

Historical Precursors to Modern Transnational Social Movements and Networks

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink

When we suggest that transnational social movements and transnational advocacy networks have become politically significant forces in international relations over the last several decades, we immediately face a series of challenges.¹ Many people question the novelty of these phenomena. After all, internationalism in various forms has been around for a long time. Others ask about significance—have these campaigns ever produced important social, political, or cultural changes? On what basis do we attribute such changes to network activists' work rather than to deeper structural causes?

A look at history can give us some insights into these questions. In this chapter, we examine two historical campaigns that cast light on the work of modern social movements and transnational advocacy networks. They include the 1833–65 Anglo-American campaign to end slavery in the United States and the efforts of the international suffrage movement to secure the vote for women between 1888 and 1928.

We selected campaigns in which foreign linkages or actors were central to the organizing effort, although the degree and nature of international involvement varies.² Both campaigns were lengthy and difficult, but both contributed to major political change. The international women's suffrage movement took over a half a century to secure the vote for women in most of the countries of the world, and the Anglo-American antislavery campaign succeeded only after sixty years of effort and a hugely destructive civil war.

These campaigns began with an idea that was almost unimaginable even by its early proponents. That they could abolish slavery or gain the vote for women seemed impossible. One of the main tasks that social movements undertake, however, is to make possible the previously unimaginable by framing problems in such a way that their solution comes to appear inevitable. But such changes are neither obvious nor linear. They are the contingent result of contestations over meaning and resources waged by specific actors in a specific historical context.

International Pressures for the Abolition of Slavery in the United States: 1833–65

The antislavery movement, which began by demanding the abolition of the slave trade and then promoted the emancipation of slaves, spanned many countries over an entire century.³ In its scope, methods, and sensibilities, it is the most obvious forerunner of the movements discussed in this book. We examine only one piece of this global campaign, the Anglo-American network in the period 1833–65, which focused primarily on the emancipation of slaves in the United States.

British abolitionist sentiment in the late 1700s and early 1800s focused first on the abolition of the slave trade, in which British merchants and capital were heavily involved. After it was formally abolished in the United States and Britain in 1807, abolitionists sought a legal prohibition on slavery in the territories controlled by the British, which was secured in 1833. After these “closer to home” issues were resolved, the British abolitionists turned their attention to what they considered the most glaring instance of modern slavery, its practice in the United States. The Irish MP and antislavery leader Daniel O’Connell encouraged the movement to “enable us to begin the work with the vile and sanguinary slaveholders of Republican America. I want to be directly at them. No more side-wind attacks; firing directly at the hull, as the seaman says, is my plan.”⁴ One British antislavery publication urged Americans to “wipe out the shame which renders [you] a scorn among the nations of the world,” while an address of the Irish Unitarian Christian Society to its brethren in America called slavery a “plague-spot in America, a cancer which must be boldly cut away,” and a “compilation of the greatest crimes against God and men” (Stange 1984, 59, 61).

So, as the British antislavery movement expanded from a domestic pressure group concerned with changing British policy to beginning to become part of a transnational network, it chose America as its first target and initiated a transatlantic campaign in coordination with U.S. antislavery groups. The campaign culminated in the emancipation of slaves in 1865, with the end of the Civil War, and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Like their counterparts in the target states of modern networks, many U.S. policymakers and citizens resented this British “intervention” in their affairs. One clergyman said, “we do not like the tone of English criticism upon us”; another complained of the British Anti-Slavery League meddling in American affairs and asked why there was not a league to oppose serfdom in Russia or polygamy in Turkey. A common complaint was that the British did not understand America’s domestic institutions and thus should stay out of its affairs (Stange 1984, 63, 73, 84). Pro-slavery forces in the United States argued also that the condition of the lower classes in England was “far inferior” to that of American slaves. A congressman from South Carolina denounced the British “exclamations and denunciations” of American slavery that filled “every public journal in Great Britain,”

despite poverty in Scotland and “enslaved subjects” in Ireland (Fladeland 1972, 160).

Historians and political scientists have argued at great length over whether the end of slavery was the result of economic or moral pressures.⁵ The most current and careful historical research argues that economics simply cannot explain the demise of slavery and finds that the impetus behind abolition was primarily religious and humanitarian. Robert William Fogel (1989) concludes that a quarter century of research on the economics of slavery shows that it was “profitable, efficient, and economically viable in both the U.S. and the West Indies when it was destroyed. . . . Its death was an act of ‘econocide,’ a political execution of an immoral system at its peak of economic success, incited by men ablaze with moral fervor” (410).

Some historians, instead of seeing economics and morality as dichotomous explanations, consider how the rise of capitalism and changes in the market contributed to changing perceptions, conventions about moral responsibility, and the techniques of action that underlay the wave of humanitarianism in the period 1750–1850 (Haskell 1985). This approach fits nicely with Tarrow’s (1994) argument that social movements emerged in the eighteenth century from “structural changes that were associated with capitalism” such as “new forms of association, regular communication linking center and periphery, and the spread of print and literacy” (48).

