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Srilatha Batliwala and L. David Brown (eds.), *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*, Bloomfield, CT' Kumarian Press Inc, 2006. 270pp.

Increasingly, states are confronted by complex issues that they cannot adequately deal with in isolation. Many states lack the resources or expertise required. Pandemic disease and global environmental degradation are so large in scope that effective solutions can only be derived from international collaboration and action. The exclusive nature of many governments also means they may be out of touch with many issues that impact negatively on their citizens. In some instances, the government is directly responsible for the insecurity their populations experience. Consequently, the activities of civil society and epistemic communities have been recognized by international organizations and many states as being significant in addressing these issues both domestically and internationally. Moreover, with the revolutions in communication and global transportation, civil society efforts once confined to the realm of the domestic have now become transnational. This book examines the nature, scope and effectiveness of transnational civil society (TCS).

Much debate exists over the role and influence of transnational civil society. This book presents a less polemic,

more objective perspective on the subject. It does argue that transnational civil societies are important actors in the international arena but also acknowledges that they have weaknesses and limitations. The book is an edited volume divided into two parts. Part one is entitled “Transnationalism and Global Power” and contains four chapters that trace the emergence of transnational civil society from different perspectives. Chapter one, in particular, looks at how the internationalisation of higher education has forged global citizens with a common identity. Chapter two examines the rise of TCS in response to a rise in global inequality. Chapter three discusses how TCS has become a part of global policymaking and the consequences thereof, both positive and negative. Chapter four shows the diverse nature and make up of TCS. It also points out that not all TCS actions are positive for everyone through its discussion of transnational terror and fundamentalist networks. The second part of the book looks at TCS in action. These chapters cover a myriad of topics including the environment, gender issues, the peace movement, human rights, economic activism and international labour movements. The content of these chapters are informative and enlightening. In the conclusion, Batliwala and Brown review the achievements and impact of TCS. They contend that “... TCS has established a niche for itself as a critical actor in global politics and policy. It has influenced the framing, analyses, priorities and outcomes of many international agreements, commitments and normative guidelines.” TCS, they argue, has also been able to alter the discourse surrounding international issues, thereby placing the needs of people on global agendas.

In spite of the positive contribution made by TCS, the book points out that, it still has serious challenges to overcome. An increasingly insecure post 9/11 world has led many states to become more autocratic, curtailing civil liberties. Such a world impinges on the activities of TCS. For instance, Pakistan has banned public protests. As a result, civil society movements are not able to freely express the needs of their constituents. Moreover, both critics and members have often raised concerns about the legitimacy/representativity, accountability and governance of TCS organizations and institutions. Many of these entities, especially non-governmental organizations, are not formally accountable to anyone. Furthermore, as pointed out by

many chapters in the book, the interests of the groups they claim to represent are far from homogenous. Thus, within TCS, members often conflict over whose agenda is being promoted, often this debate is split along North-South lines. The ability to balance the interests of all members is a challenge that TCS are still grappling with. Finally, although TCS may be good at identifying complex global problems, they often lack the technical capacity and resources to solve these. It is important that TCS recognizes its limitations and seeks to work in synergy with other actors who are best equipped to deal with a particular transnational issue.

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