Crossing Boundaries: Analyzing Civil Society
and Transnational Influences

IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS theory, considerable debate surrounds the extent to which external actors can influence the domestic politics and regimes of sovereign states. This book investigates a particular slice of such influence, that of transnational actors on domestic civil society organizations. It is important not to evaluate the influence of transnational actors merely by their impact on the conduct and policies of governments: transnational actors also affect domestic politics by altering citizens' views and behaviors. If they succeed in changing the norms, preferences, and concerns of significant constituencies of citizens, transnational actors can potentially have a major impact on both government policies and broader societal behavior. In certain cases, transnational campaigns aimed directly at citizens have brought about important political and economic changes (Wapner, 1995, 2002; Mathews, 1997).

Questions of International Relations

Transnational actors who introduce targeted material support and training into domestic civil societies are commonly referred to as "foreign donors." Even if foreign donors do exert an influence on intra-state political processes, how significant is it compared to domestic political and normative factors? In recent years, scholars have begun to ask this question in relation to various domestic factors, such as the configuration of state institutions (Evangelista, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1995), structure of civil society (Chilton, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1995), and prevailing domestic norms and ideas (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Some of the reasons for an increased intellectual interest

in transnational networks are their growing numbers and their frequent impact on political outcomes.

Keck and Sikkink point out quite clearly, as does social movement theorist Sidney Tarrow (1998), that transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and, more generally, transnational challenges to domestic political regimes are nothing new. TANs consist of actors that are united in promoting political or social change on some issue—including international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), social movements, foundations, media, governmental actors, and intergovernmental bodies such as United Nations agencies— and they have existed in different forms for centuries. What is new is their "number, size, and professionalism, and the speed, density, and complexity of international linkages among them" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 10). Organizations focused on issues of human rights, women's rights, peace, and the environment have proliferated spectacularly in recent decades, with especially rapid growth between 1983 and 1993.[1] Keck and Sikkink, as well as others, show that real and significant shifts are occurring in the frequency and effectiveness of transnational pressures on states, as well as in the extent to which nongovernmental networks of actors can effect domestic political changes (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler, 1998; Tarrow, 1998).

But what exactly is the nature of these actors? Although transnational NGO networks have grown in recent decades, I join several other authors in rejecting the term "global civil society" as an accurate conceptualization of existing transnational NGO networks (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Some authors, such as Ronnie Lipschutz, Mary Kaldor, and Paul Wapner, who have argued that civil society has become a truly global phenomenon, overstate the degree of transnational consensus and homogenization. They assume that transnational mobilization is growing more important than domestic civil society, and that national political opportunity structures are steadily declining in their relevance (Lipschutz, 1992; Wapner, 1995; Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor, 2001). I, along with many others, find instead that domestic political opportunities and constraints, as well as domestic normative and cultural contexts, are key aspects in determining whether or not transnationally active NGOs succeed in their campaigns (Evangelista, 1995; Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 26; Tarrow, 1998; Risse-Kappen, 1994, 1995).

In the case of Russia, local political opportunity contexts vary tremendously from region to region. Many local governments, such as in the far eastern city of Khabarovsk, do not welcome NGOs as important to social and political life and do not seem to worry about the cross-regional and transnational contacts of NGO activists when deciding how to respond to

critical activists. For example, one activist in Khabarovsk, Aleksandr Bekhtold of the For Human Rights network—which is part of the Moscow Helsinki Group network and linked into transnational human rights networks— claimed that his business was destroyed and that he faced repeated threats from the governor of Khabarovsk *krai* (region).[2] On the normative side, as discussed in Chapter Three, Western donors have invested enormous funds and training into the Russian women's movement, while most of the movement's activists and ideals are scorned by the majority of Russians—far more scorned than they are in the West. This book is concerned with how principles are transferred from the transnational to the domestic level in Russia by a particular group of actors: the liberal democratic states and Western NGOs and foundations that promote civil society development and democratization. It shows that, even in areas where foreign donors are present in force to promote certain values regarding proper NGO behavior, local political and normative conditions significantly affect the extent to which NGO activists adopt those values in their discourse and behavior. The transnational activities investigated here are focused primarily on strengthening Russian democratic institutions rather than directly changing particular state policies on issues such as the environment or human rights. The phenomenon under examination links the concerns of international relations theorists who are interested in foreign influences on domestic politics with the concerns of scholars of comparative politics in civil society and processes of democratic transition and consolidation.

Civil Society and Democratization in Comparative Politics

This section turns to defining civil society, its role in supporting democratic regimes, and the importance of NGOs as a component of civil society. But first, an explanation is in order regarding the importance of the Russian case for research into civil society development and the role of transnational actors in it.

RUSSIA AS A CASE

Russia is a particularly illuminating case for studying civil society development. First, it differs from many other third-wave democracies in that the Soviet regime actively repressed an already weak civil society—more actively than most authoritarian regimes from which democracies have emerged—by eliminating independent forms of social and political organization. Several authors, including Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, have described the radical "flattening" of society that was carried out systematically in the Soviet Union, in which diversity of opinions and expression of interests were cir-

cumscribed more severely than in many other authoritarian regimes (Howard, 2002; Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 247; Urban, 1997; Arendt, 1963). Thus, unlike civil societies in other regions, in which foreign donors have attempted to foster relationships with a civil society "resurrected" from the recent past—such as Southern Europe and Latin America, or even Eastern Europe—Russian civil society at the time of transition from Communism had been severely repressed for over seventy years.[3]

Groups of political dissidents, operating underground and opposed to the Soviet regime for various reasons, were a major component of the small realm of independent activity that did exist in Soviet society. However, most dissident organizations in the Soviet period were small and loosely organized, and the main opinion that united members was their opposition to the existing regime (Reddaway, 1972). The dissident community included individuals from a wide range of political orientations, such as Marxists, nationalists, social democrats, and liberal democrats, to name just a few. Once the regime collapsed, considerable dissensus emerged regarding the construction of a new regime, especially among more liberal democratic opposition organizations such as the Democratic Russia movement (Fish, 1995, p. 210).

