

The role of state and non-state actors in terrorism essay samples

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



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Who are state and Non-state Actors in International Relations?

International relations require the action of state and non-state actors to become a reality. These actors may be any entities or individuals who play a role in facilitating international relations. There are two types of actors: states and non-state actors. States are the major players in international relations, but they are also greatly influenced by non-state actors. Non-state actors are organizations, institutions or individuals that have strong political, social, and economic power that enables them to influence relations at both the national and international level. However, they do not identify with any country. Cunningham and Pearlman define non-state actors as “ an organized political actor not directly connected to the state, but, pursuing aims that affect vital state interests” (Pearlman & Cunningham, 2011). In addition to political power, non-state actors have headquarters in a particular state, but their operations transcend the borders of that state.

There are different types of non-state actors each occupying its niche internationally. Sub-state or domestic actors are organizations or individuals within a state that are capable of significantly affecting that state's foreign policy. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) is another non-state actor able to influence international relations. There are international IGOs like the United Nations and local IGOs like the European Union. In addition to the two, transnational actors are another category that operates across international borders. These could be companies that own extensive investments in different countries. Other non-state actors include Non-governmental organizations, terrorists, and international criminal factions. As the world globalizes, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the role of non-state actors in international relations. There are some transnationals whose financial prowess is greater than some countries. Such transnationals are influential due to the resources that can be used to influence government officials to make policies in their favor.

The difficulties in defining terrorism

Ever since the 9/11 attacks, terrorism got propelled into contemporary consciousness, and today is a worldwide concern. However, there is yet a universally accepted definition of terrorism. Definitions vary from state to state and from one law enforcement department to another. Finding a universal definition is important if at all terrorism is to be tackled. Existing definitions are pivoted on one of the three aspects of terrorism namely, causes, means of attack, and perpetrators. These though are insufficient considering the multi-faceted, fluid, and complex nature of terrorism. The

diverse nature of the three aspects of terrorism makes it difficult to define. The major problem comes when trying not to make the definition too broad or narrow. Over time, the perception of terrorism has changed from a positive state-sponsored political act to undesirable attacks by criminal and violent non-state actors as captured by Hoffman (Hoffman 1998).

The United Nations has tried to come up with a definition but has been unable to do so due to hold ups by Islamic states. These states want a difference to be drawn between terrorism and acts of defiance against foreign occupation. Apart from the political difficulty, there is also a cultural difficulty in defining it. People from different backgrounds view it differently. Roger Shuy, a professor in Linguistics, says that terrorism could refer to “otherness.” That is why most Americans associate terrorism with the Middle East. All in all, everybody agrees objectively that terrorism is a political tactic (Bernes 2012).

Reasons for the existence of uncivil networks

Illicit or uncivil networks undermine the stability of organized states or the formation of one. These activities greatly undermine a state. For a network to survive it depends largely on an organized structure. An illicit network can only be formed and survive if there are people and means of carrying out its agenda. The growth of cyberspace has largely influenced the growth of illicit networks. However, most illicit networks mainly form for profit purposes as is the case with traffickers. In addition, political power also encourages their formation as is the case with terrorists and criminal gangs (Aquillar 2007).

Human trafficking in the international domain

Human trafficking is the trade in people even if it does not involve moving the victims from one point to another. Usually, it is employed to serve the purposes of prostitution and forced labor. However, there are instances of abduction for marriage and extraction of tissues and organs. (Kevin 2004). It is a modern form of slavery. The victims are forced, coerced and intimidated to doing things that utterly violate their basic human rights. It is a crime and a violation of human rights as per international legal instruments.

The spread of human trafficking is driven by two factors namely low risk and high profits. Just like drug trafficking, this criminal activity is highly lucrative. It is also guided by the principles of demand and supply. There are some pull and push factors that also fuel human trafficking. These include poverty, lack of education, expectations of employment, and a better social treatment. The International Labor organization estimates that nearly 21 million people have been victims of human trafficking worldwide. The victims of trafficking are transported locally and across borders.

The rationale for weak arms control norms

The restriction on usage, production, development, and proliferation of all types of weapons is collectively referred to as arms control. The conventional methodology for arms control is through diplomacy in the form of treaties and agreements between consenting parties. However, some countries can join forces so as to enforce the regulations on non-consenting countries. Therefore, the manipulation of treaties and numbers is the basic criterion of arms control. Unfortunately, and for a long time, it has been ineffective as

countries often opt out of treaties so as to pursue their weapon development programs in fear of national security. The need for political and economic strength in the international arena also influences most countries decisions to pull out. The only solution is by developing strong peremptory norms.

However, is not possible because most treaties are not signed into effect or ratified without the signatures of the key countries. It acts as an impediment to the development of strong norms. Some countries also engage in free ridership. The term refers to countries that watch from the sidelines but still continue to expand their nuclear inventories. Free ridership directly opposes the formation of strong norms and impedes arms control.

Finally, on-state actors also contribute to weak arms control norms. For example, non-state actors such as weapon manufacturers may influence government policies regarding such weapons through the use of financial capacity. Such influence may be achieved through unlawful means such as bribery and threats to countries or government officials. The result is that powerful non- state actors have their way to ensure that their production and trade in weapons is uninterrupted.

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