Situating the patterns of AP landmines movement on the theory of Keck and Sikkink

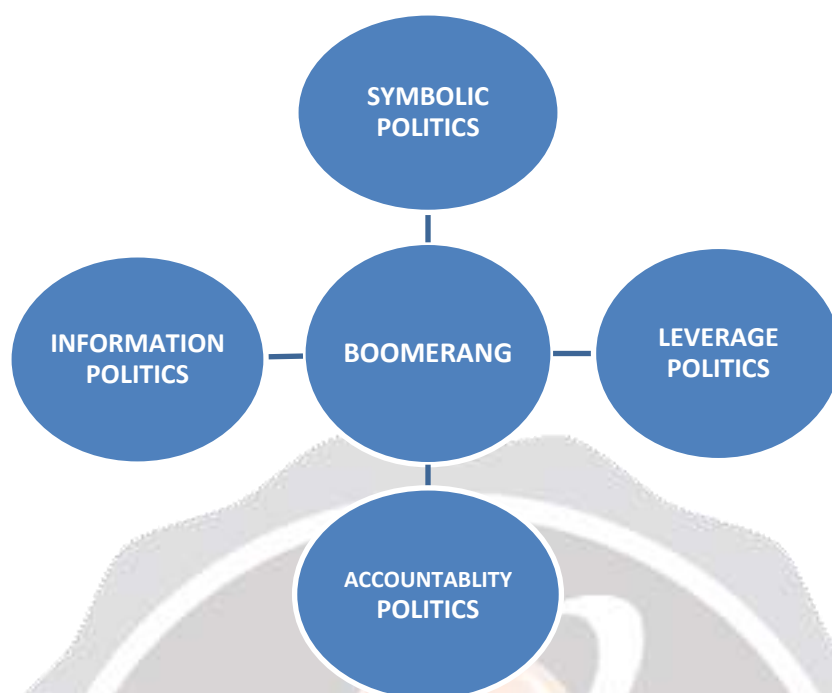**By**

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BACKGROUND

In the contemporary era of interconnectedness, transnational advocacy groups have come up as an indomitable force. One of their most important features is their ability to impact and alter the decisions of state. Such groups have up the ante to touch even the security issues. The case of AP landmines is one such case where transnational advocacy groups have had considerable impact on the governments, forcing them to reconsider their security strategy. AP landmines are used against human beings and are more often used to cause injuries rather than inflicting death. For decades, these weapons have been portrayed as conventional weapons by the military combatants and their indiscriminate effects have eluded any kind of scrutiny. However, due to growing awareness, the movement to curb the use of AP landmines had started to snowball since the Convention on Conventional Weapons held in 1980. "In 1990s AP landmines became the object of a vigorous transnational campaign involving some one thousand NGOs from over sixty countries and focused attention on land mines through a variety of media fora and conferences, public demonstration and the bestowal of 1997 Nobel Peace Prize on the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines and its coordinator Jody Williams". (Price 1998) The efforts of the advocacy groups culminated in Ottawa treaty which was signed by 122 states and called for a comprehensive ban on AP land mines. The processes and structures involved in this movement reveal how transnational advocacy groups operate and attain the potential to effect state decisions.

THE THEORY OF KECK AND SIKKINK

One of the most important explanations of the workings of transnational advocacy groups has been provided by Keck and Sikkink. This theory describes how transnational advocacy groups acquire the potential to effect state decisions by altering older norms and establishing new norms. This is done through building a tripartite interaction between domestic actors, governments and international organization which in turn leads to wider discussions and dialogues."By thus blurring the boundaries between the state's relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states have to international system, advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty". (Keck and Sikkink 1999) The process initiates when all the legitimate channels of communication between the domestic actors and the governments are severed. This is referred to as "Boomerang pattern." After this initial onset the transnational advocacy groups are formed and operate through different processes of information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics and accountability politics. The case of AP landmines can also be seen through the lenses of the theory of Keck and Sikkink.

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BOOMERANG

According to Keck and Sikkink boomerang pattern is most likely to occur in issues relating to rights, especially, human rights. This is because governments are both guarantor and violator of rights. If the rights of the people are violated by the government, they certainly are left with no recourse within the domestic political and judicial ambit. In such a scenario, international forums become a desirable platform for expressing their insecurities. Almost similar developments took place in the decades of 1940s and 50s in the case of AP landmines. There was a gigantic increase in the use of AP landmines during and after the World War – II. "But the existing state structure did not provide any channel through which the use of AP landmines could be challenged. The UN international law commission excluded the laws of war from its codification". (Price 1998) With the absence of the hands of state from this field, the task was left for NGOs to take up the issue on humanitarian grounds. Unlike other more localised movements such as resistance to constructions of dams in Chile's Patagonia region (Kiel) and 1994 violent unrest in the indigenously populated region of Chiapas in Mexico (Schwartz 2008), the campaign to ban landmines operated on the international level and the NGOs fought for an international law (Kiel). Countries such as Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola and Bosnia are among the hardest hit by this menace. Apart from this, in 1994 there were up to 110 million mines deployed in 64 countries. (International Committee of the Red Cross 1999). It is due to this truly global character of the problem that the exact version of Boomerang pattern in not explicitly visible here. The phase of domestic unrest hardly came in to picture in the case of AP landmines. The whole issues transpired at the international level where the NGOs plugged gaps in the international law and reached at consensus on an international law in the Ottawa treaty. According to Christina Kiel boomerang effect only explains why local groups may want to approach international actors. However, it does not explain why an international group would mobilize for the local actor. Thus, international group mobilization remains a puzzle. (Kiel)

