

# State and non-state actors in international politics



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## INTRODUCTION

At the International scene, there are many players engaged in what is regarded as the game of international Politics. One of the oldest and universally acknowledged actors on the modern world stage is the state. A state is a type of polity that is an organized political community living under a single system of government[1]. A Political community is referred to as a government responsible for the citizens under the government. It has been earlier assumed that international relations are made up of the relations between states. International relations can be likened to a series of actions that promote interactions between states. Actors are entities that participate in or promote international relations. The two types of actors involved in international relations include State and non-state actors. State actors represent a government while non-state actors do not. However, they have impact on the state actors.

A definition of world politics involving only states as the actors has been challenged since the late 1960s and the early 1970s, since many other actors have become way more involved in the process of international political. Due to this, international relations promotes International pluralism fostering national interactions. The forces of globalization and liberalization in the last three decades of the twentieth century have resulted in a transformation in the world economic structure, thereby undermining the ability of states to govern in full capacity. These great global transformations have had a major influence and have modified the traditional paradigm and theories of international relations, most especially the school of thought of realism due to its basic proposition that actors represent the states, and the

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states operate a system of anarchy. The realist school of thought has however been criticized for its focus on the state view of international relations and its shallow focus on the problems of war and peace.

## IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITIONS OF ACTORS IN WORLD POLITICS

Actors in world politics, states and non-state actors, per Professor Ryo Osiba of Hitotsubashi University, can be defined as entities which have the following three features:[2]

- (a) They should have overall capacity to decide on their purposes and interests.
- (b) They should also have the capability to mobilize necessary resources to achieve these purposes and interests and be passionate about appealing for global cooperation.
- (c) Their actions should be significant enough to influence the state-to-state relations or the behaviour of other non-state actors in the global system.

### Inter-Governmental Organization

Even if states are the dominant actors on the world stage (which is still an argument), they are not at all the only ones. A group of very important players in the International scene is the intergovernmental organizations otherwise known as the IGOs. Intergovernmental organizations are established by states, most times through a treaty. The most well-known intergovernmental organizations are the United Nations (UN). Some other IGOs include the Food and Agriculture Organization, International Labour

Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Maritime Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Food Programme, etc.[3]. Since, IGOs only operate by the consent of states, states maintain their sovereignty. Furthermore, most IGOs really do not possess the power to enforce state follow up with their decisions. At least, not without the help of powerful states. For example, since the United States is a permanent member of the UN's Security Council, along with China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom, it can veto any substantive UN resolution.

In accordance to liberal institutionalism, states join Intergovernmental Organisations because it is in their interest to do so. Their membership makes certain problems easily solved and at a less cost than without them. Liberal institutionalism particularly, focuses on collective problems, such as the security dilemma, the appeal to execute competitive tariffs, and the difficulty in agreeing to protect the environment.[4] There is a need for States to correspond and work with one other to oversee other states to make sure that they are honouring their commitments to acknowledge many of the problems. For example, in the free trade case, the World Trade Organization was created to coordinate the negotiation of tariffs and to further provide a mechanism and avenue for the resolving of disputes. Some of these tasks will be more expensive and complicated to execute without the IGOs. There are situations where IGOs are not only created to solve problems but to provide platforms for discussion.

Some examples of IGOs and their functions include[5]:

IGO	FUNCTION
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Maintain  
international  
peace and  
security.  
Develop  
friendly  
relations  
among  
nations.

United  
Nations  
(UN)

Achieve  
international  
cooperation  
in solving  
international  
problems.

Function as a  
centre for  
harmonizing  
the actions  
of nations

World  
Bank

This  
International  
Financial

Institution  
works on  
reducing  
poverty. It  
helps  
developing  
countries by  
giving loans.

The Group of Eight (G8)  
The Group of Eight (G8) is made up of the world's leading industrial countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA and Russia).  
The head of the G8 countries meet each

year to

discuss

global issues

such as

world

poverty and

security.

Military

alliance. A

system of

collective

defence

North

where its

Atlantic

member

Treaty

states agree

Organizati

to mutual

on (NATO)

defence in

response to

an attack by

any external

party

## Nongovernmental Organizations

Not all actors play governmental roles in the International scene.

