

**THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ON STATES' FOREIGN
POLICY: CASE STUDIES OF GREENPEACE
INTERNATIONAL, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

Ibrahim Alhassan*

ABSTRACT

It is undeniable that Non-governmental Organizations operating at the international level constitute an undisputable stance in world affairs and a number of studies were made in this respect. This paper takes a similar course with different dimension by dwelling its analysis on some general and specific cases where NGOs shapes and determines the activities of states especially in their interaction with other states. The general cases involve a discourse on the growing significance, background and proliferation of NGOs in today's world given in the introductory part of the paper and in some part of literature review. The specific cases explore the activities of the said NGOs which the paper focuses on. The paper employs a qualitative study and examined materials from secondary sources to make and enrich the findings. It is revealed that NGOs and states have a direct and indirect relationship and each shapes the activities of the other, but for the fact that states are superior actors than NGOs, academic studies focus much on the influence of the later on the former.

KEYWORDS: Non-governmental organizations, international system, proliferation, governments.

* Research Scholar, Department of International Relation, Faculty of Science and Humanity, SRM University, Chennai, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporarily, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are becoming increasingly recognized as legitimate actors in the international system along with states.(Goldstein & Pavehouse, 2008). NGOs have "found prominence in international relations because of the kind of impact they have on the political, economic and socio-cultural life of states."Their growing relevance and participation in international politics shapes and influences the action of states. Such influence usually appears to be "dynamic and conditional depending on the host states' regime type and the age of the influencing NGO."(Ghosh, 2013). It is equally argued that "NGOs influence states' foreign policy behaviour... both directly and indirectly, functioning as information providers, lobbying groups, agenda setters and norm generators."(Kim, 2011).

In his analysis, Heins (2005) posits that there is a variation of state-NGO relationship depending on different times and countries. By treating states and NGOs as rational actors, he argues that NGOs have a mixed motive game with the government. State-NGO relationship appears to be sometimes harmonious and sometimes conflictual. (Heins, 2005).

Sociological institutionalists and constructivists share the belief that norms and world culture strongly influence states' behaviours. Therefore, scholars in these fields focus on the study of how norms generated and distributed by transnational actors such as NGOs influence state's foreign policy.(Kim, 2011). In this regard, it is argued that NGOs have been the instigators of putting issues in the UN agenda like environment, women right, child labour and child conscription. Similarly, Paul posits that NGOs "have successfully promoted new environmental agreements, greatly strengthened women's rights, and won important arms control and disarmament measures. (They) have also improved the rights and well-being of children, the disabled, the poor and indigenous peoples." (Paul, 2000).

While the forgoing analysis paves the way to understanding how crucial and influential NGOs are in the international system and in shaping states' policies (both foreign and domestic), subsequent part of the paper will look at the evolution of NGOs in modern international system, their definition from literature and an overview of their continuous relevance in contemporary

world. Specific cases of the Greenpeace International, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International will form secondary concern of the paper.

1.2 Objectives

In consonance with the subject matter, this paper sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- Examine the rise and significance of international NGOs in global policy making
- Explain specifically the influence of Greenpeace International, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in shaping the foreign policy of states
- Highlight some of the challenges faced by NGOs in their operations and the criticisms labelled against them

1.3 Methodology

This is a qualitative paper which dwells its analysis on studying the influence of NGOs on states foreign policy with particular reference to Greenpeace International, Human rights Watch and Amnesty International. As data collection involve "gathering information or manipulating variables through experimentation (or analysis, where secondary data is involved) for the purpose of testing research hypothesis or answering research question" (Nnamdi, 1991), published documents in form of NGOs' publications, journals, textbooks, newspapers, broadcast media reports and documents from certified websites have enriched the making of this paper. Therefore, the data collected for use is of secondary source. Invariably thus, this is an analytical study whose method of data analysis would be Qualitative and Descriptive Analysis.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 The evolution of NGOs in Modern International System

From the 18th to 19th century, a number of organizations concerned with certain specific objectives independent of the state rose gradually. In England, The anti-slavery movement, founded in late 18th century, "gave rise to many such organizations and eventually led to the World Anti-Slavery Convention (1840), a milestone gathering to coordinate the work of citizen organizations on an international basis."(Paul, 2000). In June 1844, George Williams founded

The World Alliance of YMCAs¹ in London. (The YMCA Blue Book, 2012). The International Committee for the Red Cross came into being in 1863. These associations and others of their kind addressed many issues, including women's rights, the condition of the poor, alcohol abuse and municipal reform in the nineteenth century. Trade unions emerged as a leading force in the NGO movement later in the century." (Paul, 2000).

