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Non-State Actors: Multinational Corporations and International Non-Governmental Organisations

James Goodman

Introduction

World politics has always had a plurality of players. The key is not so much to determine which have primacy, but how they interact to produce the prevailing order. This chapter is structured around a discussion of **multinational corporations (MNCs)** and **international non-governmental organisations** (INGOs) respectively. Each is discussed in terms of first, the degree to which it has transnationalised, second, the extent to which it constitutes a social formation able to exert international agency, and third, the degree to which it is able to marshal political influence and status. It is argued there is no necessary antagonism between **state** and non-state realms. Instead, relations between state and non-state forces are intermeshed, and shaped by broader systemic conflicts. The chapter charts material class antagonisms that shape the role of MNCs and INGOs, and argues that these generate patterns of transnational contestation within international relations.

In the post-**Cold War** context, **globalisation** theory made considerable headway. For hyperglobalisationists at least (see chapter 25), newly powerful transnational forces were overwhelming state and interstate incumbents. With US **power** embedded in a range of interstate frameworks, a model of multilateral **unipolarity** appeared to be emerging – a model wherein US dominance was embedded in and restrained by a network of multilateral institutions. More recently we have seen the advent of a significantly more unilateralist unipolarity, as the US increasingly disengaged itself from multilateral institutions by adopting exceptionalist and preemptive doctrines. The consequences for globalisation **theory** have been wide-ranging. By the mid-2000s not only had the hype been exposed as ideology, but the ideology itself was claimed to have been superseded (see McGrew 2007).

A key reason for the collapse was the assumed impact of globalisation on state power. As Rosenberg argued (2000: 15), the return of state-centred politics has been 'as devastating for globalisation theory as it has always been for alternative approaches which have left untheorised the terrain of **geopolitics**'. This chapter attempts to clarify the role of **non-state actors** in relation to states and the states-system, and posit a more 'genuinely social theory of the international system' (Rosenberg 2000: 15), one that does not abstract states from broader social and economic processes and structures.

MNCs: transnationalised material power

The definition and role of multinational corporations is hotly debated. **Transnational corporations** (TNCs) are usually defined as corporate entities that have no clear national base; MNCs are then presented as nationally centred entities with international interests. The UNCTAD World Investment Report finds most corporations operating across national borders fall into the MNC category: its 'index of nationality' measures the foreign proportion of assets, sales and employment for large corporates and finds the bulk are nationally centred (UNCTAD 2005). But while it may be more accurate to use the MNC category, this does not mean the impact of MNCs is primarily national. If we examine the ways that MNCs behave, we find their qualitative impact is much broader than their operational scope would suggest. The power that MNCs exert is embedded within existing interstate hierarchies and power structures, but MNCs are not simply tools of nationally centred elites. They operate against as much as within national contexts, and, as social formations, allow an interlocking of national elites to the extent of forming a class bloc, what Leslie Sklair calls the 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair 2001).

Transnationalisation: MNCs

The central driver and rationale for MNCs is the exercise of material power across national jurisdictions. Across finance, production and distribution, MNCs exploit power-gaps between spatially fixed governments and fluid cross-national flows of money and commodities. Transnational finance relations express hierarchies of risk, in effect assessments of the future potential for capital accumulation, with each national context measured against each other. Transnationalised productive relations reflect the strategies of dominant multinational firms in exploiting and reproducing divergent relations of production and consumption. Trading, distribution and retail relations express hierarchies of inter-national dependence through unequal exchange, embedded in a diffused culture-ideology of consumerism.

Finance MNCs set the pace. In 2004 the assets of the top ten financial MNCs amounted to US$13 trillion while the assets of the top ten non-financial MNCs stood at $3.1 trillion (UNCTAD 2006: A.1.11; A.1.14). Finance MNCs have ascended the corporate league tables: in 1989 none of the world's fifty largest companies was based in the finance sector; in 2003 there were fourteen such companies on the list (UNCTAD 2005: 19). The success of finance houses is reflected in a wholesale financialisation of assets. Finance and business accounted for 25 per cent of total foreign direct investment in 1990; by 2004 it accounted for 47 per cent (UNCTAD 2006: A.1.3). Total international private lending stood at about a tenth of global income in 1980; in 2006 it stood at nearly half of global income (McGuire and Tarashev 2006). In 1978 finance flows were ten times the value of world trade; in 2000 they stood at about fifty times the value of world trade, with total flows amounting to $1.5 trillion per day. In large part this reflects the explosion in financial derivatives: there were 478 million derivatives created in 1990, by 2004 there were 6144 million (International Monetary Fund 2006a: Statistical Annex, Table 6). In terms of value, in 2003 options and futures stood at $36,786 billion; in just three years that had risen to $84,020 billion (Bank for International Settlements 2006: Statistical Annex, Table 23A). With global GDP standing at about $40 trillion this suggests a remarkable process of global concentration and financialisation.

