



Journal
of Danubian
Studies
and Research

NGOs and their Impact on the Preservation of Peace and Security in International Relations

Stefan Gheorghe¹

Abstract: The international non-governmental organization is an organizational structure that appears due to private or mixed initiatives, being outside any intergovernmental agreement and bringing together people from various social categories, private or public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) belong to a field that finds in the sphere of the civil society and have as objects, provided in the statute, the identification of some solutions to the problems of the society, thus encouraging a democratic and authentic society. They are independent of the state, and what makes them special in relation to other organizations is the non-profit character, based on the benefit of the public and not the private one.

Keywords: green energy; financing; nuclear

1. Introduction:

Currently, the concept of international relations differs a lot, compared to what it assumed at the beginning, addressing a vast issue, without being limited to the sphere of state actions, on the contrary. The new valences of the concept assume different approaches that require new and diverse angles and fields of human activity in the field, such as: migratory flows, including tourism, cultural relations, economic activities. Globalization in general and transnational currents, in particular such as religious ones, determine important causes and consequences on a global level, now having a strong impact on interpersonal relations both on a national scale and especially on an international scale. A major interest in approaching the subject, in question, was the succinct and synthetic treatment of the issue of international organizations OI, but also the desire to highlight, during the present study, as many

¹ Associate Professor, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., 800654, Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: stefangheorghe@univ-danubius.ro.

features and information as possible, useful to the tutors of those interested in the current importance of the role that international organizations have in the field of international relations.

After 1945, international relations experienced an exceptional development, as a result of the globalization of exchanges and communications through the development and practical application of the concept of international organizations. Whether we are talking about governmental or non-governmental ones, they have come to represent an increasingly important competence in the field of international relations, having the support of important actors, legal personality and specific resources. Their activity is the monitoring of the international press, governments and public authorities and they give expression to the most acute interests of the international public opinion (Niemesch & Berna, 2020, p. 5).

Due to the possibilities offered by technological innovation or transportation facilities all over the world and the constant information provided by social media on the events happening all over the planet, the current statement that we live in a “planetary village” is as true as it can be. Therefore, the subject is too large to be captured in its entirety, which is why the political, economic, cultural or military aspects will be addressed with priority in this study, starting from the premise that the main actors of the field are not only states, on the contrary, the impact of NGOs (Carpinschi & Margarit, 2011, p. 18) on international politics has become obvious today (Lungu, 2010, p. 55).

Starting with the 19th century, as an effect of economic growth and technological potential, developed nations started to establish organizations capable of facilitating development and progress in various fields. The International Telegraphic Union in 1865 and the Universal Meteorological Organization in 1878 represent just two such examples of the interests of developed countries in establishing international conventions (Carpinschi & Margarit, 2011, p. 17). Although officially, the current Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies came into being in April 1919, in Geneva, the first demonstrations at the international level, occasioned by the horrors of the war, regarding, in particular, the large number of victims suffered as a result the Solferino battle of 1859, took place as early as February 17, 1863 when, at the initiative of Henry Dunant, a conference was organized in which the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded¹.

¹ <https://crucearosie.ro/cine-suntem/originea-si-istoria-miscarii-de-cruce-rosie-si-semilunara-rosie/>.

The 20th century brought with it an exponential development of the number of non-governmental organizations in all fields, among which we can only mention a few of the most well-known: Amnesty International, Greenpeace International, Transparency International or Medicines and Frontiers, etc. Considered, in the opinion of the UN, as having a deeply consulted role, non-governmental organizations today represent one of the most important indicators of civil society worldwide, which monitor democracy, economic and cultural relations, environmental protection or respect for fundamental human rights throughout the contents of the globe. They therefore express the immediate interest of the international public opinion towards one subject or another, mobilizing the national authorities or international bodies to take immediate action when observing the occurrence of major deviations from the natural course of things. Their involvement in certain events and their critical reactions to the actions of national governments or intergovernmental bodies can be explained by their specific sources of independent funding. Although they have a global representation, most of the time, non-governmental organizations do not have the huge potential of governmental organizations, being supranational being obliged by the nature of the possibilities they have to focus their attention on topics such as corruption, humanitarian aspects or environmental protection. Most of the time, their credibility is strengthened by the large number of volunteers involved in various projects that are on the organization's agenda, unlike governmental organizations that rely mainly on the services of employees.

Some doctrinaires see international organizations as a vanguard of a world government in the process of formation. The emergence and then the proliferation and diversification of international organizations was determined by a multitude of factors. Of these, we consider some to be decisive.

The first relevant factor, in the opinion of specialists in the field, would be the need to prevent war and regulate the rules of its conduct, especially in the conditions of the discovery, at the end of the Second World War, of new weapons of mass destruction, which presented the danger “globalization” of military conflicts.

