

Chapter 22: NGOs in world politics

- TNGOs are in theory voluntary organizations aspiring to work for the common good. Nevertheless, these organizations vary greatly with respect to their mandates (general vs. issuespecific; religious vs. secular); their functions (delivery vs. advocacy); their size; and the relationships they maintain with other actors.
- TNGOs differ from states insofar as they are representatives of civil society and do not possess an international legal personality. Their relationships with states range from strict independence to dependence as a result of the funding they receive or the services they perform for governments.
- Most TNGOs, in contrast to TNCs, are non-profit. However, TNGOs have recently begun exhibiting trends generally associated with corporations, such as professionalization or commercialization. Apart from opposition, their strategies with respect to TNCs increasingly also include cooperation in the form of participation in MSDs or PPPs.
- While frequently emerging from and being part of TSMOs, TNGOs have more formal structures compared to these rather amorphous networks. Together with other NGOs, states, IGOs, or TNCs, they often participate in TANS to amplify their own strength as well as the effects of their campaigns.
- The growth of TNGOs has been encouraged by related international occurrences, including globalization, the end of the cold war, a wave of democratization at the national level, a series of UN special conferences at the outset of the 1990s, and advances in communication technologies.
- While the study of TNGOs in IR has been hampered by realism, whose proponents perceive non-state actors and their actions as inconsequential, the growing influence of liberal approaches followed by the constructivist and governance turns have all contributed to heightened interest in these organizations.
- Depending on their rules and practices, IGOs provide more or less favourable opportunity structures through which TNGOs may gain access to policy-making processes. However, access is far from even; it differs across IGOs, policy fields, the policy cycle, and across TNGOs, and does not guarantee influence.
- TNGOs possess issue-specific expertise and moral authority through which they can engage in information and symbolic politics; they also exert material as well as moral leverage in efforts to hold states or TNCs accountable.