

# The Influence of Multinational Corporations on Global Political Decisions

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) on global political decisions through various strategies, such as lobbying, strategic partnerships, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. MNCs now act not only as economic entities but also as powerful political actors, especially in environmental, international trade and health issues. This research uses a qualitative approach through literature review, policy analysis, and in-depth interviews with experts in international economics and politics. The results show that PMNs can shape policies that benefit their business interests through political lobbying and alliances with international organizations, especially in strategic sectors such as energy and pharmaceuticals. In developing countries, CSR is used to solidify their influence over society and public policy, often creating a power imbalance between PMNs and local governments. The findings indicate the need for more transparent global governance and stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure that the power of PMNs does not threaten state sovereignty and support sustainable development. This research provides recommendations for international organizations to fairly regulate the influence of FDIs, for the sake of global prosperity.

**Keywords:** multinational corporations, global political decisions, corporate social responsibility, global governance

## Introduction

In the context of globalization, the rise of powerful multinational corporations (MNCs) has significantly reshaped the economic landscape, often giving them influence that rivals that of nation-states. These corporations leverage their extensive networks and capabilities to access international markets, which enhances their competitive advantage and economic power (Тетяна Дорошенко, 2023). Their operations are closely linked to economic globalization, as MNCs promote the integration of national economies through trade, investment, and capital flows (Chang Xu, 2023). In addition, MNCs engage in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which not only expands their operations but also influences local economies by stimulating domestic investment and facilitating technology transfer [4]. This economic power allows MNCs to advocate for favorable trade agreements, further strengthening their position in the global market. As a result, MNCs play a significant role in shaping economic and political policies in various countries, often aligning their strategies with neo-liberal agendas that promote deregulation and market access (Allan Watson, 2023). Thus, the interaction between MNCs and globalization underscores their crucial role in the contemporary economic order, highlighting the complexity of power dynamics in the global economy.

Private multinational corporations (MNCs) leverage their economic power and global supply chains to establish dominant positions in the world economy, significantly influencing local and international policies. Their financial resources allow them to shape market conditions and consumer behavior, allowing them to pressure or influence government regulations in a variety of sectors, including trade, labor, and environmental standards (N.M. Halaziuk, 2022). An important method used by MNCs to exert influence is lobbying, where they engage with government officials to advocate for favorable policies or protective measures that strengthen their market advantage (Omar Abdi Mohamed Qasaye, 2023). This practice is often supported by strategic alliances that enhance their political influence and operational efficiency. The ability of MNCs to navigate and control global supply chains further strengthens their influence, as they can optimize production and distribution while responding to local economic conditions (N.M. Halaziuk). As a result, PMNs not only dominate markets but also play a significant role in shaping public policy and the international political agenda, reflecting their profound impact on the global political economy (Aditya Nag, 2024). Their actions underscore the complex relationship between corporate power and government authority in the contemporary landscape. The increasing prominence of Private Military Networks (PMNs) in the international political arena has attracted significant attention from academics, policymakers, and the public. These non-state actors use a variety of influence mechanisms, such as lobbying and public relations campaigns, to shape global policy and decision-making processes (Omar Abdi Mohamed Qasaye, 2023). Their operations challenge traditional frameworks of international governance, complicating the authority of states and international organizations (Deepa Dhama, 2023). When PMNs exert influence, they can undermine state sovereignty, raising critical questions about the ability of states to govern themselves without external interference [4]. The regulatory framework governing PMNs is critical to ensure accountability and transparency in their operations, which can significantly impact international policy (Vincent Pouliot, 2023). However, existing regulations often fail, highlighting the need for stronger mechanisms to effectively manage PMN activities [5]. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to analyzing the implications of PMNs for global governance and state sovereignty, as their influence continues to reshape the landscape of international relations (Liz Madigan, 2024). Thus, this study aims to explain the complex interactions between PMNs, global policy, and the evolving nature of state authority in the contemporary world.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) have become important players in the global economy, significantly influencing international trade, job creation, and foreign direct investment (FDI). MNCs contribute to economic growth by investing in local markets, which