In the 20th century, "It is a matter of historical record that had it not been for the lobbying of NGOs in San Francisco in June 1945, the Commission on Human Rights would never have been established. At the San Francisco Conference drafting the U.N. Charter, representatives from 42 NGOs pressed for the inclusion of human rights provisions in the Charter and for the establishment of a commission on human rights. From the beginning, the NGOs have been the life-blood of the Commission." (Wadlow, 2012). There were representatives of 1200 voluntary organizations present at the founding conference of the UN in San Francisco in 1945 who played significant role in writing the first seven words of the Charter: "We the people of the United Nations..." (Fernando & Heston, 1998) and also in the inclusion of Article 71, providing that "the Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with nongovernmental organizations." (Alger, 2002). Thus, NGOs in the modern international system started/gained recognition with creation of the UN.

2.2 Definition of NGOs

The definition of NGO at the international level derives from a compromise wording in the early days of the United Nations. (Skjelsbaek, 1975). Official appearance of the term NGO was in 1945 when the UN wanted to distinguish between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and that of international private sector in its Charter. (Clark, 1988). In various literatures, the term NGO covers a wide range of organizations and its definition is surrounded by multiplicity of views regarding its functions, composition, level of operation and motive, all of which exacerbate the difficulty in having a single, generally accepted definition of the term. Clarke (1998) posits that "voluntary organizations," "non-profit organizations," "private voluntary organizations," "international non-governmental organizations," "non-governmental development organizations," "new social movement organization," "people's organizations,"

¹YMCAs (The Young Men's Christian Association)

membership organizations," "grass root support organizations," "membership support organizations" etc are often used to refer to the term NGO.

While there is difficulty in having a generally accepted definition of NGOs, Willetts (2001) contend that three characteristics distinguish NGOs from other organizations and these characteristics disqualify other organizations from being NGOs. 1. NGOs are not political parties or government agencies; 2. NGOs are not profit-based organizations; 3. NGOs are not criminal or terrorist groups. The categorization of terrorist groups as NGOs fall short of the traditional purpose and function of NGOs the world knows. While of course terrorist groups did not belong to any government or private group, they should be devoid of being categorized under NGOs as the later functions as a force for good.

However, in spite of all obstacles, a detailed descriptive definition of the term NGO is given as:

...any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the mandate of a particular institution. (NGO Special Interest Areas: Definition of NGOs, ND).

The World Bank (1992) sees NGOs as “many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives”. In 1996, the bank further made these points about NGOs... they are (i) entirely or largely independent of government; (ii) not operated for profit; and (iii) exist to serve humanitarian, social or cultural interests, either of their memberships or of society as a whole. (World Bank, 1996).

2.3 Proliferation of NGOs

Though maintaining a more general term of non-state actors, Gosh (2013) contend that "undoubtedly, (NGOs) have come to occupy a place of significance in the international system." This significance and its corresponding period are well delineated by De Mars (2005)... "The 1990s were heady days for international NGOs, which expanded their numbers, increased their budgets, and extended their mandates into hitherto untouched areas. NGOs seemed to be rising in status and influence, taking a 'place at the table' with states in international decision-making, and gaining leverage over states to make them embrace new norms." The proliferation of NGOs, what De Mars calls "NGO bloom", has three dimensions...

First, NGOs are proliferating quantitatively in established issue-areas, including human rights, grassroots development, humanitarian relief, environmental protection, feminism, population control, conflict resolution and prevention, and democratization. Second, the increase in NGO numbers is a global phenomenon affecting all regions, even Asia and the Middle East where governments have maintained relatively tight control over civil society for decades. Third, NGOs are also proliferating qualitatively, by taking the initiative to colonize or create new issues where hitherto they have exerted limited influence. (DeMars, 2005).

