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Rethinking Global Governance? Complexity, Authority, Power, Change

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Global governance remains notoriously slippery. While the term arose to describe change in the late twentieth century, its association with that specific moment has frozen it in time and deprived it of analytical utility. It has become an alternative moniker for international organizations, a descriptor for an increasingly crowded world stage, a call to arms, an attempt to control the pernicious aspects of globalization, and a synonym for world government. This article aims not to advance a theory of global governance but to highlight where core questions encourage us to go. A more rigorous conception should help us understand the nature of the contemporary phenomenon as well as look "backwards" and "forwards." Such an investigation should provide historical insights as well as prescriptive elements to understand the kind of world order that we ought to be seeking and encourage us to investigate how that global governance could be realized.

"Global governance" is now ubiquitous, used and abused by academics and policymakers. A Google search offers a crude measure, generating over 3.1 million hits at the end of 2012—astonishing given that two decades ago, it was almost unknown. Despite or perhaps because of its omnipresence, global governance remains notoriously slippery. While it has potential beyond conveying a sense of the complexity of contemporary global authority, it has become, among other things, an alternative moniker for international organizations, a descriptor for a world stage packed with ever more actors, a call to arms for a better world, an attempt to control the pernicious aspects of accelerating economic and social change, and a synonym for world government (Craig 2008).

This imprecision has robbed the term of conceptual rigor, in the main forcing us to fall back on more staple approaches of international politics for explanatory sustenance (Ba and Hoffmann 2005). The best that could perhaps be said about global governance is that we invoke it to indicate a super-macrolevel of analysis; we do not use it to convey a discreet and pithy understanding of how the world works. As such, we have hardly advanced in answering the question that Lawrence Finkelstein posed in the first volume of the journal that took the same name, "what is global governance?" He provocatively answered, "virtually anything" (Finkelstein 1995:368).

Our aim is to press for rethinking how we conceive and apply the term. On the one hand, "global governance" has become both widespread and useful for describing growing complexity in the way that the world is organized and authority exercised as well as shorthand for referring to a collection of institutions with planetary reach. On the other hand, the analytical capacity of the term has not been mined sufficiently to enable us to get a better handle on the underlying dynamics of change. Our argument is that a deeper investigation of contemporary global governance has the potential to capture more accurately how power is exercised across the globe, how a multiplicity of actors relate to one another generally as well as on specific issues, make better sense of global complexity, and account for alterations in the way that the world is and has been organized (or governed) over time—both within and between historical periods.

It is our contention that an investigation into global governance should concentrate on four primary pursuits. First, it should move beyond the strong association that has come to exist between the term and virtually any change in the late twentieth century. It should instead be understood that the complexities of the post-Cold War era are merely the most concrete recent expression of global governance, but that forms of world organization have been and will be different in other epochs. Second, it should identify and explain the structure of global authority accounting not just for grand patterns of command and control but also for how regional, national, and local systems intersect with or push against that structure. A concern with multiple levels of governance is not enough although it is a good start (Bache and Flinders 2004). Third, a central preoccupation should be to investigate the myriad ways that power is exercised within such a system, how interests are articulated and pursued, the kind of ideas and discourses from which power and interests draw substance as well as which help establish, maintain, and perpetuate the system. Fourth, it should account for changes in and of the system and focus on the causes, consequences, and drivers of change, not just today but over extended periods of time.

Our aim is not to advance a theory of global governance but to highlight where core questions encourage

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us to go. We pick up on earlier work that has fallen by the wayside and seek to re-energize the search for a better understanding of "global governance as it has been, is, and may become" (Hewson and Sinclair 1999:ix). If our propositions are correct, and if better answers to the questions that global governance encourages us to ask are forthcoming, a more rigorous conception should help us understand the nature of the contemporary phenomenon as well as look "backwards" and "forwards." Such an investigation should provide historical insights and prescriptive elements to understand the kind of world order that we ought to be seeking and encourage us to investigate how that global governance can come about. The value-added of the concept results from opening our eyes to how the world was, is, and ought to be organized—certainly better than simply "muddling through" as we seek to counter the threats that confront the planet (Lindblom 1959).