The second factor, considered important, in the emergence and proliferation of international organizations takes into account the interdependencies that appear in the development processes of different regional communities, of nations. They require cooperation between states in forms that allow free association, taking into account the common interests and, as far as possible, the particular interests of the members of the association.

A third determining factor with a major influence in the evolution of international organizations in the last decades is related to the combined effect of the new problems facing international society, the global proportions of which can only be subjected to a global treatment.

Although it cannot be concluded that the international community's efforts to face these challenges have materialized in finding the most appropriate solutions, the association of these efforts, within international organizations. International organizations thus perform a useful function in channeling a part of interpersonal relations and providing adequate means for intensifying cooperation between communities and associations in different geographical areas.

Currently, non-governmental organizations also have an important objective of international relations, most of them being involved in smoothing and solving the numerous problems that are included in the global policy agenda of the states, without proposing to minimize the role held by the national states or the various non-governmental organizations. We have in mind here with priority the organizations specialized in environmental issues or human rights defense. International organizations of the non-governmental type constantly and most of the time pursue association with some of the supranational political, intergovernmental organizations. In this way, they manage to maximize their chances of achieving their goals committed by statute, be they political, economic, humanitarian or environmental protection, through concerted action at a global and institutional level. It is also the case of some non-governmental organizations with a political character (Buzan & Little, 2009, p. 287) that have succeeded, after long attempts, in obtaining an observer status, or an advisory one, within international organizations important for world peace and security, such as the United Nations Organization. A hybrid structure can also exist within the internal framework of the organization, the International Red Cross having, for example, representatives both from the governmental sphere and from the public opinion, and the International Labor Organization also has a hybrid component. There is also the fear, rooted among the adherents of the federalist idea of the organization of the contemporary international relations system, that the O.I -s in general, and the non-governmental organizations in particular, may represent the dominant component of the current system of international relations. Most experts in the field consider that although the role of these O.I.s may increase, the importance of international relations between states and their role in the world continues to remain a predominant one. The explanation lies in the existence of a rich and long historical process of the emergence and formation

of states based on good practices that transformed and educated the mentality of the communities. The state now represents, in the opinion of its inhabitants, the only guarantor of the protection and respect of individual and collective rights and the only one able to manage the wider framework of an increase in the material well-being of the population.

Their growing number can be, in our opinion, an indicator of the fact that civil society also tends to go beyond the sphere of national interest, getting more and more involved in global issues. We can appreciate the fact that international organizations and bodies represent an asset and not just a necessity of the contemporary era, an era in which the challenges addressed to humanity gain a new perspective compared to the last decades. Although the results of the actions are most often considered exaggerated, their efforts are not at all negligible, especially when they have as objectives topics related to environmental protection or human rights. Their results are directly proportional to the amount of financing coming from non-governmental sources, but they are perceived as being incompatible with the acceptance of financial support from government authorities. Of course, a balance between the interests of some companies or interest groups and the general purpose of the organization must be maintained and followed permanently.

The proliferation and diversification of international organizations is a consequence of the evolution of the contemporary world, of the changes that took place, especially in the second half of the last century, in the life of the international community: the Second World War, the abolition of colonialism and the multiplication of the number of states, the Cold War, such as and the collapse of communism or the emergence of new threats to international peace and security. Regardless of the profile of the international actors, their behavior determines the different relationship within the structure of the international relations system (Waltz, 2006, p. 121).

The question represents the method of identifying and quantifying the role in international relations and understanding the mode of action of the main international organizations that have a particularly large impact on the international scene, in order to illustrate the diversity of the phenomenon of the construction and operation of different types of international organizations. The organizations of the United Nations System, through their constitutive acts and the activities they carry out, reveal one of the fundamental features of contemporary international society, namely the tendency to institutionalize relations between states.

The analysis from the sociological and legal perspective of international relations explains the emergence and evolution of international non-governmental organizations as being derived from the necessity of the socio-political organization of the contemporary world within the borders given by an international legal framework that takes into account both the interests of states and those of international public opinion. The reactions appear mainly to challenges resulting from international conflicts, environmental accidents or violations of democracy around the world. The appearance of international organizations is also associated with the implementation, in international relations, of the idea of the practice of federalism, as a process of association or institutionalization of relations between people, in order to achieve a common goal.

Many non-governmental (Buzan & Little, 2009) organizations entered into direct conflict with the governmental authorities of some states, or with some supra-state organizations on various topics, as happened following the World Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the Tokyo Protocol in 1997 or the World Summit for Sustainable Development, Johannesburg. Although the basic rules of the global society in which we live refer to the principles, norms and conduct of the states of the world, in the system of international relations, after the Second World War, international organizations, and especially the non-governmental ones, enjoyed an increasingly greater autonomy, being more and more frequently considered legal actors of the international system. The war imposed on the states of the world, through the peace that followed, new standards in the relations between the states of the world, based on the values established by the founding members of the UN following the San Francisco Conference in August 1945.

