



Non-State Actors' Impact on Global Policy-Making

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Abstract:

This article critically discusses the impact of non-state actors (NSAs) in international relations particularly in policy formulation within different sectors including human rights, environmental issues, trade, health, and security. Other actors such as NSAs, which include NGOs, MNCs and terrorist groups have also taken central stage in the global system thus undermining the state-centric model of governance. Direct lobbying to policymakers, public campaigns, partnership with states and IOs, and applying economic leverage, NSAs have influenced international norms and policies. They have made the most significant contributions in human rights, the environment and social justice, where they have shaped international policies and put forward key agendas leading to formulation of international policies. That said, the establishment of NSAs has also brought issues especially in terms of public responsibility, access to information and possible conflict of interest. Despite the fact that NSAs have complemented State actions in managing multifaceted global concerns, the influence of NSAs poses certain dangers to State sovereignty and may lead to destabilization, if extreme organizations are concerned. The article examines the general effects of NSAs on the international system, therefore appreciating their achievements but at the same time concisely noting that they are increasingly becoming powerful. In the future, the domination of NSAs is expected to increase even further due to the further continuation of globalization processes, growth of innovative technologies, and entanglement of worldwide problems. As the NSAs grow in prominence as the key players in the determination of the international policies, the issues of their responsibility and the conflicts of their interest will be cardinal to address. Therefore, the article concludes that even as NSAs have led to positive change, their place in global governance is paradoxical and delicate, and needs to be well monitored so as to benefit the international system and the global governance of issues. As the world adapts to the new trend of policy making and implementation shaped by NSAs, then it will be important to understand and effectively deal with the challenges mentioned above.

Keywords: Non-State Actors, Global Policy-Making, Human Rights, Environmental Protection, Multinational Corporations.



Introduction

Non-state actors (NSAs) are entities which have a great deal of clout in the international system and the regulation of the global system, yet are not affiliated to any specific state. The categories which can be listed include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Multinational Companies (MNCs), Religious bodies and even Terrorist groups. None of these entities have direct responsibility to states but they often take action which helps define state policies and/or international norms. Some organizations which are not affiliated to any government are known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which include human rights organizations, environmental organizations and social justice organizations among others; some of these NGOs can at times coerce governments and other international organizations to come up with policies that are favorable to the NGOs' goals and On the other hand, MNCs have the economic power to determine international trade, employment and environmental standards through lobbying. Religious groups can shape policies that concern cultural identity, human rights and international peace while terrorist's organizations can shape security policies and international relations through their actions (Smith, 2019).

In the past, the NSAs rarely played a significant part in the formulation of the global agenda due to the fact that the diplomacy was conducted by states. But, the post-World War II period, especially the globalization era has brought some changes. The development of new communication technologies, the integration of the world economy and the growing number of complex world issues have enabled NSAs to have a bigger say in the forming of world policies (Keck & S For instance, the environmentalism trend that emerged in the 1970s led to establishment of international environment agreements and organizations mainly funded by non-governmental organizations like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund. In the late 1990s, another global movement that emerged from the agency of a coalition of NGOs and activist groups, targeted the policies of international economic institutions like the WTO and IMF (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005).

Over the last three decades, non-state actors have emerged as important players in the formulation of global policies, which have hitherto been the preserve of states. While nations are the primary drivers of IR, NSAs have shown that they can influence, and sometimes set the course, of the global policy. This change can be seen not only in the sphere of environmental policies, human rights, and security on the international level. For example, international NGOs have played a crucial role in creation and enforcement of international treaties such as Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement on climate change (Falkner, 2016). Moreover, multinational corporations have influenced trade relations and economic policies where most of the time the trade barriers and business environment is promoted. NSAs can be perceived in the light of the evolution of the system of the global governance, where an increasing number of people and structures are actively engaged in shaping the world policies.

Theoretical Frameworks

Non-state actors (NSAs) are well known to be an essential factor in the analysis of the global governance within the international relations theory. Using constructivism, realism, and



liberalism, the relation of NSAs with state actors and the effects on the policies can be described in various ways.

