

ABSTRACT

This thesis reexamines the behavioural logic of multinational corporations (MNC) by challenging the traditional binary classification of MNC as just actor or agent. Through studying Toyota's behaviour in the Asian region, the thesis critiques the binary framework from mainstream international relations (IR) theories that wholly assumes MNC as either only fully independent actor devoid of state's influence or agent acting as instruments of nation-states. Drawing upon the Complex Interdependence framework, this thesis moves beyond the binary framework to argue for a spectrum-based understanding of MNCs behavioural logic that captures its fluidity and context-dependent nature. Through the use of a coding framework that is divided into three categories —actor, agent, and hybrid— this thesis proposes a model that visualizes corporate behaviours based on their level of autonomy and collaboration with the state from the coded empirical data. The coding framework will be applied under two different contexts in Asia, Toyota during the COVID-19 pandemic and Toyota's behaviour in the electric vehicles industry. Revealing that rather than just actor or agent traits, Toyota are also capable of exhibiting hybrid behaviours in multiple forms, be it autonomous and collaborative or dependent and conflictual. Thus, this thesis offers a different approach in understanding MNCs behaviours beyond state-centric frameworks, that acknowledges their roles to be relational, negotiated and context-dependent rather than a fixed role. Enabling a more in-depth and dynamic understanding of MNC-state relations in international political economy.

Keywords: mnc; corporate power; international political economy; asia; international politics