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NAFTA and Transnational Contention: A Decade of Alliance and Conflict over Neoliberalism

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Introduction

As the previous chapters in this book make clear, North American contention over trade and globalization is now part of the world historical stage. Tensions between regionalization and globalization arose from the early struggles against the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) and onward to present-day concerns about the evolution of the so-called ‘Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America’ (SPP). In this chapter, we focus on the profusion of conflict at a continental level, though not without acknowledging an implicit understanding that much of what propels regionalization is a response to globalization. Forces of contraction and expansion affect the ambitions of social movements as well as states and corporations. In this chapter, we suggest that contention over international trade in North America has indeed taken a transnational form and has done so within a dynamic ‘alliance and conflict system’ (ACS).

From trade unionists to tree-sitters, protests against advancing modes of neoliberal integration in the Americas manifested during the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) fight and well into the global and regional trade meetings from 1997 to 2005. The intense and focused mobilization against the 1999 and 2003 ministerial conventions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, Washington, and again in Cancún, Mexico, sparked a widespread public discussion of globalization and the protests against it. Additionally, activists protesting the meetings for NAFTA’s expansion to a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Quebec City, Miami, Florida, and Mar del Plata, Argentina,

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experienced repression and growing frustration in their attempts to slow or stop advancing free markets. The persistence of alliances within the movement for global justice and the invitation of new actors into those alliances leave little doubt that these forms of contention are now part of the process of globalization, swelling beyond nation states into the global arena.

On the other side of the fence sit delegates from nation states, corporations, and economic associations of multinational corporations. This is another kind of collective force – the force behind the ministerial meetings and conventions. Allied to neoliberal governments in Chile, the United States, Mexico, Canada, and others, the resources and expertise of large corporations form a powerful constituency. Their influence lies in internal access to the decision-making centers of states that mold the contours of national and international economies. Heralded by elite organizations in Canada, Mexico, and the United States as a friendlier North America, the new North American initiative, envisioned as the SPP, reflects a high level of shared interest, collaboration, and organization among economic, policy planning, and governmental personnel. The collaborative network behind this and other initiatives forms a responsive system prepared to engage and coordinate transnational agendas for continental integration.

The sustained role of the respective alliances on both sides of the trade agenda in North America registers a new apparatus for solidarity and contention over free trade, an interconnected system of oppositional alliances formed in the crucible of conflict over trade policy. Indeed, the political alliances forged in a series of conflicts over neoliberal trade initiatives circa 1987–2005 have created quasi-permanent mobilization structures. For instance, many of the less conspicuous corporate *free trade* advocacy organizations, such as the Business Roundtable and the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), have figured prominently in the free trade political conflicts in the years since NAFTA: the 1994 implementation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (which created the WTO); the fast track conflict in 1997 over negotiations for an FTAA; the 1998 effort by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to institutionalize the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI); the China Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) campaign; the 2002 vote to expand Trade Promotion Authority for President Bush; and the recent conflicts over the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and FTAA. Likewise, several labor unions, a broad coalition of liberal allies, and an increasingly militant, global justice network of grass-roots groups have figured

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prominently in opposing each new round of free trade initiatives in the Americas. The battle over NAFTA helped to set this stage.

Organizations with diverse backgrounds, representing distinct and sometimes conflicting social constituencies, proved central to the formation of challengers to neoliberalism. The historical record of the 1990s makes it clear that in order to understand inter-movement cooperation and the broad, though at times tenuous, alliance system, we need to reflect on the alliances that were established, and have since endured, in the NAFTA fight. What happened in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1997, or Cancún, Mexico, and Miami, Florida, in 2003, for example, was made possible by the creation of new political opportunities by an incipient fair trade movement years earlier in the NAFTA conflict (and even before that in the CUSFTA conflict).

Alliance and conflict systems

As many social movement scholars note, it is difficult to consider a movement in a conceptual space independent from the impacts of countermovements. At a minimum, social movement activists anticipate responses from perceived opponents, whether or not opponents are in fact organized (or even exist). At the other extreme, social movement activists confront well-organized, resource-rich, hegemonic countermovements that utilize repression, murder, and imprisonment to quell movement challengers. Social movements attempting to mobilize in a context of hegemonic power structures find it difficult to grease the techniques of mobilization – to obtain high frame resonance with publics, to organize support, and to mobilize actors. The presence, real or imagined, of antagonists remains an important element of movements.