We begin with an overview of the intellectual genesis of the term, concentrating on why global governance emerged, what it was intended to depict, and how its meaning has evolved over the last two decades. Here, we show how its emergence was bound up with a specific set of changes in authority and the exercise of power that became visible at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. While the term arose to describe change in the late twentieth century, its association with that specific moment has frozen it in time and deprived it of a greater capacity to understand change. Put another way, "global governance" has come to mean world governance without world government and not a more generic analytical tool for understanding how the globe is organized. We then explore what global governance has helped us explain, but also what it has missed. Imprecision has resulted in a feebler conceptual tool than it should for understanding how the world is organized and how power is exercised. We then spell out the four desirable components of an investigation. The penultimate section considers how, despite its emergence from—and indeed its relationship with—a specific and quite recent historical moment, global governance has considerable traction in looking back to explain the nature and complexities of, as well as wholesale changes in, previous global orders, and in looking forward to how the contemporary world *ought* to be organized.

The Emergence of Global Governance

Mainstream thinking has shifted decidedly away from the study of intergovernmental organization and law toward global governance. The term itself was born from a marriage between academic theory and practical policy in the 1990s and became entwined with that other meta-phenomenon of the last two decades, globalization. Rosenau and Czempiel's (1992) theoretical *Governance without Government* was published just about the same time that the Swedish government launched the policy-oriented Commission on Global Governance under the chairmanship of Sonny Ramphal and Ingmar Carlsson (Commission on Global Governance 1995). Both set in motion interest in global governance. The publication of the commission's report, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, coincided with the first issue of the Academic Council on the United Nations System journal *Global Governance*. This newly minted quarterly sought to return to the global problem-solving origins of the leading journal in the field, which seemed to have lost its way. "From the late 1960s, the idea of international organization fell into disuse," Sinclair (2012:16) reminds us. "*International Organization*, the journal which carried this name founded in the 1940s, increasingly drew back from matters of international policy and instead became a vehicle for the development of rigorous academic theorizing."

These developments paved the way for a raft of works about growing global complexity, the management of globalization, and the challenges confronting international institutions (Cox 1994; Prakash and Hart 1999). In part, global governance replaced an immediate predecessor as a normative endeavor, "world-order studies," which was seen as overly top-down and static. Having grown from World Peace through World Law (Clark and Sohn 1958), world order failed to capture the variety of actors, networks, and relationships that characterized contemporary international relations (Falk and Mendlovitz 1966–1967). When the perspectives from world-order scholars started to look a little old-fashioned, the stage was set for a new analytical cottage industry. After his archival labors to write a two-volume history of world federalism, Joseph Barrata aptly observes that in the 1990s "the new expression, 'global governance,' emerged as an acceptable term in debate on international organization for the desired and practical goal of progressive efforts, in place of 'world government.'" He continues: scholars "wished to avoid using a term that would harken back to the thinking about world government in the 1940s, which was largely based on fear of atomic bombs and too often had no practical proposals for the transition short of a revolutionary act of the united peoples of the world" (2004, vol. 2:534–535). Barnett and Duvall said it more adroitly: "The idea of global governance has attained near-celebrity status. In little more than a decade the concept has gone from the ranks of the unknown to one of the central orienting themes in the practice and study of international affairs" (2005:1).

Yet, the emergence of the term—and changes in the way that aspirations for insights from it were expressed—did not empty global governance of the normative content stemming from preoccupations that motivated previous generations of international relations and international organization scholars. In this way, global governance came to refer to collective efforts to identify, understand, or address worldwide problems and processes that went beyond the capacities of individual states. It reflected a capacity of the international system at any moment in time to provide government-like services in the absence of world government. Global governance encompassed a wide variety of cooperative problem-solving arrangements that were visible but informal (for example, practices or guidelines) or were temporary formations (for example, coalitions of the willing). Such arrangements could also be more formal, taking the shape of hard rules (laws and treaties) or else institutions with administrative structures and established practices to manage collective affairs by a variety of actors—including state authorities, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, and other civil society actors (Weiss and Thakur 2010).

