

Working at the Corrosection of MNCs and International Relations

Introduction and Method

Overview:

This research examines how multinational companies operate at the intersection of science and international relations. Through a qualitative methodology, I interviewed Dr. Anders Ullman and Mr. Krian Desai both of whom have held senior leadership roles in global multinational companies. The interview explored how companies navigate differences in national regulations, medical practices, political environments, and cultural expectations when conducting research and entering international markets. I analysed the interview for recurring themes, such as the importance of local political knowledge, relationship building, and adapting business strategies to different countries and their regulatory procedures. As someone interested in pursuing International Relations and a future career in diplomacy, this research helped me understand how international affairs influence not only governments but also the everyday decisions of multinational corporations.

Example Questions in My Interview:

- How do multinational companies account for differences in political, cultural, and regulatory environments across countries?
- How do geopolitical tensions influence a company's decisions when entering or operating in international markets?

Two Recurring Themes I Noticed:

- International relations affect everyday business decisions. MNC companies cannot use the exact same approach in every country. They have to understand differences in regulations and politics to make sure their research and business operations run smoothly.
- Knowing the right people makes a difference. Having good science is important, but it is not always enough. Companies also need people who understand the local culture and political environment. Building strong relationships with these people can help companies avoid misunderstandings and work more effectively and smoothly across countries.

MNC Executives

Mr. Anders Ullman: Former Head of R&D and Chief Medical Officer at Sobi



My interview with Dr. Anders Ullman highlighted how deeply international relations are embedded within the operations of multinational pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Ullman explained that companies must recognize that “different countries have somewhat harmonised, but some was different, treatment tradition, and treatment guidelines,” while also navigating “their own regulatory demands” and different ethical requirements. He emphasized that companies need to “work with your internal organisation” and rely on people in different countries who can “express and teach you the important thing” about local differences. Most importantly, Dr. Ullman argued that “international relation is in everything we do,” demonstrating that diplomacy and geopolitical awareness are not separate from pharmaceutical development, but are integrated into everyday business decisions. He also warned that “you do mistakes sometimes and then they can be very costly,” showing how failures to understand political and cultural contexts can have significant consequences for multinational companies. This interview therefore helped me see that the success of an MNC depends not only on scientific innovation, but also on its ability to understand the political and cultural environments in which it operates. Dr. Ullman’s experiences demonstrated how companies must constantly adapt their strategies, build trust with local stakeholders, and understand national differences in order to operate effectively across borders.

Mr. Kiran Desai: Former Consul General at Netflix India



My interview explored how multinational corporations engage with governments and how international relations shape their operations. We discussed the importance of companies having clear principles, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues such as freedom of speech and when the government requests companies to remove online content. Mr. Desai emphasized that companies need to “stand for something that is true” rather than simply trying to maintain a positive image. Mr. Desai explained that if a company considers freedom of speech a core principle, it must be reflected in its policies especially

when governments attempt to influence what can be shared online. Another key idea was the “contagion effect,” which I thought was very relevant in today’s day and age. The Contagion effect is where a company’s decision to comply with a government’s request in one country can encourage other governments to make similar demands. Mr. Desai also highlighted how lobbying strategies depend on the political environment, particularly the government’s parliamentary majority and the influence of opposition parties. This interview helped me understand that government affairs require more than convincing government officers. It involves understanding local politics, anticipating the consequences of decisions across different countries, and maintaining consistent policies while operating internationally.