGOs across the globe grew from about 330 to approximately 730.[37] While few of these organizations were officially recognized by the League of Nations, many of them collaborated with this and other inter-governmental bodies created in the aftermath of the Paris Peace Conference and subsequent disarmament meetings among the most heavily armed states.[38] Inter-governmental bodies frequently dealt with technical matters, including telegraph and telephone communications across state boundaries, shipping regulations and new rules for the commercial use of airspace. NGOs and NSAs shared knowledge and lobbied for enforcement of

standards. In this sense, they became integral parts of a more complex, technically sophisticated and interdependent international system.

One must note that NGOs and NSAs did not escape the political controversies of the period. Their growing presence, in fact, made them attractive targets for state manipulation. Emily Rosenberg elucidates this point when she highlights the efforts of American leaders, particularly Secretary of Commerce and later President Herbert Hoover, to press NGOs into service as the chosen instruments of the White House. American financial advisers and philanthropists, according to Rosenberg, used their monetary and knowledge resources to restructure the economies of Latin American and Asian societies along lines that benefited exporters in the United States. Many of these 'financial missionaries' were officially independent from government and associated with NGOs committed to international assistance. Their policies, however, encouraged the kinds of market formation, resource extraction and private property protection that disempowered local citizens. Those who preached economic and social reform on behalf of NGOs and NSAs were sincere, but in many cases their assumptions were disproportionately beneficial to the United States. Herbert Hoover recognized this fact, and he encouraged the work of NGOs for this reason.[39]

Other states similarly manipulated NGOs and NSAs for their own purposes. The 1936 Olympics in Berlin offer a notorious instance of when fascists hijacked an idealistic enterprise. Adolf Hitler used the presence of the Olympics in his capital to showcase Nazi racial ideas and the alleged physical superiority of the Aryan race. The African-American track star Jesse Owens famously defied Hitler's aims by winning four gold medals, but his accomplishments paled in comparison with the public spectacle of Nazi salutes, fascist propaganda and open hostility to 'inferior' peoples. Despite the IOC's internationalist aims, Hitler made the Olympics a legitimizing enterprise for his racist and nationalist policies.

As the first golden age of NGOs and NSAs witnessed the dualistic development of internationalism and nationalism, the second golden age saw the frequent and self-conscious manipulation of NGOs and NSAs by state leaders. These organizations were now more pervasive than ever before. If the First World War discredited many of the traditional methods through which states forcefully pursued their interests, NGOs and NSAs offered a more acceptable means for practising *realpolitik*. This was certainly not the aim of many who joined NGOs and NSAs for sincere internationalist reasons, but states possessed formidable sources of leverage that proved difficult to resist. After all, territory in the international system remained the monopoly of states. NGOs and NSAs

needed jurisdictional rights that only government leaders could grant. Money also flowed in state-denominated, and therefore state-controlled, currencies. As NGOs and NSAs grew in prominence they were, in fact, more vulnerable to indirect state controls.

The Great Depression of the 1930s also contributed to the vulnerability of international organizations. Like most other institutions, they now faced a scarcity of resources. At the same time, financially strapped states turned to NGOs and NSAs because they served important social and political goals without draining government coffers. Most significantly, the global privations of the Great Depression turned many citizens away from the ideals of internationalism. Local and national concerns dominated popular thinking by the middle of the 1930s. Public intolerance and a popular revolt against cosmopolitanism contributed to what many recognized as a backward lurch to world war. Once again, NGOs and NSAs failed to halt state-driven destruction. If anything, NGOs and NSAs were co-opted and subsumed by nationalist militarism.

ngos, nsas and the cold war

On 1 January 1942, only weeks after the United States formally entered the Second World War in Europe and Asia, 26 countries – including Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the US – signed the 'Declaration of the United Nations'. This was a broad pledge for inter-governmental cooperation in pursuit of 'complete victory' against Germany, Japan and Italy.[40] In August 1944, representatives from the US, Britain, the Soviet Union and China met in Washington, DC, at the Dumbarton Oaks mansion, to transform the United Nations into a permanent international body that would combine the cooperative institutions of the League of Nations with a more pragmatic awareness of the utility and limits of international force. Less than a year later, on 26 June 1945, 50 nations signed the official charter of the UN in San Francisco, creating the largest and most prominent body for global inter-governmental cooperation in human history.[41]