Box 23.1: Discussion points

MNCs and tax avoidance

MNCs routinely avoid tax. In 2002 US MNCs 'sheltered' more than half of their total offshore profits in low-tax jurisdictions. In 2006 the Australian Tax Commissioner stated that MNCs accounted for the bulk of tax avoidance in Australia.

In an effort to address this, in 2003 the Pacific Association of Tax Administrators, a group that draws together tax authorities in Australia, the US, Canada and Japan, produced a scheme to enable corporate compliance with OECD guidelines. Tellingly, the scheme was voluntary.

In practice, tax minimisation and sheltering have become legitimate, accepted by the OECD as unavoidable. Governments, meanwhile, compete with each other to cut corporate taxes in order to attract investment funds.

The USA – the world's most powerful state – has been ahead of the pack in this 'race to the bottom'. In 2004 the American Jobs Creation Act provided a one-off tax cut on repatriated profit from 35% to 5.25%, explicitly to encourage MNCs to bring funds back to the US.

In March 2006 the American Shareholders Association, a strong supporter of the Act, reported that 350 US MNCs would be repatriating a total of $307 billion in 2005 (up from $36 billion in 2004), and that this could rise still further in 2006 (see Webb 2004).

In terms of manufacturing MNCs, in 1971 there were 7000 companies with overseas subsidiaries in operation; by 2005 that number had risen to 77,000, with close to 800,000 affiliates (UNCTAD 2006: 9; Annex Table A.1.6). In 1996 MNCs accounted for a fifth of global manufacturing output and a third of private assets. In 1982 MNC assets stood at about a fifth of global income; in 2005 MNC assets were marginally higher than world income (calculated from UNCTAD 2005: 9). Perhaps most importantly, MNCs control 50 per cent of global research and development funding (UNCTAD 2005). At the same time there has been an upsurge in cross-national mergers and acquisitions. Centred on the developed countries of the North, in 2004 alone total merger activity accounted for at least $3800 trillion, or approximately 9 per cent of global GDP (UNCTAD 2005: 14). The result has been an increased concentration of economic power across the various sectors of economic activity. Aside from finance, a key emerging sector is in the provision of services, reflecting the global wave of infrastructure, telecom, power and water privatisation (accounting for one-fifth of the largest 100 MNCs in 2003) (UNCTAD 2005: 15).

MNCs also play a central role in trade and retail activity, and in associated media and advertising industries. A small coterie of media empires span the globe, providing much of what suffices for global entertainment, advertising and news (McChesney 2001). Four conglomerates account for half of global advertising and public relations; one conglomerate, WPP, claims 300 of the Fortune 500 as clients (Miller and Dinan 2003). Meanwhile, the retail sector has created the world's largest private employer, Wal-Mart, with 1.7 million workers. In 1982 total MNC sales were equivalent to about a quarter of global income; by 1995 this had risen to 50 per cent (calculated from UNCTAD 2005: 9). In 1998 UNCTAD estimated that about half of MNC trade was intra-firm trade, allowing MNCs to routinely declare profit in the lowest-taxing economies (see Box 23.1).

International agency: social formation

In the wake of MNC growth, global material power has become increasingly concentrated. A report on global wealth found the wealthiest 2 per cent own 51 per cent of the world's wealth (Davies et al 2006: 26). In terms of income, the gap between the richest fifth and the poorest fifth has widened from 31:1 in 1960 to 74:1 in 1997 (Pieterse 2004: 63). The high-income, high-wealth class has become increasingly self-aware and able to act for itself, forging strategies that deliver discernible political leverage for MNC elites.

In the first instance, MNCs create a bidding war between governments. They impose a systemic restraint on government measures that delimit rates of return, such as labour protections, corporate taxation, environmental regulation, or other limits to 'market access'. Deregulated corporate enclaves – 'offshore' financial havens, 'export processing zones', 'flags of convenience', '*maquiladoras*' and 'special economic zones' – emerge as aberrations or exceptions that over time become institutionalised into **norms** of 'good governance'. In 1975, for instance, there were seventy-nine export processing zones worldwide; in 2002 there were 3000 (Hayter 2004). Such norms are then expressed as conditionalities imposed by financial institutions such as the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, or as corporate guidelines generated by hegemonic blocs such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or as international standards-setting regimes for 'market access' such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), or indeed as direct corporate rights regimes with trade and finance agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). MNCs, and the structural incentives they create, are chief instigators in the emergence of these regimes.