Scholars of the "transitology" school, which advocates broad comparisons among all cases of transition from authoritarian regimes, have pointed out that this disintegration of consensus within opposition movements has been a common phenomenon in cases of transition (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, pp. 55–56). However, in most other regions outside the Soviet Union—such as Latin America, Southern Europe, and even much of Eastern Europe—opposition interests were more differentiated into distinct groups that came together to form a united front against the authoritarian regime. These groups were then able to part ways in the process of regime transition but still remain relatively organized (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998). While in most other authoritarian regimes, non-state organizations such as the Catholic church in Poland and much of Latin America provided at least some space for organizing individuals' interests outside the state, in Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union no such organizations were permitted until after 1985, with the installment of policies of glasnost and perestroika. Toleration of opposition groups was not formalized legally until 1990, first with removal of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) guaranteed monopoly in public life from Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, and then further with the Soviet Law on Public Associations of October 1990, which legalized political parties and independent trade unions.

The Russian case is distinctive not only because of the weakness of a pre-existing civil society. The especially severe and sustained efforts of the Soviet

state to prevent independent contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners, and to regulate any contact that did take place, means that the direct influence of transnational actors on Russian civil society development is remarkably new. The perestroika period from the late 1980s on, including friendship exchanges with the West that were encouraged by Mikhail Gorbachev, brought about a considerable loosening of the restrictions on Soviet citizens' interactions with foreigners. Prior to this period, though, transnational contacts were severely restricted.[4] Although delegations from Soviet organizations attended international conferences on various occasions, the delegates sent were members of highly regulated state organizations and were observed constantly in their activities by representatives of the KGB.

The Soviet Women's Committee (SWC) provides one example: SWC delegates at international conferences were hand-picked by party loyalists within the Soviet regime and were monitored in their interactions with foreigners. It is important to note that, despite such restrictions, the ideas voiced by other countries' delegations at international conferences and the agendas presented at such forums did have identifiable effects on Soviet delegates. Several accounts by Russian women who were present in such delegations, and who are now members of other women's organizations, have attested to the dramatic ways in which attendance at international conferences opened their eyes to a different and broader understanding of issues shared by women around the world.[5] Yet the role of the SWC was much less to glean lessons from the experiences of women's movements from other countries than it was to present to the outside world a rosy and progressive image of the status of Soviet women (Sperling, 1999, p. 108). Zoia Khotkina, a scholar and activist with the Moscow Center for Gender Studies (MCGS), recalls the international role of the SWC that she and other scholars were required to fulfill at international conferences:

That organization had, like Janus, two faces: one for Soviet women and another for Western women . . . When foreign organizations came, I remember very well how we worked—Olga [Voronina, also of MCGS], Liudmila Zavadskaia, who has now become the deputy minister of Justice, and I. The three of us very often, in the presence of Western women, showed the great progressiveness of Soviet women and told them about the economic situation in our country, about the political situation . . . how we have such wonderful laws, how our laws are so full of equality for women.[6]

Given these two extreme characteristics of the Russian case—repressed civil society and a lack of access to transnational contacts—if effects of foreign democracy assistance are noticeable anywhere, they should certainly be visible in post-1991 developments in Russian civil society. According to one overview of Russian NGO sector development, only a few dozen NGOs were registered in 1990.[7] In such a context, foreign assistance programs can

potentially play a major role in shaping the development of the Russian NGO sector. In the ensuing years, foreign governmental aid agencies and nongovernmental assistance foundations have focused significant amounts of energy and material resources on encouraging the activation and growth of civil society. Much of this funding has been distributed to other intermediary agencies and nongovernmental organizations for implementation. Russia is thus important as a case for studying influences of transnational actors on civil society development, since the levels of transnational involvement with civil society before and after the Soviet collapse are so different.

WHAT KIND OF CIVIL SOCIETY STRUCTURE PROMOTES DEMOCRACY?

Although scholars and foreign donors have generally assumed that civil society is crucial to democratization, the proper configuration and actual role of civil society in the process of creating and deepening democratic institutions have been topics of ongoing debate in academic literature on democratic transitions. Most authors agree that civil society development is an important task for building stable and healthy democracies, since active civil societies are empirically closely linked with the persistence and depth of democratic regimes. It is argued that without the development of a strong and active civil society that demands citizen participation in governance, democratic rule cannot be thoroughly institutionalized (Diamond, 1996; Fish, 1996).

However, a number of important theoretical questions regarding civil society remain unanswered in the existing literature on democratization, such as how civil society should be organized and what the ideal balance is between state and society in order to support democratic institutions. Civil society is a notoriously difficult concept to define. Almost all authors concur that it is a sphere of public activities by citizens (that is, outside of their homes and kinship organizations) that lies outside of state institutions. However, scholars disagree regarding the extent to which the state should be involved and the kinds of non-state activities that should be included under the umbrella term "civil society." Most agree that commercial, profit-seeking organizations do not belong, since these represent self-oriented rather than publicly oriented activities.[8] Nearly all authors exclude political parties, since the prevailing aim of political parties is to take direct control of the state.[9]

I concur with these distinctions and advocate a definition of civil society that excludes state-run and state-organized groups as well as private businesses and political parties. Civil society is viewed most appropriately as a realm of collective, publicly oriented activity by nongovernmental actors that

is often formally organized (as NGOs, social movement coalitions, clubs, associations, and so on) but also includes many less formal networks of public discourse, such as nongovernmental mass media and informal networks among neighbors in a community. Yet this definition leaves wide latitude for controversy concerning the state's role in guiding and shaping civil society, and to what degree participants in a democratic civil society should act as adversaries or partners of the state. Debates among scholars on these questions relate directly to questions about the kind of civil society that is desirable or even possible in Russia, given a historical legacy that most would agree emphasizes communal ideas about public life as well as acceptance of heavy involvement by the state.

Scholars have generally agreed that Russia's political culture, in the wake of Communism, much more closely resembles a civic or corporatist understanding of state-society relations than a liberal one (Diligenskii, 2001; Kubicek, 2000; Phillips, 1999; Patomaki and Pursiainen, 1999; Malysheva et al., 1998). Of course, during the seventy-four-year history of Soviet rule, Russians did become accustomed to a corporatist, state-guided model of structuring citizens' participation in political life. Certainly the idea that the state should play a strong role in civic life continues to be widespread: for example, in a 1995 study of over 2,100 citizens in several regions around Russia, 62 percent of respondents answered that it was acceptable for NGOs to receive funding from the government, and 36 percent agreed with the statement that "in a normal democratic society, where the law defends citizens' rights, there is no need for NGOs" (Validata/Yankelovich, 1995). Almost a decade later, in a 2004 survey of over 2,000 citizens in forty Russian regions, carried out by the Russian organizations Tsirkon and the Agency for Social Information on behalf of the Donors' Forum (an organization of donors in Moscow), a majority of respondents (59 percent) agreed that the Russian state should be the primary charitable structure in Russia (Donors' Forum, 2005, p. 23). The next-ranking answer was Russian business organizations (43 percent). Russian charitable organizations, private individuals, and foreign organizations fell far lower on the list.

