CHAPTER 1

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Global State-Society Relations

There is growing incongruity between the empirical evidence of global political actors and relationships, on the one hand, and the state-centric model of international relations, on the other. For several hundred years the ideal of the Westphalian nation-state system upheld a global politics based on the interaction, for good or ill, of sovereign territorial governments, with little room for other actors. But it is increasingly obvious that nongovernmental actors are claiming a larger role in global politics, and using their larger role to express both ideals and concerns that are not delineated by nation-state boundaries (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith et al. 1997; Wapner 1995; Sikkink 1993).

The most visible of the peaceful expressions of nongovernmental actors have come at the world conferences sponsored by the UN. From the 1970s until today, the presence of thousands upon thousands of nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives at a wide variety of conferences has demonstrated their insistence on being present at moments of international debate over global issues. But of potentially greater importance, such representatives have sought an ever-increasing role in the process and outcomes of the negotiations. NGOs have sought inclusion from the beginning of the multiyear conference processes, often insisting on a modification of the UN rules that limit their conference participation. They have tirelessly lobbied governments—their own and others—on language for the final conference documents; they have sat quietly and listened, or loudly disrupted governmental meetings; and they have avidly used every opportu-

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nity to promote their own exchanges through expanding thematic, regional, and global networks.

States have not sat idly by during this upsurge of NGO activity. Whether through acceptance or rejection, it is clear that states have had to acknowledge the presence of new global actors. Some have actively promoted the inclusion of civil society actors. However, their inclusiveness has often been limited. State representatives have always possessed, and have often exercised, the option of excluding NGOs as debate approached issues perceived as impinging on state sovereignty. Beyond the traditional issues of economic development and military autonomy, these concerns have recently extended to social values. Human rights and gender relations, still perceived as domains in which states determine their very identities as states, have provoked the most conflict.

The increased visibility of NGOs and social movements at the international level along with states' continuing assertion of sovereign state prerogatives invite a thorough assessment of the current state of relations between states and other actors at the global level. It is undeniable that competitive and complementary actors crowd states' central position. But while the presence of such new actors is easily demonstrated, international relations scholars have debated their significance. Realists and their intellectual allies argue that states retain their central position; NGOs are a sideshow of international politics, if considered at all. At the other extreme, the literature on transnational relations asserts that global social interactions are important enough to represent a new sector of influence upon states—a "global civil society" circumscribing states' relative autonomy, or even creating alternate forms of global politics.

Our contribution to this debate comes from a more rigorous examination of its central subject. We argue that the concept of global civil society sets a more demanding standard for the evaluation of transnational political processes than has been applied in prior accounts of transnational activity. To provide a theoretical foundation for a systematic empirical assessment of transnational relations, the first section of this chapter develops the concept of global civil society.[1] To understand the impact of global civil society on world politics, the second section then examines the debate over its democratizing potential.

But in analyzing the changing dynamics of global state-society relations it is not only the concept and impact of "society" that demands more rigorous theorization. The characteristics of states

cannot be left unexamined. In the UN conference venue, sovereignty is a unique resource that only states can mine for various purposes in defending their own positions and shaping debate. Some NGOs, on the other hand, find ways around this by using sovereignty as a legitimating benchmark. In other words, they ask sovereign states to act like states, with all the responsibilities that accompany the rights conveyed by sovereign status. We lay a basis for a deeper examination of how sovereignty is expressed in the course of the issue debates of the UN conferences in the third part of this chapter by starting with a review of the scholarly literature on state sovereignty.

The final section of this chapter turns to a discussion of our cases and approach to analyzing global state-society relations in the context of the UN conferences. The conferences of the 1990s followed a multiyear preparation process, with numerous preparatory committee meetings (PrepComs) and regional preparatory meetings for governmental delegations. In addition, each had significant NGO participation, both for lobbying the official conferences and for parallel nongovernmental conferences.[2] The conferences thus provided a forum for sustained debate and agenda setting on specific issues, as well as more general discussions of the role of nongovernmental actors and other principles of international organization (Fomerand 1996). In general, these conferences have been among the more open of formal international negotiations, both in terms of their agendas and in terms of the numbers and kinds of actors who participate. Specifically, NGOs have been more influential at these global conferences than in other UN settings (Willetts 1996:57-80). In other words, these conferences have been the settings for some of the most sustained recent challenges to traditional definitions of state prerogatives and interests. Comparing across different issue conferences allows us to identify and explain the form these challenges have taken and states' responses to them.