MNCs 'cascade' across the globe: while 80 per cent of MNC parents are based in high-income countries, about 60 per cent of their branch plants are located in low-income countries. MNCs create global supply chains, webs of outsourced risk that exert influence at arm's length. Their power extends into the 'domestic' sphere through franchises, licensing arrangements, contract growing, supply contracts, equity investment, cross-ownership and joint ventures. One good example is the McDonald's franchise restaurant, where all the risk rests with the owner-franchisee. MNCs set the pace for the 'domestic' economy: as observers of 'Macdonaldisation' and 'Walmartisation' attest, MNCs establish transnational industry standards. Not surprisingly, the management consultancy industry, concentrated on just four companies, underwent phenomenal growth in the 1990s. Three global credit ratings agencies – Standard and Poor's, Moody's and Fitch – now set the framework for national policy-making worldwide. Governments pay the agencies six-figure sums to provide a 'sovereign' rating that determines access to international finance. In 1975 Standard and Poor's conducted three country ratings; in 2004 it produced more than a hundred.

Political status and influence

Corporations pursue joint political interests through international business associations. The International Chamber of Commerce, for instance, has been in place since 1919. Over the last thirty years these international business NGOs have proliferated and become increasingly integrated (Carroll and Carson 2003). A key approach is to disseminate the notion of popular **capitalism** – an approach that has generated whole media conglomerates such as *Fortune* and *Forbes* dedicated to ranking global corporations, engendering pride in global business,

and recruiting aspirants. At the same time, transnational alliances of free-marketeering think tanks have emerged, funded by MNCs, with remarkable access to the international policy-making process (Struyk 2002).

The MNC lobby is most clearly manifested in the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Robinson and Harris 2000). Created in 1987, the WEF draws major MNCs to its annual conference in Davos, Switzerland. The Forum self-consciously develops strategy: the theme at Davos 2007 was 'Shaping the Global Agenda'. The Forum commissions a yearly survey gauging corporate reputation: conducted in thirty countries with 20,000 interviewees, it shows a decline in the trust accorded to corporates since 2001. In response to this 'trust deficit' the WEF aspires to 'entrepreneurship in the global public interest', and positions itself as the leading global policy forum, actively recruiting non-corporate 'Global Leadership Fellows'. Lobbying is not always successful: from the late 1990s several states in Asia and Latin America have intervened to constrain finance flows, demonstrating abiding state capacity (Higgott and Phillips 2000). Nevertheless, as UNCTAD reports, of the 271 government measures affecting foreign investment in 2004, 87 per cent favoured MNCs, reducing the average tax for MNCs from 29.7 per cent to 26.5 per cent (UNCTAD 2005: 26). One of these 2004 measures was the 'American Jobs Creation Act', discussed in Box 23.1.

MNCs have also influenced international public policy agendas. MNC interventions into the sustainability debate, such as through the Business Council on Sustainable Development and the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), are especially significant (Sklair 2001). The GCC was set up by a group of oil and energy MNCs in 1989 to target the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and helped to limit the Climate Change Convention to declarations of intent. After the 1997 **Kyoto Protocol** put some limited commitments into place, the GCC successfully campaigned for the US to renege on its commitments. In 2002 the group was officially wound up, declaring it had 'served its purpose'. Corporate PR now sits at the heart of the UN, with a 'Global Compact' that explicitly offers MNCs the possibility of 'leveraging the UN's global reach and convening power' (Coleman 2003).

Finally, there is recourse to legal offence, to sue critics and claim compensation. The corporate use of SLAPPs – 'Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation' – became so prevalent in the US in the 1990s that by 2006 over thirty-five US states had introduced legislation to protect freedom of speech. But governments themselves are not beyond the reach of corporate litigation. From 1994, under Chapter 11 of NAFTA, corporations gained the right to sue signatory governments for discriminatory regulation. NAFTA's investor protection provisions, that treat corporations 'as an equal subject of **international law**, on a par with governments', have since been extended into other FTAs and investment agreements (Gal-Or 2005: 122). Cases taken against states under these clauses have 'risen dramatically' (UNCTAD 2005: 3) (see Box 23.2).

Overall, MNCs are transnational actors, 'oligopolistic at a global level', capable of exerting significant influence on the world stage, influence expressed in various forms of legal recognition of their role and status (Nolan et al 2002: 101). Such legal personality is hardly new – it can for instance be thought of as 'transnational mercantilism' (Graz 2004). Nevertheless it is clearly growing, complemented by an expanding international law of state-MNC arbitration (Teubner 1997).

Box 23.2: Discussion points

Investment protection and corporate–state litigation

Investor protection commitments and rights to arbitration for corporates have been written into a growing proliferation of international investment agreements. There were less than eighty such agreements in 1990. By 2004 there were more than 400.

Increasingly, corporations have used these rules to sue governments. When a corporation believes it has suffered from government actions, and believes those actions violate investment agreements, it can make a claim for lost earnings. Their claim then goes to an international arbitration court for decision.

In 2006 there were 255 such cases, taken against seventy countries (including thirty-nine cases against the Argentine government following the country's financial crisis). Several cases have led to large pay-outs. In 2002 Ecuador was required to pay $71 million. In 2004 Slovakia paid $834 million. In 2006 Argentina was instructed to pay $165 million.