Technological and institutional change can alter the “moral universe” in which action takes place by changing how people think about responsibility and guilt and by supplying them with new ways to act (Haskell 1985, 356). For Thomas Haskell, humanitarianism requires not only the “ethical maxims that make helping strangers the right thing to do” but “a technique or recipe for intervening—a specific sequence of steps that we know we can take to alter the ordinary course of events”; this “recipe” must be sufficiently routine to use easily (358). Here we have Tilly’s “repertoires of contention,” leading to Tarrow’s “modular” repertoires. Haskell shows how technological change and the market facilitated the appearance of recipes that humanitarian groups, especially the antislavery movement, later embraced. Tarrow reminds us that collective action repertoires like boycotts, mass petitioning, and barricades were pioneered within particular struggles and then were diffused to or emulated by other social movements (1994, 40–45). Foner captures this effect in the United States: “If anti-slavery promoted the hegemony of middle class values, it also provided a language of politics, a training in organization, for critics of the emerging order. The anti-slavery crusade was a central terminus, from which tracks ran leading to every significant attempt to reform American society after the Civil War” (1980, 76).

The transnational antislavery campaign provided a “language of politics” and organizational and tactical recipes for other transnational campaigns as well. The women’s suffrage campaign initially drew many of its activists and tactics from

the antislavery movement. The movement against foot binding in China set up anti-foot-binding societies similar to the antislavery societies in Britain and the United States. The “society” itself was a prominent recipe. The modern versions of these societies are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and they have become even more specialized and diverse, offering a wider selection of organizational and strategic recipes.

In Britain and the United States, activists set up local, regional, and national antislavery organizations that frequently exchanged letters, publications, and visits. In Britain, approximately 400,000 persons signed petitions against the slave trade in 1791–92 (1 out of every 11 adults); in 1814, abolitionists gathered 750,000 names (1 out of every 8 adults); by 1833, 1 of every 7 adults, or twice the number of voters in the most recent elections, signed petitions in favor of the emancipation of slaves (Fogel 1989, 212, 217, 227). This was clearly a mass movement, not a small group of elites. In the United States, the movement matched or may have exceeded that of Britain at its peak. In 1838, authors estimate that there were 1,350 local antislavery societies in the United States, with between 120,000 and 250,000 members (Aptheker 1989, 56). The movement’s petitions overwhelmed the congressional machinery, and were so divisive to the political and regional compromises inherent in each party that the House voted first to table them and later not even to receive them.⁶

The backbone of the movement in both countries was made up of Quakers and the “dissenting denominations”—Methodists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians, who brought a deeply religious, evangelical, and philanthropic spirit to the movement in both countries (Abel and Klingberg 1927, 2). They also drew on a tradition of transatlantic networking and information exchange that had flourished among them during the last decades before American independence (Olson 1992). Some members of the antislavery movement, especially in the United States, were more influenced by Enlightenment ideas of equality and liberty than by Christianity (Foner 1980, 66). The British religious denominations were more unified in their antislavery sentiment than the American denominations and tried to encourage their American religious counterparts to take more forceful positions against slavery. British Unitarians, for example, were horrified to learn that the American Unitarian Association had named a slaveholder to their honorary board of vice presidents and agitated against it until the association abolished the board (Stange 1984, 96).

Antislavery groups in the United States and Britain borrowed tactics, organizational forms, research, and language from each other. They used the tactics of the petition and boycotts of slave-produced goods and hired itinerant speakers very successfully on both sides of the Atlantic. Many of these tactics originated in Britain, and the transnational network served as a vehicle for diffusing tactical recipes and collective action repertoires from one domestic social movement to another. In some cases, the antislavery network did more than transfer repertoires,

becoming a place for transnational political communication that mutually altered the tactics used on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite internal divisions, British and American groups often arrived at common positions such as opposition to the colonization schemes proposed on both sides of the Atlantic by the 1830s. The British abolitionist campaign for immediate emancipation of West Indian slaves led the American movement to switch its main demand from gradual to immediate emancipation. As to mutual influence, the U.S. antislavery movement eventually may have encouraged the British movement to include women on a more equal footing. The British movement, on the other hand, particularly encouraged U.S. church establishments to take a strong stand against slavery (Aptheker 1989, 91, 150).

One of the most important tactics the abolitionists used was what we call information politics and human rights activists a century and a half later would call the human rights methodology: “promoting change by reporting facts” (Thomas 1993, 83). The most influential example was the volume *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. Abolitionist activists Theodore Weld and Angelina and Sarah Grimke compiled the book from testimonials of individuals and extensive clippings from southern newspapers. *American Slavery as It Is* became the handbook of the antislavery cause, selling more than a hundred thousand copies in its first year and continuing to sell year after year (Miller 1996, 332–33). William Lee Miller’s description of the book shows how it foreshadowed many of the modern publications of transnational movements and networks, both in its scrupulous attention to reporting facts and in its use of dramatic personal testimony to give those facts human meaning and to motivate action.

Although this book was loaded with, and shaped by, a quite explicit moral outlook and conclusion—no book was ever more so—its essence was something else: a careful assembling of attested facts, to make its point. . . . The author or compilers did not simply tell you the facts and let the facts speak for themselves; they told you repeatedly what to think of these facts. Nevertheless . . . it tried to persuade you by assembling overwhelming piles of undeniable specifics. (325)

The diffusion of tactics through transnational networks could never have led in itself to the emergence of a full-fledged antislavery movement in the United States. As Fogel points out, “Although England provided the spark for a new American crusade, the fire would neither have been lit nor sustained without kindling and a large reserve of fuel.” Both the kindling and the fuel were domestic: there were militant leaders to spread the idea and “a public ready to receive it” (1989, 267, 269).