Nongovernmental organizations, also called NGOs, are defined as non-profit

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organizations who advocate or otherwise pursue policies for the good of the public. Nongovernmental organizations are engaged in issues such as human rights humanitarian aid, economic development, and social welfare, among other things. Some well-known NGOs include the Red Cross, Greenpeace, Oxfam, and Amnesty International. Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many people have discovered that by being a part of Non-governmental organizations they could in a way participate in the global system and lobby to influence International organizations. Most have joined as members of one or more NGOs, which are more about members and not states, but have volunteers from populations of two or more states which have formed organizations to promote their shared interests and ideas to influence the policies of state governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). NGOs tackle many global problems and seek changes in the world for causes such as disarmament, environmental protection, human rights and many more.

Most pursue objectives that are highly respected and constructive, and therefore do not provoke any controversy or arouse much opposition.

NGOs interact with states, sub-state actors, MNCs, and other NGOs. NGOs are increasingly being recognized in the UN and other forums, as legitimate actors along with states but is not equal to them. Some of the groups have a political purpose, some a humanitarian one, some an economic or a technical one. There are times when NGOs combine efforts through transnational advocacy networks. By joining NGOs, many people found that



they could participate in the global system and lobby to influence international organizations. Some examples of NGOs include:

Amnesty Amnesty

Internatio International

nal is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationall y recognized human rights for all. They conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose

rights have  
been  
violated.  
Some of the  
issues that  
has been  
campaign are  
armed  
conflict issues  
and  
protection of  
civilians,  
basic welfare  
of children,  
LGBT rights,  
rights of  
people with  
AIDS,  
women's  
rights,  
disability  
rights, human  
impact of  
pollution and  
environmenta  
l degradation,

freedom of  
the press and  
many  
more[6]

Oxfam An  
international  
confederation  
of 17  
organizations  
networked  
together in  
92 countries,  
as part of a  
global  
movement  
for change, to  
build a future  
free from the  
injustice of  
poverty." The  
well-known  
organization  
works to help  
eliminate  
global

poverty with

long-term

and

sustainable

solutions.[7]

AIESEC

links students

worldwide

works on

issues

regarding the

conservation,

research and

World

restoration of

Wide

the

Fund for

environment)

Nature

and hundreds

and

thousands

more of NGOs

to go

Wikimedi Is dedicated

a to

Foundatio encouraging

n the growth,

development  
and  
distribution of  
free,  
multilingual  
content, and  
to providing  
the full  
content of  
these wiki-  
based  
projects to  
the public  
free of  
charge. The  
Wikimedia  
Foundation  
operates  
some of the  
largest  
collaborativel  
y edited  
reference  
projects in  
the world,  
including

Wikipedia, a

top-ten

internet

property[8]

It stands for

Program for

Appropriate

Technology in

Health, work

with the

private and

PATH

public sectors

to help with

advancing

technologies

to address

global health

challenges.”

Political Groups that Advocate Violence (Terrorists) - Terrorists or rather political groups that advocate violence might not call themselves NGOs, but they operate in the same manner which are by interacting both with states and with relevant populations and institutions through violence and planning attacks. These groups held great power and can influence the international relations between states[9]. A group that is currently active now is the Al-Qaeda. The incidence on the spectacularly destructive attack of September <https://assignbuster.com/state-and-non-state-actors-in-international-politics/>

11, 2001 by members of Al-Qaeda, has demonstrated the increasing power that technology gives terrorists as non-state actors. Other than that, the Al Qaeda also placed suicide bombers in U. S. cities, coordinate their operations and finances through Internet and global banking system, and reach a global audience with the videotaped exhortations of Osama bin Laden.

**International Criminal Groups:** These actors are considered as transnational actors but they act in an illegitimate manner. Transnational criminals often operate in well-organized groups, intentionally united to carry out illegal actions. Groups typically involve certain hierarchies and are headed by a powerful leader. These

transnational organized crime groups work to make a profit through illegal activities. Because groups operate internationally, their activity is a threat to global security, often weakening governmental institutions or destroying legitimate business endeavors. Most of these groups are involved in drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, firearms and many other crimes. Some examples of international criminal groups would be the Yakuza in Japan, the Sicilian Mafia in Italy and Triads in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and in countries with significant Chinese population.

### Multinational Enterprises

**Transnational Actors** Transnational actors are actors that are active below the state level as well as across the state borders. There are two types of transnational actors. They are the transnational corporations(TNCs) or multinational corporations(MNCs) and the nongovernmental organizations(NGOs). Transnational Corporations(TNCs) / Multinational

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Corporations(MNCs). Other group of actors in International relations are Multinational companies. They are companies whose aims is to make profit and their business interests transcend across more than one state. Most times, these Multinational Enterprises do command vast amounts of resources that rival, and even surpass, the resources of smaller states.