Global Civil Society

The presence of large numbers of non-state actors in international politics is now an empirical fact. Tens of thousands of nongovernmental representatives regularly attend UN conferences and summits, both to network among themselves at parallel fora and to seek direct impact on government-to-government negotia-

tions. Yet even scholars who acknowledge this fact characterize the roles of those non-state actors in quite different ways. What is ultimately at stake in this debate are different understandings of the nature of global political processes and a possible global civil society. Part of the debate is an empirical one, as scholars struggle to map both the history and present occurrence of this phenomenon. The debate is also in part conceptual and theoretical, turning on differing interpretations of key concepts including civil society, democracy, and sovereignty. Although these concepts have been largely developed to discuss politics at the national level, we and other theorists of global civil society have relied upon them to aid in understanding international politics as well.

During the 1990s, the civil society concept moved to the forefront of a number of different research and analytic agendas, spurred by developments in world politics. In addition to the more-prominent presence of non-state actors in international politics, civil society was reinvigorated or even being created in Eastern Europe and Latin America (as well as in other parts of the globe) with the demise of various kinds of domestic authoritarian regimes there. Political theorists and philosophers responded by tracing the historical roots and debates surrounding the concept of civil society (e.g., Cohen and Arato 1992; Fine and Raj 1997; Hall 1995; Seligman 1992), while comparativists tried to map the rather complex new actors and relationships of transition politics onto these theoretical constructs (e.g., Diamond 1994; Friedman and Hochstetler 2002; Hall 1995; Pérez-Díaz 1993; Tempest 1997). Scholars of international relations have drawn heavily on such work in their own discussions of a possible civil society that transcends nation-state boundaries (e.g., Cox 1999; Wapner 1997, 2000).

Despite all of this analytic attention, serious differences remain on exactly how to define the object of study. While virtually all definitions include some notion of civil society as a voluntary associational sphere, the boundaries of what is included in that sphere are highly disputed. Perhaps the most common recent definition, which draws on the discourses and practices of the transitional experiences of Eastern Europe and Latin America, is one that identifies civil society as a third sphere, autonomous with respect to both market and state. Other definitions, however, draw in at least some parts of the other spheres. Both liberal and critical theorists often insist that economic forces and actors are central parts of civil society, although liberals simply grant that status to for-profit market actors as well as to other voluntary associations

(Pérez-Díaz 1993:56-58), while critical theorists see civil society as the site of a struggle between dominant and disadvantaged economic forces (e.g., Cox 1999). Another argument suggests that political arrangements and linking actors like political parties are so fundamental to the character of civil society that it is often difficult to understand the latter without considering the former (Foley and Edwards 1996); similarly, Antonio Gramsci argued that a hegemonic ideology could make state and civil society "practically indistinguishable" (Wapner 2000:269). These arguments are not only important to scholars. In the UN conferences we studied, NGOs and states also sparred over the definition of NGOs with real consequences for who was allowed to participate in NGO activities and to gain access to state actors.

Similar debates and divisions emerge among theorists of *global* civil society as well. Among theorists who speak of global civil society the most common definition is one that insists that this is a third autonomous sphere. Building on G. W. F. Hegel's vision of civil society as a free associational sphere, Paul Wapner (1995, 1996) asserts the existence of a world civic politics that is a public arena beyond the state. In this public sphere, politics emerges in power and knowledge, in acts of persuasion and understanding outside formal politics. In fact, Wapner reserves the label "civil society" for NGOs' political efforts that do not target states. Martin Shaw (1994) and Ronnie Lipschutz (1996) concur with this understanding, stressing the cultural mobilizing power of global civil society. Others, however, place economic actors within a global civil sphere (Cox 1999) or stress the ways in which the organizations of global civil society are themselves part of global economic relations (Colás 2002; Pasha and Blaney 1998). Finally, some see a set of non-state actors who are profoundly shaped by their relations with state actors and who find their primary importance in their ability to influence and interact with states (Willetts 2000).