Developing countries, UNCTAD notes, are especially 'vulnerable'. Increasingly, though, arbitrators are ruling against corporate claims. After awarding claims against the Argentine government, arbitrators have accepted the financial crisis created a 'state of necessity' that absolved it of obligations under investment treaties (see UNCTAD 2005).

INGOs: transnationalised normative power

INGOs are most simply defined as international organisations that represent sectors of society independently of governments. The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines an INGO as any international organisation that is not established by interstate treaty. In order to be accorded consultative status with ECOSOC, INGOs must be of recognised standing, representative, accountable, transparent, democratic and be funded by voluntary non-government sources. The Union of International Associations uses a similar seven-point definition, including requirements for autonomy from governments and operations in more than two countries. These definitions encompass a wide variety of organisations, including business NGOs. The focus here is on public interest INGOs that engage in international advocacy in the name of a cause or issue.

Transnationalisation: INGOs

In recent years an INGO 'explosion' has paralleled the MNC 'explosion' (Josselin and Wallace 2001: 1–2). In 2002 the UNDP described the INGO boom as a 'revolution', noting that one-fifth of the 37,000 INGOs in place in 2000 had emerged since 1990, and that these had generated over 20,000 INGO networks, a 'revolution [that] parallels the rapid growth of global business over the same period' (UNDP 2002: 102).

Since 2000 the Centre for Global Governance (CGG) has used data from the Union of International Associations to map the INGO phenomenon. Its data show a worldwide 43 per cent rise in the number of INGO secretariats (to 17,428) between 1992 and 2002, with the rise in low income countries standing at 27 per cent (Kaldor, Anheier and Glasius 2003: Record 15, 327–33). Membership growth, though, has been faster in lower and middle

income contexts (Anheier and Katz 2004: 338). Secretariats remained concentrated in high income contexts: of the fourteen cities housing more than a hundred INGO secretariats, two were in the US, one in Japan and nine in Western Europe, and one each in Africa and Latin America. The CGG project thus identifies the geopolitical heartland of Northwest Europe as the centre of global INGOism, with much of the South as peripheral.

The CGG findings confirm the expansion of INGOs while suggesting INGO distribution mirrors interstate hierarchies. The pattern is replicated at the UN, where only 251 of the 1550 registered NGOs are based in developing countries (UNDP 2002: 111). Indeed, another assessment finds the North–South divide in INGO participation to be proportionately deeper than North–South income divides (Beckfield 2003). International relations of advocacy are clearly conjoined with interstate relations: we may further argue that INGOs are simply an international version of the 'extended state', an expression of interstate hegemony over 'global civil society' (Hirsch 2003). If INGOs are to be seen as an emergent force, capable of mobilising alternate sources of power, a different distribution would be expected. Researchers in political geography have tested these possibilities, in one case looking at connectivity between INGOs as an alternate measure of INGO geography (Taylor 2004). The resulting maps of INGO connectivity reveal a different pattern, where 'Nairobi, Bangkok, New Delhi and Manila [are] at least as important as Brussels, London and Washington', suggesting INGOs are indeed creating their own autonomous trans-urban geography (Taylor 2004: 272).

Hierarchies among INGO coalitions can directly mirror interstate hierarchies and clearly INGOs are inadequate as channels for formal political representation (Chandhoke 2005). Yet INGO power relations, unlike MNC relations, rest on **normative** claims to legitimacy grounded in transnational consciousness (Hudson 2001). Policy advocacy to address global problems such as environmental change, global development, labour rights and gender division, rests on the capacity to mobilise legitimacy across the North–South axis. Yet INGO advocacy has different drivers from interstate politics, and forces into view an alternative geopolitics centring on normative claims (Bebbington 2004).

International agency: social formation

There is no doubt INGOs have an important influence on international political agendas. As Halliday (2001: 2) argues, 'the climate of international opinion, be it that of states or informed public opinion, *has* been significantly affected by what these NGOs, linked to social change, have brought about' (emphasis in original). INGOs have drawn on a vast font of legitimacy as representatives of public opinion in their confrontations with corporations and governments, establishing something of a 'pro-NGO norm' (Reimann 2006). Reflecting this, the WEF-funded survey mentioned above found that NGOs attracted remarkable levels of trust, with between 80 and 90 per cent agreeing that NGOs would 'operate in the best interests of our society'.

The influence of INGOs is often seen as extending the domestic public sphere into international contexts (Price 2003). Advocacy INGOs can be seen as vehicles for 'globalisation from below', offering an antidote to 'predatory globalisation' (Falk 2000b). Such vehicles can be seen as prefiguring new forms of 'cosmopolitan **democracy**', filling political vacuums between transnationalised power sources and national democratic structures (Held 1995). In the process, INGOs may be interpreted as extending forms of global citizenship, enabling the application of universal principles of citizen rights beyond state borders (Linklater 1998).

