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tribal assertiveness and obstacles to Indian voting may be closely intertwined, though discussion of this relationship is necessarily limited by the study’s empirical focus.

The analysis suggests many unaddressed questions. Is there a national “Native Vote” reflecting deeply shared perspectives and concerns? Is there an Indian vote analogous to other (somewhat cohesive) ethnic voting blocs? Given the powerful role that tribal communities play in the lives of many Indians—with “Indian” still a fairly recent identity layered upon continuing tribal affiliations—this cannot be taken for granted. Even with coordinated “get out the Indian vote” campaigns, it may be the case that Indian voting patterns are local in nature, primarily reflecting tribal (versus more general “Indian”) concerns. To what degree do tribes and tribal affiliations drive Indian voting (and, perhaps, the geographic distribution of Indian voting rights cases)?

The authors make it clear that the future and significance of Indian voting will depend on continuing Indian efforts to not only assert and legally defend, but also to strategically use, voting rights. The primary national Indian political efforts are tribal in nature; defending and extending tribally held sovereign rights is the foundational principle that unites many such efforts. Given that much of the Indian struggle over the past few hundred years has focused on sustaining tribes as separate, distinct entities, it would hardly be surprising if a primary motivation for the mobilization of Indian voting rights is, paradoxically, to sustain collective tribal rights rather than to further incorporate Indians as the individual, autonomous actors of liberal democratic theory.

Shareen Hertel. _Unexpected Power: Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists_. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. $45.00 (cloth), $17.95 (paper).

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In her analysis of transnational advocacy campaigns around labor and economic rights within the broader human rights advocacy framework, Shareen Hertel emphasizes the ability of activists within countries and their transnational allies to impact and even shift the agendas of the campaigns. Hertel uses two high profile transnational advocacy campaigns—an antichild labor campaign in Bangladesh and a campaign against workplace-based gender discrimination in Mexico—to expand our understanding of the mechanisms in the evolution of norms and framing of human rights claims within such campaigns. She contends that these two cases are unique because in both instances activists within the countries on the “receiving end” of the help challenged the policy implications promoted by the campaigns as well as the framing of human rights within them. The ways in which these challenges were crafted and executed in each case differed, however. In the Bangladeshi case actors sought to block the campaign entirely, whereas the Mexican opposition was less direct.

Comparing these two cases, Hertel details patterns and mechanisms at work in the emergence of transnational advocacy campaigns and the development of norms within them. She uses Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikink’s work as a jumping off point for her analysis. Keck and Sikink explain campaign emergence as a “boomerang” pattern in which activists resisting oppressive conditions within their own countries enlist the help of outside supporters to put pressure on the offending state or corporate actors. Hertel adds to this body of work by introducing two additional patterns of campaign emergence: outside-in and dual-target. “Outside-in” campaigns are characterized by activists launching campaigns aimed at changing conditions in countries outside of their own. “Dual-target” campaigns arise when activists press for change both within their home country and abroad. In Hertel’s comparisons, the Bangladeshi case is an example of the former and the Mexican case exemplifies the latter.

As many social movement theorists have acknowledged, the norms within specific movements and the ways in which movement demands are framed are not static. They change as a result of those “leading” the movements or campaigns and, as this book highlights, they change as a result of challenges made by people on the “receiving end” of campaigns. The cases in this book reveal two different ways that challenges are levied by receiving end activists. The first mechanism, blocking, involves an overt effort by activists to stop or significantly stall the campaign. The second mechanism, backdoor moves, is more covert. Contention is not public. In the Mexican case, for example, Mexican activists went along with the campaign but changed their framing of it at the grassroots level when talking with affected community members. Hertel outlines three factors which contribute to decisions to choose one tactic over the other: how the campaign emerges, the nature of the threats, and the extent to which the interests of receiving end
activists are in line with those of the "senders" (of support, pressure, help, etc.). It should be noted, however, that these mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. They can be employed at different points in the campaign or even simultaneously.

In both campaigns it is clear that the sending end actors framed the problem in ways that did not mesh well with those on the receiving end. The anti child labor frame employed in the Bangladesh campaign took a moral stance against child labor which many Bangladeshi activists agreed with, but it did not address the fact that simply removing children from the garment industry could result in more harm than good. The families of children forced out of the garment sector relied on their children’s income for basic survival, so when options became more limited these children often took employment in more hazardous sectors. While the impetus behind the campaign was noble, without a focus on changing the conditions that make child labor necessary, it was in fact detrimental and led to the overt blocking of the campaign by local activists. Although Mexican activists took issue with the limited scope of the Human Rights Watch campaign against pregnancy screening within sweatshops, various groups participated in the campaign and used the political space that it opened up in order to articulate their own message at the grassroots level. According to Hertel, a key factor in this case was the fact that the campaign against pregnancy screening did not include economic sanctions, as was the case in the campaign in Bangladesh.

Independently, both of the cases described by Hertel provide social movement scholars with important insights; taken together, the cases illuminate the many factors that shape transnational advocacy campaigns. Delivering a multifaceted explanation of the genesis and evolution of both campaigns, Hertel synthesizes rationalist, structural, and social movement analyses (although the synthesis is more thoroughly executed in the Mexican case). Drawing upon Jonathan Fox’s work, Hertel evaluates the effects of both campaigns with almost a decade’s distance. In the end, she draws the conclusion that blocking produces more significant changes than backdoor moves do. That said, in an ideal campaign, blocking would not have to occur. Those initiating transnational advocacy campaigns would be wise to take heed of a key point of this book: acknowledging and understanding differences in how rights are conceived, and the policy implications thereof, are “critical to developing shared strategies for effective, inclusive advocacy—and meaningful solutions to the problems that provoked contentious politics in the first place” (p.110).


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In 1992, an African-American, working-class drag queen named Joan JettBlakk ran for President of the United States under the slogan “Lick Bush in ’92.” In 1970, a party of anarchist gnomes ran for city council in Amsterdam. In 1998, another drag queen named Pauline Pantsdown, who rose to fame with the disco hit “I’m a Backdoor Man,” ran for a seat on the Australian Senate. These outlandish political campaigns garner public attention, but what do they mean? Why do such unconventional and seemingly unelectable candidates run for office? These are the questions explored in L.M. Bogad’s delightfully written and wonderfully provocative book Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements. Bogad argues that these campaigns are examples of an innovative social movement tactic that combines electoral participation with grassroots, guerrilla-style street theater and thereby disrupts the dichotomy between working inside or outside of the system. This book documents three examples of electoral guerrilla campaigns and explains their intentions and their outcomes by synthesizing social movement literature with theories of theater and performance studies.

Bogad argues that electoral guerrilla theater appears in democracies where groups of people feel shut out of the system, despite claims of universal suffrage. In this context, guerrilla candidates step in to parody a particular candidate, but more generally to mock the exclusivity of the broader system. Often guerrilla candidates are connected to a specific marginalized group. Their performances make use of “insider” humor that energizes and solidifies the communities from which the candidates emerge. In addition, guerrilla candidates embody outlandish personae and articulate outrageous platforms in order to point out the ritualized and contrived aspects of the campaign process. Such exaggerated performativity has much in common with drag shows, and indeed two of the examples Bogad presents are drag queens. However, guerrilla candidates seek to attack not conventions of sex and gender, but rather the legitimacy of the electoral process.