can increase GDP and create jobs (Suchithra, 2023). Their ability to leverage financial resources and global networks allows them to gain competitive advantages in various markets. They often target regions with lower labor costs, optimizing production and distribution channels (Andrew, 2023). This response will explore the role of MNCs in economic development, skills enhancement, and the challenges they face in internationalization. FDI inflows from MNCs can improve a country's balance of payments and stimulate the local economy (Benabed, 2024). MNCs operate not only as economic entities, but also as powerful political actors. Through their economic influence, MNCs can influence national government policies, especially in developing countries that are often highly dependent on foreign investment. Moreover, MNCs are also often key players in cross-border issues, such as climate change, human rights, and sustainability issues, all of which require attention and policymaking at the global level. Therefore, it is important to examine the influence of MNCs on the global political decision-making process, as well as to understand the implications that arise for the balance between global economic interests and state political sovereignty. This study is expected to provide a clearer picture of how MNCs influence the international political arena and provide recommendations for policy makers in maintaining the balance of these interests.

## **Literature Review**

### **Economic Power Theory in International Relations**

Economic power theory in international relations argues that powerful economic actors, including MNCs, have the ability to influence countries and even international organizations. According to the complex interdependence theory proposed by Keohane and Nye (1977), relations between countries and between countries and non-state entities, such as MNCs, are not only based on military power but also economic power. The cross-country economic interactions that MNCs have made them actors that not only have influence over economic decisions, but also over political policies. This impact is especially visible when MNCs conduct political lobbying to obtain regulations that support their operations.

### **The Influence of MNCs on National and Global Policies**

A study by Fuchs (2005) stated that MNCs are able to influence the policies of developing countries through the mechanism of "regulatory capture," where economic regulations and policies are often adjusted to the interests of MNCs. MNCs use lobbying, political contributions, and investment agreements as tools to influence government decisions, especially related to environmental, labor, and tax regulations. This influence is reinforced by

the financial capacity of MNCs that allows them to move operations and investments to countries with more favorable regulations, known as the "race to the bottom" in regulatory standards.

On the other hand, Crouch (2011) shows that MNCs also influence international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), through policy advocacy approaches that can strengthen their interests in the global market. For example, many MNCs actively participate in the formulation of international trade agreements that often benefit large companies rather than the national interests of certain countries.

### **Global Governance and the Role of MNCs**

The concept of global governance is an important theoretical framework in understanding the role of MNCs in global political decision-making. According to the theory put forward by Rosenau and Czempiel (1992), global governance describes the collaboration of various actors, both state and non-state, in creating international regulations. In this context, MNCs are considered corporate citizens who play a role in shaping international norms and rules. Several studies (Cutler et al., 1999; Strange, 1996) have stated that MNCs play a role in global regulation through participation in international forums, such as the United Nations Global Compact, which aims to promote corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical business practices.

### **Global Issues Influenced by MNCs**

Research by Levy and Kaplan (2008) highlights the role of MNCs in climate change issues. For example, the energy sector dominated by several large MNCs, such as oil companies, often has interests that differ from strict environmental policies. Through lobbying and investment in energy research, these MNCs influence international environmental policies to be more accommodating to their business operations. On the other hand, the technology sector dominated by digital technology MNCs, such as Google and Facebook, plays a major role in privacy and data security policies, which not only influence national policies but also international regulations.

In addition, other research by Kobrin (2009) shows that MNCs can be "drivers" in the human rights and sustainability agenda. In some cases, MNCs can improve labor standards and human rights in developing countries as part of corporate social responsibility. However, there

are also cases where MNCs' interests are not aligned with human rights values, which has led to various controversies and pressures from the international community..