Sarah Oates and others have found through recent survey and focus group research that Russian citizens prefer state-run television news coverage to commercial television news. State media were viewed by many as "orderly" and "[w]hile state-run television was biased, many respondents felt that this was for the good of the country" (Oates, 2005, p. 68).

During the Soviet period, an authoritarian form of "state" corporatism dominated in structuring citizen participation. Paul Kubicek, in discussing developments in post-Soviet Ukraine, points out that "societal" or "democratic" corporatism as it developed in Western European states differs con-

siderably from "state" corporatism of an authoritarian type (2000, p. 21). State corporatist systems focus mostly on mechanisms for the state to control and restrict public participation, and interest groups are meant to control citizens, rather than represent them (Schmitter, 1977). This, of course, is the kind of corporatism that existed in the Soviet regime. There is also much evidence that the current Putin regime in Russia is striving toward exactly this kind of corporatist model, by developing institutions such as the new Public Chamber (*obshchestvennaia palata*) created at the federal level, in which civil society representatives are chosen in a manner that makes them heavily loyal to the president (see Chapter Five). In contrast, corporatism may exist in democratic contexts, as it has done in several European countries (particularly Sweden); if power is not entirely centralized, various groups participate in shaping policy and remain largely independent, and competitive elections occur.

In attempting to change citizen and government attitudes toward political participation in Russia, foreign donors predominantly have promoted a liberal model of civil society in their assistance to NGOs, as we shall see in Chapter Two. Some critics have argued that such an approach is destined to fail, due to communal and statist traditions in Russia that stem from both the Soviet and pre-Soviet periods (Phillips, 1999; Patomaki and Pursiainen, 1999). In reality, though, there is a considerable amount of variety in Russian citizens' views of appropriate civil society models. NGO participants in particular often espouse fairly liberal notions of ideal relations between citizens and the state.

In my detailed interviews with sixty NGOs, in which I asked about their extent of interaction and cooperation with the state, ten of them expressed a preference for an adversarial or "watchdog" relationship with the state, which is one aspect of a liberal model of civil society. The organizations that advocated such a stance were mostly human rights (soldiers' rights) NGOs whose activists had backgrounds in the Soviet dissident community (see Sundstrom, 2001, Ch. 6). They included Elena Vilenskaia and Ella Poliakova of the Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg (SMSP), who were active in the pro-democracy People's Front (*Narodnyi front*) in the late 1980s and up until the Soviet regime's collapse. Olga Lipovskaia of the Petersburg Center for Gender Studies was active in the dissident movement of the 1980s and published a *samizdat* (unofficially self-published) feminist journal. Two of the other adversarial NGO leaders were jailed as vocal dissidents in the Soviet era. Nikolai Khramov of the Moscow Antimilitarist Radical Association (ARA) was detained for several months in military prisons and psychiatric hospitals for refusing military service during the war in Afghanistan. In the late 1950s, Boris Pustintsev of St. Petersburg's "Citizen Watch" spent five

years in a labor camp for protesting the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Thus, it is important to note that the leaders of nearly all of the NGOs I encountered who advocated an adversarial stance toward the state had developed their views long before the influx of foreign funding.

Moreover, these and other organizations also frequently described civil society as a realm for defending human rights, voicing public opinion, developing citizen activism, and making demands upon the state. These views indicated a more or less liberal approach to the role of civil society. The idea of "taxpayers'" right to control their government featured in some interviewees' statements. For example, Elena Vilenskaia, co-chair of the Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg, expressed this idea when I asked her how she began thinking about concepts such as civil society: "The theme developed as the organization did; but, of course, in order to form such an organization, we were already thinking about this . . . that the citizens must control their army; we are the boss, we are the taxpayers . . . and we must control it."[10]

So, contrary to the arguments that certain scholars have made, the liberal character of the civil society model that foreign donors promote in Russia is not in itself a critical determinant of donors' success in their assistance to Russian NGOs.

A more fundamental problem with the particular liberal model that foreign donors promote in Russia is that it may not in fact strengthen democracy. Later chapters show that foreign donors have generally forwarded a very simplified model of civil society, as a sphere consisting of nongovernmental advocacy organizations, rather than as a more complicated realm including other kinds of networks of public discussion and participation. Several scholars of civil society have argued convincingly that much more sophisticated networks of civic relations are crucial to democratic civil society.

The powerful "social capital" thesis, as forwarded by Robert Putnam, argues against reducing definitions of civil society to include only politically relevant NGOs. He maintains, through comparative study of the diverging development patterns of northern and southern Italy, that the direct political relevance of associations and social networks is not important for creating a civil society that improves overall levels of trust and the quality of life in a society (Putnam, 1993, 1996). "Social capital" for Putnam "refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1996, p. 292). He argues that completely nonpolitical clubs and societies—as well as activities unrelated to organizational membership, such as newspaper readership—play just as large a role in creating social capital as political advocacy organizations that we typically call NGOs, and that "[t]o identify trends in the size of the nonprofit sector with trends in social connectedness would be [a] funda-

mental conceptual mistake" (Putnam, 1996, p. 296).[11] Even in the United States, Tocqueville's ideal of associational life, most citizens are not active members of formal NGOs, especially when mere check-writing activity is excluded. In addition, Putnam points out that as NGO membership is increasing in the United States, voter turnout and attention to political affairs are decreasing (1969, pp. 292–93).

