

IR Field Seminar Week3
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Margaret E. Keck, and Kathryn Sikkink. Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Chapter 3. "Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America."

History of Human Rights Ideas and the Network

-Political leaders and lawyer-diplomats first introduced and promoted the idea of internationally recognized human rights in the interwar period.

-After these individual efforts, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the values which bind actors together. However, it is important to note that the advocacy networks spur state actions to advance the norms embodied in this law. Those networks include:

- (1) parts of intergovernmental organizations at both the international and regional level:
intergovernmental organizations like UN often rely their information gathering on NGOs. Since 80s, OAS as a regional organization promoted democracy and human rights.
- (2) international NGOs: One of the first human rights organizations which emphasized a small but specific range of gross violations of human rights. The number of such NGOs increased dramatically in the north and the south in the 70s and 80s.
- (3) domestic NGOs: Many human rights activists in Latin America became involved in networks as a result of their personal experience living under repressive regimes. Their organizations like the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo cooperated with international NGOs and pressured foreign governments.
- (4) private foundations: Ford Foundation and other foundations funded human rights activities promoting social science researches on human rights issues in Latin America.
- (5) parts of some governments: Most governments' human rights policies have emerged as a response to pressure from organizations in the human rights network, and have depended fundamentally on network information.

Argentina

Amnesty International and other NGOs gathered information about the Argentinean junta's political repression. Based on this information, US government reduced and later eliminated the military aid. The Argentine domestic human rights organizations and activists developed significant external contacts with US and European counterparts. As international pressures increased, the Argentine junta hoped to improve its international image in the US and Europe and to restore military and economic aid. This cooperation between NGOs and governments is a classic boomerang process.

Mexico

Until the late 80's, human rights violations in Mexico didn't attract much attention because no advocacy network existed. However, the situation changed completely when domestic NGOs funded by foreign foundations like Ford Foundation developed and international NGOs like Amnesty International and Americas Watch released a report on human rights violations in Mexico. This report provoked pressures from US government (negotiating NAFTA with Mexico) and regional organizations which finally forced Mexican government to reduce its human rights violations. The press and NGOs played a role in monitoring the Mexican compliance.

Note that in both cases foreign governments placed pressure on human rights violations only after NGOs had identified, documented and denounced human rights violations, and had pressured foreign governments to become involved. Also note that "in the realm of human rights, it is the combination of moral and material pressure that leads to change (linking principled ideas with material goals)."