The categorization of NGOs as non-state actors in the field of International Relations "suggests" how significant and influential NGOs are in the international system, a sphere of interaction where previously only states are recognized and given importance. (Paul, 2000). Similarly, the World Bank implied the significance and proliferation of NGOs globally when it recognized the roles of Non-profit organizations² in development. According to the bank, NGOs/NPOs perform the following roles: "(1) providing goods and services - especially meeting needs which have not hitherto been met by either the State or by the private sector; (2) assisting the government achieve its development objectives - in particular through contributing skills for which NPOs have comparative advantage, such as public information, education and communications campaigns, or providing information about the situations and needs of particularly vulnerable

²"The World Bank usually speaks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by which it means NPOs and community-based organizations (CBOs)..."

groups; (3) helping citizens to voice their aspirations, concerns and alternatives for consideration by policy makers, thereby giving substance to governments' policies regarding freedoms of association and speech; (4) helping to enhance the accountability and transparency of government and local government programs and of officials."(World Bank, 2013).

3. Case Studies

3.1 Greenpeace International

Greenpeace is an international non-governmental organisational with members as voluntary participants worldwide. Its major priority is global environmental campaign. The organisation has 250, 000 members in the US and 2.8 million members worldwide who virtually provide the funding for the organisation via individual contribution.(Greenpeace International, 2014).

In their history, the Greenpeace started in 1971 when "a group of activists set a sail to Amchitka Island, Alaska to protest nuclear testing." As Bob Hunter, one of the crew members put it, "whatever history decides about the big picture, the legacy of the voyage itself is not just a bunch of guys in fishing boat but the Greenpeace the entire world has come to love..."(Greenpeace International, 2014). Since then, with a combination of daring action, solid science and political pressure, Greenpeace has revealed the threats, confronted the villains and forced the solutions necessary for a green and peaceful world.

In their publication, "40 Years of Greenpeace Victories", the organisation revealed their successes throughout their course year-by-year. In this paper, I select a few of these victories to bring out those cases where they influence the foreign policy of states.

1. Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife suspended Herakles Farm's operation pending further investigations into the company's activities in Cameroon. The decision came shortly after the release of "Herakles Exposed", a Greenpeace investigative report providing details on the devastating impacts of Herakles operation in Cameroon linking the company to US financiers. The Cameroonian government issued a permit to the Herakles for a much more reduced Herakles project in late 2013. Greenpeace is working in coalition to cancel the project entirely and send a

message to the industry and investors that deforestation and human rights abuses for palm oil in Africa is not only a bad idea - it is bad for business.

2. European Union votes to ban bee-killing pesticides produced by chemical companies Bayer and Syngenta. This was in response to Greenpeace more than 100, 000 petitions demanding a suspension of bee-killing pesticides.

3. Senegal government cancels all fishing permits for foreign "Pelagic Trawler", a large fishing vessel that drags nets below the surface of the ocean.

4. The US Senate passed the Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 that would prohibit the sale of all species of billfish in the vast majority of US by domestic or foreign companies.

5. Japan plans to end nuclear by 2030. The Japanese government plans a new 'energy and environment strategy' of zero nuclear reactors in 2030s. The strategy involves a nuclear phase-out nearly two decades later than needed.

6. Greenpeace helped exposed government lies and cover-ups that could lead to a triple melt down of Duke's Oconee nuclear reactors in South Carolina.(Greenpeace International, 2013).

3.2 Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

Amnesty International is an NGO of more than 7 million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries who campaign to end grave abuses of human right. Amnesty international begun in 1961 with a human right advocacy campaign by a British lawyer Peter Benenson. Their vision is to ensure that every person enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Right and other international human right standards.(Amnesty International, 2015).

Human Rights Watch on the other hand is a leading independent organisation dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. This movement began in "1978 with the creation of Helsinki Watch, designed to support the citizens groups formed throughout the Soviet bloc to monitor government compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords." Since then, the organization spreads across the world in defence of human rights.(Human Rights Watch, 2015). Through

drawing international attention where human rights are violated, the Human Rights watch gives voice to the voiceless oppressed and help in holding oppressors accountable for their crimes.