It is also worth noting that the need to refresh thinking about how to better utilize international organizations underpinned the efforts of scholars working under the auspices of the "Multilateralism and the United Nations System," a project coordinated by Robert W. Cox and sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU; Sakamoto 1992; Krause and Knight 1995; Cox 1997b; Gill

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1997; Schechter 1999a,b). The stated intention was to capture, revitalize, and build upon the legitimacy connoted by the term "multilateralism" as a way of thinking about how to better organize the world. As Cox summarized:

> "Global governance" means the procedures and practices which exist at the world (or regional) level for the management of political, economic and social affairs. One hypothetical form of governance (world government or world empire) can be conceived as having a hierarchical form of coordination, whether centralized (unitary) or decentralized (federal). The other form of coordination would be non-hierarchical, and this we would call multilateral (Cox 1997b:xvi).

An earlier and widely cited project directed by Ruggie (1993) had also aimed to substantiate the idea that "multilateralism matters," albeit less ambitious in the way that it sought to conceptualize the capacity of this institutional form to be refashioned. Another UNU project actually challenged his more traditional concept of multilateralism (Newman, Thakur and Tirman 2006). Yet, the insights of all of these projects were unable to rehabilitate the study of global authority via a reclaimed multilateralism. Global governance proved more pervasive and persuasive.

Global governance also became bound up with another normative project ignited by worries about the shortfalls in the capacity of states to reign in the activities of a range of actors and to blunt the sharper consequences of global marketization as well as the seemingly unstoppable actions of powerful international economic institutions. In this variation—what Chanda (2008) called "runaway globalization"—the political authority of some great powers and international economic organizations along with the absence of authority among others (largely those states that encountered globalization as a quasi-force of nature) underpinned growing dissatisfaction in civil society (Hall 1998; Hobsbawn 1998). This disgruntlement found expression in mass demonstrations during the meetings of the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Union (EU), and various regional development banks as well as in the growth of an anti- and then an alter-globalization movement (Peet 2003; Amoore 2005). The normative result was one of governing globalization (Vayrynen 1999; Coyle 2000; Held and McGrew 2002).

In short, potential analytical traction evaporated because global governance meant so many different things to so many different people. It embodied the hopes and fears of many at the turn of the millennium, but failed to satisfy the need to analyze those tumultuous times.

It is worth recalling briefly what those dramatic changes were as well as what the term hoped to describe and capture. Three broad developments underpinned the appearance of the notion of global governance: the character of global problems, the nature of actors, and the perceived limitations of international measures to govern the planet.

Beginning in the 1970s, interdependence and rapid technological advances fostered the growing recognition that many problems defied the problem-solving capacities of a single state. Prior to this time, and the evidence of world wars and the Great Depression notwithstanding, most observers would have argued that powerful states could usually solve problems on their own, or at least could insulate themselves from the worst impacts. Efforts to eradicate malaria within a geographic area and to prevent those with the disease from entering a territory should be seen as qualitatively different from halting terrorist money-laundering, avian flu, or acid rain. Today no state, no matter how powerful, can labor under the illusion that it can protect its population from such threats. Rich states earlier could insulate themselves by erecting effective barriers, whereas a growing number of contemporary challenges to world order simply cannot be prevented by erecting walls. And politicians can no longer completely shy away from recognizing that reality—except perhaps during elections.

The development of a consciousness about the global environment and the consequences of human interactions, and especially the 1972 UN conference in Stockholm, is usually seen as a game-changer in the evolution of thinking. Although other examples abound, sustainability is especially apt to illustrate why we are all in the same listing boat. It simply is impossible that such laudable localized actions as environmental legislation in California or wind farms in Denmark can put the brakes on the destructive trajectory of climate change down which the planet is hurtling (Newell 2012).

The second development underpinning growing interest in global governance was the sheer expansion in the numbers and importance of nonstate actors (NSAs), particularly civil society and for-profit corporations, and more especially those with trans-national reach (Willetts 2011). While analysts of international relations and international organization had become aware and included them into their thinking and concepts, they were still seen as appendages to the state system (Keohane and Nye 1971). Such growth has been facilitated by the so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991), including institutional networks similar enough to facilitate greater trans-national and trans-governmental interactions described by Slaughter (2004) and Grewal (2008), a growing disillusionment with state capacity *and* state willingness to deal with social issues, and the onset of a more pernicious global economic environment.