We do not attempt to draw a final and consensual definition of the conceptual boundaries of civil society. The long history of the civil society concept means that there are theoretical antecedents and justifications for drawing the boundaries in a number of different places. The early theorists of civil society themselves conceived of it in remarkably different ways. In the current era, even if boundaries were analytically declared, numerous specific actors would be difficult to characterize because they inherently cross the boundaries—consider professional associations, for example—or because they cross the boundaries in practice, as when a non-

governmental organization accepts a government contract or when a union is linked to a political party. For our purposes, the crucial question about civil society is not how it is defined, but the impact that these voluntary associations have on world politics. This impact is quite clearly dependent on the interactions of voluntary associations with state and market forces, rather than simply a function of those associations' essential characteristics and unilateral actions.

Therefore, we begin here with the basic definition of civil society as a realm of voluntary association, more or less autonomous from state and market. Because our empirical focus is on the UN conferences and their parallel nongovernmental conferences, we concentrate on the boundary and interactions between state and civil society actors rather than the boundary between civil society and market actors. This focus does not imply that we think the civil society-market nexus is unimportant. In fact, the failure of the UN and the UN conferences in particular to address market-based social forces—and thus their implicit acceptance of a neoliberal market context—has already alienated some sectors of civil society. Some are choosing to redirect their attention from the UN to other fora that more directly confront dominant market forces and actors (Smith 2001a). Nonetheless, the stark contrast between the sometimes violent and dramatic street protests of Seattle and Genoa and the more placid and sustained engagements of state and society at the UN conferences further underlines the importance of understanding the latter: are these a desirable model for global state-society relations? If so, can they be replicated in some way in the more contentious economic sphere?

As we examine global civil society empirically, we are particularly concerned with the diverse set of nongovernmental and non-profit actors often simply called NGOs.[3] As Wapner (2000:268) says, "While the state system and the global economy provide a space for global civil society, as a phenomenon its existence rests on the activities of certain actors [NGOs] that actually constitute it and the quality of the relations that emerge between them." However, we think it is important not to assume that the simple presence of NGOs in the international system necessarily instantiates global civil society. In chapter 2, we outline a series of more specific empirical indicators that we believe are necessary in order to prove that a global civil society exists, and then to evaluate to what extent they are present at three major UN issue conferences of the 1990s. In this and in the subsequent chapters of the book, we also

focus on the consequences of whatever global civil society does exist.

We envision at least three possible consequences of a more-developed global civil society. First, the new visibility and participation of non-state actors may have important implications for the democratization of global governance processes. Second, the development of global civil society may affect the nature of the state actors involved in world politics by limiting sovereignty. Finally, global civil society may have a substantive impact, with NGOs contributing to better outcomes in their issue areas of concern, whether they be environmental or human rights protection, the status of women, effective population policies, or a variety of other concerns. Because of our empirical focus on the UN conferences and on global civil society as a whole, in this book we extensively discuss only the first two proposed consequences of global civil society. At the UN conferences, negotiations among states and between states and NGOs provide ample evidence for assessing the extent of democratic processes and sovereignty claims and bargains. However, the actual impact on outcomes is a much longer-term process that would require substantially more issue-specific evidence and is beyond the scope of this book. The next two sections present some of the claims and debates about the potential impact of global civil society on global democratization and on state sovereignty.

