

Legitimacy and the Rise of NGOs: The Global and Local in South Asia

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ABSTRACT. We extend sociological institutionalist theory and draw on evidence from South Asia to develop a research agenda for studying how NGO legitimacy plays out in national and local arenas. After first presenting a sociological institutionalist approach to nongovernmental organizing, we extend it into three areas: national laws governing international and domestic NGOs, growth in domestic NGOs, and the situated interactions among international organizations, nation-states, local organizations, and other actors. (1) International and domestic NGOs are governed by national laws, and we sketch the history of such laws in South Asia to hypothesize a pattern of legal change leading to the present social concern about accountability. (2) Sociological institutionalism suggests that domestic NGO growth is related to the presence of INGOs and can be interpreted as the diffusion of formal organization. (3) We conceptualize the situated interactions of the plethora of actors as a meso realm at the interface of the global and local. The interrelations of these actors are marked by tensions and conflict. There are many permutations of how they coalesce, not always along a global—local cleavage, and there is a need to examine the full range of interactions. We explore some of these and it seems that actors use accountability strategically in their conflicts with others. The “uses of accountability” in contesting legitimacy within such situations is proposed as a fruitful research direction.

KEYWORDS: world society, accountability, law, organizations

Introduction

International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) operate with a type of authority based on voluntarism and a practical, rational approach to attaining goals. They claim as voluntary associations that they are democratic groups with no self-interest but only the common good. They adopt scientific, rational strategies and technologies to attain these goals. They thus claim to represent democratic principles in the world, to hold moral positions, and to have unbiased expert knowledge. Many operate with little public attention or controversy; these are the standards and rule setters in every social, economic, and professional arena imaginable. Others that engage public policy, confront state and corporation interests, and tackle global social problems are more recognizable. For decades they were written off as ineffectual do-gooders, but as their influence has been increasingly felt, their claims and legitimacy have become hotly contested. Even standards setters and professional organizations are gaining some notoriety as

they are accused of bypassing democratic processes. Criticisms revolve around debunking their claims and documenting abuses that would belie them. These criticisms over the last fifteen years or so have converged on demands for accountability. In short, the rational-moral authority of INGOs while firmly established worldwide is contested, and increasingly so.

We report on a research agenda designed to better understand the contested authority and legitimacy of INGOs. The research builds on that of sociological institutionalism¹ that analyzes the entire set of INGOs in the world—their goals, activities, memberships, and interconnections. We propose expanding this work on several levels, and in particular focusing on the interface between global and local, between international organizations and national and local organizing.

First, because INGOs are registered and operate within national legal structures, it is important to understand changing definitions and regulations governing INGOs and (domestic) NGOs. It thus is necessary to collect data over time on national laws, and to construct histories of the development of these laws. From these analyses of national laws can make inferences about the changing nature of INGOs in world society and the changing underlying political and cultural assumptions about them and civil society in general.

Second, we are interested in understanding the spectacular growth in domestic NGOs and within this growth the pattern of differential growth across national polities. One goal is to explain the worldwide growth and the degree of isomorphism among NGOs across regions and national polities. Another goal is to describe, within the global context of unprecedented growth, different growth rates in different nations. What accounts for the differential adoption of this particular form of civil society organization throughout the world? We can assess hypotheses that relate the relative activity of INGOs within countries to NGO growth rates and also the impact of different national legal contexts on NGO growth.

Third, we examine how INGOs operate and interact with other actors at the interface of the global, national, and local. National laws function as legal and symbolic frameworks for national contexts, and they set the rules of the game for these interactions. In these contexts we examine how INGOs, nation-state agencies, national NGOs, local governments, and community based organizations (CBOs or local NGOs) interact. These interactions are marked by varying levels of cooperation and conflict, and we especially focus on the way INGO authority helps cooperation or is contested within conflict. How is legitimacy enacted, contested, and used at the interface of the global and local?

The meso-social realm of the global and local is politically charged and plays a central symbolic role in contentious discourse. It even reverberates in normative threads in scholarly research. The global carries great legitimacy as authority external to the local—it is rooted in knowledge and authority “from a distance” or “from elsewhere,” but it also commonly is stigmatized for exactly the same reason. The local carries, according to this discourse, greater authenticity and is the source of resistance. Analyzing how actors contend with each other within political-cultural frames should shed light on this discourse, suggesting that demarcating the global and local is not easily done in reality and that outcomes are hybrids.

