

NON-STATE ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: FEATURES AND ROLE

ACTORII NON-STATALI ÎN RELAȚIILE INTERNAȚIONALE: TRĂSĂTURI ȘI ROL

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Cristina MORARI

ORCID: 0009-0000-3201-3402

E-mail: cristina.morari@usm.md

Moldova State University, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Summary. *The purpose of this article is to analyze the concept, features and the role of non-state actors in international relations. Through analyzed non-state actors are international inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, transnational companies, terrorist groups etc. It is an analytical study that is based on an interdisciplinary approach. The methods used in this research paper are literature review and systemic method of analysis that, has provided the necessary framework for outlining the process of repositioning of non-state actors in contemporary international system. The study highlights in which way non-state actors contribute to the international agenda setting, resolution of international community's issues, as well as the ways of their influence on world political processes and challenges that may appear in the relation of traditional and non-state actors.*

Keywords: *actor, international relations, international organizations, influence, non-state actor.*

INTRODUCTION

Current developments of the international system have led to the redefining of the classical concept of sovereignty and of the central role of the state in the analysis of international relations. In the global context that is characterized by high level of interdependence, economic globalization, advanced communication technologies and transnational challenges (as climate changes, migration, terrorism), the non-state actors have gained an increased visibility and influence on the international agenda shaping. Non-state actors consist of a range of diverse entities – international non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, religious organizations, social movements, and illegal organizations – that often operate beyond national borders and influence political economic and security processes at global level.

The specialty literature reflects a transition from realist paradigm that gives the priority to the central role of the state as the sole rationale actor within international system to the theoretical approaches that recognize the role of non-state actors in shaping norms and soft power application. Recent studies in the domain highlight that non-state actors have the capacity to manage some global challenges, not only complement the actions

of states. Thus, the understanding of contemporary international relations requires the study of the features and of the dynamic of non-state actors, of the way they interact with the states and with each other, as well as of the impact they exert on the international arena.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research is based on the theoretical-critical analysis of the specialized literature, aiming to identify the concept and features of non-state actors, as well as to examine their role in the contemporary global architecture. Were analyzed relevant works, studies and articles that investigate the problem, as well the main theoretical schools of international relations that recognize the pluralism of actors within international system. These allow us to overcome the state-centric perspective of classical realism and facilitate the understanding of the processes of power diffusion, authority reconfiguration and actor pluralization on the international arena. Also, the systemic method was applied. It contributed to the analysis of interdependence and interaction between non-state and state actors, as well as of mechanisms through which they can influence the international policies and decision-making process. This methodological combination has allowed a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, which is appropriate to the analysis of a phenomenon that is in a continuous development and transformation, and has provided the necessary framework for outlining the process of repositioning of non-state actors in contemporary international system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The actors of international relations are complex and heterogeneous elements of the international system. Not all participants of international system can be considered as an actor. The term *participant* implies the possibility of unintentional inclusion in certain events and processes. Thus, an entity can act as a participant in international relations without being actually an actor. As Lucian-Dumitru Dîrdală argues, the most comprehensive definition of the *actor* of international relations is that one that refers any entity that plays an identifiable role in international relations [1, p.44]. An actor has interests, goals and ideas. The most important is that an actor has the capacity to influence international relations. According to Professor Ryo Osiba of Hitotsubashi University, in order to define an entity as an actor of international relations, it should correspond to certain criteria. First of all, it should have a certain degree of autonomy in making their own decisions, establish and promote own goals and interests. Then, it is the ability to mobilize human and material resources to achieve their goals and interests. Finally, to have a sufficient level of influence to produce certain effect on relations within the international system. [2]

From the perspective of realism theory, the main actors of international relations are considered states. The state is the subject of international law, the activity and even existence of other entities/actors (for example international organizations) depend on the

states and the state actions on international arena determines the dynamics within the international system. The basic feature of the states is sovereignty, that allow them to shape norms that regulate the interactions within international society.

However, as researchers note, the states' leading position is challenged due to the increasing role of non-state actors. It can be observed that states can share their authority with other entities as international and regional organizations in domains such as economic and monetary policies. Also, in some domains as human rights, or environment, states should take into consideration the position and actions of non-state actors and can not ignore them in their foreign and domestic policy [1].

The non-state actors are defined as entities that participate and play a significant role in international relations, having the capacity to influence or produce changes despite the fact that they do not belong to a state [3, p. 28]. In the specialty literature traditionally non-state actors are divided into two categories: international intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations. First category consists of non-state actors created by states and often are considered as states' tools for international agenda setting and establishment of new rules within international system. The second category consists of organizations that are founded by individuals and have a transnational character. These are looking for international networks mobilization and highlighting areas of the immediate interest [3, p. 28].

There are opinions that international intergovernmental organizations could not be considered as non-state actors as soon as these do not have full autonomy in the decision-making process, being run by states, and are frameworks and forums for interstate cooperation. That is why international intergovernmental organizations may not be considered powerful independent actors as they sometimes find difficult to reach agreement on relevant issues [4].