Global Civil Society and Democracy

Like the concept of civil society, the related concepts of democracy and democratization have received new attention since the 1980s from political theorists and comparativists as well as from international relations scholars. Among democratic theorists, the 1990s brought a deliberative turn to understandings of democracy. As one of its proponents stated, "Increasingly, democratic legitimacy came to be seen in terms of the ability or opportunity to participate in effective deliberation on the part of those subject to collective decisions" (Dryzek 2000:1). Comparativists were once again inspired by the cases of the former Soviet bloc and Latin America to ask questions about the prerequisites of democracy and the conditions of its stability and deepening (e.g., Agüero and Stark 1998; Diamond et al. 1999). In international relations, observers questioned a "democratic deficit" in a wide variety of international institutions, from the European Union to the UN (e.g., Paolini, Jarris,

and Reus-Smit 1998; Schmitter 2000), as well as in globalization processes as a whole (e.g., Held 1995; Rosow 2000; Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón 1999). At the same time, however, scholars recognized the capacity of NGOs and individual citizens to affect international politics (A. M. Clark 2001; O'Brien et al. 2000; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Rosenau 1997; Smith, Pagnucco, and Chatfield 1997; Willetts 1996). Jan Aart Scholte (2002) directly connects global civic activism and the question of democracy in global governance, delineating both the democratic possibilities of civil society and some of the characteristics that could cause it to fall short of that promise.

Although there is a long tradition of debate in numerous subfields about whether democracy rests in formal institutions and procedures or not, the debate about global civil society has advanced far enough that we focus on recent arguments relevant to that question among theorists of global civil society itself. These arguments address global civil society's potential impact on democratization at the global level and the nature of global democracy that might result. Two broad families of approaches assert that global civil society contributes to democratization at the global level. A third set of authors is more skeptical about this claim for a variety of reasons. The three approaches map onto the debates about the definition of civil society in interesting ways: one stresses developments among civil society actors themselves, independent of state and market actors; one stresses the changing relationship between civil society and state actors; and the skeptics of the third approach tend to focus on the relatively unchanged relationship between civil society and neoliberal capitalist forces.

Among theorists of global civil society, one of the most common visions of a potentially emerging global democracy suggests that NGOs alter political processes in fundamental ways, by adding a second sphere of governance to the one controlled by states (Wapner 1995, 1996; Lipschutz 1996). This alternative form of governance may transform the understandings of state actors as well as those of other parts of the public, but an impact on states is not required to call it governance or to call it political. The democracy that might be emerging, according to this conception, is akin to the deliberative turn of democratic theory, as it focuses more on deliberative and relational processes among citizens, outside of formal political systems and across nation-state boundaries. This international (Lynch 2000), global (Bohman 1998), or transnational public sphere (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald

2000) is not free of conflicts and inequalities, but does allow civil society participants to directly engage each other, and even state and market actors, ostensibly outside the logic of profit and the boundaries of the state.

A second version of the kind of democratization associated with global civil society argues that the central contribution of NGOs to global politics lies in their (varying) ability to influence states and to find niches for taking part in international decision making. As Peter Willetts (2000:207) argues, "[t]he relationships between governments and international NGOs within intergovernmental organizations are a contribution to democratic global governance." In this view, governance continues to be largely associated with states and with their associated institutions, but NGOs help transform diplomacy in those realms with the unique bargaining resources and perspectives that they bring to international negotiations (A. M. Clark 2001). As they participate, NGOs may enhance the ability of states to govern (e.g., Raustiala 1997), fill diplomacy gaps that states cannot (e.g., Princen 1994), or operate as pressure groups to influence the content of state choices (e.g., Willetts 1996, 2000). Global democracy is reflected in the ability to formulate relations of accountability, representation, and citizenship between global civil society and formal political institutions above the nation-state level. Exactly how this will be done in a systematic way requires answering some fundamental questions, which David Held (1999:105) has succinctly articulated:

> At issue is the nature of a constituency (how should the proper boundaries of a constituency be drawn?), the meaning of representation (who should represent whom and on what basis?), and the proper form and scope of political participation (who should participate and in what way?). As fundamental processes of governance escape the categories of the nation state, the traditional national resolutions of the key questions of democratic theory and practice are open to doubt.

Theorists of global civil society argue that NGOs should be a part of the process of answering these questions and then actively engaged in a new global democratic politics with states, although they acknowledge that states often do not allow this (Knight 1999).

