The Marketing of Rebellion

How do a few political movements challenging Third World states become global causes célèbres, whereas most remain isolated and obscure? *The Marketing of Rebellion* rejects the common view that needy groups readily gain help from selfless nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Even in the Internet age, insurgents face a Darwinian struggle for scarce international resources—and, to succeed, they must aggressively market themselves. To make this argument, Clifford Bob systematically compares two recent movements that attracted major NGO support, Mexico's Zapatista rebels and Nigeria's Ogoni ethnic group, against similar movements that failed to do so. Based on primary document analysis and more than 45 interviews with local activists and NGO leaders, the author shows that support goes to the savviest, not the neediest. *The Marketing of Rebellion* develops a realistic, organizational perspective on social movements, NGOs, and “global civil society.” It will change how the weak solicit help, the powerful pick clients, and all of us think about contemporary world politics.

Clifford Bob is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Graduate School of Social and Public Policy at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He specializes in transnational politics, social movements, human rights, and ethnic conflict. His published work includes articles in *Foreign Policy*, *Social Problems*, *International Politics*, *American Journal of International Law*, *Journal of Human Rights*, and *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 
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The Marketing of Rebellion

INSURGENTS, MEDIA, AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

CLIFFORD BOB
Duquesne University
To Joan
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Foreign Policy magazine published a brief version of my arguments under the title “Merchants of Morality” as the cover story in its March/April 2002 issue. In their zeal to market the magazine, however, the senior editors distorted the article’s argument with cover photographs and language, as well as a summary blurb in the table of contents, that I had no hand in writing or designing. These did not reflect my findings, most importantly by implying that local movements “bul[y]” their way to international support. I was informed of the cover less than a week before the issue began circulating and did not see the blurb until I received a printed copy of the magazine. The issue was later one of three that Foreign Policy submitted in winning a 2003 National Magazine Award for Editorial Excellence. Ironically, then, the editors’ “spin” on my arguments may have helped the magazine win this prestigious award. I hope this book will clarify my views.

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