In this paper, we first discuss the conceptual framework. We then use initial work on South Asia, in particular Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, to discuss issues of definitions, national legal structures, the interaction of actors at the interface of the global and local, and the contesting of INGO legitimacy through the uses of accountability.

Conceptual Framework: Political Processes in World Culture/World Society

The modern world, marked by capitalist markets and the interstate system, has from the beginning been a global phenomenon² and can be understood as a world polity³ or world society.⁴ Transnational organizing is not new to this modern world. Flows of scientific and humanistic production (knowledge, art, literature) were prevalent early, and religious networks, associations, and organizations were prominent. Religious revivals throughout the Anglo-American world, for example, resulted from trans-Atlantic networks and exchanges.

Transnational movements in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were largely interactions of national associations that while oriented to national identities and policies had an international orientation. The abolitionist, temperance, and other social reform movements in the nineteenth century were international in scope.

Christendom and the Enlightenment provided the cultural schema for the universalism of their authority and models for their organizing. As early as the eighteenth century, but especially in the nineteenth, religious associations and networks invoked the legacy of Christendom, largely through moral order, and thereby provided the dominant source of universalism. Enlightenment internationalism, formulated in the eighteenth century, became another major source of universalistic organizing in the nineteenth century. Roman Catholic orders and associations for the most part resisted modern, Enlightenment ideology whereas most Protestant, even revivalist and missionary, groups articulated in different ways with it. The Workers' International can be understood as a radical, more politically expedient version of the Enlightenment model, but it also arguably is a secularized version of Christianity. Social, moral reform movements were an early hybrid of Christian and Enlightenment universalism.

By the end of the nineteenth century, international organizing was dominated by internationalism itself something of a hybrid. It was secular and non-Christian at its core although it encompassed an interfaith approach to religion, one embraced by liberalizing Protestantism, as an expression of the highest aspirations of humanity. World peace, “one worldism,” common understanding, and the common aspirations of all humankind pervaded the discourse of INGOs in the early decades of the twentieth century. The creation of a global language, for example, is a somewhat pure expression of one worldism and INGOs for the dissemination of Esperanto and other languages flourished at the turn of the twentieth century.

This modernist internationalism, although it discursively included science and technology as essential for ushering in the new world order, quickly took on an aura of idealism—including its connotation of ineffectuality. Beginning after World War I and then universally after World War II, this style of internationalism was replaced with a more technical, functional rationality. Many INGOs like those espousing Esperanto declined as a proportion of the burgeoning number of INGOs.⁵ The discourse of one worldism and common understanding remained prevalent, but it no longer was enough. It was subsumed within practically rationality that demanded specialization, rational goals and strategies, and action.

This hybrid of morality and rationality, inherited from the nineteenth century, is central to the rational voluntaristic authority of INGOs of all types, whether professional standard setting organizations or activist ones or mainline service organizations in humanitarian aid, health, education, and development.

What all of these organizations have in common is that they are embedded in a cultural schema that authorizes, and indeed obligates, individuals to organize to pursue rational strategies for solving problems, meeting needs, and in general creating the common good. This

commonality is seen in organizational forms, discourse, and activities. Humanitarian INGOs, for example, moved from the dominant model in the 1950s of relief to that of development in the 1970s, taking on increased commitments to research,⁶ and more recently taking on advocacy. Common discourse is revealed in interviews of leaders: leaders in American humanitarian, activist, and professional INGOs (and corporations) show an implicit faith in progress, believe that their work is beneficial, and use social science and human rights discourse when talking about the world they are building.⁷

Informal and Legal Definitions

Informally, INGOs are taken to be any organization that is not run by states and is not for profit. There are formal, legal attempts to codify and make precise this common understanding of a third sector, and there are scholarly attempts to bring order to these diverse organizations. Scholars and practitioners have identified different types, but the most common distinction is between activist and all others. Not all activists groups take the form of formal organizations and not all formal INGOs are activist in nature. Nor do activists and INGOs exhaust the forms of participation in a global civil society.⁸ It would be useful to identify an issue area or a particular goal and then identify the different groups, networks, and organizational forms that diverse actors take surrounding this issue.⁹ The complementary focus taken here is to examine INGOs as a particular organizational form that encompasses diverse goals, issue areas, and normative positions.¹⁰ From the point of view of the organizational form, the distinction of being activist can be blurred. Service and especially development INGOs, for example, have increasingly taken on advocacy as a crucial style of action.¹¹