In contrast, a final set of scholars questions whether the emergence of NGOs as important new actors in international politics is

likely to ever transform the international system in more democratic ways. The deepest skepticism comes from authors who argue that the failure of many proponents of global civil society to consider the economic positions and forces associated with new global civil society actors leads them to miss the inequality and alienation of the non-state sector (Macdonald 1994; Pasha and Blaney 1998). Frequently arguing from the perspectives of third world regions, they stress the exclusive and elite nature of global associational life: "Global civil society interactions reproduce the conflicts and contradictions of the domestic civil societies they emerge from, and also create new ones reflecting the dynamics of power at the international level" (Macdonald 1994:285). Undemocratic and unrepresentative itself, the participation and presence of global civil society cannot democratize the state system, according to these arguments.

The UN conferences we study here have been invoked as supporting evidence for all three of these arguments. John Dryzek (2000:130) and Iris Marion Young (2000:178), two prominent theorists of deliberative democracy, both cite the large mobilizations of the UN conferences as evidence of deliberative civic politics at the global level. Marie-Claude Smouts (1999:307–308) argues that the conferences show the new influence of civil society on states: "The proliferation of special conferences that devote part of their agenda to civil society and its major groups marks a basic transformation in multilateral activity. Henceforth the driving forces of civil society are involved in developing law; they have become incontrovertible partners in the elaboration, implementation and enforcement of recommendations that result from these big jamborees." Our own past work (A. M. Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998) raises doubts about whether NGOs have managed to use the UN conferences to democratize world politics, although we find the recalcitrance of states to be a key part of the explanation. In this book, we approach the question of the democratizing potential of NGOs at the UN conferences as an empirical issue, evaluating the evidence for each of these arguments.

Global Civil Society and Sovereignty

A second possible area of impact of global civil society is on its frequent target: the nation-state. Taking note of the real and potential influence of other global actors, scholars from varying theoreti-

cal perspectives have called for revisiting theories of sovereign state control (Sikkink 1993; Thomson 1995; Biersteker and Weber 1996; Litfin 1997). Few would argue today that sovereignty is a monolithic concept, or that states are the only actors to be considered in international politics. Instead, different dimensions of sovereignty are cataloged, debated, and revised. Moreover, these dimensions take on particular salience for scholars who have found that one dimension may well be traded off or compromised to capitalize on another in response to transnational challenges to state authority (Litfin 1997, 1998; Krasner 1999). For our analysis of the ways in which states assert, manage, and manipulate sovereignty at the global level, it is first necessary to review existing theoretical conceptions of sovereignty and to elaborate on the approach we will be using.

What is Sovereignty?

Sovereignty has been defined and redefined in the scholarly literature. Beyond the formal, juristic conception of sovereignty, which spotlights the international legal equality of states in the absence of formal overarching authority (B. C. Schmidt 1998:232), most definitions of sovereignty include some combination of internally and externally oriented attributes or capacities. The externally oriented components encompass states' relative freedom from outside interference, a negative feature rather than a positive ability to achieve a desired effect (Jackson 1990:27-28). On this view, states are defined by, and prize their legal independence from, other states, and will be reluctant to enter into binding agreements with them.

Internally, sovereignty is defined as a state's positive ability to act and to achieve the results it wants, especially within its territory (Jackson 1990:29-30). Scholars focused on the internal definitions of sovereignty have drawn on theories of the state in domestic politics, with references to pluralism (B. C. Schmidt 1998), postcolonial "quasi-states" (Jackson 1990), domestic preferences (Moravcsik 1997), the historical development of the state (Poggi 1990), and the state's implied link to a political community (Hinsley 1986). In all cases, as Stephen D. Krasner (1999) suggests, sovereignty is a complex affair that states achieve unevenly. At the domestic level, rulers coordinate and compromise internal aspects of sovereign control with actors in civil society.

Our observations confirm others' contentions that states nego-

tiate between the two quite different positions of authority just described (e.g., Kocs 1994; Litfin 1998; Putnam 1988). On the one hand, the negative, juristic conception of sovereignty characterizes states' striving toward relatively autonomous action within the formal anarchy of the international system. On the other hand, states are accustomed to a role as centralized power-holders in domestic politics that may also play out internationally. In this capacity, at both domestic and international levels, states manage claims to sovereignty amid "a dense arrangement of disaggregated state and non-state actors interacting in a highly interdependent environment" (B. C. Schmidt 1998:238).