A third driving force lay in concerns to upgrade the UN system for the post-Cold War period. Combining worries about the increasingly trans-border nature of problems and state incapacity to address them with a desire to draw from the untapped potential of "new" global actors, scholars and practitioners sought to shore-up the world body by encouraging it not only to reform but also to partner with others to address pressing issues. One aspect of this movement pressed the United Nations to recognize the comparative advantage of other actors that were better able to fulfill key tasks, including roping NGOs and TNCs more closely into the work of the world organization through the Global Compact. Another explored the capacity for a "complex multilateralism" to emerge designed to capture the capacity of global social movements to fill a legitimacy gap in global governance (O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte and Williams 2000:3). Another still sought to address the "crisis of multilateralism" through root and branch reform of UN institutions (Newman 2007).

Whatever the exact explanatory weight of the three driving forces, the emergence and widespread recognition of trans-national issues that circumscribed state capacity along with the proliferation of NSAs responding to perceived shortfalls in national capabilities and a willingness to address them in the context of a perceived crisis of multilateralism combined to stimulate new think-

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ing. Scholars of international relations and international organization began to ask questions about the precise role of other actors that were to varying degrees already global agents. Multinational corporations and philanthropic institutions, for instance, were obscured from the sight of analysts who focused on states as the only or at least the most consequential actors. As a consensus about the pace and extent of global change grew, so did the impulse to understand the significance of an even greater range of players, extending later to faith actors and financial rating agencies as well as such less salubrious agents as transnational criminal networks and terrorist movements (Sinclair 2005; Madsen 2009; Marshall 2013). At the same time, scholars began to ask what kind of governance was exerted by mechanisms such as markets that had previously been the sole purview of international political economists (Cox 1997a). So, whereas states and the intergovernmental organizations that they had created had once monopolized the attention of students of international organization, the closing decades of the twentieth century encouraged the shift from state-centric structures to a wide range of actors and mechanisms.

These ideas, in turn, were carried over into real-world developments. New, or newly recognized, as well as old actors combined in partnerships, thereby blurring even further the traditional conception of a world shaped essentially by the interactions of states and their relative power capabilities. The United Nations "sub-contracted" security operations to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Balkans and to the Economic Community of West African States in West Africa as well as to development and humanitarian NGOs for the delivery of services, assistance, and protection (Gordenker and Weiss 1996; Weiss 1998). And as indicated above, the UN itself also formed a coalition with multinational corporations, labor unions, and civil society around shared concerns for social and environmental standards in the Global Compact (Hughes and Wilkinson 2001; Ruggie 2001).

These new institutional forms and partnerships encouraged investigators to ask questions not only about who and what were involved in the organization of the world but also how any particular form of organization came about and its mechanisms of control. Here, work accelerated on networks and epistemic communities, super-sized business gatherings like the World Economic Forum and counter weights such as the World Social Forum, and markets and investor decision making (Cox 1992; Haas 1992; Germain 1997; Sinclair 2005; Stone and Maxwell 2005; Pigman 2007). To borrow an image from James Rosenau, a "crazy quilt" of authority was emerging and shifting, resulting in a "patchwork" of institutional elements that varied by sector and over time (1999:293). He also correctly attached the adjective "turbulent" to our world and times and struggled to make sense of "fragmegration," or the simultaneous pulls toward fragmentation and integration (1990).

Plus Ça Change...

Yet, for all of the interest that growing complexity engendered, and the new and novel scholarly first-cut in thinking about global governance that it generated, old ways persisted. Three-quarters of a century of distinguishing the study of international relations from political science as one characterized by a focus on states as the primary units of analysis continued to condition thinking and weighed heavily on the way that scholars understood this altered world. Similarly, students of international organization have continued to emphasize the role of major powers in intergovernmental organizations as the central lens through which to view human progress.