The dual core of the commonly understood definition of INGOs, their voluntary, not-for-profit nature, also can be ambiguous as witnessed by the large number of “hybrid” actors. In practice, many of what are commonly accepted as INGOs receive grants from states and corporations. Some organizations are ostensibly in the third sector but function as quasi-agents of the state. Others emerge out of agreements among states, corporations, and INGOs that establish standards, ethical codes, or agreed procedures about particular issues. Abbott et al. conceptualize states, NGOs, and firms as ideal types and any particular organization as a particular “mixture” of the three.¹² The Global Compact, for example, is a hybrid comprised of states and firms that was created at the initiative of the United Nations in response to concerns over accountability. The Kimberly Process was formed to govern the problems surrounding “blood” diamonds and is comprised of states, INGOs, and firms.

The UN recognizes any commonly and legally accepted organization as an INGO, but they are more selective when granting consultative status. The UN committee focuses, at least according to formal requirements and documentation, on the procedures of governance, the countries of members of the governing board and executive staff, general memberships, sources of funding, expenditures, activities, and any formal or financial relationships to governments.¹³ In short, the required information revolves around assessing the claims of democratic governance, independence from states and firms, expertise, and goals of the collective good.

In practice, INGOs are defined within national legal frameworks. National law defines what organizations qualify as NGOs and require some form of registration with a central agency. Increasingly these stipulate rules and procedures of accountability, all involving the handling of money, and more recent elaborations of these legal structures have become more regulatory. The

history of laws governing international and domestic NGOs in South Asia document this pattern of initial registration to financial accounting to heightened accountability and regulation.

Laws concerning voluntary associations in South Asia date back to colonial British India. The Societies Registration Act of 1860 established the requirement that voluntary associations register with the government. This and subsequent laws in the region focused on registration, expanding the scope to different types of associations. Throughout the period, specific laws singled out religious groups given their prominence. There was and remains special concern over the use of charitable organizations for proselytizing.

After political independence, there was increasing concern about foreign funds, and in the 1960s and 1970s a variety of acts and ordinances were promulgated that focused on finances. By the 1970s, laws required that NGOs give account to the government about the amount and source of all foreign money they received (e.g., in Bangladesh 1978 Foreign Donations Regulation Ordinance and the 1979 Foreign Donations Rules and Regulations; in India the 1976 Foreign Contribution and Regulation Act). Subsequently, these states expanded the bureaucracy to administer these requirements and added associated legislative measures. These laws also require that INGOs on their end also account for funds distributed. The general intent of the foreign contribution laws was to make sure that the organizations used the money for the declared purposes, but the immediate precipitating issues were political. There was great concern that foreign monies were being funneled through NGOs to influence political parties, elections, and officials.

By the 1990s, demands for accountability broader in scope emerged worldwide by a variety of actors including INGOs themselves. The amount of money flowing through INGOs and NGOs and the sheer number of NGOs was viewed as something of a crisis that needed to be

managed. This resulted in the now intense discussions by both practitioners and scholars about the nature of accountability and its centrality to the legitimacy of INGOs and NGOs.

Accountability currently dominates the discussions of INGOs and NGOs and of global civil society generally, but since September 11, 2001, there has been increased politicization. Recent laws and debates about potential laws revolve around much tighter regulations, taxes, and political affiliations. The recent Foreign Contributions Management and Control Bill of 2005 in India, for example, restricts foreign contributions in a much more stringent fashion and raises concerns about “anti-nationalistic” activities. INGOs and NGOs in all three countries have mobilized to contest what they consider a policy shift from the accounting of funds to regulating activities.

National histories of these laws clearly are affected by models and principles worldwide. We would thus expect to see similarities in these histories across nation states. These global processes interact with local and national cultures relating the state to civil society, and a major research agenda is to analyze the diffusion of legal frameworks and within that common context the particular hybrids that emerge within different regions and nation-states.