The UN gave NGOs and NSAs an unprecedented institutional home. In addition to the 50 nations represented at the San Francisco meeting in June 1945, there were also approximately 250 NGOs in attendance. These non-governmental groups established a close working relationship with the national delegations, particularly the US representatives, and they convinced the signatories of the UN Charter to give them an official role in the new international body. Article 71 of the Charter gave the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations authority to 'make suitable

arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations'. Christy Jo Snider has explained that the US government favoured the entry of NGOs and NSAs into the UN architecture because it saw no real alternative. These groups had grown in number, influence and range during the inter-war years. Government leaders recognized that they could only legitimize the UN's universal claims and control the activities of NGOs and NSAs if the new body included more than just states. In addition, NGOs and NSAs offered vital resources for reconstruction after the devastation wrought by the Second World War. They helped to define social and economic challenges, they offered creative solutions, and they assisted with the implementation of policies. Through the UN, NGOs and NSAs provided useful services both to international society and to states.[42]

Emboldened by their new international standing, the number of NGOs and NSAs grew astronomically during the decades after the Second World War. Between 1939 and 1980 the number of international NGOs multiplied from approximately 730 to almost 6000.[43] The historical literature on this period, however, provides little evidence that the proliferation of NGOs and NSAs at first made much of a tangible difference to policy or everyday life. Contrary to the periods before and after the First World War, NGOs and NSAs were straight-jacketed after 1945 in a Cold War world that emphasized bipolarity, nationalism and state-centred power. Akira Iriye and Lawrence Wittner have described the energetic endeavours undertaken by non-governmental groups to transcend Cold War politics, but these international reform impulses amounted to very little at a time when the largest states mobilized vast resources to assure their dominance across regions. Even the UN was deadlocked by the animosities and Security Council vetoes of the United States and the Soviet Union.[44]

NGOs and NSAs became effective at influencing international change in the 1960s. This was their breakout decade in the Cold War. Public discontent with the stalemated strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union led many citizens in the US, Europe, Latin America and Asia to turn to NGOs and NSAs in the search for new ideas and alternatives to Cold War institutions.[45] The rapid retreat of European empires in Africa and Asia also encouraged individuals, particularly intellectuals and activists, to leverage NGOs and NSAs for new cooperative connections across continents. Non-governmental groups interested in 'development' and 'modernization' proliferated during this period, including the Society for International Development (SID), originally founded in 1957. SID quickly evolved from being simply an international association of diverse professionals interested in development to function

as an agenda-setter for economic assistance programmes across the globe. By the middle of the 1960s, SID had chapters on five continents, connecting prominent international thinkers with local activists.[46] Established NGOs and NSAs, like the Ford Foundation and Save the Children, also devoted extensive resources to developmental endeavors during this period.[47]

In the last decade, scholars have extensively criticized the developmental programs pursued during the latter decades of the Cold War. In particular, they have pointed to the mix of condescension, economic self-interest and narrow-mindedness that drove many well-intentioned figures to advocate destructive policies.[48] James Scott has condemned the 'high modernism' of international developmental programmes for repressing the wisdom and pragmatism of local knowledge.[49] NGOs and NSAs in this field surely fell prey to many of these shortcomings, but they also embraced a wider spectrum of social and economic points of view than the state-driven institutions, like the World Bank (officially the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the United Nations Development Programme.[50] Akira Iriye has argued that less rigid programmes for global development did at least achieve an airing, if not overwhelming policy support, within NGOs and NSAs.[51] Harold Jacobson makes the case that while the outcomes of developmental efforts might have been mixed, international activism on behalf of this end gave claims of basic human equality across societies more legitimacy. After the early 1960s it became more difficult to justify policies that presumed the inferiority of foreign peoples.[52] In this sense, the expanded work of NGOs and NSAs made equality a common understanding in international society.

Common understandings of human rights also emerged from the work of NGOs and NSAs, beginning most vigorously after the 1960s. The upheavals of the period undermined the validity of Cold War arguments that justified domestic privations in the name of 'national security'. In every major society – capitalist and communist alike – citizens demanded more attention to the individual freedoms promised, but frequently not delivered, by ruling regimes. These internal pressures reached a violent crescendo with the 'global disruption' of 1968.[53] In the following years, the energies of domestic activists poured into NGOs and NSAs seeking to mobilize international opinion in defence of human rights. This was an attempt to use international society as a bulwark against national repression, particularly in the Soviet Union and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe.