However, older ways also involved thinking outside of these boxes. Harold Jacobson observed that the march by states toward a world government was woven into the tapestries decorating the walls of the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva—now the UN's European Office but once the headquarters of the defunct League of Nations. They "picture the process of humanity combining into ever larger and more stable units for the purpose of governance—first the family, then the tribe, then the city-state, and then the nation—a process which presumably would eventually culminate in the entire world being combined in one political unit" (Jacobson 1984:84). Other than a few surviving world federalists, virtually no one believes that is where we are headed; and Mazower (2012), for one, is comfortable with the disappearance of this noble but megalomaniacal, visionary but delusional idea.

Thus, our best shot was to label this complex world where authority was exercised differently "global governance," but to persist with familiar state-centric ways of understanding it, to view all other actors and activities as appendages to the international system that analysts have observed since the Peace of Westphalia. What the ups and downs of global change had injected was curiosity and new questions. They revolved around how the world was organized and authority and power exercised therein, and the knowledge that we lacked by merely peering at states for insights. But we stopped short of providing real answers to questions that pushed us beyond comfort levels with older modes of thinking.

"IO plus" was basically Finkelstein's original answer to "what is global governance?" His reply is not all that different from contemporary responses. Indeed, the journal that was established to drive forward understandings of new worldwide complexities—*Global Governance*—signaled a reluctance to break with old ways of thinking in its subtitle, *A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations.*

According to Craig Murphy's masterful history of "global governance" *avant le mot* since the nineteenth century, international organizations customarily are viewed as "what world government we actually have" (2000:789). He is right, but the problem lies elsewhere. At the national level, we have the authoritative structures of government that are supplemented by governance. However, internationally we simply have governance with some architectural drawings for modest renovations in international structures that are several decades old and not up to present building codes. Blueprints sit in filing cabinets while unstable ground and foundations shift under feeble existing structures, which are occupied by a host of other actors, processes, and mechanisms that all-too-often occupy only our peripheral vision. The result has been that the value of global governance in understanding complexity and especially the drivers of change has been less than fully exploited. We have updated the Finklestein's answer: "add new actors and issues and stir."

We also have too closely associated the changes that we sought to explain with a particular moment in time, the post-Cold War era. The capacity of existing international organizations to address pressing contemporary challenges is called into question by their demonstrated inability to bind key states in meaningful ways to address global problems—to which efforts to protect the global

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environment, eradicate world poverty, or attenuate increasing inequalities within and across states and social groups bear ample witness. Consequently, the association of global governance with the hopes, worries, and complexities of a particular moment runs the risk of turning it into an historical artifact. This consignment brings with it a risk of losing sight of questions about how the world is organized and authority exercised. In short, we need to rescue the term.

Reviving Global Governance

These risks should push us to probe more deeply into how the world is truly organized—or as John Ruggie some time ago remarked, how "the world hangs together?" (1998:2). What is it that we need to do in order to realize the analytical utility of global governance? The first part of an answer is to tackle global complexity in a more satisfactory fashion, not to be afraid to disaggregate by issue and by context, and then to try and fit the data back together into an explanatory whole. We should not only describe who the actors are and how they connect to one another, but also how a particular outcome has resulted and why and on what grounds authority is effectively or poorly exercised. We should examine the consequences of new forms of organization and determine what adjustments might be made to enhance their utility to meet existing, new, or changing social goals. Important as well are subtler understandings and a better appreciation of the differing characteristics of institutions and the effects when those with varying natures and capabilities come together.

Another essential task is giving greater thought to the way that power is exercised other than indicating that Germany is not Gabon, that emerging powers are on the rise, and that the end of *Pax Americana* is nigh (Strange 1987; Layne 2011). In today's international system, state capabilities matter as do the way that formal and informal institutions mediate relations between states and the way that goods and services are exchanged and managed. When the numbers and kinds of actors proliferate, markets are less controlled by states, and more complex relations exist between actors and markets, questions of power are less straightforward. Here, we should probe more than the relationship between the birth of the current phase of international institutions and US power, illustrated by the work of Ikenberry (1992) and Ruggie (1994). We should also reflect on institutional expressions and social groups, epistemic communities and policy networks, financial decision making, and changing capabilities among other actors (Haas 1992; Pogge 2001; Cerny 2010; Hellenier and Pagliari 2011; Stone 2012).