Organizational Forms and Isomorphism

Nongovernmental organizing is a particular organizational form rooted in particular assumptions about the individual, society, authority, and narratives of progress.¹⁴ Each national polity has its own cultural, political framework for the third sector.¹⁵ These vary from viewing voluntary associations as a form of participation crucial to democracy (e.g., USA) to those that are suspicious of such organizations (e.g., old communist states). In Macedonia the USA and INGOs

have cultivated NGOs as anti-state because they have continued to equate the state and communism, resulting in heightened state-NGO tensions.¹⁶

The growth worldwide of national and local NGOs takes place in these contexts. We would expect several factors to affect the different national rates of NGO growth. Legal requirements likely embody the broader political and cultural views of voluntary associations, and will encourage or discourage the establishment of NGOs. The level of INGO presence and activities within a country has, we would hypothesize, a positive effect on the growth of NGOs. There arguably are two mechanisms resulting in this relationship. First, a strong presence of INGOs would model this organizational form and civil society organizing generally. Second, to the extent that INGOs bring resources such as development dollars, they would attract much attention. A major impetus for forming NGOs associated with development projects is to tap into development money administered by INGOs. We consequently expect that the levels of development money available to the third sector affect NGO organizing and that NGOs would compete for these limited resources.

We have argued that INGOs are predicated on universalistic and individualistic organizing: individuals have the authority to organize for collective goals. The question arises whether this might be in tension with local communal organizing. It is common to see local groups and organizations as resistance to and in competition with large INGOs.¹⁷ If so, this would suggest that the strength of local communal associations (peasant groups, religious groups) would hinder the adoption of the NGO organizational form and hinder the growth of NGOs.

Local agency, however, is much more varied and much more of an engagement of INGOs. Evidence suggests that strong local communal groups are able to take advantage of the

NGO organizational form.¹⁸ INGOs, moreover, seem to temper their individualistic discourse when engaging local communal groups.¹⁹ Following this line of argument, we would hypothesize that the greater the number of INGOs active in a country, the greater the growth of NGOs within the country.

We can break down the aggregate number of NGOs within a country by local regions or states. It is possible to map the reach of INGOs within a country and relate it to local factors, including NGOs. For example, Chhetri related the presence of development INGOs in states within Nepal to social factors such as literacy.²⁰ The locations of INGO projects are identified by district, and these can be counted as one (present) or by actual number of projects or project per capita. INGO projects are in many sectors: community development, women and children, education, health and disabled, natural resources, and others. Different sectors can be mapped distinctly in one or more maps. The maps might be overlaid with different variables, such as poverty levels, number of local NGOs, or strength of local communal groups.

Competition, Conflict, and Contested Legitimacy at the Interface of the Global and Local

Several types of actors are involved in any service delivery or development project on the ground: large foreign INGOs, IGOs, the central state and its agents, national NGOs, local governments, and local community based organizations. And under closer scrutiny there are, of course, religious groups, neighborhoods, kinship groups and the like not organized as formal organizations. There might also be agents of foreign governments providing bilateral support.

These actors cooperate to a great extent, but they also compete or outright contend with each other. Conflict is over interests including resources, power, control over a sphere of social life or over a particular place, and attributions of responsibility for success.²¹ Conflict is also

over authority. Issues might symbolize nation-state sovereignty or local state authority within a federal system. In the same vein, conflict is over cultural schema and bases of knowledge: How is policy based on rational, scientific research articulated with local, common knowledge?

Actors use differences in bases of authority and knowledge in contentious discourse. Local actors might cast a particular development policy as the product of evil, often American, homogenizers and the local as the last stand of resistance; IGOs and states likely describe the policy in social scientific terms arguing that it is the best way of attaining a higher standard of living, security, and freedom against the entrenchment of local despotism, ignorance, and superstitions. Taking the global-local binary at face value oversimplifies the complex interactions and contentions of the actors within the situation. The global-local interface is in practice a meso-realm within which the binary discourse of global-local is used to contest authority.

There are many permutations of how the various actors line up and there are different patterns of cooperation and conflict. In the case where there is cooperation among the central state, IGOs, and INGOs, there is a unified pressure of a *global hyper-rationalism* applied to local actors. Local actors whether local governments, communal organizations such as peasant cooperatives, or CBOs, have little support, although even in this extreme case they generally are able to network with other INGOs.²² In a *nation-state centered* case, the national state and NGOs play INGOs for resources and legitimacy, resulting in a strong national/local versus global pattern of tension and conflict. Another case is when INGOs and national and local NGOs work together to attain goals. In this civil-society centered case, INGOs and NGOs leverage the state applying both external and domestic pressures. This is a common pattern in South Asia.