Fogel’s fire metaphor serves well for describing the types of interactions we see in these two historical cases: foreign influence or transnational linkages often provide the spark, but that spark only catches and sustains fire with domestic kin-

ding and fuel. There must be an idea, advocates to spread it, and a public ready to receive it. But how do we know when a public is ready to receive an idea? Why do some ideas resonate while others do not? In the case of the antislavery movement, the "vast supply of religious zeal" created by the Protestant revival movements of the early nineteenth century heightened the receptiveness of religious communities in Britain and the northeastern United States to antislavery ideas (Fogel 1989, 267–69). Revival theology emphasized each individual's capacity and responsibility for salvation through his or her good works and efforts to root out individual and social sin. In this worldview, not only was slavery an example of social sin, but the slave was being denied the individuality essential for personal salvation. Temperance movements also appealed to this sensibility, because alcohol was seen as a major example of personal sin that led to social sin, and many antislavery activists also participated in the temperance movement. Yet some apparently congruent concerns such as "wage slavery"—that is, low wages and poor working conditions among the working classes in the North—did not resonate with the Protestant sensibility. Workers, however poor, were free to strive both for salvation and to improve their lot in life; slaves were not.

The world antislavery conferences held in London in 1840 and 1843 solidified Anglo-American cooperation. But the 1840 conference also sharpened internal divisions within the Anglo-American antislavery movement when the English majority refused to seat several black and white women elected as American delegates. They seated the women in the balcony as spectators, where part of the U.S. male delegation, including the fiery abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, joined them. This led to a split in the movement, and the Garrisonians were not invited to the 1843 conference.

The antislavery campaign resembled modern transnational social movements and the advocacy network definition in terms of the dense exchanges of information among its members. The communications technology of the time of course imposed a different pace on the transatlantic movement. British abolitionists argued in the mid-1800s that "America was no longer a distant land: it was only two weeks away" (Stange 1984, 96). Despite the distance, British and American antislavery groups exchanged letters, publications, and speakers and were honorary members of each other's societies. (American antislavery speakers in Britain attracted large audiences; some early British speakers in the United States barely escaped lynching.)

After having been serialized in an antislavery newspaper, Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold three hundred thousand copies in the United States in the first year (about one copy for every eight families in the North) and more than a million copies in Great Britain in eight months in 1852 (Fogel 1989, 342; Stange 1984, 140). In writing her novel, Stowe relied on the abolitionist compendium of facts and testimony *American Slavery as It Is*, even, she said, sleeping with it under her pillow. "In 1853, she published a 'key' to Uncle Tom's

cabin—a defense of its authenticity, an answer to those who said such things do not happen, or are rare—which drew heavily and explicitly on the testimony in *American Slavery as It Is*” (Miller 1996, 334). Stowe made a triumphant speaking tour of Britain in 1853 from which she returned with more than twenty thousand pounds sterling for the cause. Even Queen Victoria probably would have received her had the American minister not objected that this would appear to be a British government endorsement of the abolitionist movement (Fladeland 1972, 354–56).

As in many modern issue networks, the line between government and movement was fuzzy in Britain. Many leading antislavery crusaders in the early 1800s, such as William Wilberforce, were members of Parliament, and they could often count on the abolitionist sentiments of members of the government (Fladeland 1972, 52). In the United States during this period, the abolition movement had few sympathizers in government (although in the late 1830s it gained champions such as John Quincy Adams in Congress).

The transnational dimension was most influential and decisive when government links with civil society were impaired. In antebellum U.S. politics, southern dominance in political institutions and northern fear of breaking up the Union kept abolitionist sentiment out of these institutions.⁷ Ironically, it was the constitutional provision allowing a slave to count as three-fifths of a person in determining congressional districts and electoral votes that gave the South this control of political institutions (Fogel 1989, 339). The South used its dominant position to silence debate over the issue of slavery, first tabling and then refusing to receive antislavery petitions, even those raising issues clearly within the congressional purview such as slavery in the District of Columbia.

These gag rules, prohibiting members from introducing antislavery petitions or resolutions, made transnational linkage politics an attractive strategy for American abolitionists; by joining with British activists and at times leveraging the power of the British government on behalf of the antislavery cause, they could amplify their own voices.

For years, John Quincy Adams and a handful of antislavery representatives were virtually alone in defending the right to petition against slavery. Throughout his long battle against the gag rules, Adams’s strategy was to frame slavery as an issue of civil liberty. When Congress tried twice to censure him for introducing petitions against it, Adams conducted a brilliant defense, accusing supporters of gag rules of suppressing the constitutional right of petition and interfering with the most basic of civil liberties, the right of legislators to speak their minds freely in Congress.

By 1841–42, Adams had more support, especially from Joshua Giddings of Ohio and a number of other antislavery advocates in Congress. The abolitionist activists set up what Giddings dubbed a “select committee on Slavery,” to plan a congressional strategy on abolition, do research and writing for congressional speeches on slavery, and print and circulate the speeches around the country since

officially printed documents “would be far more valuable than abolitionist tracts and pamphlets” (Miller 1996, 405). In those days a congressman had no staff, so the members of the select committee made the unprecedented decision to use their own funds to rent rooms and hire a research assistant to do fact-finding for their speeches. They hired Theodore Weld, one of the most prominent abolitionist “agents” and speakers. Weld was also the leading researcher of the antislavery movement and had helped compile *American Slavery as It Is*. As an itinerant abolitionist speaker, Weld had helped convert three of the congressional members of the select committee to the cause, so he was a logical choice for staff. He agreed to do the work because “these men are in a position to do for the Anti-slavery cause by a single speech more than our best lecturers can do in a year” (405–6). The select committee was a strange hybrid somewhere between the NGOs that lobby Congress today and the modern committee or congressional staff. It was a forerunner of the modern network where activists and policymakers collaborated on a joint project motivated by principled ideas.