Finally, and despite some notable endeavors (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Gill 2002; Jolly, Emmerij and Weiss 2009), we have yet to fully understand the ideas and interests that drive the organizations that we have, and more particularly how they arise and develop, and subsequently permeate and modify the international system. Here, ideas themselves are important as are the value systems upon which they sit, the discourses in which they are embedded, and the interests to which they speak. So too are the individuals who generate those ideas, the networks through which they are disseminated, the ways that various institutions mediate core messages, and the processes through which ideas are translated into forms of organization and policy delivery. Checkel (1997) long ago called for "mid-level theory," and we as a scholarly community have yet to do that and link ideas to global governance.

Without a concerted effort to press forward our understanding of the complexities of global governance, the way that authority and power are exercised, and the ideational and material aspects of global organization, we risk not only misunderstanding the world around us but also underestimating our capacity to make meaningful adjustments to that order. In short, we can no longer ignore global governance's capacity to understand change—past and future as well as present.

Global Governance: Backwards and Forwards

Thinking harder about global governance may have utility beyond understanding where we are and the nature of the world order in which we live, or which actors we should or should not emphasize or ignore when thinking about complexity (Jentleson 2012). The questions asked in the closing decades of the twentieth century may also be useful in helping us understand where we have come from and where we are going. And the analytical utility of global governance as a conceptual device beyond the current order may lie in ideas advanced about a refashioned multilateralism immediately after the Cold War's end.

Earlier we recalled Cox's distinction between global governance as multilateralism and as world government or empire. This distinction provides a potentially fruitful way of thinking about global governance that removes some of the blinkers that its association with the post-Cold War moment entails. We understand global governance as the sum of the informal and formal ideas, values, norms, procedures, and institutions that help all actors—states, IGOs, civil society, and TNCs—identify, understand, and address trans-boundary problems. If so, we ought to do so not merely on the basis of its *contemporary* manifestations, which emerged from a specific and recent historical moment, which responded to a perceived need to better understand what was going on, and which sought to capture global change as a positive phenomenon. Pursuing answers to the question "how is the world governed?" across time should also give us a better idea of where we have come from, why change has happened, and where we are going.

Put differently, if we apply the same kinds of questions that led to understanding global governance as a pluralization of world politics at the end of the last century, then we should also be able to determine what kinds of systems of world order existed before the current one, and how power and authority were exercised. In brief, we should have answers about the ultimate drivers of change and their impact.

A willingness to ask how the world was governed as well as how that governance has changed over time has the potential to destabilize international relations theory. It opens our analytical aspirations to examine a complexity that, in fact, has always existed; and it requires us to account for that complexity by adjusting our theoretical lenses to examine that long-standing complexity. As many have shown, the global governance of the Westphalian era was more than an anarchic state system alone. For instance, Spruyt (1994) reminds us that a mosaic of actors—states and nonstates—have always been involved in global governance although *some* states have been far more capable actors than other states and NSAs.

Indeed, perhaps the best that we can say about the community of international relations scholars over the past half-century is that we have manufactured a handle to grasp how the interstate part of the global governance

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complex has worked. However, we have spent too little time thinking about what other agents and forms of governance exist and have existed and what the relationships between them and the interstate system have been —not just in the last few decades, but forever.

One way to think about global governance over time is to evaluate the kinds of ideas about world order that have prevailed. In the two-dimensional and static view of the Westphalian order as an interstate system, an assertion that the organizing principle is anarchy tells us nothing about why the world has been organized that way or why we need to know about what existed before hand. Such an approach takes us into well-charted territory, but our way of journeying through it—if we focus on questions of how and why the world is organized—is different and potentially more satisfactory.

One reason for the emergence of the interstate system as the broad framework that governs the world was a response to ideas that—in the European world at least—sought to move away from a form of global governance in which papal authority was supreme to one in which various secular rulers exercised sovereignty over discrete geographic units. While ideas of self-determination found their first expression here, the move from papacy to state was not necessarily in the interests of the populations who were subjected to this new form of governance. Nor did it end the influence of the papacy, or of religious institutions more generally, in the global governance of the time. Nor did it extinguish ideas about the subjugation of populations beyond national borders as a "legitimate" product of global governance—though the fight against later expressions of European imperialism most certainly accelerated the consolidation of self-determination as a foundational principle of the subsequent system of global governance.