However, we cannot deny the important role and impact the international intergovernmental organizations have in international relations. These organizations symbolize the will and hope of people to ensure harmony throughout the world, to ensure the security and an effective socio-political and economic cooperation, as well as effective intercultural communication and friendly relations between nations. The decisions that are adopted by such international intergovernmental organizations, as for example United Nations, transcend the borders and national interests and regard the international community interest and well-being and not just state matters. Moreover, according to scholars' opinions international organizations: "pose sanctions on states, transform their economies and financial systems, and change their political and institutional landscapes (e.g., UN Security Council, WTO, IMF, UNDP, etc.)" [4].

International non-governmental organizations are very diverse, as are the goals they pursue, including in the sphere of world politics. Among them are those who set themselves the goal of helping the disadvantaged, protecting human rights, contribute to the education of people or protecting the environment. The influence of international non-governmental organizations on the international relations is mainly indirect and

is realized mainly through the influencing the public opinion, which in turn can exert pressure on the state when it makes foreign policy decisions. A more significant way of influence, that these organizations may have, is through cooperation with international intergovernmental organizations. Such organization as Amnesty International has a direct impact on human rights issues at global level. It was founded in 1961 and has about millions of members and supporters in 150 countries. Its main goals include: the observance of economic, social and cultural rights, children and women rights, change of oppressive laws, the abolition of death penalty, torture and other cruel and inhuman measures applied to prisoners, arms control etc. The organizations' funding resources reflect its desire for independence and relies on broad public support. It does not rely on the government subsidies to implement its programs. Funds are formed from its members, public donations and contributions of commercial organizations. It actively collaborates with United Nations by providing information on the human rights violations in order to ensure the observance of international laws and standards [5]. In the context of globalization, the role of international NGOs increases, as these are encouraged to transcend from actions at local level to global level by utilizing the mechanisms created by the international intergovernmental organizations in order to influence some public policies and change things.

Another typology of non-state actors classifies them in such categories as non-governmental organizations as part of civil society; transnational corporations that activate on the territory of several sovereign states; international mass-media; religious groups; diaspora communities and even individuals. Moreover, as non-state actors are considered to be illegal or violent non-state actors such as organized criminal groups, terrorist groups or cartels [3, p.28].

As for transnational corporations, they really have a special and exceptional position within the galaxy of non-state actors of world politics. Today, the economic and political influence of the transnational corporations is quite large. Due to globalization, transnational corporations from different sectors, as for example Walmart, Exxon Mobil, Microsoft, Apple, Coca Cola, Boeing, Safran, Thales etc., have sufficient capacity and resources to produce influence on political processes. According to scholars, there are different ways in which transnational corporations may exert political influence – through lobbying and campaign contributions in order to make political leaders to respond to their demands; through their capacity as instruments of the states, as the companies are many times used by states to promote national interests through capital transfers or production networks; and through their ability to contribute to the agenda-setting due to their presence abroad and assistance they can provide to the politicians in diverse policies development and issues management [6]. Thus, as transnational companies register annual earnings that may output the income midsize states and have the ability to make decisions or contribute to the decision-making process regarding diverse issues over which political leaders seem to have little control, led to debates regarding the challenges they can present for the state sovereignty [7, p.310].

The study of non-state actors in international relations should be completed by analyzing the violent or illegal non-state actors that use violent or illegal tools in order to achieve their purposes. Acts of terrorist groups or organized crime groups do not limit to the boundaries of the national state and target objectives and interests abroad. The increase in number of terrorist groups and of their targeted states and objectives, as well as the amplification of the violence of used techniques reflects their demand to occupy a more distinct place in international relations. As studies in the field note, if initially the actions of terrorist groups aimed at governmental, diplomatic and military targets, now they are reoriented to different targets like urban agglomerations, tourist or religious sites, trains etc., due to their symbolic charge and brings a high level of mediatization that ensure maximum visibility of the terrorist actions. In this way, terrorist groups try to determine national and international public opinion to pressure state decision-makers to accept their demands [8]. Also, the actions of violent non-state actors challenge the concept of legitimate use of force that belonged so far to states [7].

CONCLUSIONS

Non-state actors have become indispensable components of the contemporary international relations. They are diverse with diverse objectives, interests and tools to achieve established purposes. Through their activity they complement and, sometimes, even may challenge the role of the state within international system. Non-state actors have a significant impact on world political processes, competing with states for the right of shaping the international agenda. However, even some of these actors may look to gain some political functions that were previously exclusively of nation states it does not mean that they are going to replace the leading position of the states. In response of multiplication of non-state actors, the states dynamically have been transformed to correspond to new trends of international system evolution. At the same time, non-state actors can no longer be considered marginal, but should be included in the analysis of international relations, recognizing the pluralism of power, normativity and influence in the current international system.

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