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In the following section, the notion of an ACS, originally outlined by Klandermans, is expanded (1990). The ideas behind this concept are particularly germane for this discussion, given the manner in which movement-countermovement dynamics as well as interorganizational interactions are highlighted. This conceptualization also provides tools to understand the contested turf of state and para-statal institutions. States are included in both the alliance and the conflict systems. A single state may have conflicting agencies or government bodies that take opposing stands in response to actors in the movement/alliance and countermovement/conflict system. States may also shift in response to emerging transnational political opportunities, joining the movement/alliance system, or attempting to leverage both.

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Klandermans proposed that the background environment of movement organizations consist of both ACSs (1990). His basic assertion stems from the observation, across multiple social movements, of 'support structures' for the formation and maintenance of social movement organizations (see, for example, Heirich 1968; Morris 1984 and Gould 1991). These support structures provide the backdrop from which internal and external resources are identified and acquired, issues raised, leaders selected, and allies made. In the context of social movement mobilization, the multi-organizational field – 'the total possible number of organizations with which the focal organization might establish specific linkages' – has both supporting and opposing sectors (Curtis and Zurcher 1973). According to Klandermans, the field of organizations and groups that may be supportive of a particular movement organization form an alliance system (1990). Movement actors may scan the alliance system – and in fact may be explicitly aware of changing alignments within it – for political opportunities. Efforts to secure new allies are one manner by which challengers may enhance their political opportunity, even in the face of a relatively unified elite and fortified conflict system. The conflict system is composed of 'representatives and supporters of the challenged political system, including counter-movement organizations' (Klandermans 1990: 124). In this regard, the multi-organizational field forms the potential structure for an ACS that engenders the political environment with latent opportunities and constraints.

The development of a counter-movement makes the conflict system all the more potent. As Zald and Useem argue, counter-movements are much more likely to develop if a movement is successful (1987). Characteristically representative of the status quo being challenged, counter-movements typically find support from the elite, have extensive financial resources, and ideologically align themselves with the established order. One of the unique and indispensable elements of a conflict system, to which counter-movement organizations are bound, is the ability to restrict opportunities and drain resources from the challengers (Klandermans 1990). Several tactics are commonly used toward these ends: (1) splitting the unity of the movement; (2) undermining the organizational integrity of the leading movement organizations (via infiltration, bribery, arrest, legal harassment, and so on); (3) limiting the opportunity structure of the movement (media propaganda, litigation, and so on); (4) adopting bargaining stances that co-opt movement moderates and institutionalize conflict; (5) increasing the costs of mobilization to the challengers by policing protest and organizations (arrests, repression, and so on).

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For challengers, a deeper reliance on networks within the alliance system offers one avenue for enhancing opportunities for mobilization. Both tangible (money, personnel, equipment, and so on) and intangible (strategic know-how, experience, leadership, and so on) resources may be tapped from this environment. More importantly, as Klandermans notes, 'the alliance systems provide social movement organizations with extended communication and recruitment networks' (1990: 126). A common means for accessing these resources and opportunities is in the form of loosely coupled coalitions, such as those formed in the anti-NAFTA mobilization. During cycles of heightened mobilization, these coalitions may endure through difficult political environments. In the NAFTA campaign, the coalitions endured over three years, and in the years following some have matured into semi-autonomous organizations. Their continued presence in an age of neoliberal globalization suggests an entrenchment of the fair trade forces that were unleashed in the early 1990s. This resilience points to a resource advantage of the coalition form of mobilization in an alliance system with transnational properties.