With the rise of new antislavery leadership in Congress, British abolitionist influence in the United States waned (Fladeland 1972, 342). Paradoxically, it was a transnational factor, immigration, that robbed the South of its historical dominance of political institutions. The “huge influx of foreigners into the North after 1820” affected the distribution of House seats and electoral votes, giving the North the possibility of gaining control of the Federal government (Fogel 1989, 319).

The task that fell to the new political antislavery leadership was one that only domestic leaders could carry out—a reinterpretation of the meaning of the Constitution. Before 1842, politicians and abolitionists alike believed that the Constitution prohibited the federal government from interfering with the issue of slavery. It was this “federal consensus” that had to be undermined for the antislavery campaign to proceed (Fogel 1989, 282). This interpretive task fell to the new political leadership in the House. With Weld’s help, and following in the footsteps of Adams, they claimed for themselves the role of defenders of the Constitution. In a 1937 pamphlet, Weld first developed the theory that freedom was national and slavery local, so whenever an individual left a slave state’s jurisdiction, in the territories, in the District of Columbia, or on the high seas, “freedom instantly broke out.” In 1842, Congressman Giddings used such a theory to turn the classic arguments of southern slaveholders against them. In an argument that grew out of the work of the select committee, he claimed that “if the Federal Government had no constitutional right to interfere with slavery in any way” then it followed that the federal government “had no constitutional right to support it.”⁸ This line of argument then allowed the antislavery members to challenge the fugitive slave laws and the legalization of slavery in Washington, D.C. With the population shift to the North and savvy coalition building by some of the antislavery forces, this reframing helped the new Republican Party put together a fragile but winning coalition in the 1860 elections that brought Lincoln to power (205).

The outbreak of the Civil War did not immediately unify the Anglo-American antislavery alliance around a strong common purpose. Many leaders in the antislavery campaign were pacifists and found it hard to support any war. The carnage and destruction on the battlefield appalled British humanitarians, some of whom were sympathetic to the South's claim that it was fighting for independence against an imperial North. Particularly troubling was the fact that the leaders of both the South and the North denied that slavery was a cause of the war. Although "the most explosive confrontations between North and South throughout the antebellum period related to slavery," political constraints prevented both northern and southern leaders from identifying slavery as the source of the conflict (H. Jones 1992, 16). Lincoln understood that many northerners were unwilling to fight to free blacks and that an antislavery campaign could even drive the border states out of the Union. Yet his refusal to make emancipation a war aim left an increasingly moribund abolitionist movement in Britain in disarray and allowed the British government to focus on its commercial interests rather than moral issues (16).

Southern leaders believed that the British textile mills' dependence on southern cotton would force the British government to recognize and support the Confederacy. "Nobody but crazyheaded abolitionists ever supposed for a moment that England would not recognize the Southern Confederacy" the *Richmond Whig* declared in early 1861 (Jenkins 1974, 1:5). Still, Confederate leaders understood that vocal support of slavery would not help their cause to gain British support.

The southern leaders were not just engaging in wishful thinking. By mid-1862, the three most powerful men in the British government, Prime Minister Palmerston, Foreign Minister Lord John Russell, and Chancellor William Gladstone, were all leaning toward offering to mediate the Civil War jointly with France. This would have favored the South and most likely would have provoked a northern refusal followed by British recognition of the Confederacy. Spurred by Confederate military victories, which made southern separation appear irrevocable, by economic distress in the British textile industry, where almost a third of the mills were closed, and by popular distress at the war's carnage, British leaders felt that public opinion would support the peacemaker (H. Jones 1992, 151, 165).

By early 1863, well before the decisive military victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg that turned the tide of the war in the Union's favor, the British leaders had changed their minds and instead maintained a policy of "wait and see" neutrality. What led to this shift in British policy?

One factor was Lincoln's September 1862 Emancipation Proclamation, which reinvigorated the antislavery movement and clarified the moral dimension of the conflict (Owen 1994, 111). Initially the British press and public pointed to the hypocrisy of freeing slaves in territories over which Lincoln had no control and perceived the proclamation as an incitement to slave revolt in the South (Jenkins 1974, 2:176; H. Jones 1992, 225). In the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny, British

fear of "servile insurrection" played a role "in shaping and distorting" the initial response (Jenkins 1974, 2:158).

Yet the proclamation also reinvigorated the antislavery movement, which organized a series of large meetings and rallies in support of the Union in December 1862 and January 1863. When the feared slave revolt in the South failed to materialize, British leaders began to understand the long-range implications of Lincoln's proclamation. It paved the way for the end of slavery, and it clarified the war aims of the North so that any British offer to mediate the conflict put the country in the position of condoning slavery.⁹

In the end, antislavery sentiment in Britain was "one of a combination of influences" that helped keep the British from recognizing the Confederacy and extending aid to it, an act that most agree could have altered the outcome of the Civil War (Fladeland 1972, 386). Considering how close the British came to recognizing the South, each factor weighing against intervention was important. William Seward, Lincoln's secretary of state, convinced the British that his government would perceive any intervention as a hostile move, with all the complications that entailed for the unprotected border with Canada. Neutrality in the Civil War also kept Britain's hands free to handle difficult diplomatic situations in Europe. But there was also a moral dimension to the debate. The Emancipation Society's campaign helped mobilize British public opinion in favor of the North, convincing leaders that any policy that appeared to favor the slave states would be divisive and unpopular (Jenkins 1974, 2:269; Owen 1994, 114).