Other agents that contributed to how the world was governed until this point—such as mercenary armies and city states to name but two—fell into relative desuetude, but new actors emerged to play a more central role. Indeed, we can observe how Hobsbawn's (1994) "Age of Empire" came about as the dominant form of world organization from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries by scrutinizing the role of private enterprises—which in many cases started off as "privateer" ventures and became the nationally sanctioned "companies" of European empires—in extending imperialism as the dominant form of global governance.

Asking questions about the rush to empire enables us to see the role of such actors as the British and the Dutch East India Company, but it also helps to distinguish between the kind of global governance in existence during the appropriation of European imperial power (as well as the brutal forms of governance to which colonized peoples were subjected) and that which existed once the scramble for colonies subsided. The usual route into thinking about how the world was organized in the nineteenth century is to examine how the balance of power became institutionalized among the major European countries through the Holy Alliance and the Concert of Europe (Morgenthau 1995:481–489). Yet, this perspective tells us merely of efforts to avoid costly and catastrophic wars in Europe, not how the world was governed. Absent from this view are the competing imperialisms that were the dominant frame of global governance along with differing ideas about the subjugation of non-European peoples and the colonization of uninhabited lands (or that were treated as *terra nullius* irrespective of indigenous populations). Moreover, this dominant form of organization and the ideas on which it was based were subject to challenges—both ideational and physical—that eroded the bases of competing imperialisms and helped set in motion the wholesale changes in global governance that we now label "post-colonialism."

Murphy's (1994) *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850* traces the origins of global governance to the middle of the nineteenth century. His examination of public unions as the forerunners of "global governance" is anomalous in that the term arose, as we have seen, early in the 1990s. However, his effort suggests the crucial importance of testing the framework of global governance as an approach to understanding how the world was organized in other historical periods than our own. The utility of Murphy's work lies in his willingness to connect changes in the form and function of global governance with the onset, consolidation, and acceleration of another global dynamic that mainstream international relations has always found it difficult to comprehend—the industrial revolution and the logic of global capitalism. Others too have used this form of economic and social organization as a different starting point for thinking about how the world is organized and governed (Chase-Dunn and Sokolovsky 1983). These works contribute considerably to our understanding of what world authority structures we actually have, but they do not—attempts to historicize these approaches further notwithstanding (Frank and Gills 2003)—fully explore the kinds of questions an enquiry into the historical manifestations of global governance demands. Likewise, Hobson's (2004) work on the contribution of non-Western civilizations to the contemporary world and non-European forms of organization offers useful insights into—but not a complete platform for—thinking about global governance, past and present.

It is also worth bearing in mind that if the questions that led us to define contemporary global governance pluralistically were driven by the need to understand change and new horizons, we should be able to ask similar questions about earlier epochs and find satisfactory answers. Boli and Thomas's (1997) research on international non-governmental organizations goes in this direction. Peering into the past through the lenses of global governance makes one realize that, like globalization which once seemed novel but is not, global governance also is not new.

The call of many historians to learn lessons for the future from the past resonates loudly (Macmillan 2009). Carr (1961:62) commented that history is an "unending dialogue between the past and the present." The relevance of this caveat was immediately obvious to three authors of a recent international relations text who argue, "One of the often-perceived problems of the social sciences is their lack of historical depth" (Williams, Hadfield and Rofe 2012:3). Nothing is more valued in contemporary social science than parsimony, which puts a premium on the simplest of theoretical pictures and causal mechanisms. History complicates matters, which is one of the reasons that global governance has become widespread as an approach because it "emerges out of a frustration with parsimony and a determination to embrace a wider set of causes" (Sinclair 2012:69). Self-doubt and reflection flow naturally from historical familiarity in a way that they do not from abstract theories and supposedly sophisticated social science.

