

INTRODUCTION

“The basic compact of coexistence between states”, wrote Hedley Bull, “implies a conspiracy of silence entered into by governments about the rights and duties of their citizens”.¹ It is against this conspiracy of silence that the contemporary human rights movement has been fighting since 1945. In spite of the inherent tendency of states to look the other way, less and less violations of human rights go unreported. To a very large extent, this can be attributed to the growing capacity of the human rights movement to mobilise the attention of the international community.²

The emerging role of the human rights movement has helped challenge the conventional view of world politics. Classical theory held that states were the sole actors in international relations. Contemporary theory now also recognises non-state entities as legitimate actors.³ Thus, issue-oriented groups and individuals are able to influence state behaviour, gradually ingraining a concern for what Bull called human justice⁴ into the very fabric of international relations.

¹ H. BULL, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*. London, Macmillan, 1977, p. 83.

² Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been described as unofficial ombudsmen safeguarding human rights against governmental infringements, by such techniques as diplomatic initiatives, reports, public statements, efforts to influence the deliberations of human rights bodies established by intergovernmental organisations, campaigns to mobilise public opinion, and attempts to affect the foreign policy of certain countries with respect to their relations to states which are responsible for human rights violations: D. WEISSBRODT, “The Contribution of International Nongovernmental Organizations to the Protection of Human Rights”, in T. Meron (ed.), *Human Rights in International Law. Legal and Policy Issues*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, pp. 403-404.

³ R.O. KEOHANE and J.S. NYE, *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (Boston, Little Brown, 1977). In the pluralist paradigm of international relations, the state is no longer seen as a rational, unitary actor, and its central role in world politics is questioned. Competing actors include transnational corporations, pressure groups, even terrorist movements. See, e.g., P. WILLETTS (ed.), *Pressure Groups in the Global System. The Transnational Relations of Issue-Orientated Non-Governmental Organizations* (London, Frances Pinter, 1982). Pluralism also allows for individual action on the conduct of international relations: C.F. ALGER, «Foreign Policies of U.S. Publics», *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 21 (1977), pp. 277-293.

⁴ As opposed to inter-state justice : H. BULL, *op. cit.*, 78-86.