INGOs do indeed act as semi-autonomous institutional nodes, promoting a deepened globalisation. They mediate and translate normative principles and discourses from one context to another, creating a politics of flows that constitutes a less hierarchical transnational politics (Walker 1994). While INGOs find their inspiration in transnational fields of contention, they find political traction in relation to states and interstate regimes (Joachim 2003). INGOs make claims on states and interstate bodies, and reproduce state centrality. Their leverage rests on the capacity to deploy normative and informational power, provoking public argument about the most desirable or necessary course of action for governments and for interstate bodies (Holzscheiter 2005). Confined to the non-state realms of 'global civil society', they constitute a self-limited 'loyal' opposition, that respects Lockean liberal categories of state and non-state, public and private, and reproduces these as naturalised universals (Chandhoke 2005). INGOs are therefore not necessarily pitted against states: like MNCs, INGOs constitute transnational realms of action that realign rather than transcend interstate power relations. We may see INGOs, then, not so much as harbingers of a new order, but rather as key players in reforming the existing one.

Political status and influence

A central factor in the growth of INGOs as players in international relations is the capacity to politicise cross-national issues under-addressed by state and interstate sources of authority. Benefiting from the increased connectivity that results from transnational communication, INGOs are able to expose the inadequacies of existing frameworks, and mobilise public opinion to challenge both the policies and legitimacy of interstate agencies. Through the 1990s INGOs actively constructed their own capacity, primarily through coalition-building targeted on MNCs and interstate bodies, with considerable success (Yanacopulosi 2005). Reflecting this, INGOs have considerably more involvement in countries that are engaged with interstate institutions (Smith and Wiest 2005). These 'transnational advocacy networks', and the sources of political leverage they provide, have become a crucial aspect of INGO activity (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Indeed, given their orientation to transnational concerns, INGOs have at times had an advantage over MNCs in interstate policy-making (Kellow 2002).

INGO coalitions play a formative role in a range of international policy issues, from the development of international **human rights** regimes to the management of global environmental change, to the creation of international norms on the status of women. On these and other issues INGOs have become key agents in instigating and developing the emergence of interstate normative and policy regimes (see Box 23.3) (Reimann 2006). In the process INGOs 'find themselves involved in setting the agenda for political negotiations and decision-making' (Hirsch 2003: 250).

INGOs are formally recognised but only in a limited sense. In 1986 for instance the Council of Europe recognised INGOs with the proviso they are at first recognised in a national jurisdiction. The 1996 resolution regulating the role of NGOs in the UN conferences clearly states that 'active participation of non-governmental organisations therein, while welcome, does not entail a negotiating role'. In 2002, the UNDP outlined a series of responsibilities for INGOs, effectively imposing ground rules for INGO engagement (UNDP 2002). While

Box 23.3: Discussion points

UN – INGOs 'catalyse change'

Since 1990 the United Nations Development Programme has published the yearly *Human Development Report*. The *Report* has been instrumental in promoting a holistic measure of international development.

In 2002 the *Report* was subtitled 'deepening democracy in a fragmented world', and focused on democratic involvement as a key aspect of development. The *Report* discussed deepened democracy at the global level, pointing to INGOs as key agents for cross-border democratisation.

The UNDP *Report* cited six examples of INGO campaigns that had forced the creation of new interstate agreements and regimes. The six campaigns are:

- Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief
- campaigns for essential HIV/AIDs drugs
- the campaign for an International Criminal Court
- anti-dams campaigns
- anti-poverty campaigns, and
- campaigns for corporate responsibility.

All had been led by INGO coalitions, demonstrating INGO capacity and 'potential to catalyse change'. According to the *Report*, INGO campaigns herald a 'new global politics' (UNDP 2002).

interstate bodies may seek to circumscribe their formal role, INGOs have become deeply engaged with interstate regimes, to a significant degree influencing intergovernmentalism, such as at the UN Millennium Forum (Alger 2002).

As central players in 'complex **multilateralism**' INGOs have tailored their proposals for interstate bodies and have become increasingly professionalised (Martens 2006). In response, interstate bodies have adapted procedures to enable structured dialogue with INGOs, such as through inclusion in government delegations, consultation, involvement in convention drafting, acceptance of alternative reports and accreditation arrangements (Cooper and Hocking 2000). In some contexts INGOs have entered into tripartite relations with corporations and intergovernmental institutions, whether in service delivery, in compliance monitoring, or indeed in projecting influence (Ottaway 2001). Such engagement comes at a price as INGOs are required to accept the institutional legitimacy of interstate bodies and of their dominant policy frames (Kamat 2004). A good example drawn from the field of global environmental policy is the role of the Climate Action Network in negotiations over the Climate Change Convention, and the subsequent Kyoto Protocol. The Network aggregates opinion within the transnational environment movement, correlating and calibrating its proposals to the negotiating agenda (Paterson et al 2003). In the process, the interstate regime is bent to the needs of environment NGOs, but also vice versa (Haas 2002).

