

NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society

By Thomas Davies

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In the first historical account of international NGOs, from the French Revolution to the present, Thomas Davies places the contemporary debate on transnational civil society in context. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, which sees transnational civil society as a recent development taking place along a linear trajectory, he explores the long history of international NGOs in terms of a cyclical process characterized by three major waves: the era to 1914, the inter-war years, and the period since the Second World War. The breadth of transnational civil society activities explored is unprecedented in its diversity, from business associations to humanitarian organizations, peace groups to socialist movements, feminist organizations to pan-nationalist groups. The geographical scope covered is also extensive, and the analysis is richly supported with reference to a diverse array of previously unexplored sources. By revealing the role of civil society rather than governmental actors in the major trans-formations of the past two-and-a-half centuries, this book is for anyone interested in obtaining a new perspective on world history. The analysis concludes in the second decade of the twenty-first century, providing insights into the trajectory of transnational civil society in the post-9/11 and post-financial crisis eras.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Davies has produced an important book. He brings the skills of an international historian to bear on some of the pressing questions of contemporary international politics. Davies has utilized an extraordinary range of sources to trace the emergence and development of international non-governmental organizations over time and in so doing he challenges many widely held views about the role and importance of these organizations. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned with the past, present and future of international NGOs."--David Williams, School of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary University London

"Thomas Davies' book is a game-changer in our understanding of the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society in international politics. Davies manages to present meticulous detail and scrupulous research in a highly readable book that confronts what we think we know about NGOs. The book not only demonstrates the complexities of NGO politics but shows the ability and limitations of such actors in shaping international affairs. There is so much in this book that it deserves to be read by all interested in international relations, politics, international development, history and sociology."--Sophie Harman, Senior Lecturer in International Politics, Queen Mary University of London

"Thomas Davies has written a comprehensive and readable history of international non-governmental organizations and movements that is much needed. He rightly argues that transnational civil society has a long history (over two centuries) and is not only Western in origin. Based on primary sources and literature, this book is indispensable."--Bob Reinalda, Radboud University Nijmegen

About the Author

Thomas Davies is Lecturer in International Politics at City University, London, where he researches and teaches transnational history and politics. He was previously a junior research fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, and a Lecturer at St Catherine's and New College, Oxford.

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