Evidence from the last decade suggests that nationally based ACSs can develop and expand into transnationally contentious spaces (Dreiling 2001). In order to consider these developments, we suggest two amendments to existing conceptualizations of ACSs. First, we expand on the idea that a single state may have conflicting agencies or government bodies that take opposing stands in response to actors in the movement/alliance and countermovement/conflict system. In addition to this logical extension, we argue that a transnational ACS must include multiple states and governments. States are themselves actors and objects of contention across the complex, multiorganizational systems of conflict. Moreover, states, like agencies within states, may shift allegiances, seeking new allies and abandoning older ones, as citizens and publics transform domestic political priorities and allegiances. Like other actors in a transnational ACS, state actors may shift in response to emerging national or transnational political opportunities, embracing the movement/alliance system, or trying to manipulate both. Venezuela's recent rejection of a US-led FTAA is an example of states taking a dissident position within the movement's alliance system. We refer to states taking these counter-hegemonic positions as dissident states.

Second, we posit that transnational political opportunities are not constrained by a single polity, but rather respond to a polymorphous system of states, transnational institutions, and the structure of allies and contenders on this landscape. Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink suggest

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that the transnational character of political opportunities is ‘multilayered’ given the structure of polities at many different levels (2002). Polities, in the classical political process example, revolve around states. In the transnational arena, systems of governance transcend single polities and create opportunities for transnational polities. Kay, for example, shows how the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC) (a side agreement of NAFTA) established transnational political opportunities for labor movements in all three North American countries (2005). More recent research, reported in Chapter 9 of this book by Graubert, highlights a growing reluctance by North American labor unions to utilize the petition process in the NAALC. Below, we elaborate on the manner in which NAFTA governance institutions and regional trade meetings created a political space to nurture a transnational alliance system. But, we argue that this transnationalized space is not a static and homogenous space. Indeed, transnational political structures wax and wane, contracting and expanding as cycles of contention mold institutions, networks, and mobilization capabilities in this emergent political space. That this space is at once national and transnational, regional and global, speaks to varying scale of political action achieved by collective actors in recent decades.

Alliance and conflict over North American trade policy

Conflict over the signing of NAFTA continued for over three years and was followed by a series of political actions in North America, beginning with the Zapatista mobilization in Chiapas, Mexico, and followed by numerous actions gathering steam at the transnational level. The outcome of these conflicts over NAFTA stimulated the expansion, and, in some instances, the birth of transnational structures that include movement actors, states, transnational governance structures, and countermovement networks. In the decade-plus following the passage of NAFTA, transnational contention has emerged in three distinct settings over trade and economic policy: contention within the legal-juridical institutions created by NAFTA; multi-city protest mobilizations in cities across North America; the coordination of countermovement activity within the conflict system of elites, sharing policing practices, public relations media, and cooptation of dissidents. Not one of these spheres of contention provides uniform opportunities for protest. Instead, their strategic value to movements and movement leaders is in flux as the political issues and environments change. We discuss each of these below.

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NAFTA was clearly not the panacea celebrated by its proponents; nor was it the death-knell decried by some of its opponents. Neither side has successfully claimed victory to the public. Instead, regional conflicts over trade policy escalated, new alliances emerged, and transnational connections persisted. CAFTA was hotly contested in 2004–2005. At a global and hemispheric level, the legitimacy of the World Economic Forum remains challenged as the World Social Forum sets new goals and directives for globalization. These repertoires of contention now reflect the emergence of a quasi-permanent global justice alliance system, a system that has transcontinental links. However, achieving, much less sustaining, a truly global scale of mobilization defies the capabilities of many collective actors. Instead, regional networks befit the capacities and issue-concerns of many collective actors, making a continental orientation likely. A distinctly North American alliance system does exist, even as it contributes to, and learns from, regional movement alliances from counterparts in South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. The North American alliance system has a definite periodicity and political configuration, as do other continental alliance systems. By no means do we attempt to explore those details here, but rather, to provide a sketch for thinking about the transnational evolution of this North American alliance system and raise some questions about its contributions to emerging transcontinental alliances.

NAFTA and transnational contention: Opportunities for transnationalizing alliances?