While INGOs play a key role in generating and collaborating with some interstate initiatives, they have also been successful in exposing and halting others. These interventions are embedded in transnational perspectives, but gain political leverage by exploiting interstate divisions. An important and relatively early example was the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment – a corporate rights agreement proposed by the OECD in

the mid-1990s. Here INGO campaigners deliberately played national jurisdictions off against each other (Goodman and Ranald 1999). This same 'monkey-wrenching' approach was used successfully to block the World Trade Organization's 'Millennium Round' in 1999, and also the subsequent WTO 'Development Round', which finally unravelled in 2006.

INGOs have also sought to generate their own positive programs. The World Social Forum, first staged in Porto Alegre in 2001 as a deliberate counter to the WEF, was deliberately geared to developing such agendas (Soeane and Taddei 2002). The WEF Davos forum had been the focus for protesters in 1998. In 1999 a counter-conference was organised in Davos, and in 2000 an anti-Davos 'global forum' was held in Paris (Houtart and Polet 2001). In 2001 a World *Social* Forum was convened to debate alternatives to the WEF, symbolically located in Brazil, part of the developing world (Byrd 2005). Since 2001 the social forum process, expressed as a dialogue for alternatives in the WSF Charter of Principles, has been highly influential. It has attracted many tens of thousands of participants, and has been replicated across the globe. Subsequently the WSF has been on the move, to countries of Asia and Africa, deepening its legitimacy beyond the Latin American context. INGO involvement in the WSF lent an infrastructure to the global justice movement that emerged in the early 2000s. Latterly, in the face of the so-called 'war on terror', INGOs and wider social movements were able to proactively engage the states-system, deploying their autonomy to seize the agenda, and in 2003 mount the largest mobilisation the world has seen in anti-war demonstrations in capital cities across the world (Rupert 2003).

Positioned at the nexus between transnational flows and national jurisdictions, INGOs have charted channels for influence, in the process broadening the logic of interstate politics. They have been key players in a 'new public diplomacy' where governments exercise power with an eye to normative INGO agendas (Vickers 2004). They have also charted alternatives to official channels, constructing their own shadow structures (Goodman 2007). These are highly uneven, especially in their North–South dimensions, reflecting the contingent and limited logic of transnational awareness and consciousness (Kiely 2005). But the leverage remains, both as a contingent present-day reality and as a transformative potential.

Conclusion

MNCs and INGOs have a central and abiding constitutive role in international relations. As non-state actors, though, they are embedded in the interstate system. From **Cold War bipolarisation** to post-Cold War US predominance and the revival of American exceptionalism after the terrorist attacks of September 11, non-state forces have been harnessed as constituent elements of **sovereign states**. They have also persistently constituted themselves and exercised their own autonomy: international antagonism between corporate power exemplified by MNCs and 'people power' expressed by advocacy INGOs is thus much more than an interstate conflict. States and interstate bodies clearly play a role as the vehicle for the corporate rights agenda and as the main focus for INGO appeals. But it is the non-state players, MNC business associations and advocacy INGOs, which define the terms of the conflict. This non-state dynamic of agency and contestation generates its own autonomy, shaping definitions of the global common good. In this respect their role is not so much political as meta-political.

Such transnational contestation is most clearly expressed in the conflict between the WEF and WSF. The similarities between the two are instructive: both seek to frame the public sphere through agenda-setting strategic interventions; both are predicated on the principle of dialogue and engagement on how best to address mutual problems. In both there is a deliberate attempt to articulate and assert legitimacy on the world stage and thereby influence governmental and interstate bodies. Both the WEF and WSF are not so much policy-making institutions as discursive interventions, geared to concertising and coalescing political blocs, and to manifesting principles and values that can guide interstate and state authorities. Taken together they constitute a clash of guiding principles framing the state-system. More generally, their role demonstrates the need for an approach that apprehends the co-constitutive international relations of states and non-state actors. Following Halliday (2001), to understand the role of non-state actors today we need a political sociology of state power rather than an international relations of state-ness. Such an approach offers us the critical scope we need to identify the overarching or meta-antagonisms of international relations, and to highlight strategic fractures and sources of instability and transformation.

Questions

1. What are the similarities and differences between MNCs and INGOs?
2. Have non-state actors shifted power away from states and the states-system?
3. How do you explain the rise in number and influence of MNCs and INGOs?
4. To what extent have MNCs influenced state economic management?
5. To what extent have INGOs managed to curtail state power?
6. How do MNCs and INGOs impact on the North–South divide?

Further reading

Centre for the Study of Global Governance 2001–, *Global civil society yearbook*, London: Sage. Compiles commentary and data on the role of INGOs in global politics. Available online at www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/correspondents.htm.

International Labour Organisation 2004, *Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization*, Geneva: ILO. Collection of papers on social aspects of globalisation, including the role of MNCs housed under the heading 'Knowledge Networks' at www.ilo.org/public/english/fairglobalization/.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 1991–, *World investment report*, New York: United Nations, www.unctad.org, housed under the heading 'Main publications'. A mine of information on all aspects of MNCs, including their role in international politics.