South Asian State Bureaucracies and INGOs

Public civil servants in Bangladesh, Nepal and India (and elsewhere in South Asia) historically have had high social status and bureaucratic positions were much sought after. They were granted based on merit and education, and only the cream of the educated elite became “public servants.” Through the 1980s when the industrial and service sectors were still in their infancy, the government sector was the largest employer of university graduates. With the cream of the intellectual prowess being employed by the government, it became generally “known” that only the “not-so-bright” became professionals within the private sector. For that reason, professionals in private and nongovernmental sectors had lower social status, despite their higher income. In other words, the higher social status of bureaucrats offset to some extent the relatively low salaries they received. The status of high level government bureaucrats is so ingrained in the psyche of South Asian intellectuals that even those who have migrated to the USA and have done very well for they refer nostalgically and enviously to those who have stayed behind and now occupy high government positions. In rural areas of Nepal parents still hope for their children to achieve the status of *hakim* (government official) and thereby bring prestige to the family.

Structural problems and tensions arise because many prominent INGOs though staffed by professionals of national origin have traditionally been headed by foreign professionals whose educational credentials do not match the comparatively high educational degrees of their counterparts in government circles. The lower educational attainment of INGO leaders is a significant shortcoming in the South Asian culture within which education is a strong determinant of status. Beyond social psychological resentment this might engender, this creates

structural issues. Within South Asian culture negotiations are presumed to be between equals. The social inequality between government bureaucrats and INGO leaders complicates interactions and negotiations.

The status of INGO staff has increased since the 1990s, and while this has solved issues of unequal statuses, it has threatened the status security of the still low paid government officials. A greater number of university graduates enter the private and nonprofit sector, and highly education professionals of national origin have gradually taken over the top INGO positions. The higher pay and now increasing relative social status of INGO professions and their increasing role as players in the service and development sector threaten the social status of government bureaucrats.

The Uses of Accountability in Contesting Legitimacy

Actors use accountability strategically in their conflicts with each other. There are good governance reasons for demanding the accountability of INGOs and NGOs, given their spectacular claims of having no self-interest but only the interest of the common good and given the large amounts of money they mediate in development and service sectors. Accountability is thus a powerful tool for assessing an INGO's or NGO's legitimacy and thus a powerful weapon for granting or withholding legitimacy. While states have the ethical high ground given the global consensus about the need for the accountability of putatively disinterested organizations handling a lot of money, they are not above using accountability procedures in their interactions and conflicts with INGOs and NGOs. Many organizations for their part resist the expansion of formal accounting as undo interference by states.²³

Paralleling the longitudinal study of national legal structures, it will be important to analyze the history of the demand for accountability. While the simple demand for accountability is imminently reasonable and thus not a puzzle, understanding its social and political construction is important. It also likely is an important context for interpreting patterns of change in national laws. Within a country, the accountability of INGOs and NGOs thus is a political process.

National laws and procedures since the early 1990s focus on the handling of money: from whom do NGOs receive money for what purpose and how is the money spent? These laws have been used to restrict and blacklist a large number of organizations. In India, for example, the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), a semi-autonomous body under the aegis of Ministry of Rural Development, blacklisted 248 voluntary organizations to date and has placed several other organizations under financial restrictions.²⁴ The Public Action Committee of the Comptroller Auditor General of India submitted a report indicating lapses in administering grants by state agencies and NGOs.²⁵ The Ministry of Home Affairs has restricted receipt of foreign funds under the FCRA act of 1976 for 8,763 organizations in various states in India due to non-receipt of audited statement of accounts (as of October 26, 2005).

States since the 1990s increasingly attempt to hold NGOs accountable for practices in the field. They tend to focus on activities rather than outcomes because it is so difficult to assess program success, especially in development and service. They attempt to assess if an organization is doing what it is funded to do, whatever the success of those activities. This accounting relies heavily on the individual evaluator in the field. Individual evaluators might "look the other way" for a particular group whether because of bribes or solidarity with the local

group, and they might be overly strict enforcing the letter of the law to the point of guaranteeing noncompliance to other groups that are out of favor. State tensions with a particular NGO or with a type of organization or with the foreign source of their funds come into play, as does the competition among local groups.

