

## **ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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At the International scene, there are many players engaged in what is called international Politics. One of the oldest and universally acknowledged actors on the modern world stage is the state. It has been earlier assumed that international relations are made up of the relations between states. In other words, state was considered as the most important actor in global politics. This however, is undergoing rapid transformation with the growth of various non-state actors. Many contend that the non-state actors along with globalisation and liberalisation has reduced the power and authority of the states in the international system. This phenomenon is commonly expressed as ‘the depleting role of states’ or the ‘retreat of the states’ in the international system. To put it in simple words, state actors represent a government while non-state actors do not. However, they have impact on the state actors. The examples of non-state actors include MNCs, TNCs, IGOs, NGOs, civil societies, terrorist organisations, religious actors, diasporas and ethnic actors so on.

The most prominent contemporary NGOs are multinational corporations (MNCs). They are huge firms that own and control plants and offices in at least more than one country and sell their goods and services around the world. They are large corporations having branches and subsidiaries operating on a worldwide basis in many countries simultaneously. MNCs are “major driver of global economic integration” and “establish unprecedented linkages among economies worldwide.” They are very effective in directing foreign policy of states, including that of the most powerful ones, and they set agenda for international politics. They have become a major factor in national economic decision-making process. MNCs may be considered as instruments of economic development for less developed countries. However, when we look at the functions, they perform in host countries, we see that they have a very strong bond with the home government which becomes a source of concern for host countries. MNCs challenge the state sovereignty of host countries. Host countries may lose control over their economies. They create political and social division and prevent the development of domestic industries in host countries.

Similarly civil societies too have become very vocal in recent times and they operate at a space outside of government, family and market. A place in which individuals and

collective organisations advance allegedly common interests. Civil society organisations can include community groups, non-governmental organisations, social movements, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, media operators, academia, diaspora groups, lobby and consultancy groups, think tanks and research centres, professional associations, and foundations. The presence of civil society organisations in international affairs has become increasingly relevant. They have played a role in agenda setting, international law-making and diplomacy. Further, they have been involved in the implementation and monitoring of a number of crucial global issues. These range from trade to development and poverty reduction, from democratic governance to human rights, from peace to the environment, and from security to the information society.

Over recent decades, civil society activities have been responsible for a number of important contributions. At least two kinds of impact can be identified. In the first instance, civil society organisations have managed to influence political decision-makers by giving voice to the voiceless and framing new issues. At the same time, they have managed to pressurise global governance institutions so that today the overall level of transparency, consultation, outside evaluation and efficiency is measurably higher than it was in the past. Such results cannot be attributed solely to civil society, but they have been achieved in part by civil mobilisations.

Terrorist organisations around the world now have become a major issue in contemporary times. Although terrorism has a long history, the events of 11 September 2001 gave it an unprecedented prominence. It demonstrated how the nation-states were vulnerable and how the growth of terrorist organisations posed a serious threat to international peace and security. Hence, after the September 2001 attack, we witnessed a dramatic shift in the foreign policy of the United States. This is an apt example as to how the non-state actors influence the foreign policy decision making of the states. After the said attack efforts were made by the Western scholars to reassess the role of religion in international relations among. The recent dramatic and well-publicized attacks by the Jihadist terrorist organizations in Madrid and London has reinforced these narratives.

Thus, it is obvious that the emergence of non-state actors and the transnational relations has attacked the state-centric international system. It has changed the nature of international relations. Non-state actors have forced a change in the concepts of sovereignty and nationalism. These have affected the role of the nation-states as the actors in international relations. The policies, decisions and actions of the nation-states now bear the increasing

influence of the presence and activities of the non-state actors. The latter have emerged as powerful non-political, commercial, economic, cultural, or trading actors in the international environment. Analyzing the role of non-state actors, Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), international non-governmental organisations (i.e., INGOs or NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs).

Though the non-state actors of international relations have emerged as important and active actors in international system, it does not mean that in future, the role of the nation-states will end. The role of nation states will be important especially in promoting international cooperation and collaborations. Further, the inter-governmental organisations, and the international organisations like the United Nations and a host of other international agencies, have their existence in accordance with the wishes of the nation-states. The nation state still holds (near) monopoly on the use of coercive power in the international system. It still moulds the activities of non- state actors more than its behaviour is moulded by them.