Opening the websites for the two institutions created by the NAFTA side accords reveals their transnational character: options for reading them are available in English, French, and Spanish. Yet this transnational character goes deeper than this: as discussed elsewhere in this book, public petitions to these institutions have persisted from all three countries over the last decade. As outcomes of the conflict over NAFTA, the side accords and the emerging institutions reflect the contentious qualities of the ACS in North America. While it is true that many activists in the labor and environmental movement have concluded that the environmental and labor adjudication processes are weak, others maintain the strategic value of pressing their issues via these NAFTA channels and building common understandings of the legal limitations of the respective NAFTA signatories. Under the Commission for Labor Cooperation (CLC), labor unions and labor-related organizations have filed 30 complaints to the National Administrative Organizations from the three

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member countries as of February 2005. Similarly, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) has received 47 citizen submissions in the last decade, with 9 generating a 'factual record', 10 currently active, and 32 inactive (as of February 2005). Graubert details the rise and retreat of petitions by labor organizations in Chapter 9 of this book.

Rise and fall of opportunities in a transnational alliance system

In an offbeat kind of tempo, with corporate internationalization leading the motion and labor following, neoliberal economic restructuring and its resistance are raising political institutions that at once challenge national labor institutions and make way for contention over labor rights. This ongoing contention over labor rights in North America has left a paradoxical footprint, first in NAFTA with the forging of the so-called 'labor side agreement' and followed by labor's testing of the agreement over the last 12 years. Paradoxically, NAFTA's labor side agreement was born out of the conflict over the threat of capital flight implied by NAFTA. Labor unions mobilized to prevent the passage of NAFTA but instead their efforts led to NAFTA's side agreement on labor, the NAALC. This agreement established a pseudo-juridical institution, the CLC, designed to hear complaints regarding failures of signatory nations to abide by and enforce their own labor laws. Critics of the NAALC have made it clear that there are currently two gaping holes in the agreement: enforcement of the labor standards in the agreement is virtually impossible, and so far non-existent, and there is no institutional call for an upward harmonization of worker rights and labor laws.¹ Analyses and accounts of the numerous submissions to the CLC via the respective National Administrative Offices (NAO) in each country validate these claims and will not be repeated here (Compa 2001a; see also Compa 2001b).

Environmental activists challenged NAFTA on an analogous front. Sparked by ecological devastation along the United States–Mexico border, and moved by activist efforts to link social processes to environmental justice, the North American environmental movement began questioning free trade and the environment. The mobilization and eventual split in the US environmental movement resulted in the environmental side accord, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) (Dreiling 2001). The NAAEC established a distinctly transnational juridical body, the CEC. Unlike the CLC, the CEC accepts and reviews petitions as a transnational body. The CLC requires petitions be submitted to, and reviewed by, the NAOs of the

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respective governments. Furthermore, the CEC has numerous avenues for taking action, including drafting plans and proposals for national governments to adopt.

Table 11.1 presents all petitions filed and heard by the CLC and its respective NAOs and through the CEC until February of 2005.² As we might expect, the trend in submissions increased in the first years after passage of NAFTA. Yet, after 1998, the number of labor petitions dropped and environmental petitions crept slightly higher, on average.

Table 11.1 Labor and Environmental Complaints Filed through the North American Agreement for Labor Cooperation and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 1994–2004

Year	Labor Petitions		Environmental Petitions	
	Number	National Origin	Number	National Origin
1994	4	United States (4)	0	—
1995	1	Mexico (1)	2	United States (2)
1996	2	United States (2)	4	Canada (2) Mexico (1) United States (1)
1997	3	United States (3)	8	Canada (5) Mexico (1) United States (1)
1998	10	Mexico (4) Canada (2) United States (4)	6	Canada (1) Mexico (4) United States (1)
1999	2	Canada (1) United States (1)	2	United States (2)
2000	3	Canada (1) Mexico (1) United States (1)	5	Canada (1) Mexico (3) United States (1)
2001	2	Canada (1) United States (1)	3	Canada (1) Mexico (2)
2002	0	—	5	Canada (2) Mexico (3)
2003	3	Canada (1)	5	Canada (2) Mexico (3)
2004	0	—	7	Canada (4) Mexico (3) United States (1)
Total	30	All NAFTA nations	47	All NAFTA nations

Source: Commission for Labor Cooperation (2005) and Commission for Environmental Cooperation (2005).