Some other American scholars are concerned that the kinds of problems Putnam points to in civil society have been exacerbated by NGO funding patterns in the United States. They are concerned about how NGO funding structures shape civil society and democratic development in ways that are similar to my own concerns about foreign funding among Russian NGOs. For example, in a recent volume, Theda Skocpol analyzes the shift in American civic engagement patterns from large, broad-based, multipurpose, membership-based associations prior to 1960, to smaller, single-issue, largely elite professional associations in the present period. She points out, paralleling my findings in the Russian case, that patterns of funding to NGOs play a significant part in explaining the shift in the United States away from large membership organizations to professionally staffed ones. American associations prior to the 1960s largely depended on nationwide memberships and members' investments of time and finances for support (Skocpol, 1999). Yet in the contemporary world of American NGOs, organizations are often "sparked by well-connected leaders, [and] they frequently have—or soon obtain—outside funding from tax-exempt private foundations" (Skocpol, 1999, p. 501). John Judis similarly argues that NGOs today "have a far more tenuous connection to those whom they claim to represent directly" (Judis, 1992, p. 16). They are overwhelmingly organizations dominated by unelected professional staffs, funded by wealthy private donors, with little grassroots input. As Skocpol points out, there is nothing inherently wrong with this development; she merely cautions that "we should not imagine that these arrangements are democratic" (Skocpol, 1999, p. 501).

In the Russian context of foreign foundations supporting domestic NGOs to promote democratic development, this piece of American history prompts an important question. Can a strategy of supporting advocacy NGOs with professional staffs gleaned from among the elite intelligentsia promote a civil society that is characterized by broad citizen involvement in governance? Foreign donors in Russia, with few exceptions, have not experienced much success in increasing citizen involvement in public life or making civil society more influential in Russian politics. This outcome is in part a result of the narrowness of the range of principles and organizations that foreign donors are willing to support in the NGO community, which has exacerbated a pre-existing tendency for Russia's intelligentsia to dismiss the majority opinions

of the masses.[12] When NGOs are encouraged to work in an insular way through the staging of NGO conferences, publication of analytical literature, and creation of specialized networks rather than working to build constituencies of interested citizens, they are not promoting civic participation or enlightening citizens about their efficacy in a democracy.

Donors' focus on civic advocacy organizations—often with the uncomfortable condition that they should be both politically relevant and nonpartisan—is much too narrow to encourage significant change in citizen behavior at large to bring the benefits expected from a civil society (Carothers, 1999; Van Rooy, 1998a; Ottaway, 2000). Important roles of civil society in a democracy are to foster a broad and participatory realm of discussion with relevance for all kinds of topics that concern citizens, and to create horizontal links that build a sense of inclusive and diverse community. This is done not solely by NGOs but also by more informal networks of civic interaction. The NGO-bound definition of civil society is thus inadequate for creating a civil society that plays a strong role in upholding democracy.

Nonetheless, this book focuses on NGOs for a number of reasons. Such organizations do comprise a large segment of civil society, and in institutionalized democracies they play important roles in encouraging citizen participation in public issues and defending the interests of various citizens. They also act as vehicles for dialogue with governments and state institutions. Moreover, as emphasized above, NGOs are the major form of civil society to which foreign donors direct their funding and technical assistance programs; thus, in order to evaluate the role of foreign donors in civil society as a component of democratization, investigation of their influence on the NGO sector is crucial.

For these reasons, the primary research presented in the book concerns Russian NGOs and their interactions with foreign donors, the state, and Russian society. The definition of NGOs employed is not as restrictive as that used by most foreign donors, however. It includes organizations that may receive funding and significant assistance from the state, but are nevertheless nongovernmental in constitution. In this way, I am able to observe a broader segment of Russian civil society, including both actors that are targeted by donors and those that exist outside the world of donors.

Democracy Assistance: A New Area of Policy Analysis

Democracy assistance comprises only a small portion of all Western foreign aid programs to Russia and other countries, but democracy assistance generally and civil society assistance specifically have grown steadily as a proportion of foreign aid spending since 1990. Analysts have acknowledged that

accurate estimation of foreign aid spending devoted to democracy is extremely difficult, largely because few states or nongovernmental donors classify their democracy promotion activities under a unified category of assistance, and donors vary a great deal in how they classify aid that would be widely identified as part of democracy assistance (Perlin, 2003, p. 13). Estimating civil society assistance expenditures within the broader category of democracy assistance is yet another, even more difficult step.

We can gain some insight into the growth of democracy assistance and civil society expenditures by governments from data gathered by the OECD. According to the OECD, in 2002 foreign aid expenditures by developed states' governments for promoting "government and civil society" overseas totaled approximately US$4.5 billion, or 7.8 percent of official bilateral development assistance. This compares with approximately US$1.8 billion, or just 3.2 percent of total official bilateral development assistance in 1996 (the first year in which the OECD separated the category of "government and civil society" assistance from other development categories), and assistance from multilateral organizations in this category has grown similarly, from 2.3 to 8.2 percent of official development assistance (OECD, 1997, 2003). It is important to note, though, that various kinds of aid for government reforms, which most analysts would not characterize as promoting democracy per se, fall under this category of "government and civil society," such as technical reengineering of government agencies in terms of efficiency or international standards. Other authors, as well as myself, have made rough estimates of the share that democracy assistance occupies in official (government-funded) international development assistance. The available figures are inconsistent in terms of years covered and method of calculation, but they give a rough idea of the magnitude of funds expended by donors in this area. They are all somewhat different since analysts must make judgment calls regarding what should be counted as democracy assistance. For example, U.S. assistance to Russia under the Freedom Support Act (FSA) includes funds that are dedicated partly to democracy assistance and partly to market reforms and other programs, and civil society development specifically falls under several different line items. Based on the OECD data, George Perlin estimates that democracy assistance ranges between 6 and 11 percent of individual states' international development budgets (2003, p. 13). Mendelson and Glenn found that 2.8 percent of all U.S. assistance to Russia and 19 percent of all EU assistance to Russia was devoted to democracy assistance during 1990–1999 (2002, p. 5). I estimate that between 1990 and 2002, the total amount of U.S. government assistance to promote democracy in Russia was roughly $860 million.[13] During the period 1991–2001, the EU's Technical Assistance to the CIS (TACIS) program spent somewhere in the area of 750–800 million euros on

democracy programs in Russia (European Commission, 2001). In the particular area of civil society assistance, it becomes even more difficult to estimate donor expenditures, since civil society is often folded into more general funding categories, such as democracy, governance, and human rights. Sarah Henderson has estimated that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) alone spent approximately $92 million on civic initiatives and NGO support programs in Russia from 1992 to 1998 (Henderson, 2003).