Constructivism

Constructed realism can also be applied to explain the role of NSAs in global governance because it is concerned with the constructivist approach to International Relations. Constructivist authors have noted that NSAs such as NGOs, MNCs, and TANS are influential because they jointly establish the global norms and identities. For example, Amnesty International and Green piece are among the most active non-governmental organizations in the formulation of norms in the international relations in the areas of human rights and environmentalism respectively. According to the constructivists, these actors are very useful in constructing the social reality of international relations through the creation of new norms and the elimination of the old ones. From a constructivist point of view, NSAs are an important

Realism

However, realism paints a rather more cynical picture of the part played by NSAs in global governance. Realists, however, focus on the state system of the international relations and argue that NSAs are powerful but they are not the ultimate actors, the state is. Realism holds that states are the primary actors in the system and that NSAs are their extensions or adjuncts and not powerful entities. From this point of view, the activities of NSAs are deemed to be subordinate to the strategic decisions of states. For instance, realism scholars can argue that multinationals corporations and NGOs have power but they have it by the permission of powerful states or against it. Realists conclude that NSAs are a part of the global governance structure, but its function depends on state interest and actions (Waltz, 1979).

Liberalism

In contrast, liberalism gives a more positive outlook of NSAs as key actors in the international system through cooperation, interdependence, and the backing of the international organizations. Liberals as they are, NSAs that are based on state cooperation help in establishing and sustain international institutions and regimes that can support various international cooperation on different concerns. From this point of view, NSAs are viewed as entities capable of bringing change in the anarchic international system by promoting cooperation between states. For example, role of NGOs in the formulation of international treaties like Paris Agreement on Climate Change indicates that NSAs are involved in the formulation and thus development of GPGs and strengthening of IGFs. Hence liberalism acknowledges NSAs as key actors in an interconnected and coordinated global society of nations (Keohane & Nye, 1977). NSAs' participation in world affairs is understood in a different way depending on the theoretical perspective taken. The constructivism emphasises the normative potential of the international organizations, the realism – the state, and the liberalism – the positive role of the international organizations. All the four perspectives present important analyses of the interactions between NSAs and state actors at the international level.

The Rise of Non-State Actors

Over the past few of decades Non-State Actors (NSAs) have emerged as important actors in international politics and a challenge to the state-centric system of world politics. Some of the



causes that have fueled this growth include globalization, technology, and reduced government strength. These have thus led to emergence of other actors like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Multinational Corporations (MNCs), and even Terrorist Organizations and so on in the international system

Globalization process can be considered as one of the most important that has contributed to the enhancement of the role of NSAs. The trends of globalization of the world's economic, social and political systems has also given NSA the opportunity to expand its operations and influence world politics. This has been due to the fact that the globalization has enabled the movement of information, products and services, capital which has in turn helped the NSAs. For example, the multinational corporations have capitalized on the global markets to decide the way business is done, employment and the environment. Non-governmental organizations have also secured their place in the globalization through forming their networks that struggle for human rights, environment and social justice. These networks have been able to respond and act on many global problems faster and better than the conventional state actors (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

This is so because of advancement in technology especially in the area of communication and information and as a result NSAs have been even more enhanced. Social networking sites and the internet has made it easy for NSAs to dispense information and mobilize supporters and coordinate actions globally. This has been especially useful for NGOs, who may now arise and champion for certain courses, garner the attention of millions of people worldwide, and put pressure on governments and other IGOs to act in specific manners. For example, the global campaign against landmines that was led by the International Campaign to Ban Land There is also the factor of weakening of State sovereignty that has also been cited as another factor that has led to the emergence of NSAs. Currently, the world is a global village and this has meant that the authority of states has had to be shared with IOs/RBs and other actors like NSAs. This shift has led to the emergence of a highly dynamic and depolarized system of global governance in which NSAs can engage as fully fledged players with states. Challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and inequality cannot be addressed by states anymore, and NSAs have filled the gap, and at times, set the standards for states (Strange, 1996).