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Critics attribute these trends to the failure of these NAFTA side institutions to provide any significant remedy to labor or environmental violations in the NAFTA countries. For example, by the close of 2001, of the 21 submissions evaluated by the CEC, only two had achieved the venerable 'factual record', the most authoritative position this institution can take. Skepticism by both labor and environmental groups appears grounded in these failures of the institutions to hold governments or firms accountable for labor or environmental violations (Blair 2003). As evident in Table 11.1, the evolution of conflict through the CLC and CEC involved an initial deepening and broadening of movement participation in all three countries. In some cases, more marginal movement organizations joined in the petitioning. For example, the independent labor movement in Mexico became directly involved as a petitioner in several cases.³

Yet the pace of deepening and broadening has clearly slowed. At a recent activist gathering on the topic of the CEC, several leaders from environmental groups in Canada, the United States, and Mexico testified to this issue. Activists from Mexico, frustrated by efforts with their own government, expressed greater hope for using these transnational petitioning processes. The case against the Mexican government for failing to enforce national environmental protection laws in the large Lake Chapala basin was cited as a case for persisting with the CEC. This case began with a submission in 1997, which was terminated by the Secretariat of the CEC. As activists continued work in the state of Jalisco, the Mexican government continued to urge the CEC to dismiss the second case – even arguing that many elements of the petition should remain confidential. The July 2005 decision by the Secretariat to make a 'factual record' in favor of the petitioners and against the Mexican government was seen as a beneficial outcome that supported their efforts on the local level.

While many activists in North America appear disheartened with the CEC and CLC because of the lack of any substantial legal authority, others see it as a means to support their legal initiatives at the local level. Barring substantial new conflict or new national-level pressures to improve the labor and environmental protocols at the transnational level, the status quo will continue to prove disappointing to activists.

Protest and transnational mobilization in NAFTA countries

The protest in Seattle was one in a series of events that illustrated the expanding alliance structures that emerged with NAFTA. This

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was a 'transformative event' that heralded a unique turning point in the global justice movement; it revealed the mobilizing capacity of national and international Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), it catapulted supranational organizations and multilateral trade agreements into the public view, and it produced one of the first victories against neoliberalism (McAdam and Sewell 2001). Post-Seattle mobilizations continued in the United States and abroad (DC WB/IMF meetings in April 2000 and September 2001). Social networks, developed through years of challenging supranational institutions, continued to play an important role in linking movement organizations to a developing and maturing alliance system in North America and beyond.

Sustained, coordinated transnational mobilizations against globalization spread across North America throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. This contentious action took place against similar targets, with virtually the same NGOs and representatives from civil society, and in the name of goals that were almost identical. Mobilizations in Canada and Mexico against the WTO, the G8, G7, G20, and the FTAA illustrated that these were not, as some considered, short-term and ephemeral connections.

Quebec 2001

In April 2001, over 60,000 people from around the world converged in Quebec City to protest FTAA negotiations. The authorities, fearing a repeat of the blockades in Seattle, took a defensive posture and erected their own perimeter blockade ('the wall of shame') to keep protesters from disrupting the trade talks. Once again, the grass roots and SMOs recruited, assembled resources, and coordinated collective action in the largest protest demonstration against the FTAA. Activists from various social movement sectors collectively challenged authorities utilizing a mobilization strategy of labor marches, rallies, die-ins, and people's summits. As mass demonstrations and negative public perceptions of the FTAA increased outside of the barricaded meetings, opposition percolated from periphery countries over agriculture, poverty, and other social issues inside the ministerial meeting. The existence of both internal and external disruptive challenges did little to enhance the reproductive potential of the neoliberal vision. After seven years of negotiation, six ministerial meetings, and numerous gatherings among governmental and business interests, the FTAA was unable to go far beyond the preparatory stages.

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The mobilization in Quebec is noteworthy, first, because it revealed an institutional vulnerability to challengers and, second, because it signaled a tactical shift in the ACS. Protests on the street opened up space for national resistance in the trade talks. Government representatives from several Latin American states found opportunities to express concerns over neoliberal trade policy and, in some cases, voice sympathy with protesters. These dissident state actors began to redefine the fault lines around the transnational ACS. A relatively new transnational institutional space for solidarity and contention over free trade began to develop.

Within the conflict system, a tactical shift was evident in the Canadian government's response to protest activity. In order to limit the disruptive potential of demonstrators the state took a number of precautions: it militarized security; it situated the meetings in a well-fortified, nearly inaccessible location; and it denied non-national protesters entry into the country. Each of these institutional responses to protest would become a standard model for subsequent trade meetings.