In tandem with the growth of democracy assistance as a component of Western states' foreign aid budgets, scholars and policy analysts have begun to treat it as a significant topic of research. It can now be said that some general points of consensus are emerging from studies of democracy assistance. Researchers have examined the impact of democracy assistance in newly democratizing regimes in all relevant regions of the world: Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe/Eurasia (Henderson, 2003; Mendelson and Glenn, 2002; Mendelson, 2001; Burnell, 2000; Carothers, 1999; Ottaway and Carothers, 2000).

Most authors in this growing field concur on several points that this book reinforces: that democracy assistance tends to be structured as a universal template that donors assume to be equally applicable in any democratizing environment; that it is implemented in a manner that is too directive and closed to influence from actors in local contexts; and that it often supports very narrow constituencies of Westernized intellectuals, to the neglect of the vast majority of the public in countries that receive assistance. Most authors also argue that democracy assistance can only hope to improve democratic practices in very small ways and cannot decide the course of a nascent democratic regime.

In accordance with the point that democracy assistance tends to be too far removed from the desires of local actors in democratizing countries, this book adds the finding that foreign assistance to NGOs has a significant impact on the success of those NGOs only when it is directed at organizations that pursue norms that are broadly embraced in the local society. When the opposite is true, the results of assistance in terms of successful NGO mobilization and achievement of goals in society are likely to be negligible. In addition, assistance must be combined with a local political atmosphere that either openly supports or, at worst, benignly neglects independent citizen activity in order to have a sustained positive influence on the development of individual NGOs. Despite these limitations to democracy assistance, most authors, including myself, agree that democracy assistance is a worthwhile enterprise in which established democratic states should engage. Democracy assistance already provides a crucial lifeline to help proponents of democracy to continue working in many transitional local contexts around

the world. If it were structured to be more effective along the lines suggested by myself and others, then its positive impact on direct recipients of funding and society more broadly would increase in significant ways.

Research Variables and Choice of Cases

Having laid out many of the major theoretical and practical questions surrounding civil society and the role of NGOs in its development, we now shift to the more specific design of the study: competing factors considered in explaining NGO development, cases chosen, and methods employed.

NGO DEVELOPMENT

NGO development is the phenomenon to be explained in this study, and my focus on two NGO subsectors calls for further clarification of how I define each group. The definition of "women's organization" is somewhat broader than that which is typically assumed in Western contexts. These are often understood in Russia to be any organization made up of exclusively women members, whether they work on an issue directly regarding women or on such areas as social services or cultural activities. Women's organizations in this book are defined as those that are formed and run by women (comprised of, with few exceptions, exclusively women members) and concern themselves with issues that, under existing social structures, disproportionately affect women. Thus, in some cases, they may focus on lobbying for or voluntarily providing services and family benefits, rather than on a specific issue concerning women as a target group. Examples of such organizations would include Mothers Against Narcotics (*Materi protiv narkotiki*) in St. Petersburg, which counsels parents of drug-addicted children, or the group Faith, Hope, and Love (*Vera, nadezhda, liubov'*) in the small city of Staraia Russa, which provides help to families with disabled children. The crucial defining factor is that in each case, they define themselves as a "women's organization" due to their work in a sphere of responsibility that is typically placed upon women. Many Russian women's organizations also work on issues—such as domestic violence, gender analysis, women in business, and women's political leadership skills—that are more familiar to Westerners who are accustomed to a feminist women's movement.

NGOs in the soldiers' rights subsector typically consider themselves to be part of the Russian human rights movement. Some analysts consider the soldiers' mothers' organizations to be "women's organizations"; however, interviews with the soldiers' mothers and leaders of women's organizations suggested that the soldiers' mothers do not consider themselves to be part of a movement to advocate for women's interests and instead view themselves as

human rights proponents. For example, soldiers' mothers have allegedly made statements that dismiss the problem of violence against women in comparison with the problem of conscript abuse in the army.[14] Although I chose to focus on soldiers' rights organizations, in many cities I did interview and become familiar with leaders of human rights NGOs in other issue areas, such as those that focus on protecting journalists, victims of political repression, and the disabled.

The two particular areas of women's organizations and soldiers' rights organizations were chosen for a number of reasons. Women's organizations came naturally to mind, first, because I had already spent a great deal of time researching the Russian women's movement in previous work. The very idea of studying the influence of foreign funding on Russian NGOs was sparked for me as I attended a conference of Russian gender studies scholars in 1997, at which several of the attendees loudly voiced their concerns about the effects that foreign funding was having on the Russian women's movement. I knew from reading and direct experience that the transnational connections of Russian feminists, at least in Moscow and St. Petersburg, were significant, and I wondered about the nature of those organizations that were not in contact with transnational actors, due to either lack of desire or lack of knowledge. At least one groundbreaking scholarly work, by Valerie Sperling, had confirmed that the international environment is an important factor affecting the post-Soviet Russian women's movement and called for further study of these issues (Sperling, 1998, pp. 264–65). One of the areas of strategic focus for Western donors among Russian NGOs has been women's issues, and several donors, such as the Global Fund for Women, Soros Open Society Institute, and the Canadian Embassy, have programs dedicated specifically to funding women's NGOs.[15] Thus a great deal of opportunity for investigating transnational influences on civil society was possible through studying transnational actors' interactions with the Russian women's movement.

However, I was also aware that the women's movement had some characteristics that perhaps made it atypical of many other Russian NGO subsectors. I was acutely aware of the fact that the women's movement has few followers or even sympathizers in Russian society. The word "feminist" is a highly negative term, even among most activists whom Westerners would undoubtedly call "feminists" according to parameters that are familiar to them. As one women's NGO in the Siberian city of Tomsk notes, "Inequality of women in Russia is not perceived as overt discrimination, which, according to general opinion, does not exist in our country" (ICIWF, 1999b). Dismissive attitudes toward the idea that women constitute a viable interest group exist even among female staff members in the Russian offices of foreign donors. For example, a staff member in the Moscow OSI Civil Society

program once stated to me that "civil society groups must be those that represent everyone in all of society, and therefore women's organizations are not part of civil society."[16] Moreover, many typical Russian citizens also suspect that more conventional women's organizations in fact do nothing useful; for example, those that conduct activities such as charity, social services, or women's business support. A Western grant officer at the Ford Foundation's Moscow office stated that he frequently found himself defending grants to women's organizations against the complaints of Russian female employees in his office.[17] This problem of low domestic popularity was likely to affect outcomes in NGO development among women's NGOs and might have little to do with foreign donors' assistance, yet it would be closely correlated with donors' involvement. This characteristic led me to seek out another NGO subsector for comparison that also had relationships with foreign donors, but would likely display greater public acceptance.