A number of examples show how NSAs have influenced the formation of the international policy. Amnesty International is a non-governmental organization that focuses on human rights and has contributed enormously in the promotion of human rights across the world. Amnesty International has therefore been able to support the formulation of international human rights norms as well as campaign for the altering of the conduct of governments through advocacy, research and campaigns (Clark, 2001). Likewise, Green peace which is an environmental NGO based global has also played a crucial role in the formulation of the global environmental policies. Greenpeace has over the years Advocated for issues such as deforestation, whaling and climate change leading to formulation of international treaties and regulations on the environment (Wapner, 1996). On the more negative side, global policy-making has also been shaped by terrorist organizations for instance the Al-Qaeda. The 9/11 attacks by the Al-Qaeda group resulted in major shifts in international security policies such as



the US-led War on Terror as well as enhanced counter-terrorism measures across the globe (Gunaratna, 2002). Globalization, technological change and supersession of sovereignty are some of the factors which have promoted non state actors in policy making. It has therefore become possible for NSAs to play a key role in the formulation of policies that define the international system and may even over shadow sovereign states.

Channels of Influence

NSAs use a number of avenues to shape global policy, sometimes in cooperation with, or in place of, state-level actors. These are direct lobbying and advocacy, indirect pressure through public opinion and media, alliance with states and international organizations, and economic and financial muscle. All these approaches help NSAs in providing guidelines and direction to achieve what they want. The most direct form of influence which NSAs can bring is through lobbying and advocacy. This entails engaging with policy makers, parliamentarians and intergovernmental organizations to support particular policies or changes to the laws. Amnesty International and Greenpeace are some of the organizations which are well known to engage in lobbying to protect human rights and the environment respectively. These organisations may give evidence in court, prepare policy briefs and participate in discussions with government and international actors. Through lobbying, the NSAs are capable of influencing the formulation of international norms and the domestic laws that accord with the goals of the NSAs (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

But the NSAs are very influential through the public and the media in general and not through lobbying directly. Having such influence, NSAs can change the people's perception and make them change the government and other international organizations' standards. NSAs use outreach programs, protest and social media sites to influence the perception of the public. For instance, an NGO known as 350.org which is the major face behind the climate change, this means that NSAs can use the public and media to come out in public and make their stand on certain issues in a bid to influence the issues they support.

One more way of influencing by the NSA is collaboration with the states and international organizations. Almost all the NSAs work in collaboration with the governments, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations in fighting global challenges. It can be in form of sharing forums, formulation of conventions and even technical assistance. For example, during the It can therefore be useful in the formulation of the global policies through their interaction with the states and other international organizations that are within the system. Even more, NSAs, especially the MNCs, are in a vantage position to influence through their financial power and strength. MNCs are in a vantage position to demand for formulation of laws, trade relation and policies that are suitable for them. They can spend their monies to sponsor research, policy institutes and lobby groups in order to achieve these policies. Moreover, MNCs are considered to have policy effects in that they can choose to either move their business or investments elsewhere in the event of. NSAs especially MNCs are economic forces that cannot be overlooked when developing any policies in the international system.

NSAs' Impact on Policy Areas



Non-state actors (NSAs) have emerged as significant policy makers in many fields of human activity. It will be apparent when looking at the areas that encompass human rights and humanitarian issues, environmental issues, trade and economics, health and development, and security and counter-terrorism. These are advocacy, lobbying, and direct action, and NSAs have been able to bring about policy change and set the world agenda. NSAs particularly the NGOs have been the most important players in the protection of human rights as well as in the management of humanitarian crises. Other organizations that have been very instrumental in advocating for the protection of human rights include Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Some of these NGOs carry out scientific studies, issue reports, and campaign for governments and other international bodies to protect human rights. It has given birth to International treaties such as Convention against torture and has influenced the policy formulation of international organisms such as the United Nations as mentioned by Clark (2001). In the same way, NSAs have played a very useful role in humanitarian interventions, in leadership during disasters.

Environmental protection is one of the areas that have received a lot of effects from NSAs. Other stakeholders like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have played a big role in promoting policies that will protect habitats and combat climate change. These organizations have been involved in the crafting of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement to help set the rules on how countries should drastically reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (Wapner, 1996). Campaigns as well as lobbying and awareness raising have given environmental non-state actors a voice that has influenced governments to adopt higher environmental standards and has contributed immensely to the growth of the International business and economic policies have been shaped to a large extent by the Multinational Corporations and the trade-oriented Non- Governmental Organizations. MNCs have used their power to pressure for liberalization of trade and liberalization of markets and services. On the other hand, those NGOs that are involved in fighting for fair trade and economic justice such as Oxfam has advocated for policies to correct the economic disparity in order to support sustainable development. These organizations have campaigned for the change in trade agreements and have also demanded changes in the global financial institutions so that the economic policies serve the interest of the poor and vulnerable (Dreher, 2019).