Amnesty International soon gained international recognition after its establishment in 1962 (Carpinski & Margarit, 2011), as an advisory body of the United Nations Organization and the Council of Europe in matters related to the violation of human rights by government authorities. The obligation of the states of the world to respect the fundamental human rights and liberties is a difficult goal for the organization to achieve. In order to be successful in this endeavor, the effort was directed towards the UN and in this sense in 1993 Amnesty International managed to determine the establishment of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. According to the organization's statute, it is that every person can enjoy the rights and freedoms they deserve, according to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization therefore represents only a global community of defenders of these universal values and principles.

The main internal organizational structures are the International Council, the Executive Committee and the General Secretariat¹. The organization is present in over 50 countries of the world, 25 of which belong to the European continent, and undertakes long or short-term actions, in accordance with the provisions of the organization's statute. Amnesty International has succeeded in influencing the relations between the states of the world and their own citizens, producing a change in the perception of the role and political impact of non-governmental organizations around the world. Thus, Amnesty International has gained the reputation of being the most powerful non-governmental organization whose objective is the respect of human rights by the states of the world. What is even more meritorious is the fact that it comes from within society, constituting an expression of the interest of international public opinion. However, the obvious disadvantages that NGOs register in their activity often contribute to the discrediting of their actions. The vulnerabilities to which they are exposed on the international political scene are also given by possible intoxication, misinformation, manipulation of members responsible for the investigations, sympathies towards the financiers or the lack of experience of the organization's field representatives. The reports you publish can be flawed for many other reasons.

The case of Amnesty International, regarding the conflict in Ukraine, is eloquent regarding the approaches that an organization, specialized in this case in identifying human rights violations, exposes to international public opinion. If less than a month after the outbreak of the conflict, the organization, through its secretary Agness Callamard, vehemently condemns the Russian invasion and denounces the repetition of the situation in Syria, including the commission of war crimes, later, the accusations multiplied, and the address of the Ukrainian side, being accused of using civilians as human shields in the conflict in order to protect its military capabilities from the attack of Russian troops. The comparison of the besieged city of Mariupol with the war-torn Syrian city of Aleppo attracted the attention and interest of international public opinion on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, the frequent changes of position, taken by the organization's representatives, in the first months of the conflict, will affect the activity and impartiality of Amnesty International's representative for Ukraine, Oksana Pokalciuk. Maria Struthers, the director of Amnesty International for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, publicly denounced in a conference held in Paris², the fact that, following investigations on

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/>.

² <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2022/03/29/amnesty-international-razboiul-din-ucraina-o-repetare-a-razboiului-din-siria--892829>.

the ground, the organization's representatives were able to document and prove that the attack on the civilian population follows the same scenario as in Syria or Chechnya, totally disregarding the rules of international law that condemn, among other things, the use of prohibited ammunition in war¹.

Greenpeace International is a non-governmental organization founded in 1971 in Canada, currently based in Amsterdam, with branches in over 55 countries of the world and having 26 regional offices, all under its coordination. In Romania, there is a branch with headquarters in Bucharest, Str Louis Blanc, no. 16, Sector I, related to the Greenpeace Central & Eastern Europe regional office.

The regional offices are administered by an executive director elected from among the members of the Regional Administrative Council who also send delegates to the Annual General Meeting that votes to maintain or dismiss the organization's Administrative Council. It has the role of coordinating the activity of the offices in the world and establishing the principles and taking strategic decisions regarding the organization's activity (Carpinschi & Margarit, 2011). Being a non-profit organization, the majority of funding comes from individuals and less from organizations or foundations, transnational companies that could somehow compromise the goals of Greenpeace. The organization's financial independence allows it not to accept funding from authorities, intergovernmental organizations or political parties. Before the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, the organization's budget totaled around 400 million dollars, donated by people mostly from Europe².

Aiming to protect the environment in order to “ensure the Earth's ability to host and nourish life, in all its diversity”. Greenpeace International represents the main non-governmental organization with global involvement in protecting nature. The large number of employees, over 3,500, in 2022 and the volunteers who support it in all the steps undertaken reflect its importance at the global level and the appreciation it enjoys among international public opinion. Greenpeace is a first-rate partner and an important promoter in the sphere of international organizations in the fight against the destruction and excessive use of the planet's resources. Greenpeace militates through its objectives and principles for the imposition of global standards in the field of green energy, for the prevention of climate change and the modification of the natural environment, the limitation of excessive fishing, the protection of virgin

<https://ea.md/opinie-amnesty-international-sustine-ca-razboiul-din-ucraina-este-o-repetare-a-celui-din-siria-de-acum-11-ani/>.

¹ <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/>.