In the case of abolition, a nascent transnational advocacy network, mobilized around a moral issue and using some tactics similar to those of modern social movements networks, succeeded first in helping create abolition as a pressing political issue in the United States and then, when the issue ultimately contributed to war, became a crucial factor in preventing British recognition of the South.

The International Movement for Women's Suffrage

Historians and international relations scholars have paid remarkably little attention to the international dimensions of movements for women's suffrage. Recent historical research, however, stresses the mutual influence and international cooperation among suffrage movements around the world (Dubois 1994, 254). Nancy Cott argues that "anyone investigating feminism at the turn of the twentieth century cannot fail to recognize that she or he is looking at an international movement, one in which ideas and tactics migrated from place to place as individuals in different countries traveled, looked for helpful models, and set up networks of reform" (1994, 234).

The international movement for women's suffrage began with women's involvement in antislavery organizations in Britain and the United States. Their experience at the World Anti-Slavery Conference in 1940, when the English major-

ity refused to seat women, spurred Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to press forward with an organized movement for women's rights that led to the historic meeting of 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York. Likewise, an early split in the suffrage movement in the United States came when suffragists' Republican allies supported the ballot for freed male slaves but not for women. Parallel to the contribution that the civil rights movement and "freedom summer" made to the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, these early connections and evolutions remind us that besides diffusing repertoires movements in their shortcomings sow the seeds of future movements (McAdam 1988).

When Elizabeth Cady Stanton first suggested a suffrage resolution at the Seneca Falls meeting in 1848, even her most resolute supporters were afraid that it might make the movement look ridiculous and compromise their other goals (Griffith 1984, 54). Voting was considered the quintessential male domain of action. Other issues, such as equality before the law in matters of property, divorce, and children, better pay for working women, equal access to jobs and education, and application of the same moral codes to the behavior of men and women, were much less controversial than the proposal that women should vote. Resolutions regarding these issues passed unanimously, while the suffrage resolution was carried by a small majority and only after eloquent speeches by Cady Stanton and abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Buhle and Buhle 1978, 96–98).

We might consider these other initially "less controversial" issues present in 1848 at Seneca Falls the "noncases" with which to compare women's suffrage. Why did suffrage, originally perceived as more radical, become the goal of a successful global campaign while some of the other issues were still unresolved? We argue that suffrage, like slavery, was a clear example of denial of the most basic legal equality of opportunity. The causal chain was short: the law (and the state behind the law) denied women the right to vote. The solution, a change in the law, was simple. The issue lent itself to framing and action that appealed to the most basic values of the liberal state—equality, liberty, and democracy.

Like the abolitionists, most early women's rights advocates were motivated by the religious revival movements. The slogan of Susan B. Anthony, for example, was "resistance to tyranny is obedience to God." Other early suffragists, instead of asserting that women are entitled to equal rights and citizenship by virtue of being human (the liberal human rights idea), framed their arguments in terms of women's difference from men and the unique qualities, such as morality or nurturing, that they could bring to the public realm (Berkovitch 1995, 21). Opponents of women's suffrage also believed that women were different, claiming that if given the vote women would be too conservative, too tied to the church, or too supportive of banning alcoholic beverages. Nineteenth-century campaigns against prostitution and trafficking in women ("white slavery") or for special protective legislation for women workers were thus premised on the idea that women's vulnerability and fragile nature required special protection (23–46).

Although many domestic suffrage organizations were active in the nineteenth century, it was not until 1904, when women's rights advocates founded the International Woman Suffrage Association (IWSA), that an international campaign for suffrage based on an Enlightenment frame of equal rights was launched (Berkovich 1995, 46–50). In fact, there were three or four overlapping campaigns with different degrees of coordination. Suffrage groups were often divided by political and personal differences and disagreed over the same kinds of choices that modern movements and networks face: single issue focus versus broader demands, lobbying and political tactics versus grassroots organizing, and radical civil disobedience versus legal forms of opposition.

Unlike the antislavery movement, the women's suffrage movement relied more on symbolic and pressure politics than information politics. The problem women faced was more about entrenched social attitudes and practices than lack of information or understanding. Nowhere did women find more powerful organizations, such as other governments, willing to use their leverage or devote resources to promote women's suffrage beyond their borders. The British government initiated an active global antislavery campaign after 1834, but it never made votes for women a foreign policy demand. Nor were suffrage organizations able to use accountability politics, for no government would accept international obligations about suffrage to which it could later be held accountable. As a result, women used symbolic politics more than any other tactic, and when their peaceful tactics produced meager results they sometimes turned to civil disobedience and provocation. Many activists were prepared to break the law to gain attention for their cause and to go to jail to defend their beliefs.