INFORMATION POLITICS

After the process begins, there are a number of tools that the transnational advocacy networks utilise to achieve their goals. One of such processes explained by Keck and Sikkink is that of information politics. Information is used by the TANs to keep strong bondage between the members of the network and keep the cohesiveness of the network intact. Information politics also refers to the dissemination of information about the concerned issue in such a way that it is comprehensible for the society at large and strongly puts forth the case of the TAN. Non state actors gain influence by serving as alternate sources of information. Information flows in advocacy networks provide not only facts, but also testimonies- stories told by people whose life has been affected. (Keck and Sikkink 1999) The TANs used information politics to the fullest by bringing forth studies and researches

that revealed that AP landmines were not even militarily viable. They showed that "that the human costs exacted by anti-personnel mines far outweighed their military utility**."** (Nourafchan 2008) An international media campaign was launched in 1995 which advertised the ills of AP landmines and called for a comprehensive ban on them. (Price 1998) Different studies were used to show the wrath of AP landmines. In 1993 a US state department study estimated that land mines kill or wound 150 people per week, and a revised study in 1994 claimed that "landmines maim or kill an estimated 500 people per week world wide" (US State Department 1994) Use of such scientific studies laid the solid foundation which was used by TANs to initiate the process of norm change.

SYMBOLIC POLITICS

Symbolic politics is another key tactic explained by Keck and Sikkink which is put to work by TANs to manoeuvre their way. It is the use of events that serve the purpose of a significant symbol for the concerned issue. Activists frame issues by identifying and providing convincing explanations for powerful symbolic events, which in turn become catalysts for the growth of the networks. Symbolic interpretation is a part of process of persuasion by which networks create awareness and expand the constituency. (Keck and Sikkink 1999) The relentless efforts of ICBL influenced many countries and organizations around the world. The biggest symbol that it was able to create to turn the tide towards itself was the award of Nobel Peace Prize to ICBL chief organiser Jody Williams. This event had intense cascading effect and several key states agreed with the claims of ICBL and voted for ban on AP landmines. The ICBL was able to mobilise the support of important personalities such as UN secretary general, Pope John Paul – II, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Dalai Lama, Jacob Selebi. Apart from these it also had the support of European Parliament and the council of ministers of organization of African Unity.(Price 1998) Support of such entities created powerful symbol for roping in support for the cause of ICBL.

LEVERAGE POLITICS

Leverage politics is another tool defined by Keck and Sikkink. According to them leverage politics is 'the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence'. (Nourafchan 2008) They have argued that this leverage could be of two types, viz- Material and Moral. Material leverage usually relates to money and goods. It also includes votes in international organisations. Moral leverage involves what some commentators have called mobilisation of shame where the behaviour of target actor is held up to the bright light of international scrutiny. (Keck and Sikkink 1999) The base of moral leverage had stated to build from the time when religious and ethical leaders such as Dalai Lama and Pope John Paul-II were incorporated in the campaign. Apart from this, the processes of information politics had made it amply clear, through its numerous scientific studies, conferences, newspaper and media reports, that support towards AP landmines is wrong and unethical. As, more concerned states began to fall in line, pressure began to mount on other state to support the cause. After a certain level of awareness and consensus may states had to support the ban because they did not want to be sidelined. For instance, South Africa's support to the cause of ICBL "helped that country establish a distinct and admirable international profile after decades of pariah status." (Nourafchan 2008)

ACCOUNTABILITY POLITICS

Accountability politics is the tool through which TANs make the political executive accountable by judging them on their own public stands. Once a government has publicly committed itself to a principle – for example, in favour a human rights or democracy – networks can use those positions, and their command of information, to expose the distance between discourse and practice. (Keck and Sikkink 1999) It is effectively used by TANs when governments agree to the demands of TANs to avoid complex discussions and public reprimand but fail to follow their promises through action. The strategy of ICBL was to first get an in principle agreement from the government on the basis of reasoned debates. Points such as indiscriminate nature of landmines could not be argued against and forced the governments to change their discursive positions. Even the most reluctant states, such as the US and China, felt impelled to at least verbally agree to this idea. Such verbal agreements strengthened the stand of ICBL and helped it to ask the questions to the states that provided lip service but did

not act to materialise the ban on AP landmines. Thus, political accountability was ably used by the TANs to persuade the states.

| INFORMATION POLITICS | → | STATES BROADER AGGREMENT, FAILING WHICH, **SHAMING** OCCURS | → | ACCEPTANCE OF NEW NORMS |

CONCLUSION

The case of AP landmines demonstrates the relevance of the iconic theory of the Keck and Sikkink. This case of Transnational Advocacy groups has followed all the patterns discussed in the theory. It being a global movement which was based an issue which had significant international relevance; the process of boomerang has not clearly manifested itself in the AP landmines case. Apart from this all the processes discussed in the theory almost perfectly fit in the practical realm. This transnational movement against AP landmines also depicts a unique process where non state actors have been able to influence state decision making in the field of security. Security and power have been traditionally considered to be under the exclusive realm of the state. But it is interesting to see that Transnational Advocacy Groups have overridden the coercive power of the state through their moral and persuasive power. It is in this context that it can be predicted that Transnational Advocacy Groups are going to be a big success in the numerous local and international issues that they are involved in.

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