The dual image of sovereignty as expressed through external and internal dimensions raises the question of how to interpret and evaluate states' sovereign claims. Sovereignty status is partly descriptive and partly subjective. Which actors—states, or non-state actors (whether domestic or transnational), or both—bestow and withhold legitimacy on states' sovereign claims? Sovereignty must be assessed at least partly through how it is "performed" (Weber 1998), but the performance is reviewed by both states and domestic and transnational non-state actors. While earlier definitions of sovereignty have often focused on the legitimating relationship between states and their domestic civil societies, the role of actors from global civil society as potential legitimators of sovereign claims is not yet well documented or theorized.

Karen T. Litfin's conceptualization (1997), which finds sovereignty to be a composite of three dimensions—autonomy, control, and legitimacy—is helpful as a starting point. In this regard, the externally oriented aspect of sovereignty corresponds to a state's "autonomy," the aspect of sovereignty that connotes freedom in decision making relative to other agents. The internally oriented sovereignty concerns correspond to Litfin's "control": the state's power to execute its plans. Litfin adds legitimacy as a third dimension of sovereignty. This dimension asks which actors are socially recognized as having the authority to make, recognize, and enforce internal and external rules. The question of which actors participate in legitimating this authority merits further empirical examination in light of observations about the role of NGOs in international politics.

As corollaries to sovereign privilege, states have traditionally asserted that only fellow states may recognize one another's sovereignty, and that only states have the authority to participate fully in any global governance that may occur. Janice E. Thomson (1995)

has argued that in practice states in large part do retain the ability to decide for themselves who else is sovereign and who has political authority within a territory. States have struggled to retain certain sovereign prerogatives while engaging in ever deeper dialogue with actors in global civil society. However, while a classic view of sovereignty suggests that states exist to guard the self-determination of distinct communities (Hinsley 1986:225), states' claims to sovereignty at the global level may also appear more or less legitimate based on an element of external, international social regard that autonomy, control, and even external, state-based legitimacy do not fully encompass.

We contend that it is important to recognize that sovereign legitimacy may in fact depend on two audiences: states and NGOs.Given the increasing influence of non-state actors on the development of international norms (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; A. M. Clark 2001), states are not always able to define the extent of their sovereignty by themselves. To protect sovereign prerogatives states may cooperate internationally to box out societal actors, as Thompson suggest (1995), but others join with nongovernmental actors to express universal aspirations. In order to take into account this new potential source of legitimacy, we would suggest a fourth dimension to sovereignty: internal control, external autonomy, and legitimacy in the eyes of both other states *and* non-state actors. We will examine this multidimensional sovereignty empirically in chapters 2 through 5.

How Do States Claim Sovereignty in Global
State-Society Relations?

The presence of multiple, interdependent, and potentially conflicting elements of sovereignty suggests that at times states may choose to trade one dimension of sovereignty for another—and not always under conditions of their own choosing. One example we find in this study is the trade-off between sovereign autonomy and control negotiated at the Rio conference whereby developing states agreed to limit their ability to make decisions over their natural resource use in return for monetary compensation from the developed world. Such choices, or bargains, will of course vary according to the issue at stake. If states are willing to strike bargains over sovereign prerogatives, we would expect to see such bargaining revealed at UN conferences. Because such conferences are among the more open of formal international negotiations, both in terms of

their agendas and in terms of the numbers and kinds of actors who participate, they have been the settings for some of the more sustained recent challenges to traditional definitions of state prerogatives and interests.