The first and often overlooked international organization promoting women's suffrage was the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Because it believed that the vote would allow women to secure prohibition and physical security for themselves and their children, the WCTU changed from a conventional Protestant women's group to a politically aggressive organization fighting for a wide range of issues, including suffrage (DuBois 1994, 256). One WCTU activist traveled all over the world, "leaving in her wake some 86 women's organizations dedicated to achieving woman's suffrage" (Nolan and Daley 1994, 13). Everywhere that women gained the vote between 1890 and 1902—Australia, New Zealand, and the states of Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho—the "members of the WCTU were by far the most numerous among the suffragists" (Grimshaw 1994, 34). The WCTU was especially important for the early enfranchisement of women in New Zealand and Australia; suffragists from those countries later traveled to Europe and the United States to spread the story of how they had won the vote and what it meant to them.

The second strand of the international women's suffrage movement came from the women's groups associated with the Second Socialist International. In 1900, the Socialist International passed the first pro-woman suffrage resolution,

but suffrage only became a fundamental demand of socialist parties in 1907 (DuBois 1994, 262). Socialist women around the world were not supposed to cooperate with "bourgeois suffragists," but in practice socialist and nonsocialist advocates for woman suffrage cooperated extensively.

The third strand of the international movement was the independent, militant suffragettes (so-called to distinguish them from the more moderate suffragists). The suffragettes advocated public agitation, civil disobedience, and eventually even violent tactics to further their demand for the vote. By confronting speakers at meetings, chaining themselves to fences in front of government buildings, throwing stones through windows, and participating in street demonstrations that often ended in clashes with police and hostile male spectators, the suffragettes invited imprisonment, and once jailed they engaged in hunger strikes and were fed by force. The best-known suffragette organization was the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in Great Britain, under the leadership of the Pankhurst family, whose tactics had tremendous international influence. Although it did not endorse the more militant tactics of the suffragettes, the International Woman Suffrage Association "provided a conduit for their influence" (DuBois 1994, 267). In their regular international meetings, suffragette militancy spread among IWSA members, who brought it back to their home countries. American suffragists who participated with the WSPU in Great Britain later took its militant approach and tactics back to the United States to lead the more militant wing of the women's movement there (Holton 1996, 109, 155).

A fourth strand of the international suffrage movement included women gathered in the International Council of Women (ICW), founded in 1888. Although after 1904 it adopted a strong women's suffrage stand, the ICW was not prepared to give the issue priority over the other issues on its agenda, which included demands for equal pay for equal work, access to professions, maternity benefits, suppression of traffic in women and children, peace and arbitration, the protection of female and male workers, and "development of modern household machinery to relieve women from household drudgery" (*Women in a Changing World* 1966, 23, 27). Although not at the forefront of the movement, the ICW contributed by promoting communication among women's organizations in diverse countries. Furthermore, it worked actively with intergovernmental organizations and conferences, including the International Peace Conferences at the Hague and the League of Nations. In 1907, it was one of only two international nongovernmental organizations whose delegations the president of the Second Peace Conference at the Hague consented to receive (141). This may be the earliest example of the now established practice of granting NGOs a special role in international conferences.

The focused and militant IWSA expanded more rapidly than the ICW did in the early twentieth century: eleven countries were represented at the IWSA's founding conference in 1904, while forty-two were there at its tenth congress in 1926.¹⁰ International congresses took place approximately every two years, and

between them suffrage leaders and activists kept in touch with each other through letters, exchanges of books and pamphlets, visits, and speaking tours.¹¹ Despite their different national backgrounds, these women developed a common way of thinking. The correspondence of two leaders from the Netherlands and Hungary in the early 1900s, for example, reveals that despite totally different social and political situations "these two were able to describe all kinds of events in similar terms. The common language encouraged a feeling of solidarity" (Bosch and Kloosterman 1990, 15).

Suffrage activists testified that their international connections provided support, inspiration, and ideas for tactics and strategies. As with the antislavery movement, ideas and tactics spread through the travel of key activists, family connections, and exchanges of letters, pamphlets, and newspapers. Some of the main tactics used symbolic politics to highlight the conflict between the discourse of equality and democracy and the actual situation of women. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her colleagues composed the Seneca Falls "Declaration of Sentiments" of 1848, they used the language of the Declaration of Independence to frame the demands for women's rights. According to one of her biographers, "Cady Stanton's appropriation of the Declaration of Independence was a brilliant propagandistic stroke. She thereby connected her cause to a powerful American symbol of liberty" (Banner 1980, 40). Similarly when a small handful of women's rights activists in the United States began tax protests, refusing to pay taxes on their property until they were permitted to vote, one activist explicitly drew on the Revolutionary War slogan of "no taxation without representation" and requested that the local authorities choose the Fourth of July to auction her property in payment (Sterling 1991, 367–72). Although the tactic did not catch on in New England, it was adopted in England by radical suffragists in the early twentieth century (Holton 1996, 107, 11–12, 155, 163, 167, 174). American suffragists also took symbolic advantage of the 1876 centennial anniversary of the American Revolution to press their demands for women's rights.