² <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/>.

forests, disarmament and the prevention of conflicts by solving the causes that lead to their outbreak, eliminating the threat nuclear, stopping the production of dangerous chemical substances, sustainable agriculture, without genetically modified organisms, protecting biodiversity and encouraging the corporate social responsibility of agricultural farms.

Education is the main option in saving natural resources from destruction and depletion, and Greenpeace aims to defend these values by using nonviolence, the exchange of ideas, financial independence, democracy and social equity. The passive assistance of the violation of these principles is not enough, the members of the organization promoting active involvement to stop their violations by denouncing and incriminating all susceptible authorities, organizations or companies.

Although it had some hesitations at the beginning, the position of the Greenpeace organization vis-à-vis the Russian-Ukrainian conflict condemned the invasion, showing, officially, that its purpose is fossil fuels that are now used as geopolitical weapons. The organization, which aims to protect the environment, states that the fight against climate change is hindered by the conflict in Ukraine, and the bombing of civilian and military targets and especially the energy infrastructure can cause major risks regarding the occurrence of disasters and nuclear pollution. The efforts of the organization's members focused on convincing European politicians and public opinion to boycott the import of fossil fuels from the Russian Federation, arguing that this financially fuels the war against Ukraine and contributes to intensifying climate change. More than that, the oil companies increased the price of fuel speculating on the lack of imports from the Russian Federation. Greenpeace denounced this, drawing attention to the importance of the decision, but also to the fact that such measures do not really want to stop climate change and switch to the widespread use of green energy. European banks were accused of the same thing by financing the most important Russian players on the energy market, such as the Gazprom company, and the pressure exerted by the actions of the members of the organization did not leave its mark.

Conclusions

The brief presentation of only the two examples of non-governmental organizations and their possibilities and actions regarding a single aspect of international politics, respectively the conflict in Ukraine, reveals the fact that both, although they have various means and procedures for investigation, financing, public opinion and

pressure on various civil or military authorities, they fail to achieve their proposed objectives due to their limited possibilities of action. This is the only way to explain the failures of non-governmental organizations in terms of international politics and the need to associate with some intergovernmental organizations in order to influence political decisions. The constant support of the international media and maintaining the interest of the international public opinion, towards one subject or another, has to do with respecting the universal values of human rights and protecting the environment in society and maintaining them at the highest possible standards.

Non-governmental organizations do nothing but express, in the most dynamic way possible, the position of public opinion on subjects of major interest, forcing the authorities to take this into account. Active members or simple supporters represent pressure groups in their countries and through the actions they participate in they do not do enough to highlight the importance of the objectives of the organizations they support. The sensitivity of public opinion is accentuated through protests, demonstrations, civic acts, investigations, position, reports or even through active participation, in preventing actions contrary to the goals of the organizations they belong to. Non-governmental organizations do not have the necessary force to impose the voluntary change of some decisions made by third parties, except by bringing to the attention of public opinion and political decision-makers on the production of events that directly affect the security and rights of the inhabitants of a state.

Bibliography

- Buzan, Barry & Little, Richard (2009). *International Systems in World History*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Carpinschi, Anton & Mărgărit, Diana (2011). *International Organizations*. Iasi: Ed. Polirom.
- Dumitriu, Petre (2008). *UN System in the context of globalization*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House.
- Jura, Cristian (2013). *271 international organizations*. Bucharest: Ed. CH-Beck.
- Lungu, M. D. (2010). *The role of international organizations in the peaceful settlement of international disputes*. Bucharest: Ed. Universul Juridic.
- Lungu, Magdalena Denisa (2010). *The role of international organizations in the peaceful settlement of international disputes*. Bucharest: Ed. Universul Juridic.
- Niemesch, Mihail & Berna, Maria-Beatrice (2010). *Law of International Organizations, University Course, Second Edition.*, Bucharest: Hamangiu Publishing House.
- Vaisse, Maurice (2008). *Dictionary of international relations*. Iasi: Polirom.

Vătăman, David (2008). *European and Euro-Atlantic Organizations*. Bucharest: Ed. Lumina Lex.

Waltz, Kenneth N. (2006). *Theory of International Politics*. Iasi: Polirom.

<https://www.amnesty.org/>.

<https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2022/03/29/amnesty-international-razboiul-din-ucraina-o-repetare-a-razboiului-din-siria--892829>.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/>.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/romania/articol/7461/am-lansat-pinputin-alatura-te-si-hai-sa-expunem-reteaua-de-companii-din-europa-complice-la-razboiul-lui-putin/>.

<https://crucearosie.ro/cine-suntem/originea-si-istoria-miscarii-de-cruce-rosie-si-semiluna-rosie/>.

<https://ea.md/opinie-amnesty-international-sustine-ca-razboiul-din-ucraina-este-o-repetare-a-celui-din-siria-de-acum-11-ani/>.