I found this subsector in the area of human rights work that deals with the rights of soldiers. These organizations range from those that offer simple humanitarian assistance and demand that the Russian army provide adequate living and working conditions for its soldiers, to antimilitary or pacifist organizations that assist conscripts in avoiding military service and spend most of their time advocating passage of a federal law on alternative service and reform to a professional army. The most numerous organizations within this subsector, called Committees of Soldiers' Mothers, boast representation in nearly every major city of Russia and are extremely popular and well known among the Russian population. Arguably, they are the best-known and most widely respected type of NGO in Russia, with public opinion polls consistently showing their name recognition among citizens in the range of 70 to 80 percent (Gerber and Mendelson, 2003, p. 5; MosNews, 2005). Many other, more radical antimilitary organizations are less widely known and even suspiciously regarded by Russian citizens. However, their ultimate goal of a smaller, professional army is welcomed by a solid majority of Russians.[18] The issue of conscription and military service conditions is one that touches virtually every family in Russia in which there are male sons, and citizens typically have high regard for organizations that attempt to deal with these problems.

How can we measure NGO development among these NGOs and others? Although it is considerably less difficult to define for research purposes than the broad concept of civil society, NGO development is still not simple to operationalize. Since I am concerned ultimately with the relationship of NGO development to political behavior and regime democratization, I sought to define it in terms of organizational characteristics that most authors would agree contribute to an active civil society that encourages

democratic governance. For individual NGOs, these elements include well-organized work toward focused goals in pursuing some collective purpose; autonomy from state manipulation of activities (although a certain amount of state funding is not excluded); knowledge of, communication with, or even collaboration with other NGOs working on similar issues; outreach to the public constituency to which the NGO's activities are relevant; and, where appropriate to the organization's concerns, turning to state and government institutions to advocate improved public policy. For the overall NGO sector in each region examined, elements of general sectoral development include the degree of NGO voice and influence in public affairs and politics and the existence of actually working NGO associations or networks. Improvement or growth in these individual and sectoral characteristics constitutes NGO development in a particular location. I consider these elements of NGO development to fall into two general categories: *internal development and professionalization* of individual organizations and the NGO sector as a whole (including development of management skills, definition of goals, attainment of autonomy, and networking among NGOs); and *external mobilization* (including development of societal constituencies and interest articulation to the state, growth of public support, and increase in the size of the NGO community working on an issue). Throughout this book, when I discuss NGO mobilization, I am referring to the publicly palpable aspects of NGO activity.

I argue that foreign donors on the whole have focused heavily on internal development and professionalization of the Russian NGO sector, but have largely ignored external mobilization.

A final element of NGO development, which is shaped by both internal professionalization and external mobilization, is the material sustainability of NGOs. Are organizations able to continue their activities in the long term, or will they collapse if a single source of material resources—whether the state, an individual benefactor, or the foreign donor community—withdraws its support? This is a serious problem for most NGOs in Russia today. Very few have developed long-term reliable and diverse sources of funds. With many foreign donors expecting to exit Russia in the next five to ten years, NGOs that rely exclusively on foreign assistance are in a highly unsustainable position unless they develop sources of support from domestic actors. Foreign donors have been complicit in the failure of NGOs to attain some degree of sustainability—despite their repeatedly voiced concern with the problem—because they have failed to encourage NGOs to mobilize externally to develop domestic supporters in their communities.

The density of NGOs in terms of sheer numbers of organizations was also taken into account as one means, albeit unreliable, of concrete comparison

among regions. These figures are not emphasized as the most revealing indicator of NGO development, because accurate counts of NGOs that are comparable across regions are extraordinarily difficult to obtain. Many organizations remain hollow, with few members or even a single person forming several organizations (sometimes dubbed NGIs, or "nongovernmental individuals"), mostly as a result of foreign donors' preference to grant funds to many different organizations over time (Henry, 2001, pp. 7–8). Large numbers of officially existing NGOs in Russia are in fact inactive or defunct, and many active organizations choose not to register officially with the Ministry of Justice. Registration is an expensive and time-consuming exercise, and in recent years, some NGOs have been denied registration for reasons that are ostensibly legal but appear in reality to be political, disproportionately among environmental and human rights groups that voice opposition to the Putin government (Information Center of the Human Rights Movement and the Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights, 2000; Pustintsev, 2001; Henry, 2001, p. 21; Goble, 1999).

It was also not possible to obtain alternative counts of active NGOs that were comparable across regions. Nonetheless, in Chapter Four, I use the official and unofficial counts of NGOs in the seven cities studied as an indicator of NGO development, since together these estimates do provide a limited sense of the density of NGO activity in each city.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, LOCAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS, AND FRAME RESONANCE

Exposure to foreign democracy assistance, local political environments, and normative frame resonance are the major factors examined as influencing NGO development. The factor of greatest interest, foreign assistance, includes transnational interactions that are both material and ideational in nature. The foreign donors involved with Russian NGOs include mostly the official international aid agencies of foreign states, development agencies of intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union, and Western NGOs that carry out material assistance or training. The latter often implement programs that are subcontracted by foreign state aid agencies.

Of course, in addition, Russian NGOs sometimes develop relations with foreign organizations or individuals for the purposes of information exchange or transnational mobilization on certain issues. One example of this kind of relationship is the Network of East-West Women, a transnational organization with over 2,000 members that links women's organizations from Western countries with those of the post-Communist region. Other examples are information exchanges that have been formed between Russian

human rights NGOs, such as the Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg or Moscow Memorial, and Western human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, or the U.N. Committee Against Torture. In this book, I do not discuss the transnational actors involved in such informational or coalitional relationships for the simple reason that they are not intentionally engaged in the process of NGO development. That is, their contribution is not aimed in any organized way at assisting the development of Russian civil society. Rather than "teaching" or "developing" Russian NGOs in specific ways, they are collaborating with Russian NGOs as more or less equal partners.