Transnational linkages between U.S. and British suffragists played an important role in a crucial principled and tactical debate among British suffragists over how inclusive the demand for women's suffrage should be. Voting in Britain was still linked to property, and married women could not own it. Many suffragists believed that demanding the vote for married women was too extreme and thus advocated a more limited suffrage for spinsters with property. British radical suffragists believed that activists must demand the vote for all women and linked their demand to the need to further democratize British society and extend the vote to all men as well. Suffrage activists in the United States supported the position of advocating the vote for both married and single women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who visited England frequently, attempted to "strengthen the resolve" of her British allies on this issue. Her diary records that she tried to impress upon her colleagues that "to get the suffrage for spinsters is all very well, but their work is to

elevate the position of women at all points. . . . That the married women of this movement in England consent to the assumption that they are through marriage, practically represented and protected, supported and sheltered from all the adverse winds of life, is the strongest evidence of their own need for emancipation."¹² Radical suffragists were more active in international networks than the more moderate British leaders, perhaps because of "their more marginal standing in their own country," and the international connection served "as a valued endorsement of their own distinct identity" (Holton 1996, 65). Cady Stanton contributed to the formation of the first suffrage organization in Britain to "formulate its demand in terms which expressly included married women" and drew upon "the transnational network" formed by her and her friends and colleagues for its early support (76). Although the radicals were a minority in the British suffragist movement, their inclusive position eventually became the dominant one within the British women's movement and around the globe. So resounding was the success of this position that we usually forget that British suffragists initially failed to advocate the vote for married women.

Speaking tours were an especially effective way of spreading the suffrage movement internationally. In 1913, two leaders of IWSA traveled to Asia and the Middle East. Upon their return, one reported "the tangible results of our trip are that we are connected with correspondents representing the most advanced development of the woman's movement in Egypt, Palestine, India, Burma, China, Japan, Sumatra, Java, and the Philippine and Hawaiian Islands, and also in Turkey and Persia, which we did not visit" (Whittack 1979, 52). National suffrage societies from four of the countries they visited became members of the IWSA over the next ten years. The formation of a women's suffrage organization did not always lead to winning the franchise. Women in Switzerland, for example, first demanded suffrage in 1868 but did not receive it until 1971. Yet most states granted suffrage after decades of focused organization by women's groups. Founding dates of national suffrage organizations are often twenty to thirty years earlier than the dates on which suffrage was granted.

Sometimes international congresses headlined the issue effectively enough to promote national debates. In the Netherlands, host to the 1908 International Congress of the IWSA, the press provided a great deal of generally favorable coverage. Membership in the national suffrage organization grew from about 2,500 to 6,000, and men founded a Men's League for Woman Suffrage. Dutch women won the franchise in 1919, and the 1908 conference was viewed as "a decisive breakthrough to the Dutch public which until then had stood somewhat aloof" (Bosch and Kloosterman 1990, 46).

The United States, Canada, and many European countries granted women the right to vote in the years during and immediately following World War I. Many woman suffragists joined in the patriotic war effort, but others used the war aims as yet another symbolic vehicle to press for women's suffrage. Militant activists

in both the United States and Britain pointed to the hypocrisy of fighting a war to make the world safe for democracy while at the same time denying it to half of their own populations. Subsequently, international suffragism focused on Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, in part through the activities of some of the same international organizations (e.g., the IWSA, renamed the International Alliance for Women) and in part through larger working-class movements and revolutionary nationalism (DuBois 1994, 270–71).

The international campaign for women's suffrage led to surprisingly rapid results. Suffrage was almost unimaginable even for visionary advocates of women's rights in 1848. It took until 1904 to found the first international organization dedicated primarily to the promotion of women's suffrage, the IWSA. Yet less than fifty years after the founding of the IWSA, almost all countries in the world had granted women the vote. As new countries formed in the wake of decolonization, they enfranchised women because of women's contribution to the independence struggle but also because suffrage was now one of the accepted attributes of a modern state. The international campaign for women's suffrage is a key part of the explanation of how votes for women moved from unimaginable to imaginable and then to standard state behavior.

Conclusions

The two historical campaigns examined in this chapter suggest some insights for the study of modern transnational movements and advocacy networks. They clearly indicate that transnational social movements and networks are not an entirely new phenomenon. Both the antislavery and women's suffrage movements involved fully activated networks whose dynamics were very similar to modern networks and social movements. They differed mainly in the speed of communications and the kinds of actors involved.¹³ The antislavery societies' connections to and pressures on actors in the state foreshadow the work of modern NGOs and networks, as does their emphasis on gathering facts and testimony. Intergovernmental organizations and private foundations that play a central role in modern networks were absent; their place was taken by private philanthropy.

Nevertheless, the number, size, professionalism, density, and complexity of international linkages among modern transnational social movements and networks have grown so dramatically in the last three decades that the modern transnational social movement sector differs substantially from its historical precursors. As Hugh Heclo remarked about domestic issue networks, "if the current situation is a mere outgrowth of old tendencies, it is so in the same sense that a 16-lane spaghetti interchange is the mere elaboration of a country crossroads" (1978, 97).

A second insight from these historical precursors has to do with the time span over which one can evaluate the success of movements. Both movements were

eventually very successful, but the time span over which success is measured was one of decades and even centuries. Historians suggest that such change was relatively rapid: "It is remarkable how rapidly, by historical standards, the institution of slavery gave way before the abolitionist onslaught, once the ideological campaign gained momentum. . . . [W]ithin the span of little more than a century, a system that had stood above criticism for 3,000 years was outlawed everywhere in the Western world" (Fogel 1989, 204–5). These campaigns also suggest that, although early change comes very slowly and with great difficulty, with time change may develop a momentum of its own. For women's suffrage, it took more than eighty years, from the Seneca Falls conference in 1848 until 1930, for twenty states to adopt women's suffrage. In the next twenty years, from 1930 to 1950, some 48 countries adopted women's suffrage laws (Ramirez et al. 1997).