NSAs have also contributed greatly in the formulation of the health and development polices in the entire globe. Some of the global health challenges have been dealt with by the World Health Organizations and NGOs such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders). For example, the Gates Foundation has provided funding to research and development of vaccines, treatment of diseases such as malaria and. Similarly, the development NGOs have lobbied for policies on poverty, education and gender and have partnered with international institutions to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the field of security and counter-terrorism, NSAs have, both, played a direct and indirect role in shaping the world policies. Other organizations including Al Qaeda have shifted the security systems of states through the formulation of counter terrorism measures and international cooperation agreements (Gunaratna, 2002). On the other hand,



NGOs and advocacy groups such as the International Crisis Group that works on issues of peace and security have influenced conflict transformation and have called for policies that prevent violence and promote peace (Kaldor, 2007).

Positive and Negative Impacts

Non state actors (NSAs) have been key players in influencing international relations and policy making in the world in any given positive or negative way. Nevertheless, there are other several advantages that NSAs have contributed to the enhancement of human rights and democracy.

Another benefits of NSAs include the protection of human rights. Some of the human rights organizations that have played the centre role in the fight for the rights of the affected groups, and reporting cases of human rights violations include; Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Red Cross. Some of these organizations has not only exerted pressure in the adoption of the international human rights treaties but has also rendered assistance in the implementation of the same. It has allowed them to set international standards that prevent people from being attacked and that allow people to seek justice.

Another sphere in which NSAs have played key role in setting the world's environmental agenda is the issue of environmental sustainability. Some of the most renowned national and international environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, the WWF and Friends of the Earth have launched campaigns on some of the biggest environmental issues that affect the world today such as climate change, deforestation and loss of They have been able to design such international treaties such as the Paris Agreement to regulate emission of greenhouse gases in order to conserve the planet for future generations (Wapner, 1996). These NSAs have thus played a very crucial role in promoting the culture of sustainable development and ensuring that governments and corporations are checkmated in the international relations regime. NSAs have also played a role in social justice as well. Examples of such NGOs include those with objectives of fighting poverty, empowering women, education and other objectives which has been the role of ensuring that the targeted excluded and disadvantaged groups get food and other basic needs. For instance, OXFAM and CARE INTERNATIONAL are some of the organizations which have helped in fighting poverty and enhancing equitable growth. These NSAs have played an advocacy role, conducted research and taken direct action to inform policies that seek to change societies for the better (Hulme, 2010).

Nevertheless, it cannot be overemphasized that NSAs have some weakness in their effectiveness. This is however one of the worst side effects because it challenges the power of the state. Since NSAs are becoming increasingly more powerful and influential they are also capable of undermining the state sovereignty and even ignore state institutions and bureaucratic control. This can lead to a weakening of the state, something which makes it hard for governments to impose order and effectively put into place policies and strategies (Strange, 1996). For instance, the expansion of MNCs with a lot of financial muscle power has made it so that MNCs are able to shape national policies to the extent where they forget about the common man.

The third negative impact of NSAs is that they might nurture extremism. As much as there are NSAs which are positive, there are those which are negative including the terrorist groups that advocate for terrorism. As seen above, both Al-Qaeda and ISIS have capitalised on



the mentioned channels to recruit new members, spread their pamphlets and organize attacks hence causing a lot of damage. These actions of these NSAs have not only caused a lot of suffering of the people but has also compounded the work of other International Organizations in the achievement of world peace and stability. However, NSAs can also be involved in the undermining of regions. This paper has also established that through the use of force, economic power, or politics, the activities of NSAs have at times helped in the escalation of the current and new conflicts in and between states. For instance, the activities of MNCs in resource endowed regions have on some occasions led to the exacerbation of corruption and conflict, which in turn creates social and economic capital.