Material forms of foreign assistance to Russian NGOs include mainly grants but also contributions of other resources such as office space, equipment, and Internet access. Ideational forms of influence include mainly international travel experiences and training seminars for NGOs organized by transnational organizations. At an aggregate level, it was possible to observe patterns across regions and NGO subsectors that seemed to correlate with levels and types of foreign assistance. Through the process of detailed discussion with and observation of NGOs and their members, it was possible to determine with some confidence whether activists' thinking or behavior had been affected by contacts with foreign donors. For example, did they discuss concepts or mention projects during interviews or in their organizational literature that were specifically traceable to their trainings and/or grant projects with donors?

A major competing domestic factor affecting NGO development, and the one considered in detail in this book, is the local political environment. The concept of "political opportunity structure," developed in social movement theory, includes opportunities and constraints for activities that consist of the arrangement and extent of openness of political institutions, alignments of relevant political elites, the state's capacity and propensity for repression, and the presence or absence of movement allies in the state or government (McAdam, 1996, p. 27). Sidney Tarrow defines political opportunities as "consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (1998, pp. 19–20). Several existing studies of transnational influences on NGO development have tried to gauge the impact of foreign donors on the NGO sector, but without considering the extent to which variations in domestic political opportunity structure also affect local NGOs (Mendelson and Glenn, 2002; Richter, 1997; Henderson, 2003). Some analyses, particularly the internal policy evaluations by foreign donors themselves, have tried to judge their success in affecting the behavior of various levels of Russian government toward NGOs through training and advocacy programs

(USAID, 1999a). However, the impact of foreign assistance on the development of Russian NGOs in combination with helpful or discouraging local political factors has not been systematically researched.

In this book, I make such an attempt by examining how NGO development differs across regions. Specific aspects of local political contexts taken into account include the presence or lack of material support for NGOs from regional governments (such as grant programs, social contracting, or office space); elements of institutionalized dialogue with NGOs (such as committees for relations with NGOs, active "public chambers" of NGO consultation with government, or municipal resource centers); the existence of widely acknowledged NGO allies in the regional administration; the presence or absence of an open conflict between regional and city governments that affects NGO relations; and any clear evidence that the administration either threatens NGOs for maintaining "wrong" positions or plays favorites with a few select NGOs. Chapter Four discusses in detail how these various aspects were measured and weighted.

A second domestic factor considered is the normative or "frame" resonance of transnational concepts. Like political opportunity structure, this concept is also drawn from social movement theory. Frame resonance is introduced as an intervening factor that affects the type of impact that transnational influences have on NGO development. Social movement theorists argue that, in order to succeed, movement activists must depict or "frame" their issues in terms that resonate both with target audiences' experiences and with their extant beliefs (Snow and Benford, 1992). While such theorists have traditionally used the concept of frame resonance to analyze the influence of domestic social movement organizations on the norms and beliefs of the broader public, in this book, frame resonance is applied to foreign donors to assess the extent to which the concepts they promote are compatible with historically developed norms and beliefs in Russian society. I employ the concept of issue framing on a Russia-wide basis, rather than regionally, since it is assumed that regional differences in domestic norms and beliefs regarding the NGO issues examined in the book are not significant enough to warrant separate consideration.

Utilizing Cross-Regional Comparisons

Chapter Four includes a cross-regional analysis comparing the seven cities chosen for study: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Izhevsk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Novgorod. These cities exhibit varying levels of foreign assistance and, not surprisingly, variations in many additional factors that

might conceivably affect NGO development patterns—including level of urbanization (city size), economic wealth, education, and degree of military "closedness."

Level of urbanization is one of the most important socioeconomic factors emphasized in studying citizens' political activism and is arguably a major component of modernization processes that create fundamental changes in social structure (Durkheim, 1960; Janos, 1986). The usual assumption is that large cities provide more opportunities than rural areas for individuals to associate with a critical mass of like-minded people, and they also allow individuals to remain more anonymous and less monitored in their activities by those around them.

We have little reason to suppose that the widely found correlation between urbanization and social movement activism does not hold in post-Soviet Russia as well. Until very late in the Soviet regime, the state maintained undeniably significant constraints on free association among citizens that precluded this kind of automatic relationship (Fish, 1995, pp. 19–20). However, by now, over a decade since the breakdown of these mechanisms of control with the end of Soviet rule, associational dynamics traditionally connected with the greater socioeconomic diversity in urban areas are likely to apply to some extent in Russia as well.

Unfortunately for a researcher interested in pinpointing the influences of transnational actors on NGO mobilization, transnational actors have tended to concentrate their attentions more on larger population centers than on smaller, more remote ones. The danger for the study was that, in the likely event that larger cities would have larger and more sophisticated NGO movements than smaller cities, it would be difficult to separate the influences of urbanization as a background factor from the specific influences of foreign donors.

In order to avoid this outcome, I included large cities that have been disproportionately ignored by foreign donors as well as smaller cities that have been targets of focus for them. The latter category of city was easier to locate than the former, because a few donors have experimented with a pilot technique of concentrating resources in a few cities that they believe hold promise in terms of economic potential and local political climate. The city I chose in this category, Novgorod-the-Great—with a population of only 230,000, by far the smallest of my study—was just such a target of foreign assistance. Novgorod was the first Russian city chosen as a site for the Regional Initiative of the U.S. Department of State.[19] It was more difficult to find large cities that have been overlooked by foreign donors. However, I succeeded in locating a number of medium-sized cities (in the range of

600,000–700,000 population), of which one (Izhevsk) has been relatively ignored, while two others of the same size (Khabarovsk and Vladivostok) have been targets for foreign assistance. In the course of research, I did find that urbanization shaped NGO development in some ways, principally indirectly by affecting the strength of the local political environment's influence on NGOs.

Fortunately, one other common factor explaining variations in civic political activism—levels of education—does not vary as much across post-Soviet Russia as in most Western countries. It is well known that the Soviet Union had an especially developed education system that provided postsecondary education to a large percentage of the population across the country. Many of the best-educated specialists were concentrated in elite industrial regions, such as those engaged in military production, while many areas, namely agricultural and basic-industry locations, remained relatively undereducated, despite the broad system of education. However, differences in educational levels among the regions I studied were fairly small, with the proportion of the population attaining mid- or higher-level education only varying by only about 8 percent outside the two vast cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.[20] As it turns out, these differences did not correlate clearly with differences in NGO development. Moscow and St. Petersburg, with up to 16 percent higher levels of education in their populations, did have more diverse NGO populations than the other smaller regional cities, but there was no correlation between levels of education and activism of the NGO community in the other five regional cities.