Examples of MNEs include: Dangote Group, Epson, Facebook, GlaxoSmithKline, Exxon Mobil, etc.

It is however important to note that these interests of Multinational Enterprises do not necessarily correspond with or favor the interests of the states in which they operate, or even with their home state where the Multinational Enterprises was formed and their headquarter situated. For example, an MNE may be opposed to trade sanctions on another state, even if its home state wants the sanctions to punish bad behavior, because the sanctions are bad for its business. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are companies that have headquarter in one state but invest and operate extensively in other states.

MNCs are based in one state but have branches or subsidiaries operating in other states. In other words, MNC is a large corporation operating on a worldwide basis in many countries at the same time, with fixed facilities and employees in each.

The types of MNCs are

:

Industrial makes goods

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in factories in  
many  
countries and  
sell them to  
business and  
consumers in  
various  
countries. The  
largest MNCs  
are  
automobile,  
corporatio oil, and  
ns electronic  
industries.  
Almost all the  
MNCS are  
based in the  
G7 states.  
Examples of  
this MNCs are  
Sony, Honda,  
Toyota,  
Petronas and  
more.

Financial such as

banks, they  
operate multi  
nationally  
with more  
restrictions  
than  
industrial

corporatio corporations.

ns Examples are

Oversea-  
Chinese  
Banking  
Corporation  
Limited  
(OCBC Bank)  
and others.

Services Such as  
McDonald's  
fast-food  
chain,  
international  
airlines like  
MAS, Asiana  
Airlines and  
more, Hilton

Hotels &  
Resorts and  
many others.

Multinational Corporations are becoming more powerful as independent actors. A great number of the industrial MNCs have annual turn over sales of billions of dollars. MNCs are most times able to match with most international organizations in terms of size and financial resources. The largest IGO (UN) has about 2 billion dollars a year in revenue, compare to more than 250 billion dollars for the largest MNC. The largest state (United States) has government revenues of 2 trillion dollars. Therefore, this shows that the power of MNCs does not rival the largest states but exceeds many poorer states and many IOs.[10]

Multinational Corporations are viewed as citizens of a world beholden to no government[11]. They act internationally in the interests of their (international) shareholders and do owe no form loyalty to no state. They have the motivation maximize profits. MNCs' operations support a global business infrastructure connecting a transnational community of businesspeople.

MNCs also contribute to their host country's development. As MNCs operate in other states, it will provide job opportunities for the locals in that state and thus, helped to stabilize the economy in that state.[12]

In determining if States are still the most important players in International politics, it is important to examine theories related to this argument

1. Realism: Realism portrays the political system of the world as an anarchic struggle for power and security among competing states. Per realism, there is at all no higher authority than that of the states. Due to this, states in alliance with other states or individually, make provision for their own defence. Power therefore is the only means of achieving security. Security also follows from the willingness to act prevent any state from achieving a preeminent and threatening position in International politics.

2. Radicalism: this school of thought view International politics as organized in line with capitalist imperatives. International relations are structured, conceptualised and dominated by the unequal relationship between the developed and developing worlds. Therefore, a Radical systematic change is important to achieve security on a global platform, security here is understood as a factor of the satisfaction of basic needs for the population of the world irrespective of their national identity.

3. Liberal Internationalism: The liberal Nationalist view suggests that there are certain reasons to believe that the dominant identity of states might be weakening. International institutions, international law, International trade and international commerce have all contributed tremendously to the developing global community. So therefore, we should describe the world not just in terms of state interaction only but also in terms of an increasing community.

why states are no longer the key actors

Per the traditional perspective, states play the major role in international Politics but after the World War, communications technology has been on the <https://assignbuster.com/state-and-non-state-actors-in-international-politics/>

rise, international division of labor and the expansion of global trade, a great number of international organizations have also established. The international scene has changed due to the forces of globalization. It is now of importance that states communicate with one other, which influence international political, economic, military and culture to a great degree. The increasing number of these organizations is parallel to the increasing levels of political, economic, military and cultural transactions between individuals, societies and states. These kinds of non-state actors challenge the "state-centric" perception. There are two prevailing theories about the role of the state in international relations. Neorealism emphasizes the state plays the most important role in international arena. On one hand, the state possesses sovereign power to insure domestic security. On the other hand, neorealism also stresses the state influence economy in international relations. Neoliberalism not only indicates that the state is the main behavior body in international system, but also affirms the role of non-states, such as international organization, transnational organizations and other kinds of social organizations. As a by-product of intensified globalization process, these kinds of organizations have become more significant determinants of foreign policies of the state.