Founded in 1961, Amnesty International became the leading public exponent of human rights during this period, marshalling world-wide

attention for the plight of dissidents and threatened groups. Amnesty International and other NGOs monitored the plight of suffering individuals and kept their stories alive in the international media. Government leaders like Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev found that they could no longer avoid the issue of human rights in their policy-making endeavours. This became evident when Soviet and American negotiators reluctantly added human rights to their agenda, bowing to public pressure.[54]

Arguably the most successful NGOs of the Cold War era were the Helsinki Watch Groups and Charter 77, all of which were founded in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe following the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975. The 35 states, including the United States and the Soviet Union, that signed the Helsinki Final Act at the end of the conference pledged to protect basic human rights within their societies. Almost immediately, dissidents in Soviet-dominated states formed the Helsinki Watch Groups and Charter 77 to expose the communist violations of this agreement. They not only embarrassed their regimes but also created pressures for foreign intervention and reprisal. Western 'hard-liners', affiliated with NGOs like the Council on Foreign Relations, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and the Committee on the Present Danger, used the reports from these groups to justify an arms buildup, trade embargoes, and other measures that undermined Soviet security.[55]

Helsinki Watch Groups, Charter 77 and other human rights NGOs did not only create pressures for change in the communist world, they also offered avenues for reform. A number of scholars have pointed to the East–West associations and new ideas for cooperative politics that emerged through the efforts of scientists, disarmament activists and human rights advocates operating in the aftermath of the Helsinki conference. Common understandings about collective security, social market economies and technology transfer emerged from many of these endeavours to emphasize interdependence, rather than Cold War competition. These ideas filtered through to government leaders, particularly Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and his coterie of relatively young advisers, anxious to infuse their own society with some refreshing 'new thinking'. NGOs and NSAs did not single-handedly end the Cold War, but they offered a promising path to international reform that delegitimized many of the Cold War assumptions about capitalist–communist conflict. Human rights NGOs, in particular, constructed new common understandings among citizens and leaders across Cold War divides.[56]

beyond the cold war

The history of NGOs and NSAs after 1991 remains to be written. The end of the Cold War was a triumph for NGOs, NSAs and international society against the pressures of capitalist–communist division. New communications technologies, particularly the internet, contributed to a continued growth in the number of non-governmental entities. NGOs and NSAs also became more emboldened to challenge state governments, including that of the United States, on issues of social justice and political rights. Environmental NGOs, like Greenpeace (founded in 1971), became especially prominent in condemning the ecological damage inflicted by states, businesses and other 'traditional' international actors.[57]

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 showed, however, that NGOs and NSAs could also work with incredible effectiveness to deploy violence across the globe. Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network use the very same institutional and communicative tools that allow peaceful NGOs and NSAs to function. Terrorism and human rights activism are both parts of the non-governmental sector of international society in the twenty-first century. The contemporary 'war on terror' creates a cloud of uncertainty over whether NGOs and NSAs will in future be most salient for continued activities in parallel with state governments or for being permanently at war with them, as nations are threatened by international forces they cannot control. The future of NGOs and NSAs thus depends on the future of international society, on whether new common understandings can emerge there and on what those understandings might be.

notes

1. See, for example, Lawrence Wittner's magisterial history of anti-nuclear activism, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 3 vols (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993–2003).
2. The literature on NGOs generally excludes businesses and religious institutions from its coverage, an arbitrary move that reflects the idealistic and secular biases of scholars working in the field. The following analysis will be more inclusive, since this allows for a fuller understanding of NGOs' historical interaction with the other prominent features of the international system. One of the early seminal studies of international NGOs also encompassed both businesses and religious institutions: see Lyman Cromwell White, *International Non-Governmental Organizations: Their Purposes, Methods, and Accomplishments* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1951).
3. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, rev. edn (London: HarperCollins, 2000), esp. pp. 14–15.
4. For the most eloquent, thorough and scholarly articulation of this position, see Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

5. Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2001).
6. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2nd edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), esp. pp. 3–50. The first edition of this classic text appeared in 1977.
7. For a classic and widely influential description of civil society, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
8. Adam Watson, 'European International Society and its Expansion', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp. 13–32.
9. Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001).
10. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, 'Introduction', in Bull and Watson, *Expansion of International Society*, pp. 1–9. See also John Boli and George Thomas (eds), *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
11. Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844–1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
12. Hedley Bull, 'The Emergence of a Universal International Society' and 'The Revolt Against the West', in Bull and Watson, *Expansion of International Society*, pp. 117–26 and 217–28 respectively.
13. Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
14. Iriye, *Global Community*, p. 11.
15. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1983), esp. pp. 149–237 on the nineteenth century.
16. For further details on the history and activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross, see http://www.icrc.org (accessed 17 June 2004).
17. The evidence for increased understanding of foreign cultures during the mid nineteenth century does not mean that Europeans were free of prejudice. Edward Said has pointed to a set of condescending 'Orientalist' views that played a prominent role in European discourse about the non-Western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although Said's analysis is persuasive, it only captures part of the story since 'Orientalism' did not preclude cultural understanding in many areas, nor were 'Orientalist' views embraced by all Europeans at the time: see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). For an analysis of understandings among Western and non-Western elites, see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).
18. Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Marilyn Levine, *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).

19. Harold K. Jacobson, *Networks of Interdependence: International Organizations and the Global Political System*, 2nd edn (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 10.
20. The best analysis of how people interpreted the concept of 'world opinion' is Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
21. This was a period when newspaper readership in major urban areas grew enormously: see, for example, Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin, 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
22. The IPB has remained in existence through the twenty-first century. Its offices have moved from Berne to the home of many NGOs, Geneva. For further information, see http://www.ipb.org (accessed 17 June 2004).
23. The Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden, oversees the Nobel endowment and the various annual prizes. According to the terms of Alfred Nobel's will, a committee of Norwegians (assisted by the Norwegian Nobel Institute), awards the Nobel Peace Prize. For further details on the history of the Nobel Foundation, see http://www.nobel.se (accessed 17 June 2004), and on the Norwegian Nobel Institute, see http://www.nobel.no (accessed 17 June 2004).
24. Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 13–50.
25. Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism*, pp. 36–49; Iriye, *Global Community*, p. 13.
26. Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 13–48, 130–55; Leila J. Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888–1945', *American Historical Review*, 99 (5) (1994) 1571–600. See also Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine, 2002).
27. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
28. For further information on the history of the IOC, see http://www.olympic.org. See also Barbara Keys, 'The Internationalization of Sport, 1890–1939', in Frank Ninkovich and Liping Bu (eds), *The Cultural Turn: Essays in the History of US Foreign Relations* (Chicago: Imprint, 2001), pp. 201–20; Iriye, *Global Community*, p. 16.
29. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Barbara Keys, 'Spreading Peace, Democracy, and Coca Cola®: Sport and American Cultural Expansion in the 1930s', *Diplomatic History*, 28 (2) (2004) 165–96.
30. See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 194–274.
31. On Woodrow Wilson's internationalist vision and its lasting influence, see Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

32. John Milton Cooper Jr, *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
33. For seminal work on American internationalism during the inter-war years, see Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).
34. Akira Iriye, 'A Century of NGOs', *Diplomatic History*, 23 (3) (1999) 425. For further details on the activities of these organizations, see http://www.ssrc.org and http://www.acls.org respectively (accessed 17 June 2004).
35. White, *International Non-Governmental Organizations*, pp. 19–32.
36. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*.
37. Jacobson, *Networks of Interdependence*, p. 10.
38. Bill Seary, 'The Early History: From the Congress of Vienna to the San Francisco Conference', in Peter Willetts (ed.), *'The Conscience of the World': The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System* (London: Hurst, 1996), pp. 22–4.
39. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*; Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
40. For the text of the Declaration of the United Nations, 1 January 1942, see http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decade03.htm (accessed 17 June 2004).
41. For the text of the United Nations Charter and a short history of the organization, see http://www.un.org (accessed 17 June 2004); Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations*, 2 vols (New York: St Martin's, 1982); Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
42. Christy Jo Snider, 'The Influence of Transnational Peace Groups on US Foreign Policy Decision-Makers during the 1930s: Incorporating NGOs into the UN', *Diplomatic History*, 27 (3) (2003) 377–404.
43. Jacobson, *Networks of Interdependence*, p. 10.
44. Iriye, *Global Community*, pp. 37–95; Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, vol. 1.
45. See Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 7–130.
46. For further details on the SID, see http://www.sidint.org (accessed 18 June 2004).
47. Iriye, *Global Community*, pp. 79–82.
48. See Nick Cullather, 'Miracles of Modernization: The Green Revolution and the Apotheosis of Technology', *Diplomatic History*, 28 (2) (2004) 227–54; David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele and Michael E. Latham (eds), *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Suri, *Power and Protest*, pp. 131–63.