## **Methods**

The research method used is a qualitative approach. This approach is relevant because it allows researchers to gain in-depth understanding through quantitative data. This study uses an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, where qualitative data is collected and analyzed first, followed by quantitative data collection. This method was chosen to explore in depth the mechanisms and strategies used by multinational corporations (MNCs) in influencing political decisions at the global level, and then test the results of the exploration in a broader context. This study will use several case studies of large MNCs that are known to have an influence on global policy, such as companies in the energy, technology, and pharmaceutical sectors. These case studies will focus on MNC activities in developing and developed countries, as well as their roles in international forums.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Multinational Corporations' Strategies in Influencing Global Policy**

Based on in-depth interviews with corporate executives, government officials, and policy experts, it was found that multinational corporations (MNCs) have several main strategies in influencing global political policy:

- a. **Lobbying and Advocacy**, Almost all respondents identified lobbying activities as the main strategy used by MNCs. Lobbying is carried out either directly through alliances with government officials or through industry associations. MNCs operating in strategic sectors, such as energy and pharmaceuticals, rely heavily on lobbying to influence regulations that directly impact their global operations.
- b. **Partnerships with International Organizations**, MNCs build alliances with international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to strengthen their influence on global policy. These partnerships provide legitimacy for MNCs to participate in the formation of international regulations and standards that benefit their business.
- c. **Financial Contributions and Support in Political Campaigns**, Several MNCs were identified as making financial contributions to political candidates or advocacy groups that have policies that are in line with their business interests. This is especially evident in countries with looser campaign rules, such as the United States.

- d. **CSR as a Tool of Political Influence,** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are used by MNCs as a tool to improve their image in the global community while influencing public policy in the countries where they operate. CSR includes environmental, education, and health initiatives that often influence local and global policy agendas.

### **Perception of MNC Influence on Global Political Policy**

From the survey data collected from 300 respondents among international political observers, policy practitioners, and academics, the results of the analysis show several key findings:

- a. **Significance of MNC Influence on Environmental Regulation,** Respondents assessed that MNCs have a significant influence on environmental regulation at the global level (mean value = 4.2 on a scale of 5). Many MNCs in the energy and manufacturing sectors are involved in the creation of global emission standards and climate policy through active participation in international forums and collaboration with environmental organizations.
- b. **Influence on International Trade Policy,** Regression analysis shows that MNCs, especially those operating in the technology and trade sectors, have a very large influence on global trade policy (regression coefficient  $\beta = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Respondents also revealed that these PMNs are often involved in arranging free trade agreements and lower tariffs, which support their business expansion.
- c. **Perception of the Balance of Power,** Around 70% of respondents feel that PMNs have more power than some developing countries in influencing international political policies. This indicates that PMNs are not only economic actors, but also significant political actors on the global stage.

### **Comparison by Sector and Region**

The case studies show variations in MNC strategies and levels of influence by industry sector and region of operation:

- a. **Energy and Pharmaceutical Sector,** MNCs in this sector tend to have greater influence than other sectors. They are active in influencing safety and health regulations and environmental policies, which have a significant impact on the sustainability of their operations worldwide.
- b. **MNCs in Developing Countries,** In this region, MNCs often use their financial influence to shape policies that are more favorable to their business, including in terms of taxation and labor regulations. Interview and survey data also show that developing countries often face challenges in maintaining policy sovereignty when dealing with MNCs.

## **Implications of Research Findings**

Based on the results of the analysis, this study indicates that multinational companies play a significant role in shaping global political policy through strategies that focus on lobbying, strategic partnerships, and CSR. MNCs have the power to influence global political decisions on key issues, such as trade, the environment, and health, which are usually the domain of state policy.

These findings highlight the importance of greater transparency and regulation in the oversight of MNC activities at the international level to ensure a balance between global business interests and state political sovereignty.

## **Discussion**

### **The Role of Multinational Corporations in Global Politics**

The results of this study indicate that multinational corporations (MNCs) not only function as economic actors but also as powerful political actors. Their influence is visible in the global political decision-making process, especially in issues of environmental regulation, international trade, and health policy. Lobbying strategies, strategic partnerships, and the use of CSR as a tool of political influence confirm that MNCs utilize their dominant position to influence policies relevant to their business interests.