Yet the attempts to shield themselves from public protest were not effective. By taking this approach, these state actors openly acknowledged the disruptive potential of the movements, further solidifying the belief that mass mobilizations are a necessary element to create change. As a consequence, it also sparked a revitalization of local solidarity actions across North America, with labor, environmental, and social justice networks gathering to localize resistance to international trade agreements.

Cancún, Mexico 2003

With neoliberals on the defensive, events in Cancún at the WTO's fifth Ministerial illustrated further the level of transnational resistance and expanding global justice alliance system. Instead of a manifesto for international trade liberalization, the talks collapsed as unified opposition from developing countries surfaced. The coalition-building and networking characteristic of popular movements were matched by networks of dissident states within the ministerial meetings who voiced opposition on key issues involving medicine, agriculture, trade in services and investment. Over 80 of the poorest WTO member countries, along with Brazil and India, called on the trade body to develop a more transparent and democratic process so that their voices could be heard. This transnational network of challengers, with shared grievances and a collective understanding of the problems with current trade policy,

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exploited new political opportunities opened by grass-roots contention and tapped a variety of resources made available through previous trade talks.

The growing transnational resistance to unfair agriculture subsidies, anti-dumping laws, intellectual property rights, and inadequate labor and environmental protections enhanced opportunities to question the discourse of free trade. The institutional alliance of dissident states enabled issues concerning nations of the global South to gain negotiation leverage as a bloc against the US and EU. This combination of elite and popular dissent against neoliberalism signaled a new dimension of international solidarity. These institutional alliances opened up new political space for challengers; mobilization opportunities were created, new external allies emerged, and the structure for contention over future neoliberal trade policies changed in favor of the fair traders.

Miami 2003

Despite a post-9/11 climate of fear, the movement for global justice and fair trade continued its resistance at the seventh FTAA ministerial in Miami. Once again, contention was facilitated by transnational labor, environmental and social justice alliances that were established in previous trade battles. These alliance networks provided tangible resources and opportunities that enhanced collective action. For example, labor unions afforded direct action activists high-rise hotel rooms to run communications to demonstrators on the streets. The Canadian United Auto Workers Union (CAW), United Steel Workers of America (USWA), and numerous international unions bused thousands from all over the country to march with environmental, social justice, and anti-globalization activists. In addition, an alliance of international unions and SMOs sponsored three days of rallies and marches adjacent to the ministerial meeting.

Funded by an \$8.5 million grant from the federal government (a line item in an \$87 billion appropriation for Iraq) security police, most of the time clad in full riot gear, patrolled the city in helicopters, on bikes, and on horseback. The intimidation, hyper surveillance, arrests, and media propaganda were unprecedented. Despite increasing repression, NGOs and grass-roots activist networks were not discouraged from participating in collective action. Violent police actions against peaceful demonstrators did not deter mainstream labor organizers like American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) President John Sweeney from joining meetings with

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the direct action community at the activist convergence center. This show of solidarity and cooperation with the broader international social justice and environmental community helped strengthen the alliance system. Subsequent USWA lawsuits against the city of Miami and calls by SMO's and labor unions for investigations into police brutality further solidified intermovement alliances and solidarity.

Where Cancún represented a major setback for US and EU hegemony in global trade negotiations, the FTAA failure in Miami represented a huge blow to the US designs in the western hemisphere. Opposition in Latin America was widespread, and the United States walked away from negotiations having failed to get the biggest economies, Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina, to sign on to the agreement. A North American alliance system, increasingly networked into the transcontinental global justice networks with loose ties to dissident states, organized these challenges to a neoliberal conflict system.