Our Cases and Analytic Approach

The intense interactions between and among states and NGOs at the UN provide a microcosm of global state-society relations. As the UN enters its second half-century of existence, it continues to excite debate and controversy among scholars and political observers. James Rosenau catalogues twenty-three answers to the misleadingly simple question: of what is the UN an instance? (Rosenau 1998:253-255). The UN is both an intergovernmental organization of nation-states and an adaptive transnational organization that reflects emerging non-state-based values and interests (Cronin 2002; Rosenau 1998:255). As one result of its complex nature, the UN has been excoriated both for its international meddling at the expense of national sovereignty (e.g., Barr 2002) and for its inability either to act independently of, or to challenge the interests of, its more powerful members (Martin 1998). The variety of views of the UN also reflects the vast scope of its activities. It is one of the few social organizations outside of national governments that involves itself with security and economic growth concerns as well as issues of social concern as varied as educational practices, iodine deficiencies, human cloning, marital structure, pesticides, and genocide. These features of the UN, along with the simple fact that, like it or not, states turn to international organizations when they need to conduct common affairs (Abbott and Snidal 1998), support the argument that the UN will continue to reward in-depth study.

The highly visible global issue conferences supported by the UN have been called on an ad hoc, or nonroutine basis, and addressed a limited agenda within a single issue area (Willetts 1989:37). In the 1990s, nine UN conferences were held (see table 1.1). This book explores six of them. Because they addressed issues around which global social movements have arisen, we primarily analyze the 1992 United Nations conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro; the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna; and the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. To assess our

Table 1.1 Major UN Global Conferences of the 1990s

Date	Title	Place
5-9 March 1990	World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Learning Needs	Jomtien, Thailand
29-30 September 1990	World Summit for Children	New York, United States
3-14 June 1992	UN Conference on Environment and Development	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
14-25 June 1993	World Conference on Human Rights	Vienna, Austria
5-13 September 1994	International Conference on Population and Development	Cairo, Egypt
6-12 March 1995	World Summit for Social Development	Copenhagen, Denmark
4-15 September 1995	Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace	Beijing, China
3-14 June 1996	Second UN Conference on Human Settlements	Istanbul, Turkey
3-17 November 1996	World Food Summit	Rome, Italy

(Source: UN 1998)

findings, we also use comparative information from three other conferences, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo; the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen; and the 1996 Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul.

All of the conferences so far have shared similar goals and formats. A central focus of official business at each conference and at preparatory meetings leading up to the conference was the creation of a final conference document to be endorsed by state participants.[4] At regional preparatory meetings, governments developed regional positions on specific conference issues. Prior to each conference, a series of Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepComs) were global rather than regional, and focused particularly on drafting the conference document. The wording of the final documents was invariably the focus of intense politicking among states and between NGOs and states, which continued up to and through the final conferences.

Now that the decade of 1990s conferences is past, two nearly opposite interpretations have emerged. On the one hand, both observers and participants in the conferences have noted growing "summit fatigue." These concerns emerged with the disappointment at Rio+5, when the conference meant to mark five years of progress looked back on few new achievements since the 1992 Earth Summit (see, e.g., Sandbrook 1997). Such sentiments gained ground as ten-year anniversary summits for the 1990s conferences approached. Even the chair of the Rio+10 conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002 thought he was seeing the last environment summit of its kind (Meyerson 2002:1). In this view, the resources and time devoted to the conferences have not been repaid by the weak commitments to action that emerged from them.

The opposite point of view stresses the strong normative and agenda-setting functions of the 1990s conferences, which legitimated new ideas and actors rather than directly causing changes in state behavior (Haas 2002). Jacques Fomerand (1996:372) directly takes up the question of whether UN conferences are media events or genuine diplomacy, and concludes that "UN global conferences bring about new norms, new policies, and new modalities of action. They redefine problems by casting them in their global contexts and foundations. Their ultimate aim is to crystalize (*sic*) the existence of a majority will." Interestingly, this point of view has also caused some reluctance to hold additional conferences, as some advocates fear that government representatives might backslide on previously agreed norms and values. This has been the case for women's activists anticipating the ten-year assessments of the population and gender conferences (Center for Women's Global Leadership et al. 2003).

Our research starts out from the latter view that stresses the innovations of the conferences. While we acknowledge that large global conferences as a specific organizing phenomenon may be passing from the global scene, we focus on the conferences in order to understand more fully the new modalities of action and new actors that NGOs have represented in them. This includes addressing questions about the consequences of that NGO participation for broader global state-society relations and whether those consequences include the development of a global civil society and greater global democratization, as discussed earlier in this chapter. We believe that the consequences are likely to outlive the specific organizing framework of the UN conferences them-

selves, and may be a model for other kinds of global governance arrangements.