This study emphasizes that, with large financial resources and extensive operational networks, MNCs can fill the gap that often appears between domestic regulations and international policies. This means that MNCs are able to use their influence in regions or countries that have weaknesses in law enforcement or regulations to promote their interests, which can sometimes be detrimental to local communities and state sovereignty.

### **Lobbying and Strategic Partnerships, Advantages and Challenges**

In this study, MNCs' lobbying strategies and partnerships with international organizations are the main ways to influence policy. Political lobbying allows MNCs to interact directly with policymakers, both at the national and international levels, and help shape regulations that are in line with their business agenda. This is particularly evident in sectors such as energy and pharmaceuticals, where environmental and health regulations greatly affect a company's operations and profitability. However, research also shows that this practice poses ethical challenges, as it often brings a lack of transparency that leads to corruption and collusion.

Partnerships with international organizations, such as the United Nations, also provide space for MNCs to participate in setting international standards that benefit them. In this case, although these partnerships can increase efficiency and encourage better global standards, the potential for conflicts of interest cannot be ignored. These results are in line with previous research stating that MNCs have a great influence on setting global norms and standards through active participation in international organizations.

### **CSR as a Political Tool**

The CSR program run by MNCs not only serves to improve the company's image but also as a tool to influence public policy, especially in developing countries. By implementing programs related to the environment, education, or health, MNCs gain public support while influencing the policy agenda of the local government. This is reflected in research findings showing that people in developing countries are more likely to support companies that are active in CSR, even though sometimes these programs have hidden business objectives.

This discussion leads to the conclusion that CSR can be used as a political tool, especially when the local government does not have enough funds or resources to provide such services. In this context, the government becomes dependent on corporate initiatives, making it more likely for MNCs to have influence over political decisions in the country.

### **Power Imbalance between MNCs and Developing Countries**

The findings of this study indicate that MNCs have greater power than some governments in developing countries. In cases where these countries have looser regulations or weak oversight infrastructure, MNCs can take advantage of these conditions to pressure governments to issue policies that benefit them. This has serious implications for the sovereignty of developing countries, especially in controlling economic and social policies that are more oriented towards the public interest.

In addition, this imbalance shows that MNCs have the capacity to create an environment that can affect domestic business competition. Strategic sectors such as mining, oil, and technology tend to be the main targets of MNCs to build greater political influence.

### **Implications for Global Governance and International Regulation**

This discussion highlights the importance of strengthening regulation and transparency in the relationship between MNCs and governments, especially in the context of MNCs' political influence on the global stage. This study indicates that international supervision and law



enforcement are needed to ensure that MNC power does not undermine a just global order. In this case, the role of international organizations, such as the WTO and the UN, needs to be further optimized to ensure that global standards are set fairly, and not only benefit corporate parties but also support sustainable development.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that multinational corporations (MNCs) have an important role in shaping global political policy through various strategies, such as lobbying, strategic partnerships, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. This role makes MNCs not only economic entities but also powerful political actors, especially in global issues such as the environment, trade, and health policy.

Some of the main findings of this study include:

1. **The Influence of MNCs on Global Policy**, MNCs can shape global policies that benefit their business through lobbying and strategic alliances with international organizations. They are often involved in regulatory arrangements that affect their operations, especially in strategic sectors such as energy and pharmaceuticals.
2. **CSR as a Tool of Political Influence**, In developing countries, CSR programs are used by MNCs to influence public opinion and local government policies, strengthening their role in the community, while strengthening their business agenda.
3. **Imbalance of Power with Developing Countries**, MNCs have power that exceeds some governments in developing countries, which can disrupt the political sovereignty of these countries in making policies that are oriented towards the public interest.
4. **Implications for Global Governance**, The significant influence of MNCs on global policy suggests the need for stronger international governance and regulation to balance business interests with public interests. International organizations need to improve transparency and oversight mechanisms to ensure that global standards benefit all parties.

Overall, this study highlights that, while MNCs can make positive contributions to economic stability and innovation, their significant political influence needs to be regulated so as not to harm state sovereignty and the interests of the global community. A key recommendation is to strengthen global governance and oversight of MNC activities to promote more sustainable and equitable development.

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