By looking at globalization, the proliferation of non-state actors is gaining international influence and position. Non-state actors can be divided into international intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and transnational or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). International intergovernmental organizations are created by states. They have official document of government agencies. On the contrary, transnational or

international non-governmental organizations are established not by the state, but by some group of businessmen, individuals and other societal units. They have no legal connection with the state, so they are genuinely transnational. But the state can restrain the activities of these kinds of organizations.

There are several powerful organizations such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations. Though these organizations own strong power in the international relations, they are entirely operated by states.

Along with the intensification of globalization the growth of so many kinds of non-state actors is bound to influence the status of the state in international relations. But they cannot substitute for the state. The state is still the most important actor in international relations.

The role of the state in the international economy, politics and climate

The question of whether the advent of Globalization can lead to extinction of State importance in the International hemisphere would be examined.

Cristopher Clapham believes that the globalization is at the core of human existence such that it can be found in every sphere of importance such as the economy, politics and climate[13]

The influence on globalization on the economy from State level to the world stage cannot be overemphasised but the State still has legitimate power on certain levels. If a company is to establish its organization in a State, it is under the jurisdiction of that State. The state wields the authority to allow,

suspend or close down any operating company within its territory. This point tends to the State the most important actor in international politics as it has the right to determine the scope of a company's operations.

States are the components of International politics and it(international politics) is significant in fostering international cooperation, conducting business and ensuring world peace among States.

The peace of the world is of grave importance in international politics. The world peace is not attainable by just a state. This goal of peace is only brought out by the endeavour of the whole world. International organizations are making great deal of efforts to prevent any form of chaos that can be caused by war, but still the mantle rests on the shoulders of the state to play the major role in international Politics. Global warming is another issue gradually become a significant in the world due to climate globalization. The negative effects of global warming could have adverse effects on the climate such as the rising of sea levels which affects the world as a whole. States have taken it upon themselves to eradicate this problem by drafting policies. An example of an international agreement called the ' Kyoto Protocol' has been formulated to ensure States take actions necessary to cut down pollution and prevent greenhouse effect. It is worthy to note that such policies can only to drafted by Stats and International organizations can only support them in actualising these goals. This further proves the importance of states in the international hemisphere.

After reviewing the more general treatment of actors in different theoretical perspectives, and if non-state actors are a factor to be reckoned with in the study of world politics, it is important to conceptualize these types of actors.

Non-State Actors are most times seen as very having little influence on world politics especially from the perspectives of the realist and other state centric, according to them, it is predominantly states that retain power in international relations but this assumption has been faulted because when realism and liberalism were developed as consistent theories, the influence of non-state actors was indeed very limited and close to non-existence. Second, by focusing on the state as main actors, state-centric theories overlook the importance of indirect influence of Non State actor.

Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch (identify two types of change:

First order change describes the change within a system, whilst second order change is the change of the system itself, therefore could be considered as meta-change. Although Watzlawick et al. were concerned with change on the psychological level of human interaction, they note that their concept of change is also applicable to a wide variety of systems. In the system of international politics, first order change is a change that is part of the system and the political structure actors engage in, and thus plays a part retaining the current political structure.

Second order change however will lead to a substantial change of the political structure and the way that political actors interact. However, it is necessary to note that an actor may affect international relations, even though it is not in the way desired by the actor itself. This would be the case

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if the action of an actor is met with fierce resistance, which would consequentially change the system in a way not desired by the original actor.

NSAs have been defined as actors that do not represent the states, but act on an international level. They include: Intergovernmental organisations), transnational corporations, non-governmental organisations, epistemic communities (i. e. Networks of scientists and experts and others which include criminal and terrorist organisations. With regard to the first group, IGOs, there is a disparity whether they can be considered as real NSA, because they are set up and controlled by governments of nation states it is necessary to consider the influence exerted by NSAs on a multi-level basis. For example, a NSA may try to influence international politics by lobbying on the domestic level of a state or in international organisations. TNCs are international corporations with offices and products in different countries. Multi-National Companies can exercise a huge influence on local laws. An example of this is the US-based TNC Texaco, whilst operating in Ecuador, was “ technically immune to human rights claims”]. The company dumped toxic waste in the Amazon region.