Challenges and Limitations

Non-state actors (NSAs) have lately played critical roles in policy-making on the international stage, and, like state actors, NSAs also have some drawbacks that hinder their performance and the credibility of their actions. These include matters concerning accountability and transparency, risk of conflict of interest and the constraints on resources and capabilities as opposed to the states. The most significant issue that is still actual for NSAs is the question of accountability and transparency. Although states, which are the major actors in the international system, are accountable to their people through the electoral and the constitutional systems, many NSAs lack such systems. The problem is that there is no accountability of these actors and hence there raises legal and moral issues with these actors. For instance, some of these NGOs have been accused of concealing the identity of their donors and the procedure they employ in arriving at their decisions thus raising the doubt of a member of the public (Edwards, 2011). Also, operations of private military companies and multinational corporations are often grey areas of the law hence raising difficulties in the issue of accountability. Lack of well-defined rules of the road on management of NSAs can erode confidence in NSAs and potentially diminish their effectiveness in the international system.

One more important problem that NSAs have is the conflict of interest which is potential in almost every organisation. Since most NSAs especially the MNCs, work with certain profit motives or certain organizational agendas there is always the danger that the actions of such NSAs may be geared towards their own interest rather than the general interest of the society. For instance, the MNCs may support certain liberalization of markets and trade to enhance profitability disregarding the social or environmental impacts of Similarly, NGOs can also face potential conflicts between the organization's goals and the interests of its donors or allies, which may compromise the NGO's impartiality and the effectiveness of its advocacy (Cooley & Ron, 2002). This may erode the legitimacy of NSAs and hence the public and the states and may reduce their ability to shape the policy environment.

While NSAs have emerged as powerful institutions they remain less endowed in terms of resources and capacities than the state. States are generally endowed with a lot of resources such as financial assets, military might and diplomatic machinery, thus making it easier for them to enforce policies than most NSAs. For example, while NGOs can speak out for human rights or the environment, they cannot implement policies which they may wish to see in place as can states or global institutions (Strange, 1996). However, due to shortage of financial and human



capital, it will be a challenging task for many NSAs to sustain the long term strategic communication or even management of new and emerging threats in the international system. This is not very efficient in their operations particularly in areas that demand much effort and much more resources and time including the fields of global health or climate change. NSAs have assumed important roles in the formulation of international policies, but they still struggle with issues to do with accountability, conflict of interest, and funding. These problems are important in order to improve their performance and make a positive impact in the system of global governance.

Conclusion

Non-State Actors have given policy direction in the international system and this has changed the dynamics of international relations. It falls across a number of policy areas including human rights, environment, trade, health and security. The NGOs, the MNCs and even the terrorists have therefore applied various means through which they can exert their power over the political system; through lobbying and other means. These actors have effectively campaigned for the universalization of norms, the establishment of international standards and policies and measures that respond to the most important global issues. In the above way, NSAs have had a very significant impact in shifting the course of the international systems particularly shifting focus from the state. NSAs have not only complemented the actions of states but have also shaped the global policy action plans in some ways. This has enabled them to cross borders and mobilize resources to attend to problems that may take countries many years to sort out. This has led to a system that is less consistent and less focused than earlier and where power is shared among many stakeholders. However, the creation of NSAs has its weaknesses mainly on the principle of accountability and transparency, conflict of interests and encroachment of the sovereignty of the member states. Therefore, it is possible to state that in the future, NSAs will play an even greater role owing to globalization, development of technologies, and increased threat levels. It was expected that NSAs were to have a better position in shaping the global agenda and norms including climate change, digital policies, and health. However, this new influence is going to have its problems as well. The leadership of the NSAs will thus have to ensure that they are seen, and are in a position to give adequate reasons and rationales why they do what they do in order to gain the confidence of the public. Additionally, the considerations stemming from the potential conflicts of interest and the threats associated with the actions of the radical organisations will have to be considered in detail so that the impact of the NS As thus, one can state that NSA has indeed emerged as important actors in the world politics, although the role of these actors in the international system is not entirely defined. They have created a lot of opportunities and at the same time have come with some issues the world has to deal with. As a result of analyzing the activities of NSAs, and their growing influence, it is possible to conclude that knowledge of their functions and impacts will be important for the formation of an efficient and sustainable system of international relations.

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