While there is still inadequate information to make a conclusive argument, it also seems likely that the speed of normative change has accelerated substantially in the later part of the twentieth century as compared to these earlier movements. This is not surprising given the new speed of communication and transportation, but the cases of suffrage and abolition may still be useful in reminding activists and scholars that change often happens very slowly.

These movements suggest that the international or transnational dimension of movements was essential for the success of the campaigns but also that transnational influences may have more impact at some stages of campaigns than at others. In the antislavery campaign, transnational influences were especially important at the early stages in the United States, when gag rules blocked consideration of slavery in the U.S. Congress, and then later, when the antislavery movement helped discourage the British government from intervening in the Civil War on behalf of the South.

A quantitative analysis of the cross-national acquisition of suffrage rights reveals a different dynamic at work for early and late adopters of women's suffrage (Ramierz et al. 1997). Prior to a threshold point of 1930, no country adopted women's suffrage without strong pressure from domestic suffrage organizations. At this point, both a strong domestic movement and international linkages were important for achieving suffrage. Between 1890 and 1930, Western countries with strong national women's movements were most likely to grant female suffrage. After 1930, however, international and transnational influences became particularly important for norm adoption, and some countries adopted women's suffrage even though they faced no strong domestic pressure to do so.

But strong and dense linkages between domestic and foreign actors does not in and of itself guarantee success for a transnational movement. Advocacy campaigns take place in organizational contexts; not only must their ideas resonate and find them allies, but their organizations must overcome the opposition their opponents array against them. In the language of social movement theory, we must consider them as parts of "multiorganizational fields" (Klandermans 1992). The

antislavery campaign was a very strong transatlantic network that confronted powerful, entrenched, economic interests with a well-developed ideology, strong political representation, and institutional and legal support in the state's rights provisions of the U.S. Constitution. The early abolition movement in Britain faced a weaker and smaller opposition—mainly from the British West Indies planter class. The British women's suffrage groups were the best organized among the national members of international suffrage organizations, but suffrage was granted in New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and the USSR, as well as in a number of U.S. states, before women received the vote in Britain.

Finally, what about the argument that moral campaigns are thinly disguised efforts to further other interests? Abolitionists in Britain often combined antislavery principles with support for British imperialism. They believed that imperialism would spread Christianity, westernization, and the benefits of trade and industry. They saw no contradiction among these principles (Craton 1974, 293; Fogel 1989, 388). Suffragists sometimes argued that educated and cultured women had a better claim to the vote than uneducated, immigrant men or former slaves.

Activists sometimes saw the victim as an unproblematic "other" who needed their assistance, and the reformers rarely recognized their own paternalism. Nevertheless, the British antislavery activists did not reserve their criticism for the foreign or distant other but displayed equal if not greater paternalism and vehemence when talking about the United States. Activists portrayed southern slaveholders as vile and evil. Although some freed blacks like Frederick Douglass played prominent roles in the transatlantic campaign, for the most part the "victims" of slavery were absent from the movement. The frequent inability of reformers to transcend their historical setting, however, does not undermine the significant challenges they made to dominant social and political orders or their contributions to political transformation.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on material from chapter 2 of our book *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (1998). We thank Cornell University Press for granting permission to use it here. Although much of what we say here is relevant to the study of transnational social movements, we prefer to use the term *transnational advocacy networks*. A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.

2. Sidney Tarrow, for example, in his historical survey of social movements, focuses mainly on national movements, although he discusses the transnational diffusion of repertoires of collective action and concludes with a section on the increasing transnationalization of modern social movements (1994, 193–98). In a recent essay, Tarrow (1995b) expresses some skepticism that the world is now entering an "unheralded age of global movements" and encourages "comparatively bold historical studies" of transnational movements.

3. Protests against slavery began much earlier; Quakers in Pennsylvania, for example, first protested it in the 1680s. But the real movement spans the time from 1787, when British abolitionists launched a public campaign against the slave trade, to the emancipation of slaves in Brazil in the 1880s (see Fogel 1989, 205). Surveys of the antislavery movement by political scientists are provided in Tarrow 1994, Ray 1989, and Nadelmann 1990.
4. Quoted in Fladeland 1972, 260.
5. For an overview of the debate among historians, see Davis 1987, Ashworth 1987, and Haskell 1987. For political scientists, see Ray 1989 and Nadelmann 1990.
6. This debate is the subject of William Lee Miller's fascinating book, *Arguing about Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (1996).
7. Southerners had held the presidency for forty out of fifty-two years, the speakership of the House for twenty-eight of thirty-five years, a majority on the Supreme Court and in the Cabinet, and "every Senate President pro-tem since the ratification of the Constitution" (Fogel 1989, 339).
8. This is the line of argument that Giddens took in the Creole case (Miller 1996, 454; Fogel 1989, 336).
9. See Owen 1994, 113–14; Jenkins 1974, 2:153–55, 398; and H. Jones 1992, 171–93.
10. See Whittick 1979, 32, 92. Delegates from eight countries were present at the founding meeting of the ICW in 1888, and by the seventh meeting, in 1925, approximately twenty-eight countries were represented (*Women in a Changing World* 1966, 53, 203, 350).
11. See Griffith 1984, 181, 193, 214; and Bosch and Kloosterman 1990.
12. Quoted in Stanton and Blatch 1922, as quoted in Holton 1996, 63.
13. Tarrow has challenged transnational social movement researchers to identify whether "the new technology of global communications and cheap internal travel are changing the dynamics of movement diffusion or only the speed of its transmission" (1995b, 22).