The neoliberal conflict system

As activists learned in 2001 and 2002 WTO Ministerial meetings, tactical innovation is not exclusive to movement challengers. Although research indicates the existence of different national styles for dealing with challenging groups (Kriesi et al. 1995; Della Porta and Reiter 1998), post-Seattle responses to protest activity have taken on a more homogeneous character. In their attempt to restrict the opportunities and drain challengers' resources, the pattern of protest policing has been standardized transnationally. Distinct cross-national differences once seen in policing may be giving way to a uniform approach to dealing with challenging groups. In the post-NAFTA conflict system, with its financial resources and ideological support from the established order, North American governments have militarized cities and provided remote, fortified locations to hold trade talks. These states have also denied entry to foreign activists; raided media and convergence centers; denied march/rally permits to demonstrators; infiltrated challenging groups; restricted public access to city streets and convention centers; arrested key leaders and legal representatives; and assaulted activists.

Within the conflict system, the combination of government-sponsored talks and repression of citizen movements is further buttressed by media and political campaigns by corporate associations. For example, following the collapse of the ministerial sessions of the WTO in Seattle, Washington, in December 1999, corporate leaders, and various political benefactors, initiated a legislative program to 'normalize'

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US trade policy with China and expedite full admission into the WTO. While China was formally invited to join the WTO months prior to the November meetings, foreign policy leadership in China asserted that US corporations could not participate in the new investment framework unless the US Congress established PNTR with China. In early 2000, the Business Roundtable-sponsored 'Go Trade' coalition applauded President Bill Clinton's initiative to support PNTR with China, despite widespread opposition. The ad hoc 'Go Trade' coalition has a striking resemblance to the corporate coalition that promoted and defended the NAFTA, the USA*NAFTA coalition. The China PNTR campaign involved a blitzkrieg of corporate advertising, lobbying by the CEOs of some of the largest US corporations, and a multimillion dollar commitment by the members of the Business Roundtable.⁴

Prior to the Cancún Ministerial meetings of the WTO, the Business Roundtable explained their hopes for deepening US 'leadership'. The press release provided an insightful analysis of the Congressional vote for Trade Promotion Authority supporting the new rounds. It said, 'First, the vote showed that the US Congress will support new trade agreements when they are well designed. Second, the vote sent a warning that foot-dragging behavior in the WTO can be countered by bilateral and regional negotiating tracks. Thus, the United States will go to Cancun with greater capacity to offer leadership.' The press release went on to explain how 'the CEOs that comprise the Business Roundtable are increasingly working with companies and business associations in other countries that share our support for the WTO and our aspirations for new and ambitious market-opening initiatives'. Transnational cooperation by business associations is not new, but its presence in this context points to the need to consider the organization of the conflict system as a determinant of transnational political opportunities and processes.

Two other recent policy initiatives, emanating from the United States, highlight the transnationalization of a neoliberal conflict system. The first of these efforts – the North American Initiative – is emerging from non-governmental policy planning networks in the NAFTA countries. In the United States, these networks are composed of government officials, academics, corporate officers, and various media representatives. Research on the US policy planning network and its influence on US government policy formation is extensive.⁵ What is relevant for this chapter is the transnationalization of this network. The involvement of elite policy planning organizations from Canada and Mexico in shaping policy recommendations by the Council on Foreign Relations reflects this expanding conflict system. The Council on Foreign

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Relations' Task Force for a North American Initiative offers this innovation and expansion quite explicitly as a new program for a transnational North America. Reading the report of this task force, one is struck by the clear references to the trinational nature of elite cooperation in devising the series of policy recommendations. Overarching these policy recommendations is the establishment by 2010 of a North American economic and security community. This new North American initiative will define and establish boundaries defined by a common external tariff and an outer security perimeter.

Unlike previous Council-sponsored Task Forces, this project was international, or trinational to be precise. The membership was comprised of policy practitioners, scholars, and business leaders from each of the three countries. The Task Force held meetings in Toronto, New York, and Monterrey. Their initiative is at once political and economic, aimed at consolidating neoliberal economic reforms in all three countries – and transnationally shared neoliberal relations, that is, NAFTA – and introducing political coordination of national and international security relations. Expanding police and military coordination reflects this transnationalization of North American governance.

Last, the recent passage of the Dominican Republic – Central American – United States Free Trade Agreement and the ongoing search for an FTAA highlight the continental expansion of the neoliberal conflict system. The Business Coalition for United States–Central America Trade mobilized hundreds of corporations, business associations, and local chambers of commerce to pass CAFTA. Their strategy mimicked previous methods, building bridges across business sectors, nurturing diplomatic relations with foreign heads of state, and advertising in all the effected countries.