Whatever the mechanism, patterns of blacklisted organizations are discernible and are shaped by factors such as religion, ethnicity, and language. In South Asia, for example, a larger proportion of humanitarian, relief, and development organizations are faith based. Some of the largest INGOs in Nepal and India are Christian and many INGOs and NGOs are Muslim. Both types of groups commonly are accused of using humanitarian aid and development projects to proselytize, especially the lower castes. Christian organizations throughout the world for decades made services a priority over proselytizing, claiming that they will “bear witness” or “share” only when those receiving the services ask. Many evangelical organizations get into trouble with their sponsoring churches (mostly in the USA) for elevating material needs over spiritual. At the same time, it makes them vulnerable to accusations of buying conversions. In India, Dalit conversions to Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are taken as documentation of this strategy. These tensions are found locally and are mobilized nationally by religious leaders and political parties.²⁶ State officials, whether sensitive to popular opinion or acting more on their own tensions with such organizations, are not immune to using accounting practices for political ends.

Development INGOs and NGOs in general are more suspect than those in other sectors such as environment, health, and education. There are several likely reasons for this. For one thing, development organizations handle larger sums of money. For another, development organizations are involved in attaining goals that are the exclusive responsibility of states—nation-states are constituted by their mandate to attain societal goals, development being crucial.

It threatens the legitimacy of the state regime if not the state to have nongovernmental organizations, especially foreign ones or ones receiving foreign money, attaining these goals. Organizations in the education sector have the same potential competition, but they tend to support and advise the ministries of education and school systems or to work in areas of informal schooling that supplement not compete with public schools.

None of this analysis is meant to debunk the importance of accountability or to cultivate a cynicism about demands for it. Accountability is, nevertheless, part of the political process that encompasses the various actors at the interface of the global and local. Accountability taps into the identities and goals of the various actors, including states and their agents. We have noted just a few of the political factors involved.

Future Research on Law, Accountability, and INGOs

For organizations that have no authority to promulgate formal law and that directly command little political power or economic resources, it is important to understand the nature of their authority that enables them to interject themselves into power politics central to the mandate of the nation-state and to the structures of everyday life. The question of INGO authority gains even greater significance when we consider the extremely different types of INGOs: activists, mainline service organizations, and technical, professional standard-setters. INGO authority enables some to mobilize popular demonstrations and mass boycotts, enables others to mobilize resources of the middle class throughout the world for others throughout the world, and enables still other organizations to sit down with corporations and lawyers to work out standards to which states and businesses submit.

INGO authority is rooted in world cultural schema that enables them to claim that they have no self interest and have the sole purpose of the collective good, and those contesting INGOs focus on contesting their authority by debunking this claim. This is a rational-moral authority deriving in part from their voluntarism and demonstrated in the ethical and unbiased use of money and knowledge for the good of the targeted stakeholders. This is especially true for mainline service and developmental organizations that handle large amounts of money and that administer programs based on scientific research and technical knowledge. As INGOs have become more influential and development INGOs have been more open to taking on advocacy activities, the controversy over these claims has increased. Similarly, as the number of NGOs has burgeoned and the amount of service and develop money has increased the controversy over NGOs has increased.

We have in broad outline drawn attention to the need for research at several levels of this contested legitimacy. The proposition that cuts across these levels is that contesting INGO legitimacy takes the form of demanding and elaborating accountability. Demands for accountability are not reducible to this political process—there are good reasons independent of these conflicts for demanding accountability, but in practice accountability is implicated with the political process.

We have explored several levels of contested legitimacy that require further research. National laws have changed over time, from registration, to accounting of money, to stricter assessments of activities, linking the latter to national security interests. There is a need for broader longitudinal, cross-national analyses that relate changes in global discourse and in national legal contexts to changes in INGO/NGO influence, activities, and diffusion locally. Conflicts among actors at a meso-level are crucial for understanding the contesting of

INGO/NGO legitimacy. We have reported on very initial attempts to unpack the nature of the actors' interests and how legitimacy is contested. There is some support for our understanding of the nature of INGO/NGO authority because attempts to debunk that authority revolve around exposing self interest. Moreover, there is strong evidence that actors use global discourse and the legitimating nature of rational-voluntarism to attack INGOs and NGOs. Further work is necessary to understand how actors are shaped by and in turn shape global discourse.

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