United Nations Development Programme 1990–, *Human development report*, New York: United Nations, http://hdr.undp.org/reports/. Invaluable resource for debates on global issues affected by INGOs and MNCs.

World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org. The WEF site provides an archive of conference statements dating back to 2003 under the title 'Knowledge Navigator'.

World Social Forum: www.forumsocialmundial.org.br. The WSF English version contains a 'Library of Alternatives', effectively an archive of WSF perspectives since 2001.

24 Global Poverty and Inequality

Heloise Weber and Mark T. Berger

Introduction

This chapter examines poverty and inequality in global politics. The first section provides the background for our analysis of global poverty and inequality. We demonstrate how different perspectives of development and the causes of poverty have implications for how one responds to poverty and inequality. The second section examines three key contemporary initiatives for global development. The final section focuses on the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative. Through an analysis of the MDGs we reconnect to the key points put forward in the first section of this chapter.

Background to poverty and inequality

Global poverty and inequality are high on the agenda in world politics at the start of the new millennium. At the same time, the capacity of developed countries to eradicate poverty and address inequality has probably never been better. However, contemporary research continues to make clear that there is not only a growing gap worldwide between the rich and the poor, but also that there has been an unprecedented rise in insecurity and vulnerability in the everyday lived experiences of many people, specifically the poor. There is no shortage of figures and statistical evidence to draw upon in order to substantiate these claims (see for example, the **World Bank**'s *World Development* reports since 1990 and the United Nations' *Human Development* reports). Activists, **non-governmental organisations** (NGOs), policy-makers, politicians and scholars are all engaged in rigorous debates about the scale and character of global poverty and inequality. Yet any meaningful discussion of these issues is incomplete without addressing their corollary, namely development or the lack thereof.

It is not surprising then that debates about global poverty and inequality have always been situated within the wider development debate. In turn, debates about development have historically centred upon the erstwhile Third World. Today, however, concepts such as the First, Second and Third World have little analytical utility. This is partly because the idea of the three worlds of development was historically specific. During the **Cold War**, the First World was identified with the core capitalist nation-states, the Second World with the

EDITED BY

Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke and Jim George

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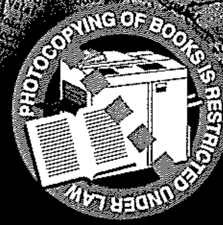

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www.cambridge.org
ISBN: 978-0-521-68276-3

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521682763

© Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke, Jim George 2007

First published 2007

Printed in Australia by Ligare

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data
Devetak, Richard.
An introduction to international relations: Australian perspectives.
Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 9780521682763 (pbk.)
1. International relations. 2. Australia – Foreign relations. I. Burke, Anthony, 1966–. II. George, Jim, 1946–. III. Title.
327.94

ISBN 978-0-521-68276-3

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This textbook grew out of a sense that Australian students studying Introduction to International Relations courses were not particularly well served by the textbook offerings available. Scores of textbooks exist, many of them excellent in their own ways, but none is specifically tailored to the concerns of Australian students and the broad menu of topics covered in their undergraduate courses. Conversations with colleagues teaching introductory courses around the country led us to the view that a large textbook written specifically for Australian students, by Australian scholars and teachers, would be welcome. Additionally, it would serve as another means of building the Australian discipline of International Relations. The Australian discipline has always produced important and internationally recognised scholarship, but it has generally remained fragmented, lacking a sense of common spirit. In recent years just such a spirit has grown up in the discipline and *An Introduction to International Relations: Australian Perspectives* is both a reflection of and a contribution to this development. Indeed, some of the original conversations on the potential of a textbook like this took place at the first Oceanic Conference on International Studies (OCIS), hosted by the ANU in July 2004. We hope that future OCIS delegates will be able to say that this textbook helped provide a foundation on which they further developed their knowledge of and passion for what must be one of the most perennially exciting disciplines in the social and human sciences – International Relations.

There are a number of people we need to thank. A handful of people were directly and actively instrumental to the production of this textbook. First, we must thank Kim Armitage at Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, who enthusiastically supported the textbook from its inception. She also diligently helped in conceiving the textbook's format and ensuring it would meet students' needs most effectively. We thank her for seeing the potential and importance of such a textbook for Australian students and in providing the essential support and encouragement. Susan Hanley assumed responsibility for the textbook at CUP when Kim took maternity leave. We thank her and Kate Indigo for their patience and professionalism in steering this unwieldy manuscript through the latter stages of its production. We are also very grateful to Anna Crago for her excellent copyediting work in polishing the final manuscript. She was meticulous in spotting errors and inconsistencies and extremely helpful in making stylistic improvements to the text. Thank you also to Tony Fankhauser for his excellent maps.

