

YOUTH: AS A NON-STATE ACTOR

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International relations relatively a new academic discipline initially emerged in order to deal mainly with relations between states or/and nations. But later, the increasing involvement of non-states actors such as multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, super-empowered individuals broadened the scope of the study of international relations significantly. Amidst those various non-state actors, contemporary youth has also gained attention as a major player in world affairs. But yet 'youth' is not specifically identified / named as a non-state actor in International Relations. The attempt of this study is to analyze the reasons / barriers behind the failure to accept youth as a non-state actor. The study further aims at seeking out strategies to elevate youth to an influential higher policy making level. This research basically used primary and secondary data. The author used secondary data to give an introduction with background information and to study on 'Actorness' as defined in the theories and concepts such as Classical realist paradigm, Liberal pluralism paradigm, mixed actor concept in International Relations. Defining actors in mixed actor concept, Brian Hocking and Michael Smith introduced autonomy, representation, and influence as three key features of any actor. The author of this study used these three features to find whether Sri Lankan youth can be interpreted as a non-state actor. Since the study is followed by a case study on Sri Lanka youth, author used primary data collecting methods such as questionnaires, observation, and interviews. The author interviewed a sample of 50 diverse young people. The results of the research showed, 60% of the Sri Lankan youth population have become members of some kind of a youth led attempt. 67% of the members are male and only 33% are female. When they were asked to assess their autonomous, representative, and influential powers, it was revealed that over 60% think limited power is available in Sri Lanka. 100% think that youth should further enhance their autonomy, representation, and influential powers. 52% of youth think that youth themselves (internally) should get more power, while 48% are of the opinion that either the government, media or society should empower youth by granting them those powers. In conclusion it could be stated that Sri Lankan youth confined by limitations, the three main features of a non-state actor: autonomy, representation and influence as Brian Hocking and Michael Smith defined in the mixed-actor concept even though, Sri Lanka youth does not use those powers progressively to function as an influential element in society and to make an impact on the policymaking process. Further, youth believe that they need to be more empowered by themselves, and a further external empowerment is required. Moreover, the author also understands that the consciousness of the responsibility that lies in the hands of youth in Sri Lanka as a strong collective bloc, needs to be waded. Identifying the characteristic features of non-state actors, author realizes 'Sri Lankan youth' is yet to emerge as a complete non-state actor.