NGOs have not had standing equal to states in the UN conferences. But opportunities for issue influence and network building arose as soon as official preparations for the conferences began. NGOs attended both the preparatory and final conferences, some registering with the official conference and some not. A parallel NGO conference with a separate agenda, the NGO Forum, has been a feature of most UN conferences and their preparatory meetings since the 1972 conference on the environment in Stockholm. Supplementing the business of the Forum there was an extracurricular festival of NGO exhibitions and activities. In all of these ways, NGOs sought to influence the governmental agenda, to exploit news coverage of the event, and to carry on business among themselves.

As contributors to the wealth of transnational activity, NGOs are curious contenders for a role in international politics. Their most important claims for inclusion rest on norms of democracy and civic participation, which historically have been weak at the international level. The early UN institutionalized the ideal of social representation by creating a consultative status for NGOs within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), but only 418 NGOs held this status in 1993 as the new UN conference cycle was getting underway (Bichsel 1996:241). Today, however, tens of thousands of NGOs participate in new ways, particularly during UN conference processes. Some avidly target intergovernmental politics as they lobby and help formulate, implement, and monitor the policies of states and intergovernmental organizations, while others supplement or eschew traditional political channels.[5] In practice, many NGOs adopt goals that straddle the division, coordinating dialogue with the grassroots sector *and* using lobbying tactics to target governmental and international policymakers.[6]

As just noted, our empirical investigation of the explosion of transnational NGO activity and states' responses to it seeks to answer three general questions. First, to assess the development and impact of global civil society, we ask how NGOs asserted a role for themselves as legitimators of, and participants in, global governance processes, and how states responded. Second, to assess the assertion of state sovereignty, we ask what kinds of sovereign claims states made at the conferences. Third, in a related vein, we ask what, if any, bargains were struck among the four dimensions of sovereignty when claims conflicted. These questions spotlight re-

cent developments of global state-society relations from the perspective of state and non-state actors, and our research consequently is based on an analysis of textual representations and primary reports of their positions and agreements.

To answer the first question, it is important to analyze how NGOs sought a role for themselves in transnational negotiations vis-à-vis states and other NGOs, and how states responded to this assertion and, often, to NGOs' contestation of state positions. We rely on the public statements and private documents of NGOs, which express their assessments of states' claims, as well as the official documents of the UN and other primary and secondary sources, including participant observation in parts of all three conferences.[7]

To answer the second question, we rely on governments' public representations of their preferences throughout the conference processes. These are found in governmental representatives' plenary statements and in written, formal reservations to the final conference agreements. These sources are especially important for understanding the sovereignty claims specific states and groups of states make, and the responses of other states. Further evidence was gathered from secondary accounts and participant observation. We do not assume that such evidence constitutes the last word on states' views of sovereignty, but we do assume that it represents what the participants found fit for global consumption. Because global conferences show the most public faces of sovereigns and their critics, we may not be able to take their words at face value. But we can assume that they represent what the *participants want the world to believe* their priorities are, which means that states are likely to be especially conscious of how they construct the messages they send—as well as the precedent being set for later interpretations of sovereignty.

Finally, to assess the extent of sovereignty bargaining, we analyze primary and secondary accounts of conference negotiations and outcomes. We focus on evidence of diplomatic bargaining: negotiated verbal (and, in some cases, written) agreements in a public international forum that represent trade-offs among participants and their competing claims about sovereignty. The second step of converting those diplomatic bargains into substantive outcomes is beyond the scope of the present work, although we do offer some commentary on observed discrepancies between agreements and substantive outcomes. Evidence of sovereignty bargaining is to be found in the shifts, compromises, and refusals

to yield on interpretations of state practices that make reference to sovereignty, in the process of arriving at the final conference agreements. Conference outcomes are the negotiated final texts and institutions created at the conferences. We assume, here, that they embody the sovereignty bargains that have (or have not) been struck by state actors.