We must also thank Lisa Denney for her tremendous assistance in preparing the manuscript. She worked promptly, efficiently, carefully and cheerfully on the entire manuscript, correcting typos and identifying problems we missed, and assisting in their solution. Jim would like to thank Heidi Hutchison and Michael Hutchison for their assistance

and excellent proofreading skills. Anthony and Jim would like to thank Richard, whose work in conceiving, guiding and finalising this book was so important.

There is a collection of other people we would like to thank also. They may not have had a direct hand in the textbook, but indirectly they have contributed to it. First of all, our teachers, without whom we would not ourselves be teaching, let alone editing textbooks for the next generations of Australian students. Richard would like to acknowledge his debt of gratitude to Andrew Linklater, Peter Lawler, and Hidemi Suganami. They will, he hopes, see the mark their inspirational examples have left on him in the chapters he has written for this textbook. Anthony thanks Caroline Graham, Jim George, Mike McKinley, Jindy Pettman, Lorraine Elliott, Graeme Cheeseman, Greg Austin, Bill Tow, Greg McCarthy, Pal Ahluwalia, Paul Nursey-Bray, Carol Johnson and Christine Beasley, who taught him to understand and care about global politics, and who helped him immeasurably as he first began to teach it. Jim remembers with gratitude the inspiration offered both directly and indirectly by Ian Clark, Richard Higgott, Andrew Linklater and Jim Richardson. We would also like to extend thanks to someone who has worked tirelessly and energetically to build the discipline's Australian identity, Chris Reus-Smit. Chris has been a constant source of moral and intellectual encouragement and, more importantly, leadership, for which we thank him.

We must also thank our students. Students of Introduction to International Relations courses at the Australian National University, Monash University, and the Universities of Adelaide, New South Wales and Queensland, where we have taught in recent years, have all contributed to this textbook. It is they who make the teaching so enjoyable by their intellectual curiosity and thirst for learning.

We would also like to thank the contributors who gave their time and effort to this textbook. In a time of the government's Research Quality Framework, it is gratifying that colleagues still see the importance of providing quality textbooks for students. Richard would like to mention his gratitude to Robyn Eckersley and Marianne Hanson who provided encouragement and useful feedback on early ideas, and to several other colleagues teaching Introduction to International Relations courses who kindly shared their course guides with him with a view to organising the book's contents and structure. He would also like to thank his co-editors, Anthony and Jim, for their readiness to take on this ambitious project and to make it work so well.

Finally, we would like to thank friends and family who have had to suffer our distraction over the past couple of years. Richard would like to register the unpayable debt he owes to his wife Naomi and daughter Chiara for their loving encouragement and tolerance, especially in the final stages of the manuscript's preparation. Anthony thanks his wife Jenny, who was ever supportive even as she chided him gently for taking too much on, and dedicates the book to her and his young twins, Nikos and Sophia, who hopefully will grow into a better world than they were born into. Jim wants to thank Joanna, in particular, for her love and support when it was needed most.

Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke, Jim George
Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra
March 2007

An Introduction to International Relations: The Origins and Changing Agendas of a Discipline

Richard Devetak

This Introduction begins by first outlining what is meant by international relations. Second, it tells the story of how and why the study of international relations emerged when it did in the early twentieth century. Knowing something about the **discipline**'s origins does not tell us everything we need to know about international relations today, but it will help us to understand the legacy left by the discipline's original purpose and by older traditions of thought. Third, it sketches the contours of the changing agenda of international relations, a shift that some scholars describe as a transition from international relations to world politics or from the 'traditional' to the 'new' agenda. Although there can be little doubt that as political reality has changed, new theoretical and conceptual tools have become necessary, we should not assume that a complete break with the past has rendered the 'traditional' agenda and its theories obsolete. Far from it; the 'new' agenda, as we shall see, supplements but does not supplant the 'traditional' agenda. It is now more important than ever to think about the relationship between 'traditional' and 'new' theories and issues.

What is International Relations?

Every day the global news media carry stories of events involving foreign governments and their populations. Usually featured under the heading of 'international affairs' or 'world news', these stories all too frequently tell of political violence, lives and livelihoods lost, **human rights** violated, infrastructure damaged, and hopes for the restoration of peace and prosperity dashed. War rather than peace makes the news headlines, and understandably so, because the violent conflict of war so visibly ravages human societies. 'If it bleeds, it leads', as the cynical media adage goes.

For over 2000 years of recorded history humans have been fascinated and frustrated by war and its consequences, so we should not be surprised by its continuing preeminence. But human societies are ravaged by so much more than war. Chronic underdevelopment, poverty, human rights violations and environmental degradation are equally devastating, if less visibly so. Occasionally, however, the plight of the world's impoverished populations becomes headline news when famine or natural disasters, such as droughts, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis or avalanches, strike, compounding already fragile or impoverished political

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Business Education Publishers Ltd	Sunderland UK
Butterworth Heinemann	UK, USA
Butterworths	NSW, Australia
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CAE Press (formerly Language Australia)	Melbourne, Australia
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