In realism theory, it is assumed that a sovereign country-in this case Ecuador-has to ensure that human rights are enforced, and has the power to do so . Hence , TNCs only indirectly accountable for human rights obligations through government regulation . But due to the importance of foreign investment , particularly for developing countries , particularly developing countries cannot follow their obligations (Texaco , with global earnings four times the size of Ecuador’s GDP , was able to operate “ as a state unto itself”

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Admittedly, it could be argued that Texaco acted as a pro-longed arm of the United States. There have been cases where Multinational companies have been able to exercise significant influence over their home countries. As demonstrated, TNCs show a high capacity for first order change, although often indirectly by using governments and international organisation. There is a considerable structural dependence of states on Multi National Companies, which will make policy makers take business interests into account when drafting legislation without being pressured. However, it is difficult to account for such indirect powers without political activity, because they are not traceable. NGOs are non-profit, non-violent organisations that are not set up by the government and are not trying to get hold of power. Examples are the French civil rights group La Quadraturedu Net, Amnesty International and the role of foreign NGOs involved in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution will be investigated. La Quadrature is a civil rights organisation that lobbies for net neutrality on European level. It takes position for net neutrality and against copyright extension and software patents and is supported by the American Electronic Frontier Foundation. In their recent campaign against the 'three strikes' approach, proposed under the French EU presidency, La Quadrature was quite successful in achieving their goals. Most of the amendments they lobbied against were rejected and some of their own proposals put into place instead. Within the framework of intergovernmental organisations, this capacity gives it "greater power than any single government" (Willems 1982, p24, as cited in: Arts2003, p7). Thus, after an extensive campaign against torture, Amnesty International co-drafted the anti-torture convention. Again, one might question the relevance of Amnesty's sanctions. However, Arts (2003) notes that there salting treaty

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we “ profound change in the underlying principle of the international community” and affected states’ sovereignty; states could no longer refer to human rights abuses as ‘ internal matters’. American NGOs supporting the Ukrainian democracy movements have often been criticised for taking sides to increase US influence over the Ukraine. But Wilson (2006) notes that oppositional NGOs were not overly advantaged by Western funds, although support for governmental initiatives was cutback in consequence of a lack of co-operation by the Ukrainian government . Even so, pre-revolutionary backing for the government Russia was significantly higher than overall Western funds(Wilson2006). Instead , oppositional NGOs used their money much more effectively and Western-funded exit polls proved an important tool in preventing voting fraud (Wilson2006). The resulting regime change affected Ukrainian-Russian relations drastically and it has been suggested that it is partly responsible for quarrels over gas prices that affected EU gas deliveries in winter 2008(Wilson2006, Willershausen 2008).

It is than commercial ones(Bus´e2001). But binding such NSAs into international agreements banning land mines presents severe complications to international politics. Many NSAs are not willing to sign a ban, whereas some states refuse to join the ban, because hostile NSAs are still using land mines. Additionally, monitoring is difficult. Military NSAs are not bound to law of the state they operate in, precisely because this state cannot retain control. (Bus´e2001) Therefore, Bus´e(2001) stresses the importance of Recognising the relevance of NSAs in international politics individually, NGOs tend to operate on small single-issues, and have much less competencies compared to governments. The sheer number of NGOs still makes them an important actor on the international scene, maybe not individually but as a

whole (Arts 2003). However, as demonstrated, NGOs are not only capable of first order change, but in the case of Amnesty, also second order change, by changing the structure of state interaction. Terrorist and military guerilla groups affect international politics in a different way. Thus, in disintegrating states, some NSAs are the de-facto government (Bus' e 2001, Cusimano-Love 2002). This does not only pose severe problems for the local population but also complicates the political interaction on an international level. According to Bus' e (2001) land mines pose a major problem as they contaminate land even years after wars, and because self-produced land mine soft en used by military NSAs are even more dangerous. Particularly after the cold war and within creasing globalisation, NSAs were able to fill gaps left by declining state influence over political, social and economic conditions (Cusimano-Love 2002, Jochnick 1999). NSAs benefited drastically from increasing globalisation. The increasing importance of international media and Internet has given NGOs a platform to connect with other NGOs and raise support and awareness for the issues they stand for. Additionally, human rights groups have been given important tasks in securing the survival of people in humanitarian crises (