

Matthew Evangelista "The Paradox of State Strength: Transnational Relations, Domestic Structures, and Security Policy in Russia and the Soviet Union" IO, Winter 1995

In this article, Evangelista proposes that the domestic structure of a country affects both how open it is to ideas promoted by transnational actors and the extent to which those ideas influence the policies which are implemented. In doing so, he uses the case of Russia and the Soviet Union as his example.

He begins with a literature review of transnational relations. The literature from the 1970s would dismiss the role of transnational relations in the area of "high politics" (which includes security policy) and in non-democratic countries. In this and other schools of thought, one would not expect to see a transnational influence on Soviet security policy, especially in realist theory due to the "systemic constraints of international anarchy[and the]... fear of mutual exploitation" (p.3) Domestic coalitions are expected to be privileged over transnational ones.

The key assumptions underlying any argument about transnational relations are as follows: opposing parties debate foreign policy in their contention for power, ideas and material interests both affect policy choices, and crises provide opportunities for new ideas to arise from policy entrepreneurs. "In this model the transnational allies of domestic political actors provide resources to influence internal debates over foreign policy" (p.4). The model considers two stages of the policy process: entrepreneurs gain access to government decision makers, and policies which the entrepreneurs prefer are implemented. The variation at both of these stages is explained by state structures. Specifically, Evangelista looks at three axes of state structure: centralization of political institutions, strength of civil society, and the nature of policy networks linking state and society.

These three variables are axes along which change can be seen in comparing the Soviet Union with post-communist Russia. Thus, Evangelista uses this as his cases, looking at the Soviet response to SDI and the unilateral test ban and verification debate. He argues that in the former Soviet Union the Communist party had a great deal of control over the transnational contacts of Soviet citizens. But those Soviet citizens who had international contacts also had direct access to high levels of the Soviet leadership, and used these to press their causes.

**Soviet response to SDI:** "the position adopted by the Soviet government – not to respond in kind to SDI but to develop relatively inexpensive countermeasures – cannot be understood without considering the role of transnational actors. Their advocacy of an asymmetric response was a genuinely new policy idea" (p.14). Transnational actors also pointed out a violation of the ABM treaty by the USSR, an act which Evangelista suggests was a political effort to discredit their internal opponents. The "ultimate accomplishment" of the transnational actors was to delink SDI from arms control, and act which Evangelista says was clearly a result of their efforts, pointing to the timing and to the extensive opposition to concessions within the Soviet security establishment.

**Soviet policy on nuclear testing:** transnational actors wanted to promote verification as a means to a test ban treaty, and also support a unilateral test ban by the USSR. They played a large role in Gorbachev's actions, a fact explained by their access to the top leadership. "the hierarchical, centralized nature of the Soviet system meant that once the top leadership was on board, implementation of the project with all of the necessary resources was almost guaranteed" (p.24)

Evangelista looks at alternate explanations for the changes in Soviet security policy. He cedes the importance of economic concerns especially in the SDI area, but argues that these provided a "window through which transnational policy entrepreneurs could promote their solutions. But the content of those solutions often depended on the transnational actors themselves" (p.20). He dismisses an argument based on the armed forces and security reasons.

With glasnost, new actors began to have influence over security policy. Opponents of arms control in Russia and the US increased contacts with the waning of the Cold War, and the

legislature provided a forum for these debates to reignite. The market economy generated new incentives for military companies to support arms buildups. These changes altered transnational activity in the post-glasnost era.

**Russian policy on SDI:** With increasing openness, the party line was not so strong, and support for a Russian SDI re-emerged. A transnational pro-SDI lobby was established, a result of transnational interaction between weapons developers in the US and Russia. Again, the timing of the emergence of this lobby can be explained by changes in the international arena (Iraq, etc.), but the degree of influence depends to a great extent on structural factors.

**Russian policy on nuclear testing:** The nuclear testing debate was one in which there was a delicate balance of power between opponents and proponents on the domestic level. The transnational community no longer played an important role. Domestic movements emerged on both sides, though they did have some limited connections to transnational communities. An alternate explanation for policy outcomes focuses on the American-Russian relationship. While the US influenced outcomes in the former Soviet Union, the main determinant was domestic balance of debate.

**Conclusion:** What do these cases tell us? They suggest that as the Soviet system opened, transnational actors multiplied and flourished. But competition between groups with opposing agendas diluted their impact, and privileged groups with money and power (which favored the pro-military groups). Under a centralized state, access of transnational groups is limited, but when it exists it is often effective. Domestic structure is an important intervening variable in determining the extent and efficacy of transnational pressure. While state institutions matter, there is no evidence, however, that institutionalization of the transnational actors was an important variable in these cases.