Literature on democratization has also argued that in societies with higher levels of economic wealth, citizens are more likely to push for and sustain civil liberties and democratic governance (Lipset, 1959; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997; Bunce, 2000). Indeed, if we extrapolate that this would predict livelier civil societies in wealthier contexts—particularly because from a social movement perspective, more income and spare time provides resources to support civic mobilization—this expectation seems to bear out in the wealthiest Russian regions. Moscow, in particular, has a wealthy population with lower than average levels of unemployment than other regions, and it also has one of the largest and most sophisticated NGO communities in the country. The study included cities with a range of economic wealth, with Moscow, Khabarovsk, and St. Petersburg at the higher end of the per capita income range and Izhevsk and Novgorod falling at the lower end. It turned out that economic wealth did seem to help NGO mobilization in various regions, but the poorest regions did not have the least developed NGO communities.

An additional factor that researchers of political activism in Russia have

described as important is the level of a region's military production or military strategic importance, which affects the degree to which a city has been closed to access by foreigners and even Russian citizens (Fish, 1995; Zaslavsky, 1982). It was very common in the Soviet Union for the state to restrict the movement of people into and out of cities considered sensitive due to the presence of military production or bases. Cities were subject to varying levels of "closedness"—with some cities involved in nuclear production so closed that even Soviet citizens experienced very restricted entry and exit privileges, and many more were completely closed to access by foreigners.

While the urbanization factor may be growing stronger in affecting Russian social activism, the opposite is likely to be true regarding the significance of formerly closed cities. The importance of military production and related control over workers is nowhere near as great today as it was during the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet period. First, most of the closed cities, with the exception of a few highly sensitive locations, became open during the 1990s. Second, military enterprises for the most part today have far less financial capability to provide the material fringe benefits that they provided during Soviet times, and they have lost to private sources any monopoly on these goods and services that they once had.[21] And third, there are more numerous and more lucrative opportunities outside military enterprises today for the "best and brightest" of the Russian educated elite than there were in the past. In short, the threat that military enterprises once posed to their employees is drastically less serious today than it was during the Soviet era.

Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to expect that sociopolitical mobilization in cities that were opened up to the outside later than others would remain affected for some time by the inertia of fear in public consciousness. The cities I chose for study do vary in levels of historical closedness and military production. Izhevsk, for example, maintains erratic but significant restrictions on foreigners' access to the city to this day, and Vladivostok was highly restricted to foreigners until 1994. In fact, I found that the most influential aspect today of a city's former levels of openness/closedness is the amount of contact that Russians in a particular city have with foreigners. It seems no longer to be the case that a history of closedness affects NGO activism to a significant extent through domestic control by enterprises and the state over workers, but rather that it impedes transnational influences on NGO development.

Limits of the Study and Methods

Because research into the detailed behavior and attitudes of NGO activists, government actors, and foreign donors requires intensive interviewing and

local observation, it was impossible during this project to make the dozens of cross-regional comparisons that a fully representative research design would demand. I instead used the case study approach to make controlled comparisons across seven regions of Russia. First, by employing controlled comparisons across cities with similar characteristics, according to Mill's "method of difference"—varying one factor among transnational exposure, local political environment, and city size, while holding the remaining factors fairly constant—I attempted to ascertain the relative effects of transnational interactions and local political environments on NGO sector development. The limitations of this method of cross-case comparison are well known, and the most serious was noted by Mill himself: cases almost inevitably vary in numerous respects other than the variable under examination (Mill, 1973).

Similar modesty is warranted in interpreting the book's conclusions from the comparisons across NGO subsectors. My argument regarding the compatibility of foreign donors' norms with domestic norms must at this point be viewed as requiring further testing. Comparison of two NGO subsectors, while fruitful for generating plausible hypotheses, cannot comprise a strong test of such hypotheses. In order to test and strengthen these hypotheses, future examination of further NGO subsectors will be necessary.

Field Research and Evidence

I conducted the primary field research for this book between July 1998 and August 2000. It consisted largely of semistructured interviews with leaders and members of Russian NGOs, relevant representatives of foreign assistance organizations that work with women's and human rights NGOs in Russia, and officials in Russian federal, regional, and city administrations who are responsible for working with NGOs. In the cases of Moscow and St. Petersburg, where there were roughly a hundred (in Moscow) and fifty (in St. Petersburg) active women's organizations, I was not able to interview them all. In the other cities examined, however, it was possible to conduct interviews with nearly all known women's organizations. Soldiers' rights organizations were far fewer in number, and I was able to interview nearly all relevant NGOs in that subsector. I could not fully ascertain whether I was reaching all organizations in the area, despite use of numerous sources of contact information. Even in regions where NGO resource centers exist, often the information is out of date and incomplete. I also interviewed representatives of most major foreign donor and Russian government organizations relevant to women's and soldiers' rights NGOs. In total, the study consisted of 205 interviews with 208 subjects in 163 organizations (117 of which

were with Russian NGOs or resource centers, and the remainder of which were with Russian government officials, foreign donors, or other foreign organizations). For information on interview questions and techniques used, refer to Appendix 2.

Aside from conducting interviews, I gathered primary literature from organizations about their activities and programs, media articles regarding NGOs, copies of government laws and policies regarding NGOs, and secondary analyses of the NGO sector and transnational assistance in Russia. These also enter the analysis. I used some basic Russian statistical sources on regional demographics and official NGO registration to explore socioeconomic factors affecting regional variations in NGO development, and to gain comparative data in terms of organizational numbers. While these official statistics are flawed—especially as concerns numbers of registered NGOs—they at least offer some standardized measures that can be compared across regions, and they are the only available statistics that do so.

The book makes use of a database I created of ninety interviews with eighty women's and soldiers' rights NGOs that were conducted between March 1999 and August 2000.[22] The database does not include the interviews conducted during an initial plausibility probe for the study from July to September 1998, during which the questions asked were slightly different and interviews were not audiotaped.[23] The database allowed me to code and search interview transcripts in order to make extensive and complex comparisons of organizations by category and region, according to such characteristics as funding sources, activities, relations with foreign assistance organizations, and relations with the state. These findings are included in the empirical data of Chapters Three and Four.