Yet, wrenching global governance from a contemporary moment and applying it historically is not enough. This

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move would have limited value if it also were not a valuable approach to understanding tomorrow. The future-oriented value lies in treating global governance as a set of questions that enable us to work out how the world is, was, and could be governed, how changes in grand and not-so-grand patterns of governance occurred, are occurring, and *ought* to occur. This is an urgent intellectual task to which scholars should turn.

Conclusion

It is commonplace to state that many of the most intractable contemporary problems are trans-national, ranging from climate change, migration, and pandemics to terrorism, financial instability, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and that addressing them successfully requires actions that are not unilateral, bilateral, or even multilateral, but rather global. Everything is globalized—that is, everything except politics. The policy, authority, and resources necessary for tackling such problems remain vested in individual states rather than collectively in universal institutions. The classic collective action problem is how to organize common solutions to common problems and spread costs fairly. The fundamental disconnect between the nature of a growing number of global problems and the current inadequate structures for international problem solving and decision making goes a long way toward explaining the fitful, tactical, and short-term local responses to challenges that require sustained, strategic, and longer-run global perspectives and action.

Can a more comprehensive framework of global governance help us to attack that basic disjuncture? Contemporary global governance is a halfway house between the international anarchy underlying realist analysis and a world state. The current generation of intergovernmental organizations undoubtedly helps lessen transaction costs and overcome some structural obstacles to international cooperation, as would be clear to anyone examining international responses to the 2004 tsunami or ongoing humanitarian crises for which we see a constellation of helping hands—soldiers from a variety of countries, UN organizations, large and small NGOs, and even Wal-Mart.

Global governance certainly is not the continuation of traditional power politics. It also is not the expression of an evolutionary process necessarily leading to the formation of structures able to address contemporary or future global threats. Nor is it simply bound up with governing the economy in the *longue durée*. Moreover, to speak of "governance" and not "government" is to discuss the product and not the producer. Agency and accountability are absent. In the domestic context governance adds to government, implying shared purpose and goal orientation in addition to formal authority and police or enforcement powers. For the globe, governance is essentially the whole story, what Barrett (2007:19) describes aptly as "organized volunteerism."

To these observers, voluntary action has its limits; and so, taking conceptual steps toward a more complete framework of global governance is required. Our journey should be toward a better understanding of how the world was and currently is organized or disorganized, including how its complexity is unpacked, how authority and power are exercised, what are the ideational and material drivers of change, and who benefits. That knowledge should also place us in a position to propose what should and could happen to improve the planet's prospects.

At the end of the day, we require more satisfactory answers to "What is global governance?" Otherwise, we are left with images from two authors who rarely appear in the pages of the scholarly journals focused on how the world is organized: Gertrude Stein's characterization of Oakland, "there's no there, there," or Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat, a grinning head floating without a body or substance.

In comparison with international organization, peering through the lens of global governance opens the analyst's eyes to viewing a host of actors and informal processes of norm and policy formulation as well as change and action. The crucial challenge in the near term is to push the study of global governance beyond the notion of "add actors and processes into the international organization mix and stir."

Global problems require global solutions. We have to identify cooperation at various levels and with specific actors so that we can determine how global public goods may result from a host of means and forms, formal and informal, including supranational authority. There, we have again uttered a notion that typically qualifies authors for an asylum (Weiss 2009). We can point to numerous examples of helpful steps in issue-specific global governance—for instance, the International Committee of the Red Cross for the laws of war and humanitarian principles, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (or FIFA, its familiar abbreviation) for the world's most popular sport (football or soccer), and the International Association for Assigned Names and Numbers (also better known by its acronym, ICANN) for the internet.

Yet, we have to do more than hope for the best from norm entrepreneurs, activists crossing borders, profit-seeking corporations, and trans-national social networks. To state the obvious, they can make important contributions but not eliminate poverty, fix global warming, or halt mass atrocities. In accepting the limits of global governance without global government, our core argument is that today numerous gaps (Weiss and Thakur 2010; Weiss 2013) should and could be better plugged in a variety of ways in order to better address key problems confronting international society. At the same time, these essential measures should be taken without losing sight of the horizon. Vision is essential because history is not prophecy.

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