Conclusions

On the cusp of the twenty-first century, it is worth noting that we are witnessing the birth of a quasi-permanent ACS over economic globalization in North America – and beyond. The unique form of this system is structured by the economic and ecological consequences of a market economy dominated by mega-corporations, which are generating deleterious effects for workers, communities, and the environment. These conditions hold open the political possibility for movements to activate a politics that challenges neoliberalism. The collective bonds created on the streets, the global handshakes made, and the nods of international solidarity exchanged have helped foster a movement with a mutual

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understanding of many different struggles. The fair trade movement is the driving force for reinventing democracy, calling for a world without hunger, war, environmental destruction, and worker exploitation. It is, as Tarrow claims, 'the most rapidly growing sector of transnational politics today' (1998: 188). Yet, these political moments wax and wane as movements face an expansion and contraction of political opportunities at both the national and the transnational level.

As political contention over jobs, environmental protection, and international market expansion proliferated during the decade of 1990s, new opportunities for contentious politics expanded. Indeed, many activists have declared the recent mass demonstrations in North America as 'coming-out' parties for a movement for global justice. Unprecedented in the breadth of movement participation, these demonstrations are deepening the links between a rank-and-file labor movement and the broad, international alliance of environmental, consumer, human rights, and faith-based organizations. Among the host of demands made by these activists are calls for global labor rights, fair trade, environmental justice and sustainability, human rights, amnesty for immigrants, an end to sweatshops and prison labor, debt relief for the poorest nations of the world – the list goes on. This call, in its broad form, is an emergent offensive in the name of global justice, and the vocal leaders in this offensive are straddling national, class, race, and gender differences in a hodgepodge of loosely knit social movement alliances. As events in Seattle, Quebec, Cancún, and Miami illustrate, transnational contention has opened space in the institutional realm of trade policy.

Sustained activity by people's movements in the streets strengthened the alliance system and enhanced the political opportunities for dissident states. Yet these moments of expanding political opportunity were matched by contracting political terrains. NAFTA's labor and environmental agreements produced institutions that remain weak and have failed to sustain the attraction of citizens and movement representatives. Moreover, the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have done their part to expand security as a North American, and especially US, objective, constraining movement organizing. Yet, political discourse about trade policy and NAFTA in the 2008 US presidential campaigns reveals a persistent sore-spot for millions and the successful politicization of trade policy by the left in the United States and across the region.

With contracting opportunities are born new moments for alliance building and expansion. The aggregation of protest activity – on legal,

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street, and cultural terrains – over the last 15 years has expanded the alliance system and provided challengers with opportunities to act against the neoliberal trade policies. Dissident states, international SMOs, and grass-roots movements recently made their fight against the free trade agenda more sensitive to national and regional interests, as well as to social issues. During the third summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada 2001, due to massive protests, more than 400 arrests and hundreds of injuries by police, diplomats drafted procedures for including civil society actors, affirming trends and calls in the Organization of American States from the preceding seven years. Summit leaders stated, ‘affirming that openness and transparency are vital to building public awareness and legitimacy for our undertakings, the Summit Plans of Action call upon all citizens of the region to contribute to the Summits of the Americas process’ (Summit of the Americas 2005). Pressed forward by left-leaning, dissident states, these media savvy statements may find substance in the years ahead. As the Summit of the Americas (fourth) in Mar del Plata, Argentina (2005) suggests, the role of dissident states and an oppositional alliance system that includes movements and movement organizations will define the contours and conflicts of a transnationalizing hemisphere. Venezuelan President Chavez made those hopes a central part of his speech to a large opposition rally. The associations forged among individual participants and organizations is birthing a series of regional, even continental alliance systems to challenge the wave of neoliberal globalization and the governance institutions erected under its sway.

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QUERIES TO BE ANSWERED BY AUTHOR (SEE MARGINAL MARKS)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please mark your corrections and answer to these queries directly onto the proof at the relevant place. Do NOT mark your corrections on this query sheet.

Chapter 11

Query No.	Page No.	Query
AQ1	213	"Social movements...grease the technics of...actors" has been changed to "Social movements...grease the techniques of...actors". Is this OK?