From their nature, goals and objectives, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch appear to be similar NGOs. Therefore, I deem it right to merge the analysis of how they influence foreign policy of states together.

First of all, their greatest role in shaping the behaviour of states in the international system is in the development and implementation of the International Humanitarian Law where they help actively in drawing standards for nations to follow during wars and help check the violators of these standards. A number of national leaders were brought to book for violating human rights as a result of denouncement by either of these organisations.

In specific cases, most of EU's foreign policy on human rights considers an insight into the Human Rights Watch recommendations. As recent as November 2013, they brought Africa and Europe into table through the "Memorandum on Priorities for the African Union-European Union Dialogue on Human Rights". Human Rights Watch is concerned by some negative trends particularly in Africa regarding the respect of human right defenders and violations of the right to freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly, and in the EU regarding the right of migrants and asylum seekers, discrimination and intolerance toward migrants and minorities.(Human Rights Watch, 2013).

Human Rights Watch also made a submission to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade about certain crucial issues it wanted Australia to forward to China in their 15th Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue. The submission centres on the violation of human right by Chinese government in Tibetan where the Tibetans are forced to relocate from their local traditional communities and compulsorily compelled to pay for the new buildings provided for them. It also included a call for the respect of human right defenders in China who suffer government intimidations. (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Moreover, video evidences (as at April 2014) on the website of the Human Rights Watch which call the attention of the international community to intervene for the victim-country to adjust include:

- Bangladesh: Security Forces Kill Protesters
- Bangladesh: Toxic Tanneries
- Libya: Bloody Vengeance in Sirte
- Ghana: Abuse of Disabilities
- Syria: Cluster Bomb Drop
- China: Involuntary Rehousing, Relocation of Tibetans

Etc.

For Amnesty International, their advocacies for human right involve publications targeted at specific countries highlighting the areas to strengthen the fight against human right violation. Examples of such publications include 'Amnesty International, Human Right and US Foreign Policy: A Mandate for Leadership', 'US Drones Attack in Pakistan: Will I be Next?'

Other activities include partaking in areas of war and upheavals to offer humanitarian support and denounce human right violation for action from the international community.

4. Challenges and Criticisms

One of the common challenges facing NGOs is governments' interest and involvement in their activities. "Governments usually desire to control all activities of NGOs" (Bromideh, 2011) and where that is not possible, they become at loggerhead with one another. For the fact that they are well-coordinated and governments find it difficult to politically penetrate them, international NGO like Greenpeace often wrestle with governments in their activism.³ Some writers include organizational problems like poor governance, lack of fund, and lack of human resource, limited capacity and poor communication as challenges NGOs face. While these problems apply to some NGOs especially those operating in local/national level, it is argued in this paper that international NGOs like those discussed in the case study are devoid of these problems due to their coordination and level of operation.

³ Example is the case of 44 Greenpeace activists arrested by Dutch in their attempt to block Russian Arctic oil tanker delivering oil to Rotterdam. (The Guardian, 1 May, 2014)

As part of criticisms labelled against them, NGOs are seen as a tool by which global powers influence the internal affairs of other states. Vladimir Putin of Russia raised this concern when defending Russia's tighter control on NGOs as "Moscow accused British diplomats of making secret payments to non-governmental organisations." (BBC, 2006).

5. Conclusion

The power of NGOs has been growing because their existence gains legitimacy from the UN and states alike. NGOs and states have direct and indirect relationships and each shapes the activities of the other. However, because states are superior actors than NGOs, scholarly concern centres on exploring the impact of the later on the former. This paper has revealed some of these influences with some general and specific illustrations and cases. However, it is worth noting that these influences are based on prevailing circumstances and the case at hand... NGOs do not possess any coercive authority to compel states or halt their action. But, their method of lobbying, agitation and protest mount pressure on states to the extent that their request/call is irresistible